

32 Mr. Koutsogiane read from a prepared statement.

I am taking this time to review and comment on certain activities of this board.

Our job was to merge the four districts into one. It was to be done in a cost efficient, open, transparent manner.

I am not reviewing all items that I've had problems with but to describe in general terms and some specific items.

This is a committee of seven not a committee of one or two.

In the past to do my elected job, I have requested information/documents. Too many times I have met with resistance, delay or partial compliance.

Mr. Lemois appointed me Chair of the Finance Committee. I needed information to do that job as just described. I immediately began my review of that project.

Mr. Lemois insisted that we do a zero based budget and hold meetings. In early February, I sent out an e-mail to the finance committee, Mr. Lemois, Mr. Bruce and the Chief trying to arrange that meeting. I needed People's schedules. Within four (4) hours of receiving that e-mail, Mr. Lemois replaced me as chair of that committee with Mr. Champagne. Mr. Champagne has never scheduled a meeting of this finance committee. He presented a budget to this board in May of this year.

I disapproved of that budget. There were no savings. There was a level funded budget from the four districts. It was a redistribution of the funds in that budget to give more to salaries and the like. It was too expensive.

With a new committee appointed to look at the three platoon and four platoon concept, I think a starting point would be to examine what has been paid and what is being paid with the four platoon system, including overtime. That information is presently with the present staff. In order to do that study I requested that information.

I have requested information/copies on wages and legal bills and have been told that I would not get them. Then I was told that I could go to the station and look at the legal bills but not make copies of them. So even though I am a committee member, I had to file a request under the Access to Public Records Act to get those documents. The time to comply with that request has come and gone and the request has not been honored.

This is not the way this Board should operate. This board is a public body. This board has been run in a secretive manner.

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34 THE MINUTES WERE AMENDED ON 9/22/15 BY CHAIRMAN LEMOIS TO ADD A RESPONSE
35 TO MR. KOUTSOGIANE'S DIALOG:

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37 September 22, 2015

38 This is in response to Mr. Koutsogiane's dialog from our last meeting. It isn't meant to debate any issues,
39 but to put counter points on the record.

40 In response to the comments that we are a committee of 7 not one, the position he took early on in the
41 budget process needs to be pointed out. Communicating many times that he was working on the budget
42 by himself. At one point stating that the finance committee didn't need to have meetings.

43 While also going around the Finance Director and scheduling a meeting with the Department of Revenue.
44 Without a general agreed plan, discussing issues with the Pension Board, again absent of communications
45 with Mr. Bruce.

46 While he can surely have the opinion that things were denied, delayed or information only partially sent.
47 But the facts are that all requests were made when information was available and/or the Finance
48 Department had the labor hours to provide.

49 The Commissioner was replaced as Finance Chair, the email he mentioned was not to schedule a meeting,
50 but to only start the process.

51 Mr. Koutsogiane was replace as Chair of the Finance Committee after months of communications about
52 having meetings, Mr. Koutsogiane relating that meetings were not needed and as mentioned it his choice
53 to work on the budget by himself. Leaving out the Chief and Finance Director.

54 The current Chairman, Commissioner Champagne has been meeting with the Chief, Finance Director and
55 the finance department on a very regular basis. The Chair then brings back information for any needed
56 approvals. Under Commissioner Champagne's direction we were able to complete a complex budget on
57 time, in fact early.

58 Mr. Koutsogiane continues to repeat his opinion of the budget, a budget that was passed by a majority of
59 the Fire Committee. Please note that Mr. Koutsogiane has never presented an alternative budget even
60 after indicating he was spending much time developing one, by himself. He has never even suggested a
61 meaning to the opinion of "too expensive". As a reminder, our cost went down, our contract cost went
62 down and the amount we taxed the tax payers was reduce by some \$300,000 by adding non-tax revenue..

63 Mr. Koutsogiane, until this dialog, never indicated that he would suggest that the 3 platoon review
64 committee look backwards at the labor cost including overtime. He never came to a review committee
65 with that suggestion, nor the offer to do the research. Again he was working in a vacuum.

66 Legal bills were requested and the request was limited by the Solicitor until she could get a ruling
67 concerning publishing these bills as it relates to access to public records and attorney client privilege.
68 Allowing them to be viewed in house until said ruling. Once the ruling came in the legal bills were released.

69 Mr. Koutsogiane was requested to file an open records request due to the fact that he would show up at
70 the finance office without an appointment and demand records. This was during a very busy tax collection
71 time and even on payroll day. Mr. Koutsogiane's expression of respect for people's time was negated by
72 the continued demand for immediate access to the information.

73 The actual due date for his request was September 4, 2015, ten days after his speech.

74 Mr. Koutsogiane couldn't be more correct when he states that this is not how the board should operate.
75 Unfortunately the only person operating in secret is Mr. Koutsogiane. He has never provided evidence
76 of any of his claims. What he has admitted to, himself, is working in a vacuum on the budget and other
77 areas such as the 3 platoon review of past cost.

78 Mr. Koutsogiane is not willing to work as a team member. One cannot chose to work alone and then
79 claim to be segregated.

80 It is suspect when Mr. Koutsogiane can have concerns that the Chief of the Department, Business
81 Manager, Assistant Business Manager and Finance Director do not agree with and can offer facts to the
82 contrary.

83 It is clear Mr. Koutsogiane has not adjusted from the small district operational mind set to how the merged
84 district is being operated. Gone are the times when he can just walk in and demand something. The
85 district has time sensitive and time consuming work to be completed. We can't have 7 Commissioners
86 walking into the Finance Department, without an appointment or even a notice, and require time for their
87 own needs.

88 Lastly there are 48 pieces of evidence that this board is NOT operating secretively. They are the 48
89 detailed resolutions posted on the web site that document every district wide decision. Those resolutions
90 have been reviewed in public, discussed and voted on as a committee.

91 Also on the web site we post the monthly financials, check register, minutes as well as month meeting
92 packages.

93 The Cumberland Fire District has the highest of standards and is transparent unlike any district in the past.

94 Submitted by,

95 Bruce Lemois
96 Chairman

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99 **CONSENT AGENDA:**

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101 Chairman Lemois made suggested corrections to the 7/28/15 meeting. Commissioner Champagne moved
102 to amend, seconded by Commissioner Ouellette.

103 **PASSED 6-0**

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105 Commissioner Ouellette moved passage as amended, second by Commissioner Matter.

106 **PASSED 6-0**

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108 **OLD BUSINESS:**

109 A. **FC-R2015-44A Payout to Captain Jason Lavallee – Tabled from 07/28**

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111 Chairman asked Mr. Scullin if the resolution was to his satisfaction as he had requested it to
112 be table. He indicated he was still troubled as to why we were paying this out rather than
113 having the FF bank the time. Chairman explained that the FF was, as the resolution reads,
114 banking to the maximum allowed by the contract.

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116 Commissioner Koutsogiane recognized the explanation for the sick time, but that the FF was
117 also being paid for his unused vacation time. Chairman explained again that it is a benefit
118 that the FF was unable to use as he was out on IOD. Commissioner Koutsogiane responded
119 that he understands that, but he still carries that over. Commissioner Champagne continued
120 to explain that the FF was banking up the limit as set out in the contract.

121 Mr. Champagne further explained that the suggestion by Mr. Scullin would violate the
122 contract opening us up to a potential grievance, also that paying out now rather than over time
123 in the future allows us to use a lower amount per hour. As well as if we did allow him to
124 bank the time and he used it at a later time it would cost us fifty percent more as the FF would
125 need to be replaced with overtime.
126

127 Commissioner Koutsogiane question the amount of time the FF was out for, Commissioner
128 Champagne pointed it out as it is listed clearly on the resolution. Commissioner Koutsogiane
129 stated that he has not read the contract in great detail in regards to this issue, stated he didn't
130 want to delay the process, but that he will have to go back and read the contract.
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132 Commissioner Champagne moved passage of R-2015-44A, second by Commissioner
133 Ouellette.
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135 Chairman Lemois recapped that the GL 44-19-1 is included in the resolution. He quickly
136 recapped the intent of the law.
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138 Commissioner Scullin again questioned the time period this would cover and the amount the
139 FF earned. He asked if we had anyone other than this FF that has a lot of hours. Chairman
140 asked if meant with sick time, Mr. Scullin said yes, that were on IOD. Chairman answered
141 no, and pointed out that the payment would be coming out of the Cumberland Hill payroll
142 budget. Mr. Scullin further expressed that this is a \$10,000 payment for someone who is not
143 retiring, why this is here now at this kind of number. He also questioned how we were
144 paying him with a Cumberland Hill payroll check. He asked when we were going to be on
145 one set of books. The Chairman explain again that we are on one set of books as the merged
146 district, and that it is an accepted accounting practice to accrual for expenses and charge them
147 back to a previous year's books, as long as it is done within the legal time period.
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149 Mr. Scullin asked if the current contract allowed vacation time to be banked. And pointed
150 out that the VFFD contract did not allow for the banking of vacation time. Chairman
151 explained that the other three contracts did allow for that benefit.
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153 Commissioner Koutsogiane stated that he did look at the contract, and that he should also
154 look at the Cumberland Hill contract. I know that this has been tabled from the previous
155 meeting, that it is a monthly meeting, in fact it was a month ago. He state he doesn't want to
156 deny anyone what they should be receiving, but I have to satisfy my own matter in regards to
157 this, I would ask that we table it just to the next session and let me reread the contract.
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159 Chairman asked if there was a second to table. Second by Mr. Scullin. The Chairman took a
160 roll call vote:
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162 Commissioner Koutsogiane – Yes

163 Commissioner Matta – Yes

164 Chairman votes No

165 Commissioner Ouellette – No

166 Commissioner Champagne – No

167 Commissioner Scullin – Yes
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169 **Tied 3-3 motion fails.**
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171 The Chairman explained that we started this process last month, this package was in our
172 hands on the Saturday morning before this meeting, That we have had plenty of time to
173 review and ask questions, that the “why” we are doing this has not changed and all we needed
174 for Mr. Scullin, and rightfully so, was a more logical explanation of the amount. Which was
175 done and that is the only thing that has changed on the resolution. We have had plenty of
176 time to review.

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178 Mr. Scullin again questioned the whole vacation allowable banked hours, and even at that
179 somewhere along the line in 2012 or 2013 he should have been paid out prior to tonight. He
180 asked “why this was allowed to go on for so long?” The Chairman stated that it was because
181 he was still out on IOD and the payout is not done until they return to work. It not an
182 obligation, by this state law, to give this to them until they come back to work.

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184 Mr. Scullin states that at the same time the FF didn’t lose anything, the FF was getting his full
185 pay, and that this gives him payment above his full pay. The Chairman again explained that
186 this is the FF’s benefit. Mr. Scullin stated that the benefit is his full pay.

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188 The Chairman thanked Mr. Scullin.

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190 Commissioner Champagne asked if we could move the motion.

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192 Chairman asked if there were any other comments or questions. Commissioner Koutsogiane
193 then asked, “If he (the FF) had not been out on IOD and couldn’t use the sick time, he
194 couldn’t use some vacation time, but because he was out on IOD and getting full pay we now
195 have to give him the differential, is that what we are talking about?” The Chairman
196 answered, yes.

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198 After a pause Commissioner Ouellette asked for the floor. She began to state what she was
199 hearing, and noted that maybe we could simplify this. She stated that FF Lavallee was on
200 IOD and during that time Cumberland Fire District must pay him and he is entitled to, by law,
201 salary and benefits, correct? Chairman answered correct. Continuing she stated “he’s back”,
202 so because he is back he now gets the balance after taking everything he has earned to 100%
203 banking he now gets the balance of what he earned for benefits by law, correct? Chairman
204 answered correct. Continuing she stated, unfortunately he was on IOD for many years. We
205 have no control over that and the FF had no control over that. Therefore there should be no
206 question now that he is entitled to this reimbursement, correct.

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208 Further she stated “If you didn’t have time in a month to look up this information then there
209 should be no more questions beyond this point.

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211 Chairman asked for further questions, hearing none took a roll call vote:

212 Commissioner Sculling – No
213 Commissioner Champagne – Yes
214 Commissioner Ouellette – Yes
215 Commissioner Koutsogiane – Abstained
216 Commissioner Matta – Yes
217 Chair votes – Yes

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219 **Passed 4 yes to 1 no and 1 abstention**

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NEW BUSINESS:

A. Finance Report

Finance Director presented the year to date finance reports. The microphone was not being picked up by the camera.

He explained various items and details.

Commissioner Champagne moved to approve second by Commissioner Ouellette.

There were questions asked and it was recommended that the Commissioners contact Mr. Bruce directly with further questions.

It was noted that, not counting IOD cost, the merged district is trending just about equal to where the four individual districts were last year on the item of overtime.

Approved 6-0

Chairman expressed the Committee’s appreciation to the finance staff working with Mr. Bruce. Especially Diane Karolyshyn and Beth Markey, in the audience tonight.

B. Resolution R2015-45 – Approval to pay Atlas Insulation

Deputy Chief Mitchell reviewed the resolution and that all work was done and to the required level of quality.

Commissioner Ouellette moved passage, second by Commissioner Champagne and Koutsogiane.

Passed 6-0

C. Resolution R2015-46 Approval to pay Emergency Reporting

Deputy Mitchell explained that this is new report writing software to be used by the men.

Commissioner Champagne moved for approval, seconded by Commissioner Matta.

Passed 6-0

D. Resolution R2015-47 Approval to pay Tri Tech Software

Deputy Chief Mitchell explained that this is the bridge between the dispatch center in CPD and the Emergency Reporting software.

Commissioner Champagne second by Commissioner Ouellette.

Passed 6-0

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E. Resolution R2015-48 Payment of the Hydrant fee to Cumberland Water

The Chairman explained the resolution and that the CFD pays rent to the Town of Cumberland for the use of the fire hydrants

Also that some districts had past due bills. There is a breakdown on the resolution. Further explanation of what each district owed. It was noted that VFFD pays hydrant fees to the City of Pawtucket, but that is paid on a monthly basis. The amount is about \$71,000 per year.

Further explained that the Hydrant Line item was under budgeted and that he Finance Director would be bringing a resolution to make an adjustment of some type to balance the line item. We can't have an item in the negative. The adjustment can be made with funds from another item that could be over budgeted or from surplus.

Commissioner Champagne moved to approve second by Commissioner Matta.

Commissioner Ouellette asked as the line was under budgeted, apparently we don't have accurate information, in terms of these charges have been in the past. Is there a way we could we find out if these charges have increased dramatically, there has been slow growth or if they have remained stable for years. Chair agreed with the comment of not knowing our cost and he feels that the Pawtucket Water Board bill was not added into budget. Also the figures seemed to be stay the same. Commissioner Champagne noted that the cost was \$330 per hydrant per year.

Commissioner Koutsogiane noted that the NC figure has been consistent the last four or five years. Also noted that though he doesn't agree with the fee he knows it would just come from the taxpayers in another way, as agreed to by the Chairman.

Commissioner Scullin state that he agreed with Commissioner Koutsogiane and that the hydrant fee have long been a thorn in the side for Valley Falls. Because Pawtucket's hydrant fees have been traditionally the highest in the world. Explained that in recent past it was \$627 per hydrant and then out of the goodness of their heart they reduced it to \$337 after they realized they had made a mistake for many years. He also noted that he has requested the General Assembly to get rid of the hydrant fees because they have eliminated hydrant fees for the cities of Providence and Pawtucket, they don't know longer have to pay hydrant fees by legislative act.

Commissioner Koutsogiane noted he had reviewed that legislation and he interprets it to mean they should not be charging the Fire District. Noted as he said before, it would just be shifted to the taxpayer anyway.

Passed 6-0

Commissioner Champagne moves to adjourn second by Mr. Scullin, **Passed 6-0**

Submitted by Bruce Lemois, Chairman