

Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS Commissioners' Monthly Meeting

Updated 2/1/07

Meeting called by:	Commissioners	Date, Time:	January 4, 2007 at 18:00 to 19:32
Note taker:	Janine Vary	Place:	Center Street Station

Attendees: Comm. Tom Gallant, Comm. Bob Watson, Chief Steve Carrier, Deputy Mike Robinson, Capt. Brad Ober, Fire Prev., Treasurer Roland Seymour and Clerk Janine Vary. Absent: Comm. Harold Harbour,

At 18:00 Comm. Gallant called meeting to order. First order of business review of previous of minutes of commissioners special meeting of December 19, 2006 which had been distributed. In third short paragraph, DRA reinstated – not instated. The gap between (not bet now) 3rd line of 3rd paragraph. Later in paragraph, 5th up from bottom. We will do whatever by virtue compromise (not in). Those were the only corrections. Comm. Watson motioned to accept minutes as corrected. Comm. Gallant seconded. Vote taken and minutes were accepted with corrections.

Treasurer's report. Roland reported that we don't have bank statements so we can't reconcile accounts. This is a preliminary report wants to get out an adjusted report next week. Tax revenue for both towns has been paid. \$1,303,992, difference being revenue sharing. Pg 2 the budgeted column is \$1,320,761. We've spent \$1,283,858.74 leaving a \$36902.26. The balance in the checkbook is \$183,021.46 but doesn't tie out with these reports. Tom commented. Tom needs some time to study this. Within a week we should have the finals. Looking at the App and Equip fund there are 12 deposits and 12 invoices. Again, need to work out the balancing of the bank balances. We did receive money from both towns and will not need to borrow. Tom said to give towns some breathing room before sending a new bill. Treasurer's report was accepted unanimously. Tom again asked Janine to email the expanded reports to the commissioners and budget committee.

Fire Prevention officer report: first page is normal monthly breakdown. Not much new development right now. Laconia Road has a new modular housing sales office being set up. Pizza Hut is the slowest project he has seen. Mid February to open. Slower on rental units. Tom said work at the Tilton School has been being done in a very professional manner. They have done things very well. Asked about Cross Mill Road project. Brad has checked with Joyce Fulweiler and she isn't sure what 's happening with them. Mobile gas station is closed and for sale. Tanks have had fuel removed. His second page is a breakdown of 2006. Shows inspections by type totaling 461 for the year. Chief commented on the shift coverage hours. 39 times Brad had to cover a shift, totaling 141 hours during his regular work schedule. We didn't have to pay OT to another when he worked. There were hours he had to work beyond his scheduled times and was paid OT. Chief had heard a comment why a person needs to work in fire prevention. These numbers validate them. Brad has a systematic approach now that a new employee can do. Apartment buildings are an issue, we are still trying to catch up to smoke detector inspections. Many have battery-operated smoke detectors that are being tampered with. Brad does need permission from the property owner to do the inspections. Tom asked how do we reach 80 to 90% of those. Brad is working on a data list that was left before he came and he is writing to the property owners and asking to do inspection. Has had some resistance. Up to Elm Street and Winter Street in Tilton. He'd like to get in there annually. Mike Robinson commented that our hazards are the apartment buildings. We go in and the smoke detectors are not in service and we are told it's the landlord's fault. Brad was just in Vine Street apartment house that had working smoke detectors and then we had a trashcan fire and the smoke detectors were not working at that time. Chief: we are doing inspections upon invitation. We aren't conducting regular, annual business inspections – however, we should be in order to protect the tax base and prevent a fire before it happens.

If we could get our guys on shift involved, then they can see the buildings from the inside and it would make them more informed. The Martin Grevier's house with the front porch hanging over was brought up. Tom wasn't sure if we had any authority to require them to repair. Brad does have a call in to him. It isn't occupied at this time. Rumor is that it is being renovated to more apartments. Brad would like to look at before work is done to be sure it is done correctly. Brad commented that when looking at the 461 inspections it doesn't show the research, a number of times to visit. These hotels once up, we'll be up there once a week to do inspections.

Old business

Building Committee: Comm. Gallant mentioned that Katherine Dawson is our self appointed liaison for the building committee. Chief hasn't heard anything from her. Tom asked what do we want to do with the TNFD building committee. Chief replied we really cannot do anything because we don't have the support. Tom doesn't feel they will build a police station because they won't get any grant money and we won't be able to build, so we won't get any grant money either. Tom and Chief don't see the reason for all the effort.

New engine: Tom reported we don't know anything at this point. A letter was sent before Christmas and we haven't received any communication from them to this point. Gretchen said she heard something that a rumor was going around that our fees were being waved. Mike commented we'll be up to paying the same fees that we were trying to avoid. Tom said that Ray Bushee mentioned that. Seeing that, it makes the truck more saleable but we will still be paying the penalty fees. Tom thinks that they may give us first option before selling it. Mike believes they'll be going up by \$30,000.

E4 status. Chief reported it is out of service. It is inside now. If we get a buyer for that we'll have to let a new buyer know about the repairs needed. Tom suggested to sit on it for another month or two. Its value may be no more than what Ken Partridge will give us for it.

Direct Deposit updated. Janine reported that first one went through well. Mike Seymour helped out a lot. Roland mentioned that we are only putting the net payroll checks in that account. Not retirement or taxes, etc. It is a self-equalizing account.

2007 draft budget. Budget committee is meeting again on the 8th. Chief asked Tom if he wanted to do a work session. Tom wants to do after he gets recommendation from the budget committee. Gretchen believes she will have recommendations hopefully, by the 8th. Chief asked about the 17th before the DRA training. Or Thursday the 18th. Commissioners agreed to have the work session on Jan. 17th starting at 4:00 before the DRA training. Tom said it will be a highlighted review and Bob will run it seeing he has been at the Budget Committee meetings.

Janine asked Commissioners what date they thought would be the earliest for the District Meeting. Comm. Gallant stated that at this point he felt District meeting should be as planned and will be held on Monday, March 5, 2007 at 7:00pm.

New business

Ambulance billing. Chief stated that possibly we should be more aggressive in pursuing ambulance billing. Our current policy is to not charge residents of the communities. This is not in line with what other communities do. He feels we are missing a lot of opportunities for collections by using Comstar. We have requested them to do more follow up and he doesn't feel we get a good return on our requests. We get a 58% to 60% collection rate, which is not great. One of the things to address this is that we, in house, could do a better job at getting the information from the patient.

However, this is very time consuming. Twin Rivers Ambulance Service is being sold and this leaves a person out of a job. Cindy Beaulieu did all their billing and is now out of job. He has talked with her and had conversations about software, how would she do our collections if she was away on vacation. It sounds pretty good. Right now we pay 6% on every bill collected. His thought if someone locally did the billing we could have a better return record. It was a policy decision to not charge residents personally and he is not sure if that should be looked at again. Especially in light of comments made at the special district meeting and wanting to pay cash for vehicles. Tom: has been frustrated about the whole Comstar issue. They have met with us and are slick talkers. He knows they are servicing most of the services in the area. They do a good job at what they do, but when you look at the write offs, you wonder why. No one here has time to sit down and do that. He is hesitant to get away from Comstar. He knows it is a large organization doing this. Maybe look at possibilities for using her for things they don't touch. Comstar won't pursue a call not returned. Comm. Gallant thinks we should revisit the idea of charging residents. He would like her to make us a proposal. Comm. Watson agreed. Tom said we know that for every dollar we get 50 to 58 cents. The write off rate is less now than it was in the past. Roland said we need to revisit our collection requirements. Tom said we have done that. They are a billing agency and work in a certain way.

Discussion continued: It is a major source of revenue. If we wrote off \$200,000, how much is it from Tilton or Northfield? Mike did a survey 12 or 15 years ago and it was determined 65% Tilton. Chief will call her again and he'll get the percentages figured out for write offs that are Tilton/Northfield residents. If Cindy could collect \$90,000 and was paid \$30,000, we are still ahead.

Community forums. Chief felt that we could get all the players together from both communities we could determine what is the next step as to finding out what the issues are. The guys love the job they are doing and are putting out a quality product. Chief thought to get town administrators, boards and commissioners together to just talk. It was suggested to have a mediator conduct that type of session. Scott Weeden agreed to offer us the services of a mediator free of charge. He feels it is a tool that will possibly clear the air, get some information out that the public doesn't know to have all the systems work together. She thinks Saturday or Sunday would be best day to do this and it would be an all day event. Things to work on for the future with a working plan with where you want to go and how to get there. Roland asked for more info. Gerri King is a counselor to mediate a meeting between the fire dept and the two towns and discuss issues that affect us negatively and help us improve our relations in the community. Tom feels it is a good idea. Who would be included? Select people, town administrators, budget committees. She thought if we had a large number show up it wasn't too bad because big groups break down into smaller groups. Tom thinks it is beneficial. Selectmen, budget committees, community leaders from Tilton and Northfield. What do they foresee as a product in the end. Mike the only two people from the public are Gretchen and Kevin Waldron. Gretchen stated if we put it out as a positive it would be responded to in a positive way. Gretchen feels we are out of step and communication. Mike knows that it is tough on morale. We have worked hard and go to a meeting and hear the comments made. It extends to everybody in the department. Nothing has ever been done underhandedly and no decision was made that wasn't for the betterment of the community. We have not been liars as other communities. Chief said we still love what we do and will continue to do it no matter what the resources are. Tom doesn't see anything but positive reaction to this. Bob agrees. Chief will contact Ms. King to meet in February on a Saturday sometime.

Year-end totals: Chief had a hand out showing the number of calls in various communities. Chief commented that they are from LRMFAA. Tom noted that there are 40 communities and we are third busiest community. 7.51% Plymouth runs EMS for 5 communities. 1500 calls. We are actually down from last year's numbers. The floods of 05 bumped our numbers up and we are down to where we were the year before. Tom would like to see the numbers from 05 also. Taking our number as a percentage of the whole and look at over a couple of years.

Tom asked for public comment. Gretchen asked about the fire prevention trailer that goes out and if it is used in our community. When it goes to outside community, is there a fee? The charge is \$150.00 for outside communities. Kevin Waldron asked about the money for the sale of E3. Comm. Gallant stated that it is in the general fund.

Per RSA 91:a23c. Tom motioned to go into nonpublic session at 7:09. Comm. Watson seconded. Members of the public left the meeting room.

Comm. Gallant motioned to seal previous nonpublic meeting until certain issues are resolved. Comm. Watson seconded.

Comm. Gallant motioned to pay bills. Comm. Watson seconded.

Comm. Gallant motioned to adjourn at 19:32. Comm. Watson seconded to adjourn meeting.

Next Meeting Date, Time, Place:	February 1, 2007 at 18:00 at Center Street Station
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