

**TOWNSHIP OF PARSIPPANY-TROY HILLS
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1
REGULAR MEETING
July 26th , 2023, 7:30 p.m.**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills Board of Fire Commissioners, Fire District No.1 was called to order at 7:38 PM by Commissioner Ferdinandi at the Tarn Drive Firehouse at 909 Tabor Road, Morris Plains, New Jersey.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Ferdinandi led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. STATEMENT IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

This meeting is called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law. This meeting of July 26, 2023 was included in a list of meetings notice sent to The Daily Record and advertised in said newspaper on December 9, 2022, posted on the bulletin board in the Parsippany-Troy Hills Municipal Building, 1001 Parsippany Boulevard, Parsippany, New Jersey, and the Mount Tabor Firehouse, 909 Tarn Road on December 9, 2022, and has remained continuously posted as the required notices under the statute. In addition, a copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Township Clerk and at the Mount Tabor Fire House.

4. ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Ferdinandi, Hazel, Jamieson, Masker

Department Representation: Deputy Chief Masker, Captain Roca

5. AGENDA REVIEW

President Berry reviewed the agenda for this meeting.

6. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

Minutes from the regular June meeting were distributed by Commissioner Hazel to all Commissioners to review prior to this meeting. Minutes from the regular June meeting were approved via a motion by Commissioner Jamieson, seconded by Commissioner Masker, and carried by unanimous vote.

7. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED

No communications were received at this meeting.

8. RESOLUTIONS:

No resolutions were brought forward at this meeting.

9. REPORTS

i. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's monthly report for July 2023 declaring operating expenses of \$81,899.33 was read and distributed for all Commissioners to review.

Significant expenses included a \$21,182.21 to Phoenix for preventative maintenance; \$13,241.67 to GearGrid for gear racks and storage shelving purchase and installation; and \$3,213.49 to Spectrum Communications for radio installations for Car 19, Tower 11 and Engine 15.

ii. Truck Report

We have accepted an offer of \$80,000 through Signal 5 for Tower 11.

Phoenix will be requested to look at the rust under Engine 12's mirrors.

Engine 13's onboard dash cam system is being looked at due to the monitor regularly resetting itself.

Rescue 14's bumper repair will be scheduled in coordination with repairs for its crab walking problem as well as lighting upgrades. Rescue 14's four gas meter is out of service. It has been reported that Rescue 14's air conditioner has leaked since being repaired by Phoenix.

Engine 15's pressure governor issue has been fixed.

Engine 16's equipment box was completed and installed.

Car 19's brake upgrade is expected to cost approximately \$3,500.

An offer for old Car 19 for \$10,000 fell through.

iii. Radio Report

Four new pagers have come in.

It was discovered at the MedEvac drill that a UTAC channel was not properly programmed.

Parsippany is pushing updates on mobiles and portables for the town's trunking system. The new county format (no "Ops" channels) is working well so far.

There is expected to be a new Senior Telecom Supervisor/Liaison for Parsippany Police Department. They may be hiring an additional dispatcher as well. Responses from Parsippany regarding issues with the June 1st Brookstone Circle call are still pending. Call transfer issues persist with lagging delays on responses from Parsippany Police. A member called in active car fire and received an unprofessional response from a Parsippany Dispatcher.

iv. Insurance Report

No report.

v. Purchasing Report

No report.

vi. Fire Prevention

The building department is issuing fines to Gates Court. It was mentioned at the Joint Chief's meeting that information is not adequately coming from the fire Official. The Fire Official and his supervisor will be getting a letter. Fire Prevention stated that there isn't adequate budget to support their radio access the county System.

vii. Joint Board Meeting Report

There was no board meeting last month. Next month's meeting is at District 2's firehouse. We will raise the issue of selling the PARTIOT to an in-town agency for a nominal fee.

viii. Chief's Report

There have been 250 calls year to date, 65 of which have been mutual aid.

Demolition at 1500 Littleton Road is in progress.

Upcoming events include a solar panel class, Children's Day, and a traffic management class in Denville.

We have one member who has passed Fire 1 and another who is on his last exam attempt. One member has passed Fire 2 and another has failed. One member has passed EMT.

We are waiting for SAM number to proceed with the grant.

Station alerting will be added to the crew room and office.

We received 3 quotes to paint the bay doors at Power Mill and intend to go with the \$2,700 quote.

Manpower issues are not improving:

June 28th: No interior members and no officers.

July 8th: Structure fire call at the Hilton with 2 interior members and 2 chiefs.

July 14th: Reported fire in Cedar Knolls understaffed with non-RIC members.

July 15th: Powerlines down on West Hanover where we couldn't provide staffing.

July 23rd: Fire in District 6 with 2 members and one chief.

It is not clear that more incentive money is helping. Other districts are experiencing similar issues. We have had no new applications in over a year and a half.

10. INVITATION FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public were present to comment.

11. APPROVAL OF BILLS PAYABLE

A motion to pay pending bills was made by Commissioner Hazel, seconded by Commissioner Jamieson, and carried by unanimous vote.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

No executive session took place at this meeting.

13. OLD BUSINESS

No old business was discussed at this meeting.

14. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Masker presented a draft resolution to increase the 2024 budget above the standard cap among the commissioners for review and comment. The mentioned increase of \$298,000 would provide the District with two full time positions considering pension, benefits, and overtime assumptions.

A resolution would need to be voted into the minutes by the September meeting to accommodate the budget setting cycle requiring voting action in October. If the resolution is brought forward and passed, it can be withdrawn up until the time we finalize the ballots.

The rationale behind the resolution would be to attract qualified personnel for two full-time positions to develop and execute the structure and planning to build a successful combination (volunteer & career) fire department. It is believed that by starting with the management layer, as opposed to hiring part-time firefighters first, there can be an actionable plan with accountability to develop a robust career structure while simultaneously requiring the maintenance and development of the volunteer participation to avoid a sudden collapse in volunteer firefighter response as has been the case in neighboring communities.

Prospective duties would include alarm response, maintenance, administrative responsibilities as well as the development of policies and procedures. The salaries of between \$85,000 to \$100,000, each with pension and benefits may be viewed against the perspective of a neighboring department's open chief position advertised for \$135,000 which is claimed to be among the lowest in the county and the trend in EMS where talent is regularly cycling to the highest prevailing wage. The precise title and roll description are to be further developed as there are indirect consequences of creating a paid Chief's position whether in title or substance.

The resolution is a response to signals that a 100% volunteer fire department may not be able to provide consistent fire protection. The timing is the result of regular reports of inconsistent volunteer turnouts, the upcoming budgeting cycle, and the need to have ready a structure to support paid staffing should volunteer response prove insufficient for adequate fire protection.

The only numbers that may change for this resolution as currently written is the stated percentage increase above the two percent cap as several factors, most notably the amount and prospective allocation of reserve capital, need to be realized.

Concern over paid firefighters responding out of district were raised. It was noted that we are currently incentivizing response to calls regardless of if the call is in district or not. It is also noted that additional paid staffing would not be implemented until 2025 according to the plan inspiring the resolution as currently drafted. The prospect of other districts relying on paid staffing from District One for mutual aid alarm response would likely require the development of a fee structure to be paid by the district receiving aid.

Deputy Chief Masker stated that there could be potential revenue streams to recover the variable costs associated with response, i.e. speedy dry application at fluid spills. Examples from other departments with highway response as examples were cited. However direct billing to district homeowners would not likely be practical. There was objection to the prospect of recovering relevant revenue from district constituents as the product of a plan that would already raise taxes on all district constituents. It was noted that there is revenue collection in place from commercial nuisance alarms through Parsippany Fire Prevention and that less than \$500 is generally collected in a year.

There was enthusiasm that this proposal could be the beginning of a more responsive fire department with personnel more directly accountable to the taxpayers if properly developed with volunteer staffing. It was noted, however that the resolution as currently

drafted does not relevantly improve fire suppression capabilities in 2024 and could possibly reduce volunteer turnout in the same year.

A separate concern was raised that this will result in the long-term reduction in volunteer turnout resulting in a significant expense for the taxpayers with ineffective paid staffing on fire engines to fight a fire. Examples citing neighboring career and combination departments with one position per apparatus and minimal volunteer response, if any, were raised. It was noted that there have been instances where we haven't been able to put a truck on the road in the last month.

Given low community turnout at Commissioner meetings, we would have to work hard to ensure that the community is heavily involved in discussions regarding this potential change. Chief Crawford confirmed that the MTVFD's social media platform could engage local community groups to enhance awareness of this potential change and direct commentary and concerns to the upcoming Commissioner meetings if a form of resolution should be brought forward and passed.

15. ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, a motion to close was made by Commissioner Hazel, seconded by Commissioner Jamieson, and carried by unanimous vote at 9:32 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gerard Hazel

Commissioner