

Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS Commissioners' Meeting

Meeting Called By:	Commissioners	Date, Time:	January 18, 2012 at 17:30
Transcribed By:	Kathy Tobine	Place:	Tilton Town Hall, 257 Main Street, Tilton

Commissioner Auger called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.
 Present: Commissioner Paul Auger, Commissioner Pat Clark, Commissioner Tom Gallant, Chief Brad Ober and Administrative Assistant Kathy Tobine.

Non-Public Session

Commissioner Gallant made a motion at 5:31 PM to go into non-public Session per RSA 91-A:3, II(a) to discuss the dismissal, promotion or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a meeting and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. There being no discussion, roll call vote was taken: Commissioner Paul Auger, Commissioner Pat Clark, yes; Commissioner Tom Gallant, yes.

At 5:31 P.M. they have gone out of public session.

There being no further items to come before them in non-public session Commissioner Gallant made a motion to go out of non-public session at 6:04 P.M. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. Roll call vote was taken: Commissioner Pat Clark, yes; Commissioner Paul Auger, yes.

At 6:04 they are out of non-public session.

Public Session

Commissioner Auger called the public meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

Present: Commissioner Paul Auger, Commissioner Pat Clark, Commissioner Tom Gallant, Chief Brad Ober, Treasurer Roland Seymour and Administrative Assistant Kathy Tobine.

Public: Selectmen Sandra Plessner, Patricia Consentino, Joseph Jesseman, Katherine Dawson; and Cynthia Reinartz.

Minutes

December 28th Public

Commissioner Gallant made a motion to accept the minutes of December 28th to get them on the floor for discussion. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. Discussion: Commissioner Clark stated that on page 5 the sentence by Chief Ober, "They should have had this conversation in November not December 28th." Commissioner Clark wants it added that he brought the Chief's evaluation up at the November meeting. It was Commissioner Gallant's recommendation that we put that off until after the budget process. There was no disagreement amongst anybody at that meeting at that time. Commissioner Gallant asked if that was part of the record. Kathy stated she would have to listen to the tape to be sure. Kathy will check the record and record and if it's part of the record it will be added. Commissioner Clark stated he would like to have the opportunity to listen to the tape if need be. Commissioner Gallant withdrew his motion to accept the minutes as printed. They will review them at the next meeting. Commissioner Clark withdrew his second. The minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting.

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Correspondence

Kathy reported there is no correspondence. Commissioner Gallant asked if everyone got a copy of the engagement letter. Commissioner Clark stated he did not print it out.

Public Comment

Selectman Joe Jesseman commented that a couple weeks ago there was a big accident on I-93. The Fire Department responded to that and subsequently saved the guy's life. He would like to say, for the record, how impressed he is with the training and professionalism of the Department. He has been all sorts of places the last couple of weeks and has heard the same story several times. As a member of the District, he appreciates it and he appreciates them. Commissioner Auger stated he thinks he is right. We have a great bunch of guys and they do a great job. Commissioner Gallant stated he feels same way. He told everyone, if they have an opportunity, to stop in at the station and have the Chief show you the photographs he took. It displays the amount of training required. It is a credit to the guys and their ability. It is certainly a credit to the Chief. He was there throughout. One of the officers from Northfield, Officer Hutchinson, was very instrumental of finding that vehicle.

Selectman Jesseman stated that he was at the scene of a house fire on Church Street. He was one of the ones that phoned it in. He stood there before the fire department got there and watched that house burn. He knew that it was going to burn to the ground. He was very impressed. Within 10 minutes of the first truck getting on scene they had knocked that down. He had never actually watched the fire department in action. It is very impressive. Everybody has a job and they know what to do. The training is paying off.

Commissioner Clark asked Chief Ober if the InfoBlast he puts together is a public record or just for department. Chief Ober stated it is really meant for just department personnel.

Selectman Jesseman stated that if we only have to use the jaws once it is certainly worth it. Chief Ober stated right from the start it was an odd situation. The accident victim was the only 911 caller on that call. He then gave details of the call. Chief Ober stated a lot of people helped with this from the Fire Dispatchers to the Belknap County Dispatchers, State and Local Police, Tilton-Northfield Fire, Franklin Fire, Sanbornton Fire. It was Officer Hutchinson from Northfield Police Department and the Belknap County Sheriff Dispatcher who actually found him. At one point it was Officer Hutchinson's idea to run his siren. The Dispatcher, through the guy's cell phone, was able to hear him. She was able to tell Officer Hutchinson that he must be right there because she could hear his siren in the background through the phone. He stopped. They got out on foot and were able to find him.

Selectman Jesseman stated that the Fire Department costs a lot of money but it's for things like this and that house fire that make it all worth while.

Selectperson Pat Consentino spoke. Often as Commissioners you say they are trained to do what they do. She was at that fire. She saw what went on. There was a level of compassion and care and professionalism that you can't teach that was there. The victim of the fire was emotionally incapable of making rational decisions or talking complete sentences. Many people prior to the Chief spoke with her and tried to get her to calm down but couldn't. The Chief's level of compassion and professionalism got her to focus and got some answers. The movement, it was absolutely incredible to witness. To see that move forward, in a beautiful direction in which we could then step in and allow care to happen. That you cannot train for. That doesn't happen. You either have it or you don't. She gets taken back when people say that is their job. Yes, it is. When you have somebody that you see in that capacity goes above and beyond what they are trained to do and has that innate ability to care and be compassionate. That is in itself a gem.

Selectperson Sandy Plessner stated she is here tonight partly because of some very ugly rumors going around. We don't often say what we really think about a situation until it becomes an ugly situation. She doesn't want that to happen. She understands that it is about a year. His probation is about up.

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They are going to be doing their thoughts and talking about evaluations. She has known Brad since he was hired by the District. She has worked with him for many years. Even though he does not live here, it does not mean he doesn't care about our community. He worked very hard. He is very compassionate with people. He will go the extra mile. He still, at the same point, would insist that these are the fire regulations and you will follow them. He would work with people to make where it would work for them. She has never, in her life, had an individual as well rounded as he is and as compassionate as he is. He is a very honorable person. She would like to think that she is giving everybody the benefit of the doubt and there is no truth to the rumors.

Commissioner Auger asked about the ugly rumors. He has not heard any. He asked what some of the ones are. Selectperson Plessner replied the fact that he wasn't necessarily the person they wanted to begin with. He did go through the process and was hired. He was the person chosen to be best for the job. His year review is coming up and there are things you are insisting upon that may or may not make him want to stay around. She is giving them the benefit of doubt because she knows what rumors are. She also thinks it is a good thing sometimes that if something works and works well we should tell you it works well. She agrees with Pat that they are trained and trained well. It takes more than training to make good Chief, a good fireman and a good EMT. They have to have that desire, that love for their community and that love for what they are doing. She wants to go on record as saying she thinks we have a superb Fire District and would hate to see it change, to go downhill. Cindy Reinartz seconded that.

Commissioner Gallant stated he appreciated them saying that. They don't often have people stop to tell us that. They only tell us when things aren't going right. He appreciates them saying that because it is on the positive side and they don't very often hear that.

Treasurer's Report

Roland gave the Treasurer's Report.

The checkbook balances are as of December 31st. These are the numbers to be published in the annual report. The Operating Account, which will now go into an unreserved fund balance, increased \$74,328 from 2010. The Apparatus & Equipment Fund increased \$52,724 from the prior year. Commissioner Gallant stated the only way the Operating Account increases is that we took in more money than we spent. We under spent out budget by \$70,000. Discussion ensued.

Account Balances as of December 31, 2011

1000 Apparatus & Equipment Replacement Fund	\$542,442.87
1002 Debit Card Account	\$2,859.44
1003 Operating Budget Account	\$336,281.16
1004 Payroll Account	\$500.00
1005 Land & Building Fund	<u>\$217,307.83</u>
Total	<u>\$1,099,391.30</u>

The next page is the account balances as of today. When he was coming in, Tim Pearson told him that he had sent Tilton's payment of \$82,000. We need to add another \$82,000 to the Operating Account.

Account Balances as of January 18th

1000 Apparatus & Equipment Replacement Fund	\$541,415.31
1002 Debit Card Account	\$4,855.76
1003 Operating Budget Account	\$230,287.98
1004 Payroll Account	\$500.00
1005 Land & Building Fund	<u>\$217,307.83</u>
Total	<u>\$994,366.88</u>

Roland stated that the letters have been sent to the towns requesting monthly payments. The amounts requested were based on last year's revenues that that paid us. We did not have to use our line of credit at the bank.

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The Balance Sheet was discussed.

Fire Prevention Report

Chief Ober reported Captain Joubert was in class all week. He did not have time to prepare his report. He will catch up in February.

Chief's Report

Chief Ober apologized for not getting his report out prior to tonight. Time got away from him. The year end report was reviewed. We ended with 1,523 incidents. Our activity is pretty even across the board.

Commissioner Auger asked a couple questions on incident types. He wanted to know what public service is. Chief Ober explained that it is for situations like when we go to the Pines Community Center for spray day, Tanger Outlet for fire prevention, public education. Commissioner Auger asked about #571. Chief Ober stated that is when we are a cover truck.

Commissioner Clark asked about total dollar loss. He wanted to know if that is homes and autos. Chief Ober stated this is just a guess. One of goals for 2012 is on the occupancy record in FireHouse we can have dollar value already in there. When we enter in a dollar loss we can actually show if there was a savings. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Gallant stated it is interesting that the total number of calls is 1,523 and if you look at Account 321 straight EMS calls are 849 out of 1,523. That tells you we are in the EMS business. It would be interesting to know of the 849 how many were transports. Chief Ober stated he believes there is a report they can run that will provide that information. Commissioner Gallant stated that if that information is available he would like to know what it is. That information should be available because the questions may or may not come up. The number of incidents that we respond to has become a real hot topic that always surrounds the annual meeting. The more information we have relative to that, the better we look. You really need that information in order to plan. All this information proves that we are becoming good managers.

Commissioner Clark stated the argument he has been hearing on the street is people are saying lets get rid of the ambulance service and use an outside service to do that. It doesn't make sense. We pay for our apparatus and equipment with that money.

Chief Ober reported New Hampshire Veteran's home has instituted a new policy regarding falls and lifts. Their decision tree pretty much mimics ours.

Chief Ober touched on the Dhart incident. We usually have the helicopter go to the hospital and we meet them there. This particular case on the interstate we don't do very often. When we have a long extrication process, it is very much encouraged to have them meet us at the scene. They were able to help us on the scene medically. We closed the interstate at exit 20 so they were able to get off and get back on at 19. We did have one person try to get around the State Police barricade. Two people got arrested.

Chief Ober stated they had heard about the Church Street fire.

Chief Ober stated we had a minor fire damage but huge dollar loss at the Alogonquin Hydropower Dam Christmas Day. That was an interesting midday fire.

The Facility committee has finished their report. They have a presentation and they would like to come in at the February Commissioners Meeting to present that if it is okay with the Commissioners. It was agreed that they would come in.

Chief Ober reported on IT network support. He decided to go with Mainstay out of Laconia. They did a free audit. They gave us a very good report with simple fixes for some issues, a good plan to move forward and a proposal for regular everyday maintenance issues. He had recently received a lot of complaints from the staff. We are having delay problems with data entry. Brian Dumka did well for us. He reached his plateau of knowledge. With a couple of fairly easy fixes, the server doesn't have

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enough ram. The second thing is the switch isn't big enough to handle the data going through. It's bottle necking. Those two things alone will speed up operation. Chief Ober made a decision. Brian will be our in-house computer guru. He is going to use Mainstay for our IT support. Procedures are going to be changed. It is going to cost a little more money. He will work within the budget. He didn't add any more into the budget. It is too late for that this year. We are not going to do a full service contract. We are going to do about a 40 hour of service throughout 2012. Commissioner Clark asked if the guys do overtime to catch up on paperwork. Chief Ober replied no.

Chief Ober reported the ladder truck is out of service. Gary Bouchet has looked at that electrical system as it has an electrical problem. He is not recommending we fix it as it is such a large cost to fix it. He will talk to him to get all the details. It's not charging enough to use the radio. Discussion ensued.

New Business

COMSTAR

Chief Ober stated every year COMSTAR sends out an annual reminder to look at our rates for the coming year. He is recommending they stay with the current rates and look at it again next year. Discussion ensued.

COMSTAR is recommending we tweak our policy on residential billing. Chief Ober read the email we received from Dannisa Taveras regarding residents receiving payment from their insurance company not paying their bill. Discussion ensued. The Commissioners requested Chief Ober get more input from COMSTAR on how much of a problem they feel this is.

Old Business

2012 Meeting Locations

Chief Ober stated in June 2011 they had met three months in Northfield then three months in Tilton. Commissioner Gallant stated it makes no difference to him. The only people we have ever seen in the foreseeable past are Tilton people. He doesn't care if we go to Northfield or not. He doesn't feel we have accomplished anything by doing that. No one has come. Commissioner Auger stated we did have one there. Chief Ober stated that was when we were talking about Dispatch. Commissioner Clark feels we should continue to do it as we are both partners. We should continue flip back and forth so we are doing our part to keep the channels open. Discussion ensued. It was decided that Chief Ober will check with Winnisquam School District to see if one of the schools has a place we can use for our meetings. The meeting night is to remain Wednesday.

Warrant Articles

Chief Ober read the email received from Shelley at DRA pertaining to Article 7. *This article is perfect; it creates the fund, adds the money and names agents all in one. Good job.*

Chief Ober stated the only changes since they last saw this is we added an article for moderator as his term is up. Number 8 is different. Commissioner Gallant suggested that we lump all of the expenditures out of the Apparatus & Equipment Fund into one warrant article except for the ladder truck. The cost of the generator is included in that article.

Commissioner Gallant stated they should discuss Article 7. **Article 7:** *To see if the District will vote in accordance with RSA 31:19-a to create an expendable trust fund for health insurance deductible reimbursements. Furthermore, to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,500 from the unexpended fund balance towards this fund and appoint the Commissioners as agents to expend from the fund.* He explained they want to establish a trust fund that will have a balance of \$5,500 in it which this warrant article gives us the authority to do. It also gives us the authority to establish it and expend it for the purpose of health insurance deductibles. In order to get that fund balance there you either have to raise the money again or take it out of the unexpended fund balance. The reason it should come out of the unexpended fund balance is because we have already raised and appropriated that money once. We don't want to hit the taxpayers for it again a second time so we are taking it out of where it went and

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putting it up in a trust fund. That is what the warrant article is about. We are going to have \$5,500 in there on day one in that expendable trust fund. As Commissioners, no where have we established what a prudent amount is to have in there because we don't have a good indicator. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Gallant stated that if the Commission wants to be proactive and expand the use of the Apparatus & Equipment Fund in any way that wording needs to be done at least one year prior to when you want to do it. He recommends doing the warrant article this year. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Clark wants to wait to do it. There was no comment from Commissioner Auger.

Commissioner Clark asked if the elected officials have been told what that the amount of their salary has changed. Discussion ensued. It was decided Commissioner Clark will let them know what their salary will be.

Chief Ober presented a warrant article for the UST MOU that the School District will be presenting at their level. It has been reviewed by the attorney. They are recommending that each individual agency add this to their warrant to ratify the agreement. Discussion ensued about the MOU and changes made. Chief Ober stated he personally sees no problem with the MOU. They are meeting on it tomorrow morning. He asked for direction from the Board. He wanted to know if this new revised method of setting up the fund threw up any red flags. All three Commissioners agreed that there are no red flags.

Commissioner Gallant stated he has no problem with any of the warrant articles. Commissioner Auger stated he is okay with the warrant articles. Commissioner Gallant made a motion that the warrant articles as presented at the meeting on January 18th Warrant Articles 1 through 13 be approved as presented. Commissioner Auger seconded the motion. Discussion: Commissioner Auger asked about the fuel tank. Commissioner Gallant stated that has not been included. Commissioner Clark asked if the warrant goes to the Budget Committee. Chief Ober stated yes, they look at the money articles. Commissioner Gallant stated they will look at Warrant 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Chief Ober stated all of these will go to DRA for final review. Commissioner Clark wanted to know if any of the amounts had changed since their last meeting. Chief Ober stated only Warrant Article 8 changed money wise as they included three warrant articles in that. Only the wording changed in Warrant Article 7. There being no further discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Chief Ober stated he will now print off a packet for them now that everything has been completed. Commissioner Gallant stated the only thing that will change is if there are petitioned articles to be included. Chief Ober stated the budget can change up until the public hearing and then it cannot change again.

Non-Public Session

Commissioner Gallant made a motion to go into non-public Session per RSA 91-A:3, II(a) to discuss personnel issues at 7:56 P.M. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. There being no discussion, roll call vote was taken: Commissioner Paul Auger, yes; Commissioner Pat Clark, yes; Commissioner Tom Gallant, yes. Motion passed unanimously.

At 7:57 P.M. they have gone out of public session.

There being no further items to come before them in non-public session Commissioner Gallant made a motion to go out of non-public session at 8:05 P.M. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. There being no discussion, roll call vote was taken: Commissioner Paul Auger, yes; Commissioner Pat Clark, yes; Commissioner Tom Gallant, yes. Motion passed unanimously.

At 8:05 P.M. they are back in public session.

Other Business

Commissioner Clark requested to be out by 8:15 P.M. Commissioner Gallant asked what they were going to do to accommodate Brad. Commissioner Clark has the problem with it. Commissioner Clark stated they can talk a little bit more about it tonight, set up a meeting for tomorrow. He doesn't care

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when we meet. He will be glad to do it. There are some issues on the table that are rubbing people in bad way and they need to clear the air on that. Overall, he would suspect that everybody is fairly pleased with Brad's performance. He doesn't want to sugarcoat it. There is ample room for some feedback where improvement might be needed. That is something that should be out on the table as well. It gets down to the big issue which is going to be residency. That is the elephant in the closet they have been dancing around for a long time. He found out last night that there is a warrant article being distributed by Katherine Dawson to get signatures to allow Brad to work in the Fire District without having to move. Chief Ober stated he has heard some rumblings about it. He believes it to be a policy issue. Commissioner Gallant stated a residency requirement is illegal. It has been proven to be illegal. Commissioner Clark stated he talked with Paul Sanderson about that today and he says it is not. It has been held up in NH Supreme Court and US Supreme Court. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Gallant said you can say you must be within 20 minute response, a 25 minute response. You cannot say you need to live here.

Chief Ober stated a lot of issues are being clouded into one. A performance evaluation should not be tied to where he lives. He either performs well for them or he hasn't performed well for them. He does have some feedback on the residency requirement. He will ask the Board to forgive the requirement. He will give them some documents when they get to it. His performance evaluation on how he is performing as Fire Chief needs to be dealt with in that snapshot. It is really two different issues.

Commissioner Clark stated when he looks at what Brad calls performance review he looks at it as probationary review. Part of the terms of the understanding of having you on board was moving into the District. Chief Ober stated they have gone by his probationary period. He is off probation. Chief Ober state he needs closure on this. He needs direction from the Board on where the Department needs to go. He can't get that direction after he has made decisions and we come in after things have been put in motion and at the last minute. He can't manage that way. It is counter productive. It is not clear. It is not consistent. That's the part he is struggling with as a manager coming back from the Board.

Commissioner Clark stated the part he wanted to be clear about is that his understanding is that he does have a probationary period and one of the key points that was on the table for that was residency. If it took longer, if they needed to extend it six months to allow him time try to figure that out. That is something they would be willing to do. He could interpret that to being that they put off giving you final approval until that is taken care of. His feeling is that there is value to have Brad within the District or a certain radius.

Chief Ober stated he cannot afford to move. He cannot afford a \$60,000 loss. He presented a packet from a realtor. He had an analysis done by Mike Gagne. He works for Bean Group. He had a conversation with him today and asked him if there had been any change in his opinion. He told him that he would not change data from August. He indicated in the real estate world that we are at the bottom. It will start to go back up eventually. He cannot predict when that will be. Chief Ober told them he cannot afford to move. He cannot take a 60ish thousand dollar hit. If that is the big elephant on the table, he can't do it.

Commissioner Gallant stated that if that is going to be a condition of his employment he might as well start looking for a job tomorrow because he cannot afford to that a \$60,000 hit. He stated he would like to know what could have been accomplished had Brad been living here the last six months that has not been accomplished. He would dare say nothing. He has not seen anyone in his tenure here other than Harold Harbour who has been as active in the community, both from the School District all the way to the two towns, than Brad has been in the past year. He doesn't remember when he could remember any of the other two fire chiefs they had show up at town meetings in both towns when it had nothing to do with him at all.

Commissioner Clark said in hindsight this is the kind of thing that could have been thought through before Brad accepted the job. Chief Ober stated they could have thought about what it was going to cost him to move here too. Hindsight is 20/20. Commissioner Clark asked how to get there from here. Chief Ober stated he would like to put the way he has managed the Department on the table. He would

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like to say that he has proven that he can make it work. Commissioner Clark asked who covers when he is at home at night 25 miles away. Chief Ober replied the first on scene shift officer, Mike. They have systems in place. They have a chain of command in place for that to happen. The department will still operate. Is he coming back for the calls that he feels are of significant incident. Absolutely. He has proven that it has not had an effect on the outcome of the situation.

Discussion ensued about surrounding towns' requirements. Chief Ober asked if what he is doing is working? Are they satisfied with what he is doing? Commissioner Clark stated the fact of the matter is that they spent \$3,500 for going through LGC. They advertised and interviewed people. Part of that process was telling people what our requirements were. If we hadn't had that requirement, how many more qualified people would have stepped up to the plate to do that. Chief Ober asked if he wanted him to throw in his badge so he could find out. Commissioner Clark stated he wasn't saying that. There was discussion back and forth between Chief Ober and Commissioner Clark.

Commissioner Auger stated he knew this was going to happen. They should take a little time and meet again next week on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday and come up with a solution. He does remember one person stepped out because they would not move within the surrounding radius. Nothing against Brad. He thinks he does a great job and is very happy with what you do. There are a few things. This is one of the issues. There are a couple of other things that are minor.

Commissioner Gallant asked Commissioner Clark what he is saying. You are saying either move or you are done. He asked Commissioner Clark if Brad doesn't move what happens. Commissioner Clark stated they are going to have to think about it and come back. He just got this tonight. That's one of his issues. They get stuff and they don't have time to digest it. Chief Ober stated they only got that tonight because they are not clear on what they want to talk about. Discussion ensued.

Chief Ober asked if he should start looking for other employment. Commissioner Clark stated they are not done with the process. Chief Ober stated he needs to be able to plan for 2012.

Commissioner Clark had to leave now as he previously stated he had to leave by 8:15 P.M. He will be glad to meet Tuesday.

Chief Ober stated he cannot personally plan for 2012 with the motion Commissioner Clark got passed at the last meeting. He doesn't know where to plan his personal finances for 2012. He is up in air on that. He's got no direction.

Commissioner Auger stated they will meet again on Tuesday.

Adjournment

Commissioner Clark made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Auger seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Tobine
Administrative Assistant

Next Meeting Date, Time, Place: January 24, 2012 at 17:30. Meeting to be held at Tilton Town Hall, 257 Main Street, Tilton.