



# *Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS*

Michael W. Sitar Jr., Chief

Michael J. Robinson, Deputy Chief

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Moderator, Kent Finemore, opened the Tilton-Northfield Fire District meeting at 7:05pm at the Winnisquam Regional High School Cafetorium in Tilton, NH. Chief Sitar led the pledge of allegiance. Moderator asked for a moment of silence for David Tracey, Budget Committee member who passed away, and his family. The Budget Committee is looking for a new member to take David's place. Thank you to Mike Robinson for filling in as Chief until the new chief was hired. Commissioners present were Paul Auger, Chair, Pat Clark, and Les Dolecal. Budget Committee members present were Donny Stevens, Chair, Peter Fogg, Jane Alden, Tim Sattler, George Flanders (not present). Chief Michael Sitar, Treasurer Roland Seymour (not present), and Fire Clerk Katina Provencal were also present. Moderator went over moderator rules.

**Article 1:** To choose a Fire Commissioner for the ensuing three (3) years (Actual voting to be by official ballot on Tuesday, March 11, 2014 at the annual Town voting sessions in Tilton and Northfield at their respective polling places and times). Paul Auger won the election.

**Article 2:** To choose a Fire Commissioner for the ensuing year (Actual voting to be by official ballot on Tuesday, March 11, 2014 at the annual Town voting sessions in Tilton and Northfield at their respective polling places and times). Les Dolecal won the election.

**Article 3:** To choose a Moderator for the ensuing two (2) years (Actual voting to be by official ballot on Tuesday, March 11, 2014 at the annual Town voting sessions in Tilton and Northfield at their respective polling places and times). Kent Finemore won the election.

**Article 4:** To accept the reports of the Treasurer and the Fire Commissioners and pass any vote relating thereto. *This article is recommended by the Commissioners.*

Motion by Donny Steven, seconded by Pat Consentino. No questions. Vote taken. Vote passed.

**Article 5:** To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate Seventy-Eight Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$78,500.00) for the purpose of purchasing Fire, Rescue, EMS Equipment and Ambulance Charges, with said funds to be withdrawn from the Apparatus and Equipment Special Revenue Fund established under RSA 31:95-C (Adopted March 7, 2005). *This article is recommended by the Budget Committee and the Commissioners. Majority vote required.*

Motion by Donny Stevens, seconded by Jerry Davis. Kevin Waldron would like to know if all the money we collect goes into that fund and is it the gross amount or net amount (revenue after expenses). Mike Robinson says it is the gross amount. Waldron referenced the minutes from a Commissioners meeting on 01/11/2005 that states that the net amount was deposited into the account, after expenses. Waldron states that the fund is being used for things other than what it was created for. It is restricted from apparatus and equipment replacement materials. Medical supplies are operational costs and paying for them from this fund is a violation of RSA 31-95C and/or D. Waldron proposed an amendment to Article 5 to remove spending from this account.

**Revised Article 5:** To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate Thirty-Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$32,500.00) for the purpose of purchasing Fire, Rescue, and EMS Equipment with said funds to be withdrawn from the Apparatus Replacement and Equipment Fund established under RSA 31:95-c (adopted March 7, 2005). *Majority vote required.*

Motion by Kevin Waldron, seconded by Katherine Dawson. Scott Davis asks if in 2005 when the apparatus and equipment fund was established if the billing for Comstar was supposed to be taken out before the money was deposited into this fund. Waldron states that the intent was that the net revenue (collection amount minus a Comstar fee) is the amount that is supposed to be deposited. Davis asks what other fees come out of the gross to come out with the net amount. He wants to be sure that the newly proposed budget amount of \$32,500.00 will cover all the costs. Mike Robinson says it does include the Comstar charge. Davis wants to know how the Comstar charges would get paid. Robinson says all monies collected for the ambulance billing goes into that account directly. Then, from that, the 6.5% for Comstar and ambulance supplies are taken out. The hospital used to give us the supplies that we used, but now we have to buy and replenish those supplies ourselves at a budget of \$22,000 for this year. Lisa Swanscott wants to know how the \$78,500 is broken up. Robinson responded \$22,500 6.5% for Comstar, \$1,500 for paramedic intercepts, \$22,000 medical supplies used in transports, \$10,000 protective clothing, and the remaining \$20,000 includes things like hoses, flashlights, radios, traffic vests, batteries for the radios, and other miscellaneous items. David Court feels this is a business problem of net and gross. The net is the funds after the costs of doing business. Seems to be a technical problem of separating the charges and when you would pay them. This is more of a problem of how to solve this little problem, not the costs associated with it. Gretchen Wilder wants to know if this is an average of the consumables from the previous year. Commissioners say it is. Donny Stevens says that if the money is taken out of the fund, it would need to come out of somewhere else. Waldron says he is not disputing the amount spent on these products, just where it is coming from due to the language used when fund was created. Scott Davis wants to be sure that the 6.5% that is expected to be paid from this fund is in the budget to pay it if we reduce the budgeted number. Gretchen agrees that the money needs to come from somewhere and we can add it to the bottom line at this meeting. Robinson says we could also ask for the definition of the fund to be amended. The initial intent of this fund was to purchase equipment. If we move it to the bottom line, the money from the general fund would have to be raised by taxation to cover the cost. Where it is now, it would not. Scott asks if we have an outstanding bill for Comstar from 2013. Robinson says no, it's paid on a monthly basis. Davis says the money could be taken out before deposited into the fund. Pat Clark says they write a check out to Comstar for their services. We could amend Article 8, coming up for a building fund, and the costs of the ambulance and EMS services as well. Line 331 of \$24,000 and Line 741 of \$22,000. The purpose is to get money from the ambulance service so we don't have to raise and appropriate taxes. Lisa Swancott says it sounds like an accounting issue. Scott Davis says if the Commissioners have the ability to pay the Comstar bill out of ambulance charges before the deposit is ever made. He feels the \$22,000 should be taken out of this article. He would also like to know what makes up the \$32,500. Waldron says the \$32,500 in his amended article is made up of fire equipment \$30,000 in line 740 and rescue equipment \$2,500 in line 906.5. What was removed is EMS equipment \$22,000 and ambulance billing services for \$24,000. Joe Dimello says taking the \$22,600 was taken out for replacement medical supplies leaves a balance of \$55,900. He wanted to propose an amendment to this amended article. Kent says he cannot accept another amendment until this one has been voted one. Robinson wants clarification of the amount. Kent reread the amendment with the figure of \$32,500.00. Gretchen called the question, seconded by Donny Stevens. Vote taken. Vote passed. Vote taken on Amended Article 5. Vote taken. Vote passed.

**Article 6:** To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee recommended sum of One Million Seven Hundred One Thousand Seven Hundred Nine Dollars (\$1,701,709.00) for General District Operations. *This article is recommended by the Budget Committee and the Commissioners. Majority vote required.*

Motion by Gretchen Wilder, seconded by Jerry Davis. Joe Jesseman wants to know if we need to change that number to account for the change to Article 5. Gretchen Wilder comments that she approves the increase in the Commissioners stipend, but she does not approve of the Treasurer increase due to how the job has become easier with the use of technology and his lack of attendance at important meetings like this one. Joe Jesseman still would like to know if the budget needs to be adjusted due the amendment voted in on Article 5. Pat Clark says we need to add the \$46,000 to Article 6 and gave an Amendment to Article 6 to increase it by \$46,000 as an alternative to cover charges taken out of Article 5.

Revised Article 6: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee recommended sum of One Million Seven Hundred Forty Seven Thousand Seven Hundred Nine Dollars (\$1,747,709) for General District Operations.

Motion by Pat Clark, seconded by Donny Stevens. Joe Jesseman wants to know if the Budget Committee ever voted on this amount. Donny Stevens says they did vote on this amount, they voted on each item individually, just not in this line. Kevin Waldron says the original article is the budget committee recommended sum therefore an amendment with a different number is out of order. David Court is confused. He knows the difference between net and gross. He does not understand why we have to raise and appropriate it again. Tim Sattler says we are talking about the appropriateness of where the money comes from, not changing the number. The amount is already in to budget it's just a matter of where it is spent from. Lisa Swancott suggests putting the gross amount into the general operation fund, then take out Comstar and supplies and only deposit the net amount into the Apparatus fund. Joe Jesseman asked to call the question, seconded by Donny Stevens. Vote to call the question. Voice Vote taken. Vote passed.

Vote for amendment to Article 6. Voice vote taken. Vote failed.

Vote to call the question on original Article 6 by Scott Davis, seconded by Jerry Davis. Vote to call the question. Voice Vote taken. Vote passed.

Vote on original article 6. Voice vote taken. Vote passed.

**Article 7:** To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$30,000.00) for the Land and Building Capital Reserve Fund with said funds to be withdrawn from the Unexpended Fund Balance. *This article is recommended by the Budget Committee and the Commissioners. Majority vote required.*

Motion by Pat Consentino, seconded by Jerry Davis. Gretchen Wilder asked for current balance on this fund as it stands. Pat Clark says the most current audited amount Pat Clark 12/31/12 \$288,441.00. Should have \$25,000 estimated from 2013 remaining fund (clarified, Unexpended Fund Balance) for a balance of \$313,441. Lisa Swancott clarifies that is this the money left over from previous years. What is the money they typically like to keep in this fund before it is given back to the taxpayers. Clark says the DRA recommends \$283,000 (two months reserve supply). Waldron says the recommended surplus applies more for towns. The income to the district is guaranteed from the town of Tilton and town of Northfield. There would be no recommended amount. He would like to know how much of this surplus will be used to reduce the operational costs and given back to the town's people. Clark says they want to keep two months reserve in this fund and put \$30,000 in the Building Fund. Donny Stevens says the reason to keep money is so they don't have to borrow money for the first two months before the budget is voted on at the District Meeting. This money should continue to be left over year-to-year. David Court would like to know what the plan is for building. \$30,000 is not a lot of money. Is it going into a fund and just going to sit there. Paul Auger says they would like to have some money in this fund in case a grant comes up and there is an opportunity.

Waldron submitted an amendment to Article 7.

Revised Article 7: To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate \$30,000 for the Land and Building Fund and further raise and appropriate \$100,000 to reduce the operational costs of the district with said funds to be withdrawn from the Unexpended Fund Balance. Moderator Finemore does not accept the amendment because it changes the intent of this warrant article.

Scott Davis would like clarification. In the towns there is an unreserved fund balance and the money can be taken out to offset taxation to set the tax rate. Is this the same with the fire department? Waldron says the Commissioner have the authority to reduce taxes with the use of this money. It does no good sitting and being hoarded. David Court says the money is kept there so money does not need to be borrowed. He agrees that we need a new building down the road. What would it cost to borrow the money if we needed to? Do we really save money by having it sitting there? Donny Stevens says the extra money would be put back into the account for a building fund instead of being given back to the taxpayers. Katherine Dawson wants to know what this building is. Is there a plan? If there is, who created it? Pat Clark says they have looked at and studied it several times. The plan is to have one building by adding on to the Park Street Station or to find a new facility. They are looking to pull money together to have funds ready as a deposit on a new building if it comes along. He also wants to remind everyone that the Local Government Center suggests that two months be kept in the fund. Nancy Court wants to know if we vote against this article (don't want money moved into the building fund), where would it go to then? Kent Finemore says the money would stay in the fund. Vote to call the question by Joe Jesseman. Seconded by Jerry Davis. Voice Vote taken. Voice Vote passed.

Voice vote on Article 7. Moderator in doubt. Hand vote. In favor 21, Opposed 18. Article 7 passes.

Pat Clark would like to make a motion to restriction reconsideration of the vote, seconded by Scott Davis. Voice vote taken. Moderator in doubt. Hand vote, in favor 25. Opposed 8. Vote passed.

**Article 8:** To see if the District will vote to amend the purpose of the Apparatus Replacement and Equipment Fund to expenditures for the purposes of Apparatus and Equipment Replacement and construction costs of either a new facility or addition to a current facility. *This article is recommended by the Commissioners. Two-thirds (2/3) majority vote required.*

Motion by Pat Clark, seconded by Jerry Davis. Kevin Waldron would like to know when the public hearing was held to change the purpose of this fund. Clark says a public hearing was held on all the warrant articles. Donny Stevens adds that the public hearing was held on 02/10/14. Waldron stated the timelines for publication and timeframes and does not feel these timelines were met.

Pat Clark submitted an amendment to Article 8.

Revised Article 8: To see if the District will vote to amend the purpose of the Apparatus and Equipment Special Revenue Fund established under RSA 31:95-C (Adopted March 7, 2005) to expenditures for the purposes of Apparatus and Equipment Replacement and construction costs of either a new facility or addition to a current facility. *This article is recommended by the Commissioners. Two-thirds (2/3) majority vote required.*

Moderator asked if the intention of the article was changed. Pat Clark says no, the only change in the amendment is the reference to the RSA. Moderator will not accept the amendment because it changes the fund as it was heard at public hearing. Clark says it is the same fund, just clarifies the wording to be in accordance with the 2005.

Pat Consentino says there needs to be a public hearing to amend this article. She would like to table this article. Seconded by Katherine Dawson.

Pat Consentino wants to know when the amended article had a public hearing that was publicized (15 days prior to it) in a public place and in a newspaper. Clark says the public hearing was held on 02/10/14, posted at both town halls and published in the newspaper and the amendment does not change the intent. Joe Demillo asked if the article was posted in the town reports – he says it was in his. Scott Davis wanted to know if the amended article was presented to DRA before being brought to the public tonight. Les Dolecal said it was. Waldron reads the RSA stating that there must be a public hearing 15-30 days prior to change to purpose of a fund. The public hearing did not state that it wanted to change to purpose of the fund. Move to table. Seconded by Pat Consentino. Voice Vote taken. Vote passed.

**Article 9:** To see if the voters of the Tilton-Northfield Fire and EMS District will vote to have the Board of Commissioners initiate the process to have the annual dispatch fees from the Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid billed to the District rather than to each of the Towns of Tilton and Northfield individually. *Majority vote required. This article is advisory only.*

Motion by David Court, seconded by Jerry Davis. Joe Jesseman notes that the numbers show that the Tilton's portion of the bill will increase and wants to be sure this is correct. Pat Clark says the numbers on the paperwork are correct. This year is just to see what people would like to do. Pat Consentino is totally against this article. The Town of Tilton is a voting member of the mutual aid and can choose any dispatch company and does not have to use the same one as TNFD. Originally, they were billed by the county and saved \$4,000. If this money is now pooled, Tilton will pay \$14,000-\$15,000 more. Town of Tilton does not have to join the Lakes Region Mutual Aid. Town of Tilton is a voting member. Waldron said since this is advisory only, it is pointless anyway. Every bill is based on the split set up by the District. Every call is to the Tilton-Northfield, not call to Tilton or call to Northfield. Les Dolecal says this was put on the warrant because they had heard there was a concern on this issue. They are not in favor or against, just looking for public comment. Lisa Swancott says the dispatch calls are a Fire District charge, not a town charge. This is a fire service and should be a bill to the fire department. Scott Davis asks if this bill is for fire dispatch only. Mike Robinson says that is correct. Davis is confused by the formula. Pat Clark says the difference in numbers is due to a fixed cost changed by one – instead of 35 communities. Gretchen Wilder reminds us that we have less than fifty people here tonight from two towns. The fire district bill should go to the fire district and nowhere else. It is the same thing, in her eyes, as the formula for the school district. Donny Stevens explained how this was set up due to the two towns being from two different counties. Northfield was not part of Belknap County. We had to split, by their formula. Belknap County commissioners used to pay the bill and Tilton paid in their county tax. The county is no longer being billed for this. Northfield had always been getting the bill, but Tilton had to start getting a bill. He agrees that it should be sent back to the fire department. Gretchen Wilder says other communities are questioning this bill as well. Pat Clark reminds the public that they do not have authority over this. It is just something to discuss tonight to see if the public is interested in this being brought to the towns to see if they would do a warrant article on their town ballot. Lisa Swancott asks what happens if Northfield says yes and Tilton says no. Gretchen does not know if this is the right venue for this article. She suggests using the right, professional, legal advice so it's done right the first time. She is in favor of this article. Pat Consentino states for clarification, in order for this to go into effect it has to be passed at both town meetings and then at the fire district meeting. Scott Davis says he is in favor of this article – we are a district, and this bill is for the district. We stand together, we voted together. Waldron says he is in support of this article. Joe Jesseman asked to call the question, seconded by Lisa Swancott. Vote to call the question passed. Voice vote on Article 9 passes.

**Article 10:** To see if the District, in accordance with RSA 33:7, will vote to authorize the Fire Commissioners to borrow money in anticipation of taxes.

Motion by Joe Jesseman, seconded by Gretchen Wilder. Waldron asks that if we let you keep our unreserved fund balance from Article 8, does this not negate the need for borrowing money. Jim Vila says it's a safety valve that hopefully we won't need. Voice vote taken. Vote passed.

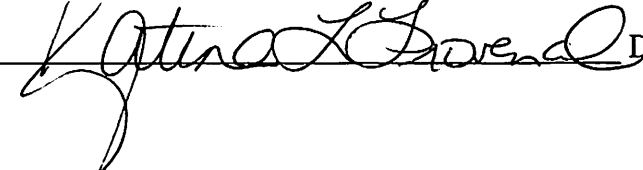
**Article 11:** To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

Jerry Davis let the audience know he has retired from the Tilton-Northfield Fire Department. There was a standing ovation for his years of service. Gretchen Wilder wanted to suggest that we double the current fee for the Moderator, seconded by Pat Consentino.

Motion to adjourn by Donny Stevens, seconded by Joe Demillo

District Meeting closed at 9:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Katina L. Provencal, Fire District Clerk

Signed:  Date: April 9, 2014