

Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS

Special Commissioners' Meeting

Budget Workshop, W/C & PLT Ins.

Meeting called by:	Commissioners	Date, Time:	November 29, 2007 at 17:30 to 19:54
Note taker:	Janine Vary	Place:	Center Street Station

Attendees: Comm. Tom Gallant, Comm. Bob Watson, Comm. Kevin Waldron, Deputy Mike Robinson, Chief Steve Carrier and Secretary Janine Vary. Members of public: Gretchen Wilder, Chair, TNFD Budget Committee

Tom called meeting to order at 5:32. Purpose of meeting: discuss proposed 2008 budget, the W/C & PLT insurance and a nonpublic item. Chief, Deputy Chief and all three commissioners present.

First item will be the PLT & W/C insurance. Tom had read the hand out and the minutes that were emailed. Kevin felt presentation was good finds the whole thing unnecessarily expensive. Don't have much time to do anything else. She indicated we could sign on, shop around and get out of it next year. Feels only real logical choice to take it as offered and he would be looking for something different. Bob agreed with no time to look around. But doesn't feel you would get a better deal. Tom agreed that we probably won't get a better deal anywhere. Tom added as far as w/c you won't find anyone that is a "pay as you go" basis. Tom said it would be good to get some inquiries out there to see what is available. Bob said but if we take one piece out of the mix, we lose the discount. Tom asked for a vote for "reupping" (renewing) the contract. Bob seconded. All three commissioners voted in the affirmative. Tom motioned that Chief can sign the renewal application. Kevin seconded. No more discussion. All three commissioners voted in the affirmative and motion passed to give Chief authorization to sign the agreement.

Proposed budget: Tom noted a recent memo dated 11/26/07 from Chief with clarifications that the Budget Committee had asked for. Chief's first budget being a draft, he has proposed changes to that. (copies of the 11/29/07 proposed budget were handed out at this meeting). Tom asked Kevin to start discussion. Kevin said that the budget is something he has watched for years. It is a given everything has to cost more every year. Feels they cost more when you allow them to cost more. We seem to keep expanding that job and get away from core of what we should be doing. Quite surprised that Chief rolled back the stuff he did. A good deal of it had a less than 50% chance of making it through the district meeting. He has gone through a lot of it, not every line and has a multitude of questions. Tom said fact is everything does cost more, we don't have to "grow" to make it cost more and he took exception to the statement that we "allow" costs to grow. We don't allow things to cost more. Many things are outside of our control to determine "cost". He feels we should go right through and deal with any questions. Mike asked if he is looking at a Budget Committee revision. Tom said this is the adjusted budget that Chief is now proposing after the Budget Committee feedback. Chief stated he had made some last minute revisions and the negative \$3254 net difference in "Revenues" on page one of the spreadsheet he didn't break that down to reflect the decrease in taxes from each town.

Kevin looking at line 110, career salaries. Seen substantial increases in the past. Some as much as 25% as he remembers it, not on board with that all. Carry 14 people on our payroll. Take time they have spent here, from 1 to 6 years, average length of service of over 4 years. He has seen some double digit increases in some positions. Shift Captain EMT-P, went up 25%. Tom asked Chief if that was accurate. Chief said that could be true. Kevin said it is over 4 years. Chief said when he became a paramedic we made a \$1.25 adjust at that time. Kevin continued: Increases in base rate means it costs more in retirement and benefits. We need to draw the line at some point. Tom: Cost of living increase and an annual performance yielding a 3.5% raise average. So do we say no raises this year? Chief said the only raise we get is merit raise. Tom said if cost of living has gone up, whether it is called a merit increase or cost of living increase, it's the same to him. Kevin would prefer to level fund. Tom can't agree with that, Bob stated he couldn't either. Bob said the only reason we brought up before was to try to get payrolls up to par with neighboring towns. Tom said he could see level funding the budget, but not level funding wages. Then you are in effect giving people a reduction in income. 2.27% is cost of living increase according to federal government. We won't attract people or retain people. If you cut income, why would they stay? Bob agrees. We will become a training ground for those out of school and will go elsewhere once they are in. Tom asked what message are we saying to those who are here right now? If we cut people we cut services. Cut wages, you'll be looking for people. Tom asked Gretchen about Budget Committee's feelings on career salaries and wages. She said it is mixed. Budget Committee hasn't discussed salaries yet. Was brought up in past with certain positions compared to other communities. Some of these people have gotten quite an increase. Chief commented that the Budget Committee was given a survey of 4 surrounding communities. We work a 48 work week as opposed to 42 for other communities. We don't have steps and grades. Starting pay is lowest of community survey. Highest paid firefighter is just at the low end of the scale. Highest pd lieutenant is below the other lieutenants. Our Captain was paid average of the communities that have captains. We have a part time deputy. Only offer single family health plan. General message to Budget Committee is we are low average paid and under benefited. Chief believes that personnel are our most

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important resource and can't deliver the same level of service to communities. If we level funded salaries, we won't see a mass exodus but will see changes in future. We have come a long way.

Gretchen asked about population in the comparisons. Mike said Franklin equal size to both our communities. Others smaller but pay more. Mike having sat here many years. We are always playing the "catch up" game for years. It's a slap in the face to take the 3% away if expenses are going up for all. Mike stated it is a true merit system, also. Not across the board. Kevin asked about deputy stipend. Chief said we dropped the mileage allotment and have increased the rate of pay per hour and a stipend. Mike's said he averages 1800 to 2000 miles on his personal vehicle. Kevin said Deputy Chief is a call person. No stipends to the call personnel. Mike responded that his vehicle gets customized with radios, etc. He goes directly to the scene. Call members are supposed to go to the station. Mike's average hours per month are 45 to 50. Chief said average call firemen is about 10 hours per month. Mike stated he is including all the meetings in addition to calls. Kevin stated Line 120.02, Shift Coverage is zeroed out. Mike said we have dual certifications needed to replace a career firefighter. Chief added career people have to pass a physical agility test, an entrance exam, a pre-employment physical, etc. before hire. Chief stated we are looking for certifications of FF2 and EMT basic minimal. Kevin said 120.14, Special Events. He asked if we generate any income from these events and Chief replied we can. This could also be a Home Depot safety expo and we pay the call firefighters from that line. Kevin asked about 120.15, Response Stipend. Mike said that was created a long time ago to keep call people coming to calls. So this is an incentive for the busiest people to get; but they have to hit that magic number. Tom asked how many of the call fire fighters have achieved this. Janine thought around 10, but Chief thought 4 or 5. Tom wants to know how many call members keep up with training, respond to calls, etc. Mike is not sure that the stipend is still effective. Chief knows there are a few people who watch their hours and have it as a goal. And it is a way for us to reward those who do respond. Chief feels it is effective. Tom would have to rely on Chief's judgment because he would have no way to know. So some people could get two dollars an hour bonus. Janine will get back to commissioners with exact number of people who made stipend in last 4 quarters.

Kevin asked about 130, Elected Officials. He feels this line should change to \$7700. He would get there by moderator at \$200 and everyone else at \$1500. Tom objected to paying moderator that amount. He would double it but not \$200. If we have three meetings, he gets paid \$50 each time. Kevin felt he has to spend time preparing for the meeting. Gretchen felt commissioners should get more pay. Tom said we are held for the year. He is retained to do the district meeting, just that. There generally is only one meeting. Tom feels the Moderator should come in and go through the warrants with the commissioners like Ken Randall does with select people in Tilton. Kevin feels that should be done this year. Tom said set moderator rate at \$100, Treasurer at \$2500, Clerk \$1500, commissioners – he feels they should make more and should be different amounts. The chair should make more than the other two commissioners. The chair has generally interacted with DRA, the fire dept secretary, etc. If that is to continue, then the chair creates warrants, gets approved by DRA. After more discussion, \$1250, \$1250 for each commissioner and \$1500 for the chair. The chair is elected annually. Tom does want to leave the Treasurer at \$2500. Bob was OK with those figures and Kevin agreed. Line 130 changed to \$8100.

201 Health Insurance. Line now is \$139,944. Auditing has jumped due to the GASB part. Line 342, Data Processing, Chief would like to buy a new pc this year. If we have 5 and they all work Kevin could not see why they needed to be replaced. On Nov. 7 we had spent \$4900. Chief said if we have overages in other lines, then we don't spend everything on all the lines. He hopes this week he can look at what has been expended. Will be some line items that are half spent and may have to stay that way because we have to compensate for the lines that are over budget. We cannot over expend our bottom line budget. Rather than being at 99% at the end of the year and then we have a large repair bill or payroll, we hold back on expenses, but then we carry \$40,000 at the end of the year. Kevin said if we do have the \$50,000 kicking around, can we give it back to where it came from. Tom commented that we have to retain 5% of our budget, which Tom is working out now. DRA wants to keep 5% in there, which is an ambiguity, nothing is written down that it is 5%. In order to get back to people where it came from, we can have a warrant article that says anything over the 5% can be returned to the towns to defer taxes. Back to Line 342, Data Processing, Kevin feels he would fund at \$5000 for next year. Tom disagreed. This is not like a private business. If we run over on vehicles repair, we can't over expend the budget. What you ask for has to be enough. Kevin said if we put \$100,000 in the unreserved fund, then we don't need it. Kevin asked if Tom would be on board to spending some of that unreserved fund. Chief asked how does it happen on paper? Tom explained the amount to be raised through taxation and net amount to be withdrawn from surplus are determined. It is not revenue. Would be transferred from the balance sheet to the income statement. If we reduce the amount raised by taxes to the towns, then we would have an imbalance between revenue and expenses report of our budget. Tom commented that the problem is that if you reduce next year's budget this way, when comparing year to year will appear to be a great increase in taxes the following year. He would want a frank discussion with taxpayers about this. Tom would like to look at the surplus to use in lieu of debt. If we went forward to add to a facility, we can use that surplus for that purpose. Using it outside the confines of the budget. He believes that DRA would go along with that. He would want to have a lot of discussion and advice from DRA on this.

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Line 412, Water. Kevin wants purchase of outside water to cease. Chief stated the proposal has been dropped to \$1000 for a different type of system. Cost is \$40 a month which covers new filters and maintenance of the device. This is just for Center Street station.

Line 430 Building Repair & Maintenance. Did increase by \$1000. In prior years two other lines (640 & 650) had totals from 430.3 and 430.4. 2003 total of all three lines was \$9250. In 2004 \$8500. Chief said we are currently at \$8500 at this time.

Line 550, Printing. Chief stated we only had 1 ad in Salmon Press listed here before. Historically we had put all ads in printing line. Moving all the ads into this line bring the total to \$447.89 and we will have another \$300 bill for the pocket calendars (which are coming in tomorrow). Total will be up around \$770. This change will drop Elections (Line 385) to \$630.

Line 560 Meetings, Dues, Subscriptions. Kevin stated so far we gave spent \$1535. Tom recommended leaving that line for now to see new bills for December.

Line 591, Hydrants, Tom asked again to discuss later.

Line 320, Legal Services. Kevin doesn't know why we haven't spent anything yet. Kevin said to drop down to \$1000. Tom advised not to. He would not drop because we cannot tell what could happen in the future and legal fees are very costly.

Line 335 School/Training Services & Fees. Kevin asked Bob his feelings. Bob felt that Chief knows what he needs more than Bob does.

Line 350 Medical Fees. Chief said we should be having our folks get annual physicals. Chief hasn't explored the possibility of having the career members get as much of a regular physical from their PCP and then getting the firefighter specific physical from Occupational Health at FRH. He will be checking into this; however, Chief said we should double the amount in that line to be sure we would have enough.

Line 385, Elections. Chief indicated we have spent \$630. It is still a relatively new number for us. We don't know what the full impact of that line can be, so Chief just cut in half.

Line 610, General Supplies. Chief has cut to \$250. This line pays for rehab food at large scale incidents.

Line 620, Office Supplies. \$2541. Chief commented we did purchase office supplies today – toner cartridges, paper, etc. Will probably be over \$3000 at year end. Line 625, Postage. Dropped to \$1000.

Line 631, Service Testing. Chief commented that the aerial ladder hasn't been done yet, might not be done this year but will have to be done next year, that's why line hasn't been spent. We held off on aerial service testing because there are other repairs needed on that truck that should take place first.

Line 660 Vehicle Repairs Parts. \$16,000 budgeted and we sit at \$18,000 right now. Engine 1 has had its problem. Chief said the good thing is we have a couple of new trucks and got rid of old trucks.

Line 680, Departmental. Chief commented that we may have to buy service awards and a couple of awards for this year. We haven't bought any badges either. Line 681, Fire Alarm System. Chief reported that our fire alarm maintenance person has been out of work for several months. We have been lucky. If a couple of lines come down, then we have to rent a bucket truck with a person from Franklin Fire Dept. and pay for that. The usual cost seen in that line is the phone line to dispatch that immediately transmits to dispatch for any incoming box alarms.

At this point, realizing that we also had to do a nonpublic session, the commissioners stopped reviewing the budget.

They will revisit wages, hydrants and pick up from fire alarm. Will reconvene the budget review on Weds. 12/5/07 at 5:30PM here at the Center Street station.*see note

At 7:29 Tom motioned to go into nonpublic session. Roll call vote taken: Bob aye, Kevin, aye and Tom, aye.

7:53 back in public session. Tom motioned that the minutes of nonpublic session remain sealed under RSA bob seconded. All in favor. All 3 commissioners voted affirmative.

Tom motioned to adjourn meeting at 7:54, all three commissioners agreed. Meeting adjourned at 7:54..

NOTE: Meeting date was changed on 11/30/07 to Tuesday, December 4, 2007 at 5:30PM due to a scheduling conflict.