

# Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS Commissioners' Meeting

Meeting called by:	Commissioners	Date, Time:	Feb. 1, 2007 at 18:02 to 19:44
Note taker:	Janine Vary	Place:	Center Street Station

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

At 6:02 Comm. Gallant called meeting to order. Those present named above.

First order is review of minutes. Tom motioned to look at minutes for the Dec. 7, 2006 meeting, which have recently been distributed. Bob motioned to review the minutes and Tom seconded. No discussion. Tom motioned to accept as printed. Bob seconded. Minutes for Dec. 7, 2006 meeting accepted unanimously. Next, Jan. 4, 2007 minutes to be reviewed. Tom motioned to review the minutes and Bob seconded. Discussion. Tom asked about issue regarding the "billing" topic, Tom asked that we put on agenda for March under old business. No more discussion. Tom motioned to accept minutes as printed and Bob seconded. Minutes for Jan. 4, 2007 accepted unanimously. Review and disposition of non-public session minutes held on Jan 4, 2007. These are sealed minutes. Tom motioned to accept as printed. Bob seconded. Non-public session minutes for Jan 4, 2007 were accepted unanimously and remain sealed because they deal with personnel matters. Review of Jan. 26, 2007, special meeting non-public session held. Tom motioned to accept as written and Bob seconded. Voted to accept minutes from Jan. 26, 2007, special meeting non-public session unanimously and these are not sealed. Motion had been made in ensuing meeting on Jan. 26, 2007 to unseal these minutes. Review of Jan. 26, 2007 public meeting. Bob motioned to accept as written, Tom seconded. Discussion. On page 2 in paragraph where Comm. Gallant mentioned that Atty. Chandler would be rendering a position on an issue that was given by the budget committee. He wanted to clarify that this request was a mutual request by both commissioners and budget committee. Tom motioned to accept as written as corrected and Bob seconded. Minutes accepted unanimously as corrected. Next, review of nonpublic session held on Jan. 30, 2007. Tom motioned to review these minutes and Bob seconded. These minutes are unsealed. No discussion. Minutes of nonpublic session were approved unanimously and are not sealed. Review of Jan. 30, 2007 special public meeting. Tom motioned to accept as printed Bob seconded. No discussion. Minutes from Jan. 30, 2007 special public meeting unanimously accepted. Comm. Gallant stated that all minutes have been accepted with the one correction made for the Jan. 26, 2007 public meeting unanimously.

All these minutes will be posted on the website. Review of Treasurer's report. Roland handed out copies of bills paid to date and amount in the bank accounts. Operating account reflects the checks to be signed tonight. Letters have just been sent to the towns regarding their monthly funding so we are waiting on their response. Check to Water District can be held back until money received from towns. Roland comment on the line for bank charges being \$25,000. The commissioners are aware what that is. Apparatus and Equipment fund has a \$72,573.29 balance. We can add another \$16,000 deposited on 1/31/07 which Roland just received the deposit slip in the mail today so that would increase the balance in the Apparatus and Equipment fund to approximately \$88,600. These reports basically show what we have right now, can't reflect budgeted amounts until next annual meeting. Janine mentioned that the FF Grant money for new SCBA's and compressor in the amount of \$157,999 was deposited in the operating account on January 24<sup>th</sup>. This money has to be spent within 30 days and we do have all the invoices. The invoices total \$169,473.00. So there are additional bills, not listed on tonight's manifest that will need to be approved by commissioners next week. Our portion of the expenses for the grant will be \$11,474.00 and Chief has indicated that amount will have to come from the Apparatus and Equipment fund seeing these are capital equipment purchases. Also, being so early in the month, Janine is aware that there are a few other regular monthly bills that have not been received yet that will need to be paid by next week. She will have an updated financial report for the commissioners by next week. Tom motioned to accept the treasurers report as presented and asked Janine to include a statement in the minutes relative to the grant and means by which it will be expended. Bob seconded. Treasurer's report accepted unanimously.

Fire Prevention report by Capt. Ober: Pizza Hut scheduled to open 2/8/07. Tanger Outlet Mall, Niki and Aerepostle have submitted plans for approval. No new changes under new development other than site plan for 17,000 sq ft in Tanger Office parking lot. Not sure what store. Couple of projects have stalled but things are going along pretty well. Tom mentioned the lot across from 99 and Wendy's, La Fleur will be putting in a Ruby Tuesdays. They are leasing the land. Brad continued that 2 weeks ago a NHCTC student started an internship here. He is here every Tuesday. Working out pretty well. Did a basic safety training at Home Depot for managers. The alarm system ordinance that the commissioners have as a warrant Brad is trying to get in place ahead of the curve and hopefully will deter the lack of maintenance of those systems. Tom commented he is glad to see we are being proactive before the situations happen. Brad researched other towns that had this program in place. Not really a problem now.

Riverfront Clinic is open and running. They are talking with Jim for renting more space but parking is an issue. Jim is talking with restaurants, which is another one of his goals. Tom asked about Tilton School. Brad said they are right on schedule. Hasn't heard anything of Walgreen's. Status of sprinkler system at Town Line Plaza is back in service yesterday at 3:00pm.

Heating system froze in old Ben Franklin and this posed a fire hazard. Posted a fire watch Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Had them posted only while buildings were occupied. Tom motioned to accept the fire activity log and report as submitted to commissioners and discussed. Bob seconded. Voted and accepted unanimously. Tom complimented Brad on a good job and good report.

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### Old Business

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Comm. Gallant reported we are at an impasse with building committee for Tilton PD. PD was looking at a piece of land but fell through. Looking at other locations. Met again yesterday and looking at 3 different options headed up by 3 different people. We'll come to body in Tilton and let them know what we are doing. The design of the building. It was a unanimous consensus of the board that they do not want to look at a PD only but do want a safety complex. Tom not sure how we will do that. The PD Committee is writing into the budget another \$2000 est. cost for a special town meeting later in the year. Come up with a firm design and land and present at that town meeting. They would like Chief, Owen, Tom and engineer come up with an optimal design. Won't cost any more for his services that have already been met by Tilton. Pursue whole avenue of grants. Need to go to townspeople with actual monies that will be available. Whatever lot it goes on will cost \$1 million. Tom feels \$160 a sq foot to put the building up. \$3 to \$3.5 mil dollars to put a public safety complex. \$2.5 to put up just a PD. The building committees for fire dept and PD should be merged. Beginning of merger would be first meeting and put everything out on the table. Either Tuesday or Friday of next week are possibilities in the mornings. Initial meeting will be Chief, Tom, Owen and the architect & engineer. Owen will call Chief.

Fire engine issue: relative to truck that is sitting in Vermont. We have been presented with an agreement from E One which we had reviewed by counsel and had amendments made to that agreement made by counsel. In that agreement limits the legal exposures of TNFD and sets a \$25,000 cap on liquid damages if truck not taken in March by virtue of the body. Will reach \$18,000 plus by end of march. This eliminates the possibility of a prolonged legal law suit. If truck isn't taken, E One won't have any other recourse. They will try to sell the truck and whatever loss they take and the accruing interest would be our cost. Capping exposure at \$25,000 has been discussed in nonpublic and is resolved that it is best interest of district. We have budgeted an amount to limit this exposure. Tom motioned that we, at the counsel of the legal counsel, enter into the agreement with E One. Seconded by Bob. No more discussion and voted unanimously to accept the amended agreement that sets our maximum exposure for this truck.

Community forum scheduled for Sat. Feb. 17, invitations went out to various select boards of both towns. Only 3 from the towns and the commissioners have expressed interest in coming. It appears not much interest. Chief mentioned that the mediator suggested re-contacting each person to see if there is interest. Maybe a small group would be better than none. Tom felt that we owe it to them to at least meet. It wouldn't have to be as smaller scale meeting. Tom said we could also cancel it and reschedule to April and try again. Maybe do it with the smaller scale and see what kind of outreach it has. Chief thinks that delaying it might be the best suggestion and maybe redo for April. Tom also asked Chief to see if the mediator has any other meetings that the commissioners could attend to just get an idea of how it works.

Dept. reorganization: letters have been sent to 8 or 9 call members that were terminated due to lack of activity. Two or three spoke with Chief. One understood, one didn't and one asked to stay but has some medical issues. The message at least is out that we can't have people who aren't active and trained. Training is most important to Chief. Looking at 50 calls a year for participating. People usually come out when you have the "big call". But they can't be learning use of equipment on scene. All the call officers will now be at rank of lieutenant. All the full time officers will be captains. Will be phased in over the year. There is one officer that needs additional training to meet that. Will clearly define roles and responsibilities and determine who is in charge. More in line with how we operate day to day. He believes people are understanding it. Full time understand but call department was a mixed reaction. A lot of change over the last 5 to 6 years and hard for some to deal with. Not the actual work that is done but the power shift. Whenever you take responsibility away from someone there is difficulty in understanding why that occurs. Chief tries to look at benefit of whole organization and sees this as a positive move. Tom asked about the active call members. Chief feels mixed. Some like and some still don't understand. Day to day questions on training or equipment. It has created discourse between call and full time personnel. Bob didn't have any questions/comments.

Draft warrants: Jamie Dow and counsel have reviewed. Tom wanted to go through quickly. Wording carefully chosen for articles 1 through 4. Attached to each of these articles wording indicating the vote will take place on March 13, 2007. Both articles 5 and 6 deal with acquisition of the truck. Wording in 5 is same wording almost identically as special meeting. Acquisition is \$310,000 but originally were going to borrow \$155,000 and take \$155,000 from capitol reserve fund. Now looking at \$147,000 to be borrowed and \$163,000 from cap reserve fund. No sense to borrow if in the account. Needs to be recommended or not recommended by budget committee. Gretchen Wilder, Chairperson for Budget Committee, said article 5 is recommended by budget committee. But the budget committee does not recommend article 6, the lease.

Tom commented that in case the 2/3rds vote fails for the bonding, we will go the lease route. Our preference is 5 – the straight purchase. Tom will motion to take articles out of order. Money articles have to be dealt with first and he has alerted Ken Randall. Article 7 chief's vehicle - budget committee not recommending.

Article 8 - this would be third year for the building fund. Budget committee not recommending.

Article 9 - water district fees. Recommended by fire commissioners. Legal counsel affirmed that we should and must recommend this article. Budget committee will be recommending this article.

Article 10 - district raise and appropriate apparatus and equipment funds. This amount does not include the amount the SUV for the Chief or any other payments for the new engine. It is recommended by budget committee after it was noted that the SUV for Chief was removed from that figure.

Article 11 – the operating budget. It has to be raised and appropriated and doesn't include any warrant articles prior to it. \$1,287,487.

Will be adding the petitioned warrant article as #12, to see if voters will vote to rescind the apparatus and equipment fund. In the event that this article passes, the apparatus and equipment fund will continue during the 2007 and will expire in 2008. Does not need recommendation/no recommendation by either commissioners or budget committee.

Article 13 being the ordinance #3, alarm system ordinance. We will have handouts for that.

Article 14 accept treasurers report

Article 15 can accept federal grants.

Article 16 authorize to borrow in anticipation of taxes.

Article 17 – to transact any other business that may legally come before the body.

Tom asked Bob what general difference between budget committee and commissioners' budget. Bob commented that we backed out the paving of Park Street. Bob is hearing that everything was going to be paid without leasing was the understanding of the Apparatus and Equipment Fund. But it wasn't the intention or ever said. But these are necessities of life and cannot wait until all monies are there to purchase. Bob said budget committee commented that to buy Chief's vehicle would be better to buy outright and not pay any interest. Whether Chief gets a new vehicle or not, doesn't matter. But if we do or don't get the engine, is a much different matter. Editorials say that Apparatus and Equipment Fund is "free money" that we can do whatever we want with this money. It is under scrutiny of budget committee and commissioners and has its own budget. Budget committee feels that we should take that money and put towards one of the leases. Chief commented that if someone wants to amend the budget and do it that way that is fine. The tapes and the minutes explain the intent of the Apparatus and Equipment Fund. Tom wants it to be explained and resolved so that people will understand the purpose of the Apparatus and Equipment Fund.

Tom asked for comments on the warrants. No comment from budget committee. Roland commented that it's stuff like the water district fees and all the controversy around it that causes divisions of the people. He feels that those people who have been very much against these fees are the people who should be invited to the meeting on Feb. 17. Tom appreciated Roland's comments.

Chief: reported that 2006 our return on ambulance billing was 47%, which is poor. Roland asked if we have any other communities to compare with. Chief commented that Franklin charges everyone, Plymouth charges everyone, etc. so they have a higher return rate. Tom commented that Comstar is a billing agency not a collections agency. Collections will hound forever because they get a percentage of the return. Not just reflective on charging local people. Tom can't see charging local people who are already paying for services through taxation.

Comm. Gallant asked for public comment: Gretchen Wilder. Commented that regarding the public meeting on Feb. 17, she hasn't responded yet because of all the other meetings going on. She will get the commissioners the budget committee items

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needed. Regarding Roland's comments about the water district fees, as "Joe taxpayer" from Northfield, she doesn't mind paying a fee for the water district and she feels like she's being singled out by his comments. Has never minded paying a fee, but what's "fair" she's not really sure. She feels the \$145,000 is unfair. Do things filter over from "Joe taxpayer" to budget committee Chair? Maybe, but she has never said she will never pay a fee. Roland commented the water district is having a meeting on Monday evening at 7:00 to discuss the budget.

**New business**

Tom welcomed Paul Auger to the meeting and welcomed him running as commissioner. Has also appreciated his years of service to the fire district.

Tom motioned to pay bills. Bob seconded. We need to study and take action on the issue of the clerk for the fire district. Tom feels we will not have anyone sign up for clerk. The whole issue of the clerk has expanded and has gone beyond duties of secretary/bookkeeper. We did discuss last Fridays meeting with members of the community. Nothing we can do about that now. If we do not have a clerk at that meeting, and if she gets a write in vote or offered the job by moderator. She will turn down.

Tom motioned to adjourn at 7:44pm and seconded by Bob. Meeting adjourned at 7:44.

**Next Meeting Date, Time, Place:**

**March 1, 2007 at 18:00 at Center Street Station**