

Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS Commissioners' Meeting

Meeting Called By:	Commissioners	Date, Time:	10/19/2016 at 5:00 PM
Transcribed By:	Kathy Tobine	Place:	Winnisquam Regional High School, Cafetorium, 435 West Main Street, Tilton

Commissioner Auger called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM.

Present: Commissioners Paul Auger, Paul Blaisdell and Dennis Manning; Chief Michael W. Sitar, Jr., Deputy Chief Michael Robinson, Treasurer Roland Seymour and Administrative Assistant Kathy Tobine

Public Present: Joe Jesseman, Katherine Dawson, Pat Consentino, Jane Alden, Bob Cormier, Joyce Fullweiller, Sean Valovanie, Matt Gilman, Amanda Gilman, Laurel Elkin, Mike Elkin, Derik Ogg, Aiden O'Brien, Derek Farrell, Justin Kantar, Helen Hanks, Tim Joubert, Jon Powell

Treasurer's Report

Roland presented the Treasurer's Report. The bank accounts are in all balance as of September 30th.

The bank balances as of October 19th are:

Apparatus & Equipment Replacement Fund	\$647,511.33
Apparatus & Equipment Replacement Fund CD	411,598.18
Debit Card	4,422.58
Operating Budget Account	577,335.23
Payroll Account	500.00
Land & Building Fund	199,702.57
Savings Account	76,901.56

Roland reported that the Apparatus & Equipment Replacement Fund receipts as of October 18th are \$268,000. Last year at this time, we were at \$223,000. We are in line to collect what we did last year.

Roland commented that the Operating Budget report the Chief presented speaks for itself.

Chief Sitar presented his budget concerns.

- We are currently 80.8% through the calendar year and the total operating expenses are at 74.5%. We are well within the budget.
- Line 660 is a concern at this time at 129%; but overall, all other expenses are still within or below projections at this time.
- Line 110.06 Overtime will be over as well, but some costs will be recouped in savings on salaries and health insurance.

Commissioner Auger commented on the cost of vehicle maintenance. He questioned why the fire trucks are going to Lakes Region Fire Apparatus rather than Northeast Tire. Chief Sitar explained that his top priority is the safety of the men and citizens of the community. If the vehicle is repaired by a non-certified person and something goes wrong, it is on us. If it is repaired by a certified person and something goes wrong, it is on them. Discussion ensued.

Public Comment

Pat Consentino addressed the fact that we are losing paramedics and need to start thinking of the safety of the residents of Tilton and Northfield. She requested the Board consider going to a 42 hour work week. We need to keep good people here. Commissioner Auger commented that we cannot compete with Concord and Laconia. Maybe we can address that in another way. There are different options. He would like to weigh all the options before making a decision.

Matt Gilman addressed the Board. He left the Department to go start over. For the eight years he has been here they have been telling the Board they need to go to 42 hours. For eight years the Board has been telling them they cannot do that, they can't afford it, it's too much. Eleven people have left the Department since he started. That is almost 100% turnover since he started. It is unheard of for an officer to give up that position to go to the bottom of the totem pole. There is no support from the Board. They don't listen to the employees. We asked for health insurance and another shift. They threw us a bone and gave us family health insurance rather than give us another shift. The next year, after they gave us the health insurance, a member of the current Board stated that next year he was coming after our benefits. That was another of the reasons he left. There is no support from the Board. They don't listen to the employees. They don't do anything regarding what the employees have been asking for. They toss a little bone here and there. No one expects to be paid what Concord pays. We do expect a comparable schedule. When the Department went to 48 hours, you made them keep their base salary. It is no different than what they are asking now. It is a minimal increase in cost to the taxpayer for a vast increase in services provided. Commissioner Auger asked how many on the floor have been with the Department for 10 years or more. Matt replied that there are four.

Jon Powell commented that he was hired in 2004 on the 42 hour work week. When the Department and Commission decided to go to a 48 hour work week, he was told that he was going to 48 hours a week and that his hourly rate was being cut by \$1.13 an hour. He had six hours a week added to his shift for a total compensation of \$1.83. He wanted to get that clarification out there.

Joyce Fulweiller addressed the Board as a Northfield resident. She wants the best level of service available for her community and she is willing to pay for it. Her friends are willing to pay for it. She appreciates everything the Board does to keep an eye on their tax dollars. She believes they need to look at the level of service their constituents want to receive in their community. We have great service. She finds it very upsetting to lose people like this. She wants full time professional people in her fire department. She is 150% to do this to maintain the service. Commissioner Auger commented he wants to weigh all the options before they make a decision including privatizing the service.

Jane Alden commented that she has lived in Tilton for the last 16 years. For the last eight years, she has heard the same story. She has heard the same presentation being made and heard the same answer from the Board of Commissioners. As a citizen of this town, she is out of options. When she moved here 16 years ago she didn't have a heart condition. She does now. If she is having a heart attack tonight, she wants a paramedic there who can treat her now. She doesn't believe other people mind paying that kind of money. We can have the best facility in the world but if you don't have the staff for it. She commented about the man who was at Market Basket whom the paramedics saved his life with a piece of equipment you were willing to spend money on. Those men put their lives on the line. It is an insult that we are starting them with a salary we start our highway workers with. It is time to look it squarely in the face and do something about it now. Not weigh our options for the next eight year. She commented that she was at the meeting the night Commissioner Auger commented he was going after their benefits next. She thanked everybody in here that does what they can to save their

lives. The Chief has provided them with a plan to provide this kind of service without increasing his budget. That is an option.

Mike Elkin commented that he has never seen a private ambulance service put out a fire or respond to a multitude of incidents that the rest of the professionals here do that you seem to show absolutely no appreciation or gratitude for. It seems to be about the same that he sees toward the other taxpayers in the room that are talking to you.

Helen Hanks commented that a thriving retention rate is a sign of a healthy organization. From what she is hearing, we don't have a healthy Fire District. You have the opportunity to make a healthy fire department. Respecting your employees, hearing the voice of your staff and the safety of your community is your mission. Retention is of huge value in any business. Safety is key. Health is about safety. It's an embarrassment to the District and to the Staff, that they don't have a voice. She hopes that they take this information into account and help us come to excellent place and a good long term plan for the District.

Commissioner Manning commented that it is not unanimous. He is looking to move forward on this. He thanked Captain Valovanie for the presentation he presented and bringing this to their attention. He didn't realize the way the shift works that nobody gets a full weekend. He can understand how that affects families. He was in the military for years. They focused on morale, welfare and recreation. The family unit was always part of that mentality because if you have a broken home, you have a broken soldier. He is favor of it. They are still going to talk about it.

Helen Hanks spoke about privatization. She commented that they will likely find indirect costs that are far more expensive than investing in the staff that they have today.

Commissioner Blaisdell commented that he is not in favor of privatization. The Fire District has two revenue sources, the taxpayers and the revenue from the ambulance service. The last thing they want to do is remove one of the revenue sources. He is concerned about adding one employee. The unintended costs concern him. He has tried to determine if there are any unintended costs he can visualize. One of those costs is the cost of overtime. We compare ourselves with Franklin as they are a similar size community, similar size department with the similar number of calls. Franklin's overtime budget was \$187,800 for FY 16, which is July to June. Our cost for overtime last year was \$126,000. If you look at the cost of overtime per call, it is in the neighborhood of \$80.82 per year per call. He doesn't know if his analysis is correct or valid but that is one way he is trying to look at unintended costs. Chief Sitar commented that overtime is directly related to sick time, personal time, vacation time and training hours. By managing appropriately, he can keep it at the level we are at this year. The year after that he will have to reevaluate due to vacation time. Comparing overtime to calls doesn't equate to how you use it. Training overtime was discussed. Commissioner Blaisdell commented that if they can alleviate that unintentional cost in some way, he is all for it.

Matt Gilman commented that the cost of the overtime to cover the two vacancies alleviates that. Commissioner Blaisdell explained that he did not calculate that as the Chief assured him it would be a balance as we would no longer be paying the wages and benefits of those two employees.

Pat Consentino commented they had a similar situation in the police department a couple years ago. One of their biggest fears was how that would affect the overtime budget. They went to 12 hour shifts and it actually cut down on the overtime budget.

Mike Elkin commented that the full time pay is nowhere the \$70,000 to \$80,000 a year. Commissioner Blaisdell commented that is the total cost of employment including benefits.

Helen Hanks commented that you can balance out the cost of the overtime using salaries and benefits but you can't quantify if its 48 hours a week. You can't quantify staff burnout. You can't quantify taking away from their families even more because your vacancies are likely to increase. You can't quantify the quality of life you are asking your staff to work with. Appreciate your staff, acknowledge your staff. Recognize what you are asking of your staff to do each time someone walks away for a better opportunity and the culture you are creating in the Fire District by not looking at the issue of containment. As much as those are the things you would like at in a financial comparison, you can't compare what is happening to the human being doing the job. You have to look at all of the human human factors as well as dollars and cents.

Jon Powell asked if Commissioner Blaisdell spoke with Chief LaChapelle. His understanding of Franklin's call back policy is that the full timers are not restricted on call backs. When the pager goes off, they can go in. They are not restricted on call backs as we are. Their overtime budget is going to be much larger than ours.

Matt Gilman commented we can argue over \$125,000. In two hours we are going to talk about millions of dollars. That is going to affect his budget as a taxpayer far more than \$125,000 in overtime. He cares way more about the quality of people that come of the fire truck than the fire station they came out of. He would rather have good people that have been around for a long time than have a pretty building to look at when he drives down Main Street. This fire department provides a good service for a lean budget. It boggles his mind that we are arguing over \$80,000 over one position to keep people from leaving. He gave up a job he loves and started all over again because he couldn't believe it was still a discussion. He is emotionally invested in it and frustrated.

Pat Consentino asked the Board what the \$100,000 would mean on the tax rate. It will probably change her taxes \$5 to \$15. She would rather pay that so when she opens the door she knows a paramedic is going to be on the other side of it.

Joe Jesseman commented that he understands how it is to ask people for more money. He agonizes over it. As a resident and taxpayer, he realizes it is cheap money. It costs what it costs.

Pat Clark commented that all the people present know how he feels about this as he was on that side of the fence. He likes the firemen. He thinks they do a great job. He spoke on the cost of adding an additional firefighter and presented a chart from Londonderry on the fire department overtime.

Commissioner Blaisdell requested the firemen meet with him either individually or as a group to discuss this further. Sean Valovanie requested they keep it public so it is part of the minutes.

Derek Farrell commented that there are six employees who have applications in to Concord. Chief Sitar commented that if we can go to a 42 hour work week he can work with essentially the same budget next year that he has this year. The budget next year with be essentially the same as it is this and he can stop the problem. They can maintain the same level of service we have now which is less than what it was two months ago.

Commissioner Blaisdell asked Chief Sitar if he was looking for an answer tonight. Chief Sitar commented he was hoping for an answer tonight. This is critical.

Commissioner Auger commented that they will take this up again at the next meeting. Matt Gilman commented that this is what has been happening for eight years. This is the problem. We have been having this conversation for eight years and it goes nowhere. You have to stop doing this to us. It is killing the Department.

Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

Chief's Report

Chief Sitar presented the Fire Prevention Report with the Chief's report.

2. Fire Prevention Report for September 2016
 - For the Month of September, there were 38 Fire Prevention inspections in which 25.5 man hours were used.
3. Run Report for September 2016
 - Report is included in the handout
 - For the Month of September we had 125 incidents.
 - 87 of the incidents were EMS in nature and that equates to 70% of our total incident volume for the month.
4. Overlapping/simultaneous incidents for September 2016
 - Report is included in the handout
 - We had 18 overlapping/simultaneous incidents for the month.
 - Overlapping/simultaneous incidents accounted for 14.4% of all incidents for the month.
 - We received three mutual aid ambulance responses.
5. On Senior Safety Day, last Saturday, members of the Department visited 45 homes to do safety checks, change out smoke detectors and batteries.
6. We are having a promotional assessment center to replace the Kelly Lieutenant position vacated by Lt. Gilman. This is tentatively scheduled for 10/28/16.
7. We are in the process of evaluating candidates for our open positions. None are paramedics. We should be able to have conditional offers of employment out by the end of this week or the beginning of next at the latest.
8. The Exit Interview for Matt Gilman revealed the reasons he left were very similar to why Dan Leathers left. The hours and pay were not comparable to other departments in our area. Another reason was that Concord offered more stability. The things that Matt liked best about the Department were the other firefighters, the Department's progressive mentality and the experience it provided. When asked if he could change anything about the Department that would have enticed him to stay, he replied that the elected leadership showing more concern about items important to the employees.
9. Currently Working On:
 - Call Company recruitment.
 - Analytic analysis comparison between TNFD and Franklin, Belmont and Gilford Fire Departments. These departments were picked because of the similarities to TNFD, area covered, population, proximity and manning.
 - Preparing 2017 Budget.

Old Business

Using ICS for Public Funds

Kathy reported she had spoken with Heather Capraro at Franklin Savings Bank (FSB) today regarding

moving the District funds to ICS (the Insured Cash Sweep). ICS interest rates have dropped. FSB is willing to take on the cost of collateralization rather than move our funds to ICS so we do not suffer a drop in our interest rates. Kathy explained that currently our funds are only FDIC insured for \$250,000. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Manning made a motion for Franklin Savings Bank to collateralize our bank accounts with them. Commissioner Auger seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

TNPFF Executive Board

Sean Valovanie thanked the Board for meeting with them. He explained that Dan Leathers presented with Dr. Boss at the stemi review last night. There were four cases reviewed from last year and ours was one of them because of the presentation and how quickly the patient got to the Cath Lab. Chief Sitar did attend and it emphasized how important it is to have that level of service available. Discussion ensued about the stemi review. Sean reiterated that they are not looking for the world; they are just looking to be a little more competitive. They just need to get closer to the middle. Discussion ensued about the applicants.

Commissioner Blaisdell made a motion to accept Chief Sitar's proposal to add a fourth shift, to keep the yearly salary as it is, that we go to a 42 hour shift instead of a 48, that we hire no more than one person (new employee), that we shift the Kelly Day officer's responsibility to be the officer of the fourth shift, that we transfer Firefighter Smith's responsibilities to cover one of the three positions on the fourth shift, that we limit overtime as much as possible in order to keep the budget level funded and that we accept the professionalism that each of our firefighters presents to us as a community. Commissioner Manning seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. Commissioners Blaisdell, yea; Commissioner Manning, yea; Commissioner Auger, nay. Motion passed.

The Board thanked Sean Valovanie for his excellent presentation. Sean thanked the Board for listening.

Commissioner Auger made a motion to keep the 2017 budget essentially the same the 2016 budget. Discussion: Chief Sitar explained that his budget proposal for 2017 will be essentially the same as it was for 2016. Commissioner Blaisdell seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Blaisdell commented that he intends to meet with the Chief pertaining to the daily work requirements and activities of the firemen. The Chief had emailed a spreadsheet to the Board and he has many issues with it. He would like to discuss it at their next meeting to insure the Fire District is getting full benefit of the work shift of the firemen.

New Business

Commissioner Blaisdell commented on the proposal received from North American Equipment Fire Apparatus for the refurbishment of Engine 1. He would like to ensure that we get the most life out of the engine in deference to purchasing a new engine. The Chief had presented the Board with options for the refurbishment of Engine 1. A basic refurbishment is \$33,764 and then there are a series of options. He would like the maintenance addressed this year. Some of the options he thinks are important are: Options 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11 for a total cost of \$47,949. He would like the Chief to review this and determine what the life expectancy of these repairs would give the engine. Chief Sitar commented that he is maintaining it as if we are keeping it. Discussion ensued.

Deputy Robinson suggested getting Engine 1 closer to the 20 year mark. It is not feasible for a front line vehicle which becomes a second line vehicle to remain in service for 30 years. He believes 20 years

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is more the number. He doesn't want to see a lot of money invested in Engine 1. Is it possible to get another two years out of that as it is, then make it go away. The Chief wants the expensive option. In a discussion he and the Chief had, he asked if there was a fire truck in the \$500,000 range that would meet that need and survive the 20 years that we try to get. Would that make it more appealing? He gave several examples of several municipalities that have recently purchased vehicles in that price range. He would like to have that discussion before they decide to rebuild something and try to squeeze another five years out of a vehicle rather than keep it the way it is, maintain it, get two to three years out of it, then look at a somewhat lesser vehicle.

Discussion ensued about repairing Engine 1. Commissioner Blaisdell would like this addressed in next year's budget. Chief Sitar recommended they discuss this at their budget workshop on the 26th.

Minutes

September 21, 2016

Commissioner Manning made a motion to accept the minutes from the regular meeting and the public hearing of September 21st as written. Commissioner Blaisdell seconded the motion. Discussion: Commissioner Auger questioned the comment Dan Leathers made about responding to a to fire calls alone. Chief Sitar explained this happens frequently. There being no further discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Manifest

The manifest of October 18th was reviewed and signed.

Adjournment

Commissioner Auger made a motion to adjourn at 6:35 PM. Commissioner Manning seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Tobine
Administrative Assistant

Next Meeting Date, Time, Place: 10/26/16 at 5:30 PM. Meeting to be held at Tilton Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room, 257 Main Street, Tilton.