

**Board of Fire Commissioners
Fire District No. 1
P.O. Box 6903
Freehold, NJ 07728**

Special Workshop

February 13, 2018

Vice Chairman Thomas Caruso called the special meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners to order at 7:30pm. Notice was read, and Chief Reifer led the flag salute. Roll call was taken. Present at the meeting were Andrew Story, John Toutouchi, Shyamal Joshi and Thomas Caruso. Also in attendance was Board Secretary-Rachel Davis.

Vice Chairman Caruso suspended the scheduled workshop and opened the meeting up to the public for questions and discussion.

Jim Franklin, 119 Lancaster Road, Freehold: The election on Saturday 2-9pm—are we voting on the operating budget for the coming year and what is the amount? Is it on the website as to why the truck is needed? Are the specifications for the truck in writing?

In answering Mr. Franklin's questions, the Board responded that this is the annual election for two seats that are up for Fire Commissioners, and two people are running for those two seats. As a citizen of Freehold Township Fire District No. 1, you can also vote for the budget and any other expenditures. The proposed 2018 budget for District No. 1 is \$1,299,950 along with a bond referendum, which states a Class A Type 3 Pumper/Tanker 3,500 gallons, not to exceed \$1,300,000, which will be purchased with a bond or a lease purchase, however the Board decides. The Board had to replace the old truck, which was a 1985 articulated tanker, difficult to find drivers, tires were a concern, and it was not used on a call in eight years. There were three drivers, An officer, a life member and an auxiliary firefighter. These individuals would not train new members that did not have a CDL. The Board weighed all these facts and decided to sell it while we could still get something out of it and then get another truck that was conducive to our drivers. All of this information was discussed in a few past public meetings and can be found in the Board minutes online.

John Johnston, 123 Lancaster Road, Freehold: Is there anything that has the price of this truck? And do you have other pieces of equipment that are bonded? When you built Georgia Road, did you have existing apparatus for that or buy new? Will this newer truck be able to get through to all the neighborhoods? Are any firefighters paid a salary? How many active firefighters are there? This is District No. 1? You are the fire department? How many average firefighters respond to a call?

In answering Mr. Johnston's questions, the Board responded that we are replacing a tanker, which is going to increase the price of a regular truck. Also, it is not just the apparatus that will be included in that price, it is all the equipment in that truck to do the job we need to

do. The normal price of the truck, with just the chassis would be \$900,000, without the radios, air packs, etc. It is also a 3,500-gallon tanker, which is not a normal fire engine. This truck is also smaller than the last one but has a larger water capacity and is more usable in getting around town and easier to get operators. This fire district is very fortunate, as we have no debt. This is the first thing that we are going to lease purchase or bond, because the Township Committee advised us to. What we have done in the past and what we think is the better way to do it is to surplus the money every year, put it to a capital account and then buy with cash and then we won't have to deal with interest and bond attorney fees. When the Township cut our budget, they did not agree with our approach to financing and buying trucks and said that we should bond or lease purchase. This is the first truck in a long time that we will be going out for a lease purchase of a truck. Bonding is too expensive. When Georgia Road was built, we already had equipment, and we also purchased some equipment with capital funds. We would have had capital funds for this purchase as well, but our budget was defeated last year, so we had to put some of our general funds to offset the tax levy and our future capital expenses had to be put into our operating budget. We did not want to do it this way, but unfortunately, our hands are tied, and we need to provide fire protection, so this is the only way to do it. Last year's big budget cut to our fire district saved the average homeowner \$24/year for fire protection. We are Fire District No. 1, which is the taxing entity that hires firefighters, and we hired and contracted a volunteer fire company (established in 1963). That volunteer fire company sets up and organizes what they have to do, and the fire district supplements them with taxpayers' dollars for training, vehicles, equipment and everything you need to put out a fire. On the average day we have about 6-8 volunteer firefighters and we can also go to mutual aid, which is a good system because some of the fire companies from other towns have paid crews.

Alex Wisienksi, 917 Elton Adelpia Road, Freehold: By the budget being voted down last year, are you saying you would have had more money this year and you wouldn't have to get the bond this year? I was just curious as to why they knocked it down?

In answering Mr. Wisienksi's questions, the Board stated that if the budget passed last year, we would have had more money this year to put towards the truck. The Board then shared the tax rate increase numbers and budget comparisons from other townships. The Board also added that although we are a volunteer fire company, last year we had a line item that would give an allowance for part-time paid firefighters, if needed, to be more proactive, but the Township did not want any paid firefighters. How much money do you put on human life? Every minute counts, and this fire company is one of the best volunteer fire companies, but there are times when volunteer firefighters are not available because of the time of day, when they are at work. There is no way you can say that a paid fire staff is not better than any of the best volunteer fire departments, and we are one of the best. But we were trying to be proactive and get ready for the day when volunteers are not available, just to have a part-time paid employee who can drive, if needed. We are talking about life-safety issues.

Howard Clesemere, 33 Princess Anne Drive, Freehold: After the budget was defeated, the Township decided how much money the fire district has to spend, but do they have any

working knowledge in fire protection and how it works? Didn't they promise you help with getting volunteers? People from township who cut your budget promised to help you but have not followed through yet? And if the people vote no, we will be at their mercy, again? But by voting yes, you can always change line items and change things around, if need be?

In answering Mr. Clesemere's questions, the Board inferred that the Township does not have detailed working knowledge in fire protection in this district. And, yes they did promise help with volunteers, but we have not heard from them yet. If the budget gets defeated, they will do what they want with the budget, again. And if the budget passes, then yes, we can change things around.

The Board thanked the residents for coming out for information and welcomed them to all future meetings on the fourth Tuesday of every month. We all need the fire department, so come out to the meetings and ask questions. We look forward to it. Board then took a short recess at 8:09pm. Back at 8:19pm.

Vice Chairman Caruso announced that the Board is not conducting any formal business, but rather a workshop to prepare for the next meeting.

Buildings:

- Georgia Road: Lights on exterior were fixed; new quote for security system.
- District: Air compressor will be looked at; PO for camera system was signed (through Hunterton Co-op, as discussed) and parts will be ordered;
- CSS will be out next Thursday to install seal detectors at district and Georgia Road; CSS contracts for renewal—Tom will sign for Georgia and District; Mr. Lengyel has Smithburg contract.

Website: Up to date.

Insurance: Two claims still out—drug screen we will pay, other one goes through workman's comp. Mr. Story said he would take over the March bills and do the basics.

Officers: Captain Dan Petersen was asked if there were any expenses or problems that the Board should know about, and he mentioned the warning lights on 79, straw pack is failing, and we will have to start the yearly servicing; 78 generator—FIS working on it; 77's alternator has been fixed.

Motion made by Mr. Toutouchi to go into executive session at 8:25pm.

Second: Mr. Joshi

4-0 all in favor

(back into public session 9:37pm)

Mr. Story told the Chief that the guys could hang out in the bay, TV room during the election. Board also asked the Chief to remind Lt. Santore to immediately send the Commissioners a list of any life safety equipment that is needed.

Motion made by Mr. Joshi to adjourn the meeting at 9:39pm.

Second: Mr. Toutouchi

4-0 all in favor

Respectfully submitted,

John Toutouchi, Secretary

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