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1                    **STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE**  
**PLANTATIONS**

2

3                    **PROCEEDINGS AT ANTHONY FIRE DISTRICT**

4

5    **IN RE: Board of Directors' Meeting**

6

7                    **DATE: December 8, 2009**

**TIME: 7:00 p.m.**

8                    **PLACE: Club Joques**

**184 Boston Street**

9                    **Coventry, RI**

10

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

11

**Gary Cote, Chairman**

12                    **Ed Webster, Co-Chairman**

**Shirley Matthews, Member**

**13 Edward Matola, Jr., Member**

**14**

**ALSO PRESENT:**

**15**

**John Golomb, District Clerk**

**16 Christopher Pucino, Esq.**

**Arthur Capaldi, Esq.**

**17 Dave Florio, Moderator**

**Paul Labbadia, Fire Chief**

**18**

**19**

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1                   **(MEETING COMMENCED AT 7:10 p.m.)**

2                   **CHAIRMAN COTE: If you're here to observe**  
3                   **and cannot vote, just take a seat on the left so we don't**  
4                   **get confused. And would everyone find a seat, if there are**  
5                   **seats available. Thank you.**

6                   **MODERATOR FLORIO: Good evening, my name**  
7                   **is David Florio, I am the moderator this evening. As Gary**  
8                   **mentioned, registered voters who are residents of the town**  
9                   **are to be seated in an area designated by myself.**  
10                  **Residents are on the right-hand side, nonresidents are on**  
11                  **the left-hand side. The meeting is open to the public,**

12 members of the press and news media, but they cannot  
13 participate in any way and they have to be seated in a  
14 special area away from the voters as decided by the  
15 moderator, on the left-hand side.

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Just a clarification,  
17 when you say right and left, it is your right?

18 MODERATOR FLORIO: My right. "Pledge of  
19 Allegiance."

20 (Pledge recited)

21 MODERATOR FLORIO: I want to make it clear  
22 that the moderator sets the rules in the meeting. Under  
23 the law I have the authority to establish rules for the  
24 orderly conduct of this meeting. This is my responsibility

**25 to manage and regulate the business of the meeting to**

**3**

**1 maintain good order. The rules of the meeting are as**  
**2 follows: Only registered voters who are residents in the**  
**3 district shall have a right to attend, participate and vote**  
**4 on matters brought before the meeting. Anyone who is not**  
**5 eligible to vote shall remain in the designated area for**  
**6 nonvoters and can observe, but they cannot participate in**  
**7 any manner. They shall not shout out, clap, cheer or**  
**8 distract or intimidate anyone. No recording devices of any**  
**9 kind shall be allowed by anyone at the meeting, including**  
**10 video by camcorder, or telephone, as the same could**

**11 intimidate a participant. To be recognized, to be heard,  
12 an eligible voter shall stand and wait to be recognized by  
13 the moderator. After recognition, advance to the podium**

**14 and give your name and address. Any subsequent time  
you**

**15 come to the podium just state your name. Any eligible  
16 voter shall speak only to the issue then before the body.**

**17 Robert's Rules of Order shall not apply. There shall be  
18 only one motion before the body at any time, but there may  
19 be motions to be amended. All motions presented shall be  
20 in writing. The moderator shall make the final decision as  
21 to what is or is not out of order or as to the propriety of  
22 any motion. All those recognized to speak shall not speak**

23 longer than three minutes. All those who want to be heard

24 on a motion lawfully before the body shall be heard. A

25 quorum shall be 32 qualified electors. We do have a  
quorum

4

1 this evening, and I would like to call the clerk to read

2 the warrant or legal notice.

3 **CLERK GOLOMB: Good afternoon, ladies and**

4 gentlemen. My name is John Golomb, I live at 477 Fairview

5 Avenue in the Coventry, Rhode Island, Anthony Fire

6 District. This is a legal notice that has been posted

7 throughout the town and also listed in the Times newspaper

8 several times. Pursuant to the charter of the Coventry

**9 Fire District, the annual meeting of the district will be**

**10 held as follows: December 8, 2009, at Club Joques, 184**

**11 Boston Street, Coventry, Rhode Island, time will be**

**12 7:00 p.m. The agenda is as follows: Call to order,**

**13 reading and approval of the minutes of the last annual and**

**14 special meetings. Old business. Report of the finance**

**15 department. Tax collector's report. The treasurer's**

**16 report. Auditor's report. Report of the board of**

**17 directors. Report from the fire chief. And the new**

**18 business, as follows: Resolutions for the operation of the**

**19 fire department, including an adoption of a budget, tax**

**20 levy and authorizing resolutions. Election of officers.**

**21 Announcements. Adjournment. District residents who are**

22 registered to vote in the Town of Coventry, they have to be  
23 taxpayers within the district, will be allowed to  
24 participate in the meeting. The facility is handicapped  
25 accessible. Anyone who is hearing impaired shall notify

5

1 the district secretary in at least 48 hours in advance at  
2 821-3141. Respectfully read, John Golomb, clerk.

3 MODERATOR FLORIO: Thank you. Prior  
4 minutes of the last meeting to be read.

5 CHAIRMAN COTE: Motion to dispense.

6 MODERATOR FLORIO: Motion made to  
7 dispense.

8 **MR. WEBSTER: Second the motion.**

9 **MODERATOR FLORIO: All in favor? All**

10 **opposed?**

11 **(VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)**

12 **MODERATOR FLORIO: The ayes have it.**

13 **Report of finance department.**

14 **MS. LEROUX: Coventry fire district,**

15 **tax/finance district report. Joanne Leroux, 20 Bonney**

16 **Street, Coventry. 2009 taxes collected, 1,599,378.75; back**

17 **taxes collected, \$260,606.53; interest on back taxes,**

18 **\$63,949.10; total taxes and interest collected,**

19 **\$1,923,934.38; interest on invested taxes as of 11/30/2009,**

20 **\$497.77; balance on hand, November 30, 2008, \$19,305.17;**

21 total receipts and interest, 1,943,737.32; transferred to  
22 treasurer, 1,920,168.92; balance on hand, November 30,  
23 2009, \$23,568.40; Coventry Credit Union balance as of  
24 11/30/2009, \$23,568.40. Report on back taxes, uncollected  
25 2009 taxes, \$308,556.39; uncollected taxes, all prior

6

1 years, \$86,174.15; total uncollected, \$394,730.54.

2 Respectfully submitted, Joanne Leroux, tax finance  
3 division.

4 CHAIRMAN COTE: Motion to accept as read?

5 MR. WEBSTER: I make a motion.

6 MR. MATOLA: Second.

7 **MODERATOR FLORIO: All in favor? All**

8 **opposed?**

9 **(VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)**

10 **MODERATOR FLORIO: Unanimous. Sir, you**

11 **voted nay when I asked for that motion? I wanted to make**

12 **sure, I wanted to make sure all residents on the left-hand**

13 **side are making motions or votes. The next report from**

14 **treasurer's report.**

15 **MS. MURPHY: Hope Murphy, 83 Sheltra**

16 **Avenue, Coventry. Treasurer, Coventry fire district.**

17 **Fiscal year ending November 30, 2009. Funds on hand as**  
of

18 **12/1/2008, \$145,976.34; cash receipts, tax division,**

**19 1,920,168.92; Blue Cross reimbursement, 7,283.04;  
insurance**

**20 reimbursement, 63,450.21; special detail, 4,393.50; grant**

**21 reimbursement, 15,466.95; tax sale monies, 6,492.05; fire**

**22 reports/public records, 133; insufficient funds charge,**

**23 100; National Grid gas rebate, 587; interest on CD medical**

**24 retirement, 631.81; rescue recovery billings, 313,143.20;**

**25 total receipts, 2,331,849.68; tax anticipation note,**

**7**

**1 200,000. Total monies available, 2,531,849.68. Long-term**

**2 note, rescue truck, 34,887.21. District expenses, payroll,**

**3 1,392,703.22; professional services, 10,589; support**

**4 services, 5,809.12; Social Security/Medicare, 22,758.70;**

**5 radio maintenance, 1,545.90; heating fuel oil, 14,268.83;**

**6 building maintenance and repair, 22,803.94; station**

**7 supplies, 5,455.50; vehicle maintenance and repairs,**

**8 21,391.93; vehicle EMS supplies, 8,894.74; vehicle fuel,**

**9 11,638.79; hydrant rental, 116,285.15; Streetlight rental,**

**10 103,503.40; electric, 10,686.26; station and vehicle**

**11 phones, 5,787.41; water, 832.20; insurance, 130,542.43;**

**12 Blue Cross/Delta Dental, 218,439.24; medical expenses,**

**13 1,399; training, education expenses, 225; equipment and**

**14 firefighter supplies, 40,988.58; clothing and maintenance,**

**15 8,183.63; postage supplies, 15,805.08; miscellaneous, tax**

**16 sale expenses, 18,887.95; rescue recovery billing expense,**

**17 18,063.33; interest, tax anticipation note, 1,944.95;**

18 interest, notes payable, 2,998.42; capital project, station  
19 upgrade, 15,647.75; pension employee benefits, 70,058.15.  
20 Total district expenses, 2,298,065.60. Tax anticipation  
21 note payment, \$150,000. Rescue note payment, 16,001.58.  
22 Total expenditures, 2,464,067.18. Checking balance,  
23 150,443.68. Rescue recovery account, 31,558.35. Invested  
24 medical retirement fund, 31,756.81. Balance of all funds,  
25 213,758.84. Respectfully submitted, Hope Murphy,

8

1 treasurer.

2 MODERATOR FLORIO: Motion to accept

3 treasurer's report.

4                   **CHAIRMAN COTE: Second.**

5                   **MODERATOR FLORIO: All in favor?**

6                   **AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have a question.**

7                   **MODERATOR FLORIO: Mr. Cotnoir, come up to**  
8 **the podium. Address, name, and you have three minutes.**

9                   **MR. COTNOIR: Ernest Cotnoir, 8 Cindy**  
10 **Lane, Coventry, Rhode Island. I believe, I didn't hear in**  
11 **the money received, the sale of the property next to the**  
12 **station. Did we sell that property yet?**

13                   **MS. MURPHY: That is on my next report.**

14                   **MR. COTE: Louis Cote, 25 Nancy Court. I**  
15 **was wondering how much money is in the fire marshal**  
**budget.**

16 MS. MURPHY: That's the next report.

17 MODERATOR FLORIO: Motion made and

18 seconded on the treasurer's report. One more question.

19 Please advance to the podium.

20 MR. GORMAN: David Gorman, 24 Hornbeam

21 Road. I had a couple of questions in regards to, you

22 mentioned there was a \$6,000 tax income from sales or  
back

23 taxes, that was in one of the very first lines. I believe

24 it was --

25 MS. MURPHY: 6,492.

9

1 MR. GORMAN: What was that?

2                   **MS. MURPHY: Money we received from the**  
3 **tax sale.**

4                   **MR. GORMAN: The next item was the legal**  
5 **expenses spent for last year.**

6                   **MS. MURPHY: That was professional**  
7 **services, 10,589.**

8                   **MR. GORMAN: That is all the legal**  
9 **expenses?**

10                  **MS. MURPHY: Yes.**

11                  **MODERATOR FLORIO: Is there any further**  
12 **discussion?**

13                  **MS. FLANAGAN: Laura Flanagan, 16 Knotty**  
14 **Oak Lane. I would suggest it would be better if we had**

15 this report on a piece of paper in front of us. As  
16 taxpayers, I think it is a burden for us to sit here and  
17 try and write these numbers and figures down as they are  
18 being read into the record. Thank you.

19 MODERATOR FLORIO: Was that placed online?

20 CHAIRMAN COTE: Not her report, no.

21 MODERATOR FLORIO: Any other discussion?

22 Motion made and seconded. All in favor? Opposed?

23 (VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)

24 MODERATOR FLORIO: The ayes have it.

25 MS. MURPHY: Fire prevention account,

1 balance on hand as of 12/1/2008, 9,523.56. Fire inspection  
2 deposits, 5,617. Interest, 79.05. 6000 -- excuse me, fire  
3 prevention expenses 6,556. Sale of rental property,  
4 19,263.01; capital improvement expenses, 3,450; total  
5 balance on hand as of 11/30/09, 25,027.06. Respectfully  
6 submitted, Hope Murphy, treasurer.

7 CHAIRMAN COTE: Motion to accept.

8 MR. MATOLA: Second.

9 MODERATOR FLORIO: Any discussion?

10 MR. COTNOIR: I didn't catch the figure  
11 for the sale of the building.

12 MODERATOR FLORIO: 19,700.

13 MR. COTNOIR: We bought it years ago for

14 90-something thousand and we sold it for 19? That doesn't  
15 sound like very good business.

16 CHAIRMAN COTE: I agree, it doesn't make  
17 good business practice. I accept no responsibility, nor  
18 does this board accept any responsibility for how much  
19 money was paid for the property. Mr. Cotnoir, you're  
20 absolutely right. I accept no responsibility, nor does the  
21 board for how much the property was bought for several  
22 years ago when the administration that was in power at the  
23 time bought that piece of property. But the price that he  
24 paid for it was approved by the taxpayers of the district,  
25 I'm told. I don't know. I wasn't here then. I can tell

1 you that for two years we tried diligently, we advertised  
2 the property over and over and over. We held a public  
3 auction on the property. We held a reserve price on the  
4 property for \$25,000. We had a market evaluation done, the  
5 property, we were told, in its current condition, that is  
6 what it was worth. We held a reserve for that at public  
7 auction, it came nowhere close to that at public auction.

8 We had a gentleman from the Town of West Warwick that  
came

9 in and did offer us 20,000, he said as a favor to us  
10 because we were a fire district. We refused that sale and  
11 after the public auction was over and our obligations with

12 the auctioneer was over, a gentleman stepped forward and  
13 offered us 25,500 for the property as we were only holding  
14 reserve of 25,000 on it. We took that offer. We went to  
15 closing. Out of that money at closing we owed the Town of  
16 Coventry monies towards the sewer assessment on that  
17 property, they were paid out of the proceeds from the sale  
18 of that property before any money was delivered to the  
19 district. All liens were paid on the property before we  
20 received any money. After that was all done, the district  
21 received \$19,700, approximately, I don't have the exact  
22 figure in front of me here. That is an approximation.  
23 That is what the house was worth. That is what we sold it  
24 for.

12

1 be landlords, for the district to ever be landlords. When  
2 the board came into power both units were occupied. The  
3 unit on the first floor, nobody had paid rent on it in

4 16 months, and the unit on the second floor, nobody had  
5 paid rent on it for nine months, yet we were providing rent  
6 to those people with heat and hot water and electricity

7 included. The district was bearing the brunt of their  
8 living conditions. We started eviction proceedings, we

9 were successful in the eviction proceedings, and we went  
to

10 the house, got it ready for nonoccupancy, and held it until

11 we could sell it. That is the best explanation I have for  
12 you, sir. Thank you.

13 MODERATOR FLORIO: Any further discussion?

14 MR. GORMAN: David Gorman, 24 Hornbeam

15 Road. I can tell you I personally put a bid in on the  
16 house and I thank the board for not accepting it, the bid  
17 was 39,000 back in 2008, early spring. They didn't accept  
18 it because they were entertaining supposedly a bid above  
19 that. But I did tour the house, probably now -- at the  
20 time 39,000 was pretty generous and I thank them for not  
21 accepting it, we're stuck with 19.

22 MODERATOR FLORIO: Any further discussion?

23 Motion made and seconded. All in favor? All opposed?

24 (VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)

25 MODERATOR FLORIO: Next agenda report is a

13

1 report of the directors, Gary Cote, chairman.

2 CHAIRMAN COTE: Gary Cote, chairman of the

3 board. At this time I would like to introduce my fellow

4 board members. When I call your name, please stand and  
be

5 recognized: Shirley Matthews, Edward Matola, Edward

6 Webster. Keith Calci also sits on the board, I received a

7 call from Keith this afternoon, he had some family illness

8 problems going on and I was informed he was not going to  
be

9 able to make the meeting tonight.

10 After being established at the 2006 annual

11 meeting, the board has just completed our third year as the

12 governing body of the Coventry Fire District. Over the

13 past year the board has accomplished the following: We

14 held a property, the old Mapledale School property on

15 Mapledale Road. The property belonged to the Town of

16 Coventry. We turned that property back over to the Town  
of

17 Coventry, but before we did that we had to clean out the

18 hazardous material that was in that property that had been

19 stored in that property by the previous administration.

20 Thanks to Shirley Matthews we were able to get that

21 hazardous material removed at an approximate saving to  
the  
22 district of about \$60,000. That is what it should have  
23 cost, but through Shirley's efforts in dealing with the  
24 federal government and DEM we were able to get that done  
at  
25 no cost to the district. We turned the property back over

14

1 to the town, saving on insurance and saving us from any  
2 potential legal liability if anything was to happen on that  
3 property while it was in our possession.

4 We sold the house next door to the fire  
5 station. It was previously offered at public auction. It

6 was sold on September 30th, and per the board's previous  
7 vote all those funds are being utilized for needed capital  
8 improvement at the station. Capital improvements at the  
9 station thus far was the updates on all the work done on  
10 the second floor. This last year we actually put bunk  
11 rooms in for the guys upstairs. It used to be one big open  
12 dayroom with a couple of little offices and a bathroom  
13 upstairs. Currently it is a dayroom, and each of the men  
14 have separate quarters for the nights they have to spend at  
15 the station. The chief recently moved his office from the  
16 third floor down to the second floor, and we have plans in  
17 the future for a gym on the second floor, a gym on the  
18 second floor if we can do it with donated materials. The

**19 district will not be spending any money for gym apparatus,**

**20 but if we can do it through donations of equipment we  
would**

**21 like to establish a gym on the second floor of the station.**

**22 We are currently, as of the first of**

**23 January we will be enrolled in a new medical insurance**

**24 plan. We were part of the W.B. Collaborative plan through**

**25 the town. Our new policy is with Blue Cross/Blue Shield of**

**15**

**1 Rhode Island, and with this new policy we no longer have a**

**2 cap on the amounts of benefits received under the health**

**3 plan. Under the W.B. we had a cap, and anything that we**

**4 used over the cap, the town, because we bought through**

the

5 town, the town was having to pay out of the general fund  
6 that the W.B. holds. We will no longer be part of that  
7 plan as of January 1st.

8 We are currently in the process of  
9 vacating the third floor at the station for insurance  
10 purposes, as there is only one means of egress from the  
11 third floor. The insurance company has informed us that it  
12 would create a safety hazard if it was inhabited on a  
13 regular basis, so we are currently in the process of moving  
14 out of the third floor, the chief has already moved his  
15 office down. When we have accomplished that fully, and  
as  
16 of January 1st we are changing insurances, we will no

17 longer be insured through Masters & Servants, we will be  
18 insured through BFIS at an approximate savings of \$60,000  
19 per year for the district, for the same coverage, better  
20 coverage in some of the cases.

21 Tax collections this year have been a  
22 little slow. We've only collected about 85 percent thus  
23 far of outstanding taxes for the year. In past years we've  
24 averaged between 94 and 96 percent. This year due to  
25 the -- I'm going to say due to the economy, I'm not sure of

16

1 that, but I'm pretty confident in saying due to the economy  
2 collections have been a little slow. We have conducted tax

3 sales this year, unfortunately. Not one member of the  
4 board took this position in anticipation of having to send  
5 people's properties to tax sales, but if everybody else has  
6 to pay, then everybody else has to pay, and if the property  
7 has to go to tax sale, that is what has to be done. We're  
8 not happy about that, but we have to do the very best we  
9 can by all the taxpayers in the district, and use any means  
10 at our disposal to try to collect outstanding taxes. We  
11 are currently starting tax sale proceedings on many, many  
12 more properties. I believe the number is 213 -- excuse me,  
13 123 are currently in the lawyers' hands and we'll be  
14 starting the procedure for tax sale on those properties.

15 In the last year we were able to hire two

16 new firefighters to replace two retirees. Both of those  
17 firefighters are progressing well, I believe they're both  
18 in the house with us tonight. We're glad to have them.  
19 We're lucky to have them. We accomplished that.

20                   And Number eight on my list is budget  
21 preparation. We did not raise the rate on the residential  
22 tax last year, although the evaluation did go up, our rates  
23 stayed the same, and we are going to present a budget to  
24 the taxpayers tonight that calls for the same rate as last  
25 year, and as you all know there will be no reevaluation on

1 property this year from the town. So everyone's taxes

2 should remain the same for the upcoming year as they were  
3 last year. Thank you very much.

4 MODERATOR FLORIO: Is there a motion to  
5 accept the report of the board of directors?

6 MS. FLANAGAN: I have some questions, if I  
7 might. Mr. Cote, thank you very much for your update, I  
8 just have a few questions for you. The first would be, a  
9 tax rate that you just referenced of \$2.10 per thousand,  
10 which remained unchanged between the prior year and the  
11 current fiscal year, seems questionable to me. In my  
12 understanding of budgets and how they're put together,  
one  
13 would take the base, meaning the assessed value of the

14 property, and not build their budget around a rate. The  
15 budget should already be built, the base should be taken  
16 and the rate is set. I have never seen a budget where the  
17 tax rate stayed exactly the same unless the budget was  
18 built around the new rate, which in essence between last  
19 year and this fiscal year means that the fire district took  
20 and increased, the increased assessments that were given  
to  
21 it by the Town of Coventry and built their budget around  
22 that higher base by not changing the tax rate and taking  
23 that higher revenue and finding a way to spend it in their  
24 budget. I would suggest that the tax rate should never  
25 stay the same from year to year. The budget should be

1 built, the assessed value should be taken, and the rate  
2 should be set, and to do otherwise tells me we're not using  
3 appropriate budgeting techniques. That is number one.

4                   Number two, it is an unfair statement to  
5 say that because we are in a year of a period where we're  
6 not revaluing, the town's base did not change. I  
7 personally know that there were many corrections made to  
8 the valuations that were made in the last year and the town  
9 should certainly have provided the fire district with a new  
10 base. I would like to ask, A, what is the base that this  
11 budget is being built on as compared to last year? If

12           somebody could get those numbers, the figure of the

**actual**

**13 base from this year that we're in to last year, I think**

**14 that is important to know because, again, the rate should**

**15 never stay exactly the same. Thank you.**

**16 MODERATOR FLORIO: Come up.**

**17 MR. CLAVIN: Kevin Clavin, 12 Evergreen**

**18 Court. How does Clarian figure in that whole shrinking tax**

**19 base thing? I know I'm punchy because I'm working a lot  
of**

**20 night hours now. Are we in old business, still? Because**

**21 we didn't have an auditor's report, we had a tax**

**22 collector's report, a report from the board of directors.**

**23 Where are we?**

**24 CHAIRMAN COTE: On the report from the**

**25 chairman of the board of directors.**

**19**

**1 MR. CLAVIN: Did we have an auditor's**  
**2 report yet?**

**3 CHAIRMAN COTE: You'll have to accept my**  
**4 apologies, as the moderator may have called it out of order**  
**5 on the agenda. I have an auditor's report in front of me**  
**6 that will be presented to the taxpayers.**

**7 MR. CLAVIN: How about the Clarian thing?**

**8 CHIEF LABBADIA: Clarian, we are still**  
**9 collecting taxes from them for the main mill, and the**  
**10 existing property switched over to another company which**

is

11 trying to bring more business in. They're in the process  
12 of doing that now.

13 MODERATOR FLORIO: Any further discussion?

14 Do I have a motion to accept the chairman of the board of  
15 directors report?

16 MR. MATOLA: Motion to accept.

17 MR. WEBSTER: Second.

18 MODERATOR FLORIO: All in favor?

19 (VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)

20 MODERATOR FLORIO: Now the auditor's

21 report.

22 MR. GORMAN: David Gorman, 24 Hornbeam

23 Road. I know we'd love to hear the auditor's report, but  
24 I'm going to motion we don't hear it. It is going to be  
25 the same redundancy we've heard for the last four years,

20

1 how they tell us to do something one way, and we don't  
2 follow it. I motion we waive the reading of this report.

3 MODERATOR FLORIO: A motion has been made.

4 CHAIRMAN COTE: Second.

5 MR. CLAVIN: Again, are we going by the  
6 general accounting standards, or not?

7 MS. MURPHY: Cash basis.

8 MR. CLAVIN: Not the general accounting

9 standards?

10 MS. MURPHY: Correct.

11 MODERATOR FLORIO: Any further discussion?

12 MR. JOHNSON: Joel Johnson, 164 Goff

13 Avenue. I think it would be important for this group to

14 hear the details of the auditor's report, because even

15 though it may be the same as previous years, a lot of these

16 people weren't here in previous years. I would like to

17 know if it is a qualified opinion, whether or not there

18 were any significant deficiencies noted by the auditors.

19 Those kind of things are very important. I would not agree

20 the reading should be waived.

21 MODERATOR FLORIO: Any further discussion?

**22 Auditors report will be left so people can review it at**  
**23 their discretion. Motion made and seconded. All in favor?**  
**24 All opposed?**  
**25 (VOICE VOTE, MOTION FAILED)**

**21**

**1 MODERATOR FLORIO: Nos have it.**

**2 CHAIRMAN COTE: Read it.**

**3 MS. MURPHY: From James N. Nadeau Company.**

**4 We have reviewed the accompanying assessment of assets,**

**5 liabilities and fund balance, cash basis of the Coventry**

**6 Fire District, Anthony Station, as of November 30, 2009,**

**7 and the related statement of revenues, expenditures, and**

8 changes in unreserved fund balance, cash basis, budget  
and  
9 actual, for the fiscal year ending in accordance with  
10 statements on standards for accounting and review  
services  
11 issued by the American Institute of Certified Public  
12 Accountants. All information included in these financial  
13 statements is the representation of the management of the  
14 Coventry Fire District, Anthony Station. A review consists  
15 principally of inquiries of fire district personnel, and  
16 analytical procedures applied to financial data. It is  
17 substantially less in scope than an examination in  
18 accordance with generally accepted auditing standards,  
the  
19 object of which is the expression of an opinion regarding

20 the financial statements taken as a whole. Accordingly, we  
21 don't express such an opinion.

22 Based on our review, with the exception of

23 the matters described in the following paragraphs, we are

24 not aware of any material modifications that should be  
made

25 to the accompanying financial statements in order for them

22

1 to be in conformity with the cash basis of accounting.

2 Management has not capitalized fixed

3 assets and accordingly hasn't reported depreciation

4 expenses on those assets. Accounting principles generally

5 accepted in the United States of America require the  
6 capital assets be capitalized and appreciated which would  
7 increase the assets, fund balance, and expenses of the  
8 governmental activities. The amount by which this  
9 departure would affect the assets, fund balances and  
10 expenses of the governmental activities is not reasonably  
11 determinable. The Coventry Fire District, Anthony Station,  
12 has not implemented the financial reporting requirements  
of

13 Governmental Accounting Standards Board, GASB,  
Statement

14 Number 34, basic financial statements and management  
15 discussion and analysis for state and local governments.  
16 Accordingly, the Coventry Fire District, Anthony Station,

17 hasn't presented governmentwide financial statements. In  
18 addition, the Coventry Fire District, Anthony Station, has  
19 not presented the management discussion and analysis  
20 information that the Governmental Accounting Standards  
21 Board has determined is required to supplement the basic  
22 financial statements.

23                   Lastly, the fire district utilizes the  
24 cash basis of accounting. GASB 34 requires the modified  
25 accrual basis of accounting to be utilized by all

23

1 governmental funds. Management has elected to omit  
2 substantially all disclosures required by generally

3 accepted accounting principles. If the omitted disclosures  
4 were included in the financial statements they might  
5 influence the user's conclusions about the fire district's  
6 financial position and result of operations. Accordingly,  
7 these financial statements are not designed for those who  
8 are not informed about such matters.

9 Our review is made for the purpose of  
10 expressing limited assurance that there are no material  
11 modifications that should be made to the financial  
12 statements in order for them to be in conformity with the  
13 cash basis of accounting. The information and the  
14 accompanying schedules are presented for purposes of  
15 additional analysis. Such information has been subjected

16 to the inquiry and analytical procedures applied in the  
17 review of the basic financial statements. This information  
18 is presented on cash basis of accounting, and we are not  
19 aware of any material modifications that should be made  
20 thereto. James Nadeau, December 4, 2009.

21 MODERATOR FLORIO: Do I hear a motion on  
22 the auditor's report?

23 MS. FLANAGAN: Point of order. Sounds to  
24 me like there are a multitude of problems with the  
25 financial statements of the fire district. What is being

24

1 done to correct those problems, and bring the opinion of

2 our auditors in par where they say they don't have a  
3 problem with our financial statements? I'm noting that  
4 they were not recording depreciation properly on  
5 capitalized assets, that our financial statements are not  
6 consistent with generally accepted accounting principles,  
7 that no management discussion was provided to the  
auditors.

8 These are significant problems pointed out by the auditor  
9 and I would like one of you, if not all of you, to let us  
10 know what is being done to correct those, and are we  
11 bringing the auditors back in to show the corrections?

And

12 if so, when?

13 CHAIRMAN COTE: To answer your question,

14 we are currently in the process of obtaining a contract  
15 with an accounting firm to do all of the district's  
16 accounting, as well as our treasury work on a yearly basis,  
17 and a different accounting firm to provide us with an  
18 accurate accounting of the district's assets and  
19 liabilities on a yearly basis. We are currently addressing  
20 that. As we go through this every year, and every year the  
21 taxpayers are not happy, and I agree. We are now in our  
22 first full year of having a chief, a full-time chief on  
23 board who is making recommendations to us. He has  
more  
24 experience at this point. We are going with his  
25 recommendations. We are making the changes. We are  
trying

1 to do what is right by the taxpayers, and all I can tell  
2 you is this is not the type of thing that we will have at  
3 next year's annual meeting. We will have an accounting  
4 service here to give an accurate accounting of what is  
5 going on in the district, all our assets, all of our  
6 depreciations, all of the values. I guess the best answer  
7 I can give you is that we are addressing the problem, and I  
8 can tell you that we will not have this problem at any of  
9 our future meetings. Thank you.

10 MR. JOHNSON: That is pretty shocking,  
11 what was just read. I think it's -- obviously it was

12 stated that it has been the same thing year in and year  
13 out. If this is the case it is really unforgivable that it  
14 has been allowed to go that way for so long. I would like  
15 to know from someone whether or not the state auditor  
16 general is aware of the situation here with the district's

17 audit? Whether Ernest Almonti has been contacted,  
whether

18 he's looked at the books and whether he has rendered an  
19 opinion on the situation in the Anthony Fire District?

20 CHIEF LABBADIA: What is going on here is  
21 you have 40 years of government, and it's 40 years that we  
22 have to change. The changes are being made. They're not  
23 going to happen overnight. We are addressing a lot of the  
24 issues because I found a lot of issues that we did have to

25 address. I do have an accounting firm that we are going to

26

1 be using. The accounting firm, he is a certified CPA so he  
2 knows the protocol that he has to follow, and I think in  
3 the future it is going to change dramatically in a lot more  
4 ways than just the accounting aspects. You have to bear  
5 with me, I have only been here a year and a half, almost  
6 two years. There has been a lot of changes going on, there  
7 are changes that need to be addressed, more than just this  
8 one. I can't really totally answer your question, but I  
9 can tell you it is being addressed, and by next year you  
10 will not have the same issues that we do have this year.

11                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** I would like to say that  
12    it's shocking to me that you folks stood up here and put a  
13    motion on the table to dispense with the reading of a  
14    qualified auditor's report which basically tells us as  
15    taxpayers that your financial statements are not reliable.  
16    With that being said, the second question I would ask  
17    everyone here, if we have an audit that says there are  
18    major problems with the financial statements of this fire  
19    district, how on earth can you people be before us asking  
20    us to vote on this when we don't have the problem  
21    straightened out? Thank you.

22                   **MR. CLAVIN:** Again my question is this,  
23    what I'm very concerned about for the whole district is,

24 God forbid it turns out where we suddenly get stuck with a  
25 lawyer turning around with a class action lawsuit taking

27

1 all the taxpayers and saying we're not paying taxes until  
2 this is done. We go a whole year without collecting  
3 revenues, what is going to happen? Are we going to go  
4 bankrupt?

5 MR. GORMAN: I did stand before you asking  
6 for the motion because as you can see I'm as frustrated  
7 every year, the same recording every year. My first  
8 question, I'm sorry for the people who haven't made some

of

9 these meetings through the years, I've been to just about  
10 every annual meeting that I can recall in the last six or  
11 seven years. One of my first questions to the board is,  
12 what do we pay for the audit?

13 MS. MURPHY: It is about \$3,000 a year.

14 It is not an audit, it is a review.

15 MR. GORMAN: I got to tell you, I think

16 you can find \$3,000 being spent somewhere else a lot  
better

17 than what we're spending it on now, when I get the same

18 exact report every single year. It is sickness. My

19 question to the board and chief, I understand you've been

20 here a year and a half, we hired a fire chief for operation

21 of the department, we elected the board to run the

22 administration of the department, why is the fire chief  
23 doing the board members' job? That is my first question to  
24 Mr. Cote.

25 CHAIRMAN COTE: The fire chief is not

28

1 doing the board members' job. In this department, the fire  
2 chief is not only running the fire department, he is  
3 responsible for the administrative end of this on what is  
4 needed and what changes should be made. He works in  
5 conjunction with the board of directors. Therefore we take  
6 his input, it is taken very seriously, and when we can act  
7 upon them, we do.

8                   **MR. GORMAN:** So you take the fire chief's  
9   input, but for four years or five years --

10                  **MODERATOR FLORIO:** Please.

11                  **CHAIRMAN COTE:** Mr. Gorman, you haven't  
12   been asking me for four years for anything. I've been here  
13   for three. If you're going to throw --

14                  **MR. GORMAN:** Three years and three fire  
15   chiefs, this is the third fire chief, he's doing a great  
16   job so far operationally. I don't understand why he is  
17   doing the board's job. Don't give me the shenanigans --

18                  **MODERATOR FLORIO:** No allegations. Let's  
19   be civil.

20                  **MR. GORMAN:** It's the same stuff every

21 year.

22 MODERATOR FLORIO: I want to point out to

23 the body, that the board of directors' job is not

24 administration. The board of directors' job is setting

25 policy. The job of administration lies with the chief

29

1 under contract, and under the bylaws and charter the board

2 of directors sets policy.

3 Please, if you have to make a point, do it

4 rationally, do it reasonably, and calm. Thank you. Any

5 other discussion? There was a motion made to accept and

6 seconded to accept the auditor's report for the year 2009.

7 All in favor? All opposed?

8 (VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)

9 MODERATOR FLORIO: The ayes have it.

10 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can we get a count on

11 that, please?

12 MODERATOR FLORIO: No. The chair has made

13 the ruling.

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Motion to overrule the

15 chair.

16 MODERATOR FLORIO: The chair makes the

17 ruling. That is not the way it is done. The chairman sets

18 the rules. He also is the final determiner of what the

19 vote is. Report by the chief. Chief, would you please

**20 make your report? The chief is going to do a PowerPoint**

**21 presentation. The moderator requests no questions from  
the**

**22 body until the presentation is completed. Thank you.**

**23 CHIEF LABBADIA: I'm going to run through**

**24 it as quick as I can. I'm going to start with the mission**

**25 statement. To protect and enhance the quality of life of**

**30**

**1 the citizens of Coventry Fire District by preventing and**

**2 minimizing the loss of life and property threatened by**

**3 hazards of fire, medical, rescue, emergency, hazardous**

**4 material incidents and disaster situations therein. Along**

5 with the fire chief, the deputy chief, company officer,  
6 firefighters, a joint effort must be taken to instill the  
7 continuance of the appropriate programs and training  
needed  
8 to carry on forward progress of the Coventry Fire District  
9 in an ongoing effort to provide services as needed to  
10 protect the community.

11 Some of the goals we achieved in the past  
12 two years since I've been here, in repairs alone, we  
13 upgraded the electrical service to a 200 amp service in the  
14 firehouse, we also installed a generator that is fully  
15 operational that runs the whole fire station in the event  
16 the power goes out and we have to use the property for a  
17 shelter for the citizens within the district. We remodeled

18 the living quarters on the second floor with new heat and  
19 air conditioning. We switched from oil heat to natural  
20 gas, which is going to be a considerable savings in station  
21 fuel. We installed a new fire alarm system to protect the  
22 entire building. I go out there every day with my fire  
23 marshal and we ask people in the community to install fire  
24 alarm systems in their building based on Rhode Island law,  
25 and the firehouse didn't even have one. It is kind of

31

1 hypocritical for me to go out to the businesses telling  
2 them they have to install fire alarms in the buildings and  
3 we don't have one in the firehouse itself. We're in the

4 process now of installing a natural gas boiler to run the  
5 heating system on the first floor. All this money has  
6 already been allocated and put aside.

7                   Some other goals, with all the  
8 improvements over the last two years we have been able to  
9 decrease our insurance. Our insurance went up again this  
10 year, it is \$138,237. We were paying for insurance to  
11 insure everything, the equipment, our building, so on. We  
12 actually, because of all the upgrades we've done in the  
13 firehouse, we're able to drop that insurance dramatically.  
14 We're going to pay 68,300 a year this year. That is quite  
15 a bit of a savings based on the projects that we have  
16 undergone in the firehouse and the changes we have

made.

17                   **For this year one of our goals is to**  
18   **replace the roof on the firehouse. Because we are not able**  
19   **to occupy the third floor of the fire station now because**  
20   **of means of egress, and that was one of the big reasons for**  
21   **insurance purposes, it is less expensive to go with a**  
22   **pitched roof over the building than to replace it with a**  
23   **flat roof, it is a lot more costly for a flat roof, so it**  
24   **will be less expensive to go with a pitched roof, so that**  
25   **is one of the issues we're going to address in this year's**

**32**

**1   budget. As usual we want to continue to maintain a high**

**2 level of service, increase where possible with the least  
3 budgetary impact. That is my main goal all the time.**

**4 Our fire prevention division is headed by  
5 the fire marshal. We've strived to reach the goals of  
6 public education, safety presentations in the public and  
7 private schools, safety talks in private sectors,  
8 businesses, as well as community organizations. Special  
9 projects provided by local and state and federal programs  
10 such as Learn Not to Burn, Stop, Drop and Roll, Teen  
11 Safety, Home Fire Safety, Coventry Firefighters Community  
12 Field Day, Your Firefighter is Friendly Open House, now  
13 that the station is all upgraded. Life Safety Prevention  
14 for the elderly, we go into the elderly houses and put on**

15 classes for them. Fire safety for the disabled, as well.

16 The fire marshal's daily duties are to

17 develop and implement training programs for businesses,

18 schools, complexes and homes, to establish a practice of

19 emergency evacuation procedures. He also does  
inspections,

20 code enforcement, fire cause and determination. Year to

21 date, smoke inspections were 99, and plan reviews were  
19,

22 that were done by the fire marshal's office. The Town of

23 Coventry has a population of 34,000-change, in an area of

24 square miles of 62.3. The Coventry Fire District, Anthony

25 Village, is the most densely populated per capita of

1 17,000-plus people in a service area of 5 1/2 square miles.

2 It is pretty densely populated, that is why we do a

3 considerable amount of runs. The total run count for the

4 Town of Coventry is 5,048 runs, the total run count for the

5 Coventry Fire District year to date is 1,926 runs, expected

6 runs are over 2,000 runs a year. Rescue calls were 1,504,

7 1,122 of these calls were rescue calls within the district,

8 382 of those calls were out-of-district, whether it be

9 Central Coventry, Hopkins Hill, or West Warwick, which a

10 lot of times we go into West Warwick. Fire calls are 422,

11 272 of those fire calls were in-district fire calls, and

12 150 were out-of-district fire calls.

13                   **Personnel salaries. The chief is \$72,000**  
14   **a year, the deputy chief is 12,000 a year. He is a**  
15   **part-time volunteer deputy. Captains' salaries, we have**  
16   **one line captain, one administrative captain, \$112,072.46;**  
17   **lieutenants' salaries, three line lieutenants, 163,573.77;**  
18   **private salary, eight line firefighters, 403,341.56; two**  
19   **administrative salaries, which is the administrative**  
20   **assistant secretary and the tax collector, 80,341.56. The**

21                   **treasurer, one administrator, we were paying**  
23,000-change

22   **for a treasurer, we're now going to an accounting firm and**  
23   **paying \$13,000, which is a savings of 15,000 (sic).**

24                   **Overtime calculations. Based on**  
25   **contractual obligations, this is the formula I use to base**

1 my overtime figure. Annual leave, 188 days at 48,314.12;  
2 sick days, 260 of them, 66,817.40; union business, 12 times  
3 a year, 3,083.88; funeral leave is \$3,854.85; on-the-job  
4 injuries, 184 days, is 35,783.39; personal days, there's 30  
5 of them, 7,709.70; military leave, 3,597.86; family illness  
6 is 60 days, which comes out to 15,419.40; and comp time at  
7 15,419.40, for a total overtime figure of \$200,000.

8 Longevity personnel for 2009/2010, 18,314.

9 Holiday pay, 14 holidays at \$49,800; 13 weeks vacation  
10 payout, 13,200; health coverage, Blue Cross/Delta Dental is  
11 going to increase this year because of the fact that we're

12 going under a small business program and we're not in the  
13 town anymore. With the total of the two, Blue Cross and  
14 also Delta Dental, for 18 personnel total, 15 family plans,  
15 three single, that's a total health coverage of 282,000.  
16 That will commence January 1st.

17 Severance pay, two personnel, one  
18 personnel at 1,200, and the last payment for Chief Mruk at  
19 \$6,000, a total of 7,200. Rhode Island employee pension,  
20 15 personnel, it increased this year due to the fact that  
21 we have to enroll the firefighters into a COLA program,  
22 which is part of a contractual obligation that we have to  
23 meet, which comes out to 212,000; legal and support  
24 services, 20,000; EMTC pay for eight personnel is \$16,640;

25 streetlights, 100,000; training and college classes come

35

1 out to 2,000, hazardous material awareness level, which we

2 have to do this year, comes out to 500, a total of 2,500.

3 Physical exams, 1,200. Ladder and rescue payment,

4 56,528.03. We have two more years of a rescue payment at

5 19,000, which is a total of 75,528.03.

6 Another line item is air packs and

7 supplies, some of the things we may need in repairing our

8 air packs, that comes to \$1,000. Hydrants are 116,000, and

9 vehicle fuel is 15,000. Clothing and maintenance, we have

10 to provide two shirts and two pants every year to the fire

11 personnel, which has a figure of \$2,000. Clothing

12 maintenance, which is \$1,000 a person, maintenance fee  
they

13 receive at 13,000. A total of \$15,000.

14 Radio maintenance, fire alarm and

15 computers, radio supplies, station software and fire alarm,

16 we are still in the process of taking fire alarm boxes down

17 in the district, we're taking the ones off the poles and

18 we're going to try to create a little revenue, there is a

19 demand for them, that total is \$5,000. Firefighter

20 equipment and supplies, we did pretty good on equipment

21 last year, there were a lot of issues that we had to

22 address so the equipment figure dropped considerably  
from

**23 last year because we don't have to do as much this year.**

**24 We're going to need to buy some hoses, nozzles, and I  
would**

**25 like to replace an old aluminum boat with an inflatable**

**36**

**1 Zodiac, and that total is 15,000. Station cleaning**

**2 supplies total 5,000, that is all the things we use, toilet**

**3 paper, dishwashing liquid.**

**4 First aid and rescue supplies. This one**

**5 went up. What is happening now is the hospitals used to  
do**

**6 an exchange program with us, so as we used things they**

**7 would replace them. The hospitals are hurting, like**

**8 everybody else is, so now they're not replacing things.**

**9 That means the burden is put on us so that is why it**

**10 increased 10,000. Vehicle maintenance and repairs, pump**

**11 testing, aerial testing, ground ladder testing, we have**

**12 five semi-annual preventative maintenance on apparatus,  
and**

**13 also we do annual preventative maintenance on the**

**14 apparatus, air supplies need to be tested, and oil changes**

**15 and so on for the staff cars, comes out to \$20,000.**

**16 Building maintenance, light bulbs, garage**

**17 door preventative maintenance, door fobs for security in**

**18 the station, that is a total \$5,000. Heating, a total of**

**19 \$15,000 for heating bills, electric, 10,000; phones, 5,500;**

20 water, \$1,000. Office expenses, postage, \$5,000; office  
21 supplies, 7500, 15,000 in all. Insurance, BFSI, the new  
22 company, is \$65,651. Initially, like I said prior, it was  
23 138,000. It is a considerable saving by just what we did  
24 in the station so far. Beacon Mutual is a separate policy  
25 based on a contractual obligation for life insurance for

37

1 the firefighters, separate policy. I'm actually in the  
2 process of seeing if I can put it all on one policy and  
3 switch it over so there is only one insurance carrier. The  
4 total is 68,300, like I said previously. Social  
5 Security/Medicare, that varies based on what they make.

6 You can't get a solid number so it's going to vary based on  
7 the salary ranges. But we put \$20,000 into there. Tax  
8 anticipation note, we actually took 200,000 this year.  
9 Capital improvements is \$15,000. Total budget for 2009 is  
10 2,362,813.06.

11 At this time I would like to thank

12 Mr. Cote and the board of directors, you, the taxpayers of  
13 the Coventry Fire District, for the opportunity to be the  
14 fire chief. It has been my honor and privilege to serve  
15 with some of the most outstanding and highly dedicated  
16 firefighters of the Coventry Fire District. Any questions,  
17 I'll be more than happy to answer them.

18 MODERATOR FLORIO: Before we accept the

19 chief's report, does anyone have any questions?

20 MR. CLAVIN: How many houses are there in

21 the district?

22 CHIEF LABBADIA: Roughly, 4,000 tax bills

23 a year.

24 MR. CLAVIN: According to the National

25 Fire Protection Agency there were 400,000 structural fires

38

1 last year. According to the Bureau of Census there is 113

2 million households in the United States. That comes out to

3 about a structural fire for every 285 houses, give or take.

4 So that is coming out to what, you have about 13 jobs a

5 year?

6 CHIEF LABBADIA: One a month, actual

7 working fires, probably, yes.

8 MR. CLAVIN: How many guys are on duty at

9 any one time?

10 CHIEF LABBADIA: Three.

11 MR. CLAVIN: I was a fireman years ago.

12 An attack by Anthony, how are we going in with three guys

13 on a structural fire?

14 CHIEF LABBADIA: That is another issue

15 that we need to address.

16 MR. CLAVIN: Just for the general public

17 to know, you got three guys doing a roof, two guys on a

18 forcible entry, you got two guys on a primary search, you  
19 got an attack line, backup line, we're talking a total 15  
20 guys, right?

21 CHIEF LABBADIA: We have automatic aid  
22 which we get support, it is a run card.

23 MR. CLAVIN: We're not using any other  
24 Anthony firefighters on a fire in the district?

25 CHIEF LABBADIA: No, we use Central

39

1 Coventry, Hopkins Hill.

2 MR. CLAVIN: If there is a working fire in

3 Anthony, it is three firemen?

4                   **CHIEF LABBADIA: It is different, we have**  
5   **automatic aid in the town.**

6                   **MR. CLAVIN: Let's assume they're all away**  
7   **on jobs.**

8                   **CHIEF LABBADIA: Three guys.**

9                   **MR. CLAVIN: We're going to attack that**  
10   **fire with three guys?**

11                  **CHIEF LABBADIA: I fought fires myself**  
12   **back in the day, they burn a lot different now, but I agree**  
13   **with you, it is not practical.**

14                  **MR. JOHNSON: This really isn't in the**  
15   **form of a question and you may rule me out of order, and**  
16   **I'll understand. I would like to make a motion, and I'll**

17 read it. Mr. Moderator, this goes back to the previous

18 issue with the audit. Mr. Moderator, I hereby --

19 MODERATOR FLORIO: I believe the solicitor

20 made his directive.

21 MR. CAPALDI: Let's hear the motion first.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Moderator, I hereby move

23 that the board of the Coventry Fire District, Anthony

24 Station, direct the chief to implement a modified accrual

25 basis of accounting consistent with the requirements of

40

1 GASB, which stands for Governmental Accounting  
Standards

2 Board, Number 34, prior to the next annual meeting of the

3 district. Respectfully submitted, Joel Johnson.

4 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Second.

5 MODERATOR FLORIO: Motion made and

6 seconded. Chief, do you have any comment?

7 CHIEF LABBADIA: No, I have to agree. The

8 new accounting company is going to follow those  
standards.

9 MODERATOR FLORIO: Motion made and

10 seconded. All in favor? Anyone opposed?

11 (VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)

12 MODERATOR FLORIO: Motion passes. Are

13 there any other questions for the chief?

14 MR. GORMAN: We're not discussing the

**15 budget, just the chief's report?**

**16 MODERATOR FLORIO: Yes. Did you have a**

**17 question on the budget? You can ask the question to the**

**18 chief about the budget.**

**19 MR. GORMAN: Chief, who came up with this**

**20 budget?**

**21 CHIEF LABBADIA: I did.**

**22 MR. GORMAN: Personally, yourself, no**

**23 input from the board?**

**24 CHIEF LABBADIA: No. At the budget**

**25 meeting the board has input. I submit a budget to them.**

**1 Multiple budgets.**

**2 MR. GORMAN: Chief says --**

**3 CHIEF LABBADIA: We have budget meetings.**

**4 We did have budget meetings, but I present the budget to**

**5 them at the work session and then we rationalize and go**

**6 through it and see what we're going to accept.**

**7 MR. GORMAN: My question is to the**

**8 moderator, if we accept the chief's report, are we**

**9 accepting the budget, or are we going to have a separate**

**10 budget?**

**11 MODERATOR FLORIO: We already accepted the**

**12 budget.**

**13 CHAIRMAN COTE: No, we did not. Separate**

14 resolutions to discuss the budget.

15 MR. GORMAN: My question to that is, are

16 we going to go line by line when we accept the budget, or

17 go through a bottom-line budget?

18 CHIEF LABBADIA: I just went through line

19 by line with you the budget in my presentation. So at that

20 point I would assume you're going to accept the budget as

21 gave it to you, once it comes up in a resolution form.

22 MR. GORMAN: My question -- then I'm going

23 to go to a couple of lines here. My question on legal,

24 last year I believe we budgeted \$20,000, we only spent

25 \$10,000. We have 33,000 in legal?

1                   **CHIEF LABBADIA: It is legal and support**  
2   **services, actually the treasurer's money is in there, also.**  
3   **The 13,000 for the treasurer, the new treasurer.**

4                   **MR. GORMAN: We're going to hold legal at**  
5   **20?**

6                   **CHIEF LABBADIA: Yes. There are other**  
7   **legal issues that come up. The other 10,000 is a retainer**  
8   **for the lawyer, but there are other legal issues that come**  
9   **up. When we have a tax sale we have to pay for --**

10                  **CHAIRMAN COTE: Excuse me. Mr. Gorman, at**  
11   **the special meeting that was held at the Anthony Fire**  
12   **Station, that you attended, the taxpayers voted to accept**

13 the legal responsibilities for the two deputy chiefs that  
14 were being named in a litigation case separate from our  
15 legal budget. So we budgeted \$10,000 for that case this  
16 year, because no one knows what the standing is on that  
17 case. The gentleman who was involved in the case who is  
18 still on the department was asked as recently as yesterday  
19 to get an update from his attorney to find out where that  
20 case is. But the taxpayers voted to accept those legal

21 responsibilities, so we have to budget money for them,  
when

22 the bill comes, we have to be able to pay it.

23 MR. GORMAN: 10,000 for that case and  
24 10,000 for the rest of the district's business?

1                   **MR. GORMAN: Does the legal team also work**  
2   **for tax sales as well under that 10,000, or is that**  
3   **separate?**

4                   **MR. CAPALDI: Tax sales, the payment of**  
5   **legal fees has nothing to do with the district. The**  
6   **payment of legal fees are paid by the taxpayer that owes**  
7   **the taxes. So whenever we start the process, we add in our**  
8   **fee to the taxpayer.**

9                   **MR. GORMAN: Your services for the 10,000**  
10   **would include what for the district?**

11                   **MR. CAPALDI: Union matters, advice, we**  
12   **handled the sale of that building within that \$10,000.**

13                   **MR. GORMAN: One of my questions, what**  
14   **would be union matters in a noncontract year if we have a**  
15   **contract with the employees?**

16                   **MR. CAPALDI: You don't know unions, then.**  
17   **Even in a noncontract year you have things such as**  
18   **grievances, meetings concerning the grievances.**

19                   **CHAIRMAN COTE: Mr. Gorman, I would be**  
20   **willing to let you peruse the contract that we have with**  
21   **the legal.**

22                   **MR. GORMAN: No, I was trying to get to**  
23   **the 33,000. The next item would be for the chief under new**

24 equipment, 15,000. Was that what was budgeted last year?

25 CHIEF LABBADIA: Last year was 37,000.

44

1 MR. GORMAN: You're comfortable with 15?

2 CHIEF LABBADIA: Yeah, we made a lot of

3 changes to the apparatus with antiquated equipment.

When I

4 walked in the door you had 1 3/4 inch hose line, that gives

5 you 180 gallons a minute, but you had a 90-gallon-a-minute

6 nozzle on it. It was kind of defeating the purpose. That

7 was the kind of things that I encountered when I first came

8 in as the fire chief.

9 MR. GORMAN: The point I'm making is, we

10 have 33,000 budgeted for legal matters, I understand we're  
11 a business, we're in the business of saving lives and  
12 extinguishing fires, equipment supplies for fire and EMS;  
13 are we budgeting enough for that or should we hold tight  
14 with other items, such as legal items?

15 CHIEF LABBADIA: I think we're going to be  
16 all right due to the fact -- I don't know, if the ladder  
17 passes in the resolution, we'll be all right, but that  
18 truck is a stock vehicle, it comes to the equipment. So it  
19 is going to give us additional equipment on top of the  
20 equipment we have. I don't think it will be that much of a  
21 major issue. I think you're going to see more changes in  
22 next year's budget, because there is going to be a little

23 more money to go around, with the savings that we're  
doing,

24 with changing to natural gas and the savings done in the  
25 building is going to give us some additional monies.

45

1 MR. CLAVIN: First of all, could the  
2 recorder put down I'm here as president of the Blackrock  
3 Homeowner's Association. I represent 54 homes. Chief, I  
4 don't like a guy in uniform, I don't like to hang out  
5 there, you basically gave me the case for why we should  
6 merge with Central Coventry. Are we as a board looking  
7 once we get this forensic audit straightened out and done,

8 are we going to join Central Coventry?

9 CHIEF LABBADIA: I can tell you that I

10 talked to the chief numerous times. Right now I don't

11 think it is fair for Central Coventry to come in and take

12 over when we are still in disarray. But I think it is

13 something that needs to be addressed in the future. You

14 have to understand, I've done a lot of research and fire

15 taxes throughout the state, Anthony, Coventry Fire District

16 holds the line, it is the top fire district in the state,

17 and we have not much more growth to go, so that means  
the

18 only place to put it is on the taxpayer, and I'm not

19 willing to do that. I think there's other issues that we

20 need to address, and as we start to address them -- as you

**21 can see, we made budget again without raising. I**

**22 understand how people feel about cash basis and so on,  
but**

**23 in all reality, the numbers are the numbers. This is what**

**24 it costs to run the fire department. I can't do the**

**25 numbers any different to make the numbers change. I have**

**46**

**1 to be realistic when I'm doing my numbers, and put them as**

**2 close as I can staying in the confines of what I am**

**3 collecting for taxes and everything else. Are we cutting**

**4 it close? Yeah. Are we cutting it close to the point**

**5 where we're on the verge of bankruptcy? No. Are we**

6 cutting it close where we'll need to raise the taxes 10

7 cents? No, I don't think so. But there is a lot of other

8 issues that I need to address, so you're aware of what is

9 going to happen, because things change. ISO ratings

10 change. I've give you the opportunity to understand what

11 the ISO is all about and how the rating is going to change

12 and how it is going to affect your house insurance,  
because

13 it is going to affect your house insurance. There is a lot

14 of issues we have to address.

15 MR. CLAVIN: Can we put on record that

16 Anthony Fire District pays \$2.10 per assessed thousand.

17 The average is 93 cents in Rhode Island.

18 CHIEF LABBADIA: Out of the paid fire

19 district, it is a \$1.70 on average.

20 CHAIRMAN COTE: I want you to know that as

21 recently as yesterday, I and this board, me and

22 Mrs. Matthews and the chief and deputy chief sat with our

23 unions, the board that represents the union in the Anthony

24 Fire District, to work on some other issues, but one of the

25 agreements that we did make is that before January 1st in

47

1 conjunction the two boards will set up a committee, a study

2 committee to study the benefits and realities of merging

3 with the Central Coventry Fire District, and we will work

4 with Central's board to the best of our ability and

5 Central's union to the best of our ability, to the best of  
6 their ability, to try to come up with the answers that the  
7 taxpayers need on whether a merger is beneficial to the  
8 district or not. But there will be a study committee set  
9 up before January 1st and I would say that that process has  
10 started as of now.

11 MR. CLAVIN: As president of a homeowners  
12 association I can tell you I believe Central Coventry has  
13 somewhere along the line of 40 guys that they can call at  
14 any point in time. Ten working at all times. Not just for  
15 safetywise, for committeewise and everything, this report  
16 came out in 2004, I believe Central Coventry merged in  
17 2006.

18 **CHIEF LABBADIA: Central Coventry is going**

19 **to go through the same thing with the ISO because last**  
time

20 **they got evaluated was ten years ago. You have to**

21 **understand now they're 29-point-something square miles.**

22 **That plays a factor in ISO ratings, also. Things are going**

23 **to change all the way around in Coventry.**

24 **MR. CLAVIN: As president of the**

25 **association, allow me to tell you I feel perfectly willing**

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1 **to speak for all 54 households when we say anything that is**

2 **going to increase safety for the firemen is going to lower**

3 our fire taxes and get quicker responses, I am for as  
4 president of the association, I state I am for.

5 MODERATOR FLORIO: Any other questions for  
6 the chief?

7 MS. FLANAGAN: Laura Flanagan. I would  
8 like to put the following motion on the floor. I hereby  
9 move that the board of the Anthony Fire District include  
10 the following additional information to its taxpayers in  
11 written form distributed to those in attendance at its 2009  
12 (sic) annual meeting: Number one, the assessed value  
13 creating its tax base; number two, the proposed tax rate;  
14 number three, revenue projections for all sources of  
15 revenue, including anticipated collections; number four,

16 comparison by line item for the prior three years; number  
17 five, a balanced budget showing that revenues equal  
18 expenses. Respectfully submitted, Laura A. Flanagan.

19 MODERATOR FLORIO: Thank you.

20 Mr. Solicitor, is this within the board's ability?

21 MR. CAPALDI: I want to know what is

22 pending and what is before the body. We have before the

23 body a report by the chief. That report is informational.

24 I don't think, in my opinion, you do not need a vote on his

25 report, it is informational only. Laura, is your motion

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1 related to the chief's?

2                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** Absolutely, the chief has  
3   provided us for informational purposes with a listing of  
4   expenditures of the fire district. I'm asking that the  
5   budget next year be prepared in such a fashion that it  
6   includes anticipated revenues, expenses, tax rate.

7                   **MR. CAPALDI:** Thank you. I would ask you  
8   to hold that motion until the budget is discussed, and you  
9   can make a motion during the budget portion of the  
hearing.

10   This is an informational report by the chief, yours deals  
11   directly with the budget and how it is prepared.

12                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** It deals with the  
13   information that the chief is providing to the taxpayers at  
14   this meeting. With all due respect, is my motion out of

15 order if I put it on the floor now, or if I wait and put it  
16 on the floor later?

17 MR. CAPALDI: The motion has to do with  
18 the budget.

19 MS. FLANAGAN: I don't think it does. I  
20 think it has to do with the information and --

21 MR. CAPALDI: Maybe I misunderstood the  
22 motion. Is the motion stating that when he --

23 MS. FLANAGAN: I'm talking about  
24 2009/2010, next year's meeting.

25 CHIEF LABBADIA: 2010/2011.

1                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** Not now, but next year's,  
2   that the chief prepares an informational packet similar to  
3   what he's given us, that includes revenue numbers, the tax  
4   rate that is before us, the base, and shows a balanced  
5   budget. This doesn't show me a balanced budget, this  
shows  
6   me expenses.

7                   **MR. CAPALDI:** Am I misinformed that you,  
8   Mr. Moderator, you have a section dealing with the budget?

9                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** This doesn't do anything to  
10   this year's budget. This is next year's.

11                  **MR. CAPALDI:** It is proper to bring it up  
12   at the time we're discussing the budget.

13 MS. FLANAGAN: He just presented the  
14 budget.

15 MR. CAPALDI: No, he is presenting an  
16 informational --

17 MS. FLANAGAN: Did you just not say you  
18 were presenting the budget?

19 CHIEF LABBADIA: It is in budget form,  
20 yes.

21 MS. FLANAGAN: If you want to rule me out  
22 of order, Mr. Capaldi, I would respect that and I will read  
23 the motion at the appropriate time.

24 MR. CAPALDI: This body has not yet  
25 reviewed your budget, has it, Mr. Cote?

1                   **CHAIRMAN COTE: No.**

2                   **MR. CAPALDI: I would ask that that motion**

3 **be presented as a motion when the budget is read. I think**

4 **that it is confusing as to how he presented it.**

5                   **MS. FLANAGAN: We're talking about**

6 **semantics, so I'll defer to your judgment.**

7                   **MR. CAPALDI: Thank you. By the way, next**

8 **year he doesn't have to do what he's doing this year. That**

9 **is why I want you to do it with the budget.**

10                  **MR. GORMAN: A couple of things, a comment**

11 **on what Mr. Cote had said with regards to merging. I can**

12 tell you for a fact that I sat before taxpayers three years  
13 ago, actually I believe it was four years ago, before  
14 Mr. Cote was elected, and every year thereafter requesting  
15 the board of directors to sit down and entertain merging  
16 with Central Coventry or any neighboring fire district.  
17 Anything is better than what we have here. The intent of  
18 my motion for years and years was to get two boards, and  
19 hopefully with Central Coventry and Coventry Fire, to sit  
20 down. I can tell you this board has met once with Central  
21 Coventry, because I sat there with them. I can tell you  
22 Central Coventry requested a list of information this board  
23 failed to provide it. That was about two and a half years  
24 ago. It is amazing that suddenly yesterday or today we've

25 decided to move forward with contacting them. Mr. Cote,

52

1 I'm trying to ask once again, when do we decide that the  
2 taxpayers run the fire district and you begin to listen to  
3 us?

4 MODERATOR FLORIO: No, no, this isn't the  
5 appropriate time for that. The chief is here to answer  
6 questions, not Mr. Cote.

7 MR. GORMAN: Mr. Cote discussed merger, he  
8 brought it up, fair game, I believe.

9 MODERATOR FLORIO: We're here to ask  
10 questions of the chief at this point. The chief can

11 address the question.

12 MR. GORMAN: Mr. Cote was allowed to speak

13 on merging, so I assumed that everybody else was.

14 MODERATOR FLORIO: Any other questions for

15 the chief? (No response) We don't have to ask for

16 recommendations on the chief's report. Thank you, thank

17 you, Chief.

18 MR. GORMAN: One more question that I

19 forgot to ask the chief. I guess it is kind of the

20 800-pound gorilla. Chief, I have to ask you, with regards

21 to rescue payment/ladder of 75,000, what is the rescue

22 payment and what is the ladder payment?

23 CHIEF LABBADIA: I believe I went over,

24 ladder payment is 19,000 a year, and the rest of it is for  
25 the ladder company, 56,000 and change, I believe.

53

1 MR. GORMAN: When will the rescue be paid  
2 for?

3 CHIEF LABBADIA: The end of 2010, two more  
4 payments.

5 MR. GORMAN: About \$56,000 per year  
6 payment for the ladder truck, that begins this budget?

7 CHIEF LABBADIA: This budget. That is a  
8 15-year lease.

9 MR. MODERATOR: Next is -- sorry. Yes?

10 MR. COTNOIR: I have a suggestion for the

11 moderator, since he is supposed to be in charge of the

12 meeting, it might be nice if he put himself in a position

13 where he could see the body so if somebody has a  
question

14 he would be able to acknowledge them without having

15 somebody tell him there is a hand up out there.

16 MODERATOR FLORIO: I'm sorry, Mr. Cotnoir,

17 I'm nearsighted, I can't see that far, Mr. Cotnoir. Why

18 don't you sit down and stop criticizing my eyesight?

19 MR. COTNOIR: I'm not --

20 MODERATOR FLORIO: I know you. Please sit

21 down. I can see you.

22 MS. DeALMO: Gayle DeAlmo, 21 South Pine

23 Drive. I've never been to a meeting, this is my first. I  
24 think it is kind of insulting for me, too --

25 MODERATOR FLORIO: This is my first

54

1 meeting, too.

2 MS. DeALMO: That is insulting in itself,  
3 for you to address him the way you did.

4 MODERATOR FLORIO: So are you, ma'am.

5 MS. DeALMO: If I'm insulting anyone, I'll  
6 apologize. I'm sorry if I insulted anyone out there.

7 AUDIENCE MEMBER: The moderator is too  
8 sensitive. Dismiss him, Chair.

9 **MR. GORMAN: Point of order. Two items.**

10 **Mr. Moderator, I request that you formally make an apology**

11 **to the lady for your out-of-order comment, and secondly,**

12 **Chair, I request you immediately remove the moderator,**

13 **replace him, for he is out of order.**

14 **AUDIENCE MEMBER: Second that motion.**

15 **MR. GORMAN: Is there a ruling, Mr. Chair?**

16 **CHAIRMAN COTE: Arthur, do I have the**

17 **authority to do that?**

18 **MR. CAPALDI: No, the moderator is**

19 **selected for tonight. It is up to the moderator to take**

20 **whatever responsibility he believes is necessary. I would**

21 **recommend that the moderator stand at the podium to**

address

22 these matters.

23 MODERATOR FLORIO: I will do that.

24 CHAIRMAN COTE: David, please apologize to

25 that lady.

55

1 MODERATOR FLORIO: No, I will not.

2 CHAIRMAN COTE: Thank you. Okay.

3 MS. FLANAGAN: I first would like to say I

4 understand your frustration and I understand how tensions

5 can rise. It doesn't do anyone any good to have outbursts

6 and swearing. In fact, you know, it really puts us in a

7 place where you could lose your vote at an important part  
8 of the meeting. I don't always agree, but I would ask that  
9 we be respectful of each other. Mr. Moderator, with that  
10 being said, I do think it is appropriate that you stand up  
11 at the podium so that you can see taxpayers who may want  
to  
12 be heard, and I think that is what was being asked of you,  
13 perhaps not in the best way, but I think that is a  
14 reasonable request.

15 MODERATOR FLORIO: Correct, that I agree  
16 with. I will stand at the podium to see. This is my first  
17 meeting, also. I will not be insulted. For your  
18 information, I am a former probation and parole supervisor.  
19 I will not be disrespected, and I will not be sworn at, and

**20 I will not allow the decorum of the meeting to degenerate.**

**21 That said --**

**22 MS. DeALMO: I spoke respectfully to you.**

**23 I don't think I disrespected you.**

**24 MR. CAPALDI: Mr. Moderator, may I**

**25 interject. It is time to get on with the business. Madam,**

**56**

**1 I appreciate what you're saying. I think it is time to get**

**2 on with the meeting, please. This should not degenerate to**

**3 an argument between the moderator and the body. Thank  
you.**

**4 MODERATOR FLORIO: The chair recognizes**

5 Gary Cote to introduce the resolutions. The resolutions  
6 will be introduced all at once. The body may move to  
7 consider each one separately, but all can be accepted by  
8 one motion.

9 CHAIRMAN COTE: Mr. Moderator, I respect  
10 your right and your refusal to apologize to the lady that  
11 was spoken to, but I will apologize. On behalf of myself  
12 as the chairman of the board, I'm sorry you were spoken to  
13 that way, ma'am, and I will do my very best to make sure it  
14 doesn't happen again.

15 MS. DeALMO: I accept your apology.

16 CHAIRMAN COTE: Resolved, that the board  
17 of directors be and is hereby directed and empowered to

**18 install additional hydrants when and where needed;**

**19 resolved, that the chief of the department be and is hereby**

**20 directed and empowered to remove the fire alarm system  
and**

**21 have radio alarm boxes installed where required and new**

**22 streetlights where required; resolved, that the board of**

**23 directors be and is hereby directed and empowered to  
renew**

**24 insurance on the firefighters and to renew liability and**

**25 other insurances that may become due. Also, continue**

**57**

**1 paying into the Rhode Island state retirement system for**

**2 all employees presently enrolled. Resolved, that the chief**

**3 of the department or his designee is hereby directed and**  
**4 empowered to designate a fire line in front of any building**  
**5 within the Coventry Fire District as he deems it necessary;**  
**6 resolved, that the board of directors be and is hereby**  
**7 directed and empowered to hire sums of money as may be**  
**8 needed to meet the needs of the district and to renew the**  
**9 outstanding notes when due. That such notes shall be**  
**10 signed by the treasurer and the chairman of the board of**  
**11 directors. Resolved, that the district tax collector be**  
**12 and is hereby directed to freeze the tax amount levied on**  
**13 real estate of any persons or person currently receiving**  
**14 the 1981 exception, or who shall qualify for the freeze in**  
**15 2010. The freeze shall be granted to any inhabitant, to**

16 persons, husband and wife, widow, widower, 65 or over  
17 living in retirement on a fixed income of \$17,500. Any  
18 person that is not granted the freeze may appeal the tax  
19 collector's decision of this matter to the board of  
20 directors in writing. Resolved, that the board of  
21 directors is hereby directed and empowered to continue  
22 implementing a direct billing to insurance carriers and  
23 health plan companies for rescue services rendered by the  
24 fire department rescue squads. With the stipulation that  
25 the taxpayers would not be obligated to pay any amount  
for

1 this service and the fire department would accept a

## payment

2 any insurance carrier or health plan company allocated for  
3 such services rendered. All funds generated from this  
4 direct billing shall be deposited to special rescue  
5 recovery fund to be used in the operation of the district  
6 budget. Resolved, that the salaries of the district  
7 officers, firefighter be as follows: Salaries, expenses,  
8 and stipends: Clerk of district, yearly, \$100; deputy  
9 chief, \$1,000 per month. The following personnel shall  
10 receive a salary adjustment: Treasurer of district pension  
11 agent, 250; district secretary, 849.22; tax collector,  
12 695.81; chief of department, \$1,384.62. All salary  
13 adjustments subject to the rules and regulations of the

**14 board of directors. Resolved, the firefighters shall**

**15 receive a 4 percent salary adjustment on July 1st, 2010 per**

**16 union contract. Their current salaries are listed below.**

**17 These are weekly. Captain, 1056.49; lieutenant, 1027.99;**

**18 firefighter one, 962.89; firefighter two, 931.67;**

**19 firefighter three, 900.65; EMT-C cardiac techs, \$40 per**

**20 week. Resolved, that the Coventry Fire District require**

**21 that all new plats being developed within the Coventry Fire**

**22 District boundaries require underground utilities, five**

**23 homes or more. The chief shall require that the developer**

**24 or owner of said plat or subdivision install at their**

**25 expense wireless radio fire alarm boxes. The fire chief**

1 shall designate location, manufacturer type, and  
acceptance

2 after installation for the fire district. Resolved, that

3 the board of directors be and is hereby directed to bill

4 insurance carriers for hazardous material incidents within

5 the Coventry Fire District's boundaries using pay scales

6 set forth by the Rhode Island Fire Chiefs' Association.

7 All funds generated will be put into a hazardous material

8 recovery fund to be used for acquiring new fire department

9 equipment. Resolved, that the board of directors be and is

10 hereby directed and empowered to purchase one aerial  
ladder

11 truck for a sum not to exceed \$535,000 on a lease purchase

12 program of 15 years at \$56,529 per year. Resolved, that  
13 the board of directors be and is hereby directed and  
14 empowered to adopt a budget for the operation of the fire  
15 district for the ensuing 2009 fiscal year in the amount of  
16 \$2,362,813.06; resolved, a tentative tax rate of 21 cents  
17 on each \$100 of the rateable property of the Coventry Fire  
18 District be levied and assessed on the inhabitants thereof  
19 and others owning property therein. A special tax on  
20 industrial and other commercial properties shall be levied  
21 at a rate not to exceed 43 cents on each \$100 of rateable

22 property as determined by the tax assessors for the  
purpose

23 of lighting the streets, hydrant rentals, fire department  
24 and incidental expenses of the district for the ensuing

**25 year. That said taxes be assessed in the Coventry station**

**60**

**1 at Anthony, Rhode Island, on December 1, 2009 at 8:00 p.m.**

**2 standard time and collected, paid into the district tax**

**3 collectors on or before April 30, 2010, or payable in**

**4 quarterly amounts due January 31, 2010, April 30, 2010,**

**5 July 31, 2010, October 31st, 2010. All taxes remaining on**

**6 any subsequent installment not paid before the due date,**

**7 the whole tax or any balance thereof shall at once become**

**8 due and payable with interest of 1 1/2 percent per month**

**9 from December 1, 2009 on the balance due, to be added and**

**10 collected by the tax collector. The tax collector is**

11 hereby ordered to collect according to law taxes not paid  
12 by April 30, 2010, and no tax bill levied shall be less  
13 than \$20. Any omissions, additions, or new account  
14 assessed after December 1, 2009 will be added for  
15 collection. If any portion of this resolution be  
16 determined to be invalid, the remaining portion of the  
17 resolution shall be deemed to be valid. Respectfully, Gary  
18 Cote.

19 MODERATOR FLORIO: Do I hear a motion?

20 MR. MATOLA: Motion.

21 MR. CAPALDI: Laura, your motion would be  
22 in order now.

23 MR. WEBSTER: Second.

24                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** Before I make my motion,  
25    may I ask a few questions. I was quickly trying to catch

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1    up as you were reading the rates that are going to be in  
2    effect, and, Chief, maybe you can help me with this. As  
3    I'm looking at our tax bill from last year, the real estate  
4    rate for individuals is \$2.10 per thousand, and, Mr. Cote,  
5    I believe you read into the record 21 cents per hundred,  
6    which would leave that rate the same, however, the  
7    inventory rate that I thought I heard you read was 43 cents  
8    per hundred?

9                   **CHIEF LABBADIA:** Commercial and

10 industrial.

11 MS. FLANAGAN: That would impact business

12 owners?

13 CHIEF LABBADIA: Yes.

14 MS. FLANAGAN: And the business owners are

15 actually seeing an increase of 10 cents per thousand?

16 CHAIRMAN COTE: Not to exceed 43 cents.

17 MS. FLANAGAN: \$4.20 last year, if we're

18 approving 43 cents, we're increasing that rate by 10 cents

19 per thousand.

20 CHAIRMAN COTE: You're not approving it at

21 43 cents. You're approving the fact that it cannot exceed

22 43 cents.

23                   **MS. MATTHEWS:** We don't set the tax rate  
24   at this meeting.

25                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** You're saying it could go

62

1   up by 10 cents per thousand after you figure your base for  
2   businesses: Yes, no?

3                   **CHAIRMAN COTE:** No.

4                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** By us approving your  
5   resolution that it could be as high as \$4.30 per thousand,  
6   you're telling me there is no possibility that it could be  
7   up 10 cents?

8                   **CHAIRMAN COTE:** I'm telling you it is not

9 going to go up 10 cents per thousand.

10 MS. FLANAGAN: Mr. Solicitor, can you

11 answer my question?

12 MR. CAPALDI: I can't because that is not

13 within my jurisdiction. I can answer but, basically if you

14 can go up to 43 cents --

15 MS. FLANAGAN: My question is this --

16 MR. CAPALDI: The answer is yes.

17 MS. FLANAGAN: Let me rephrase the

18 question. If we approve this resolution it is possible for

19 the commercial property owners and this district to pay an

20 additional 10 cents per thousand; yes is the answer?

21 MR. CAPALDI: The way the resolution is

22 worded, yes, because it is up to that amount of money.

23 MS. FLANAGAN: Let me read this motion and

24 I'll have to write another. I move that the board of the

25 Anthony Fire District include the following additional

63

1 information to its taxpayers in written form distributed to

2 those in attendance at its 2009/2010 annual meeting. You

3 gave me time to think about this. Number one, a written

4 agenda. I would love to be able to follow along. Number

5 two, assessed value creating tax base; number three,

6 proposed tax rate; number four, review projections for all

7 sources of revenue, including anticipated collections;

8 number five, comparison by line item for prior three years;  
9 number six, balanced budget showing revenues equaling  
10 expenses. Respectfully submitted, Laura Flanagan.

11 CHIEF LABBADIA: It should be 2010/2011.

12 MS. FLANAGAN: I'll amend that to  
13 2010/2011.

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Second.

15 MS. FLANAGAN: One other comment, when a  
16 board member behind me goes "Huh" as I put a motion on  
the  
17 floor, as a taxpayer in this district and as the vice  
18 president of the Coventry Town Council, I find that highly  
19 offensive. Thank you.

20                   **MODERATOR FLORIO: Motion made and**  
21   **seconded. Is this doable, Chief?**

22                   **CHIEF LABBADIA: Yeah, it is all**  
23   **information we can gather. Yes.**

24                   **MODERATOR FLORIO: Motion made and**  
25   **seconded. All in favor? Any opposed?**

64

1                   **(VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)**

2                   **MS. DiREZZO: Catherine DiRezzo, 23 South**  
3   **Pond Drive. My motion is an add-on to the motion that just**  
4   **passed with respect that was raised by Ms. Flanagan, and**  
5   **that is for greater disclosure to the taxpayers, and in**

6 that vein I would move that the Anthony Fire District shall  
7 within 90 days establish a website which shall include,  
8 among other things, the following information: The current  
9 charter, the current bylaws, the current union contract for  
10 the district in its entirety, the names of the members of  
11 the district board and their contact information, budget  
12 proposals, meeting notices and agenda.

13 MS. FLANAGAN: Second.

14 CHIEF LABBADIA: A lot of that is on the  
15 Secretary of State's website or on the Town of Coventry  
16 website.

17 MS. FLANAGAN: You have a motion and  
18 second. I think you should move the second.

19                   **MODERATOR FLORIO: Mr. Chief, do you have**  
20   **any comments about this?**

21                   **CHIEF LABBADIA: Like I said, a lot of it**  
22   **is on the Secretary of State's website, and we do have a**  
23   **web page, it is not built up yet. We do have the**  
24   **opportunity to do it. So it could be something that can be**  
25   **done.**

65

1                   **CHAIRMAN COTE: Done within 90 days**  
2   **without hiring an outside contractor to do it?**

3                   **CHIEF LABBADIA: 90 days, I'm not sure.**  
4   **We're still dealing with computer issues.**

5                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** You have a motion on the  
6 floor in proper order and form, with 90 days, but I don't  
7 think -- unless we have a motion to amend the motion in  
8 this time frame.

9                   **CHIEF LABBADIA:** My discussion based on  
10 that is 90 days is a short time to do it in.

11                   **MS. DiREZZO:** As the maker of the motion,  
12 I would like to amend my motion to include a time frame of  
13 greater than 90 days, as soon as reasonably practicable for  
14 the fire district, but giving opportunity of notice to the  
15 fire district.

16                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** Second.

17                   **MODERATOR FLORIO:** Amendment to the  
motion

18 has been made and seconded. Amendment to the motion  
has

19 been made and seconded. All in favor to the amendment?

20 (VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)

21 MODERATOR FLORIO: The motion as amended,

22 do I hear a second to the motion as amended?

23 MS. FLANAGAN: Second.

24 MODERATOR FLORIO: Motion as amended has

25 been made and seconded. All in favor? Any opposed?

66

1 (VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)

2 MODERATOR FLORIO: The ayes have it. Any

**3 other discussion on the resolutions as proposed by  
Chairman**

**4 Gary Cote?**

**5 MR. JOHNSON: I would like to say, I don't**

**6 know the chief, never met him before, I think he's doing a**

**7 professional job, from what I can see. I wanted to say**

**8 these are really tough times. It is pointed out, I think**

**9 by the chairman, that the collection rate this year is**

**10 around 84 percent, 85 percent, which is very low,**

**11 historically low. It's usually around 94, 95 percent. I**

**12 think that is indicative of the tough times that the**

**13 residents of the district are having. The economy is**

**14 terrible. Everybody knows the Anthony District is not a**

**15 rich district. I would support the adoption of the chief's**

16 budget provided there is no tax increase. I think that,  
17 although technically there is some leeway there on I think  
18 the industrial and the commercial rates that you read, I

19 would urge that the taxes not go up even for the  
businesses

20 in the community. I'm not quite sure, who sets the rate,

21 and when is that voted on? Is that, this evening, done by

22 the board?

23 CHAIRMAN COTE: Tax rate was in the

24 resolutions.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Those are the max?

1                   **MS. LEROUX: The tax assessors have to**  
2   **meet as a board and take the budget amount and set the tax**  
3   **rate from the budget amount. We're not allowed to set a**  
4   **tax rate tonight.**

5                   **MR. JOHNSON: Is that rate, once it is set**  
6   **by them, is that adopted by the board or is it final at**  
7   **that point?**

8                   **MS. LEROUX: Once the tax assessors make**  
9   **the decision, but it is not going up.**

10                  **MR. JOHNSON: I will take your word for**  
11   **that.**

12                  **MR. GRILLO: Buzz Grillo, 11 Wood Mist**  
13   **Circle. My only question for the chief is, I know you**

14 probably or most definitely have a realization of what we  
15 need for equipment, but to enter into a 15-year lease on a  
16 piece of equipment when we're talking about possibly a  
17 merger with other fire districts, wouldn't that create an  
18 excess or maybe some redundancy that we could put off  
until  
19 we know where we're going?

20 CHIEF LABBADIA: If you'll allow me, based  
21 on ISO standards, the Town of Coventry, even if we did  
22 merge, would call for two aerial devices, and that would  
23 count as the second aerial device. I can explain the ISO  
24 to you in more depth if you would like and explain why we  
25 need to do it. Right now it's changed dramatically from

1 how they used to do the fire suppression classification

2 survey. It changed where Central Coventry can't be  
counted

3 if I get four pieces of apparatus from Central Coventry.

4 They only give me the ability to count for one and two

5 personnel, even though I have four trucks coming to our

6 jurisdiction. By ISO standards, I'm theoretically supposed

7 to roll out of my station with an engine and ladder manned.

8 Those are other issues, manning is an issue like the

9 gentleman said earlier. Excuse me, I don't know your  
name.

10 But, there are a lot of issues to address, public

11 safetywise, that are going to have an effect on what is

12 going on in the Coventry Fire District. I did have some

13 news from Representative Guthrie, in a few seconds if I can

14 get him up to speak, I would like him to come up and  
speak.

15 One of the big issues is fire hydrants and streetlights.

16 There is legislation going through the House and so on.

17 I'll let Representative Guthrie speak on that.

18 MS. FLANAGAN: Let me just say before I

19 put this motion on the table that one of the things I truly

20 believe and I fought hard for on the council level is that

21 our tax rate for businesses in Coventry is very high. In a

22 poor economic time the way to grow your economy in the

23 future is not to impose higher taxes on businesses. If

**24 anything, that is counterintuitive and counterproductive.**

**25 I don't want this to be interpreted as me, personally, not**

**69**

**1 supporting the firefighters of our community. I certainly**

**2 believe in public safety. I would agree with Mr. Johnson**

**3 that everything I've heard here tonight from the chief**

**4 tells me that you're doing a great job as chief. My**

**5 concerns are financial and for, kind of the future of**

**6 Coventry and our prosperity. With that being said, I would**

**7 move to amend the resolution setting the maximum  
commercial**

**8 tax rate -- would that be referred to as the industrial?**

**9 CHIEF LABBADIA: Commercial and industrial**

10 rate.

11 MS. FLANAGAN: The commercial rate and the  
12 industrial rate both being put at?

13 CHIEF LABBADIA: Commercial is 30 cents,  
14 and the industrial is 41, 42.

15 MS. FLANAGAN: If I may begin again, I  
16 hereby move to amend the resolution setting the maximum  
17 industrial tax rate from 43 per thousand -- per hundred,  
18 that should be to 42 per hundred, which would keep it  
where

19 it is now. Respectfully submitted, Laura Flanagan.

20 MODERATOR FLORIO: Thank you.

21 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Second.

22 **MODERATOR FLORIO: Any comments, any**

23 **discussion? All in favor?**

24 **MR. GORMAN: I do have some discussion. I**

25 **understand what you're trying to do, and my question to**  
the

70

1 **chief would be that one cent difference in industrial, what**

2 **does the industrial take in and how would it affect the**

3 **rest of the budget?**

4 **CHIEF LABBADIA: I think it is based now**

5 **on 42 cents, it is based on 42 cents, based on 31 cents for**

6 **commercial, and based on 21 cents for residential. Those**

7 **figures are in my budget.**

8                   **MR. GORMAN: Your figures of 2.362 is**  
9   **based on 42 cents?**

10                  **CHIEF LABBADIA: Yes.**

11                  **MODERATOR FLORIO: Any other questions?**

12   **All in favor of the motion? Any opposed?**

13                  **(VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)**

14                  **MODERATOR FLORIO: The ayes have it. Any**

15   **other discussion? Resolution for operation of fire**

16   **department, including adoption of budget tax levy and**

17   **authorizing resolutions, as reported by Chairman Gary**  
**Cote,**

18   **all in favor of the resolutions?**

19                  **MR. GORMAN: One more question for the**

20 fire chief. On the 2.3 million, you included the ladder  
21 truck in this as well for future payments. Does this  
22 include -- are you comfortable with this budget, knowing  
23 we'll not run over, it includes the contract provisions for  
24 the union men, it includes everything else that you've  
25 listed here. I notice you have a \$200,000 line of credit,

71

1 so to say, or tax anticipation note. Are you confident  
2 that 2.3 is enough?

3 CHIEF LABBADIA: I'm confident that I'm  
4 going to be 3 percent either way, which is damn good when  
5 you're talking budget numbers.

6 MODERATOR FLORIO: I move the question in

7 terms of the resolution for the operation of the fire

8 department, including adoption of a budget, tax levy and

9 authorizing other resolutions as reported by Chairman  
Cote.

10 Is there a motion?

11 CHAIRMAN COTE: Make the motion.

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Second.

13 MODERATOR FLORIO: All in favor? Any

14 opposed?

15 (VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)

16 MODERATOR FLORIO: The ayes have it.

17 Moving into the elections. At this point in the meeting,

18 before the ballots are distributed, everyone who votes will

19 be qualified to participate in the election and the ballot  
20 you are about to receive lists the six candidates qualified  
21 to seek office, and members of the board of directors of  
22 Coventry Fire District. There are two positions open to  
23 election. You can only vote for up to two people. The  
24 talliers are hereby directed to invalidate any ballot with  
25 more than two selections per ballot. There are people who

72

1 are no longer interested?

2 CHAIRMAN COTE: Each candidate gets five  
3 minutes at the podium.

4 CLERK GOLOMB: My name is John Golomb, I'm

5 the clerk. I have here before me the qualified  
6 applications for the positions that are open. There are  
7 two positions open for the board of directors. We received  
8 six applications. They were all processed through  
9 signatures and approved with proper signatures. I'll name  
10 the six. The first name is Gary F. Cote, second name is  
11 Shirley Matthews, third name is Peter Pankowicz, fourth  
12 name is William R. Potter, Jr., fifth candidate is Louie  
13 Cote, Jr., and the last candidate is David Gorman.

14 Today I had William Potter call me and he  
15 withdrew his name because of family commitments and he

no

16 longer wants his name in the line. I understand there is

17 someone else that is going to make the announcement  
18 shortly. I have no authority to mention his name, but I  
19 think that if the moderator wants to address the person he  
20 may, and that concludes the list. Thank you.

21 **MODERATOR FLORIO:** Before the elections  
22 the candidates have five minutes to address the body, to  
23 see if the citizens have any questions of the candidates.  
24 I'm wondering who is the other person who has withdrawn  
25 their name? Louis Cote, Jr., has withdrawn his name.

73

1 **CHAIRMAN COTE:** Louis, would you like an  
2 opportunity to speak and explain?

3                   **MR. COTE: Can I, please. My name is**  
4   **Louis Cote, Jr. I just retired from the fire district**  
5   **after over 32 years of service, and while on the campaign**  
6   **trail it has come to my attention, I'm still receiving**  
7   **benefits paid by the district. I called the Rhode Island**  
8   **ethics committee and they said I had every reason to run,**  
9   **but on a lot of issues I couldn't vote because I'm still**  
10   **being compensated by the district. I feel if I can't vote**  
11   **fully for the taxpayers, I don't belong on the board. That**  
12   **is why I'm withdrawing my name. I'm sorry. Thank you.**

13                   **MODERATOR FLORIO: Peter Pankowicz, please**  
14   **address the body.**

15                   **MR. PANKOWICZ: My name is Peter**

16 Pankowicz, I live at 155 Black Rock Road for the last  
17 34 years. Of those, 15 I've been a volunteer at the  
18 station, I've been employed at the Kent County Emergency  
19 Room for the last 20 years. I feel my knowledge of the EMS  
20 services and being a volunteer at the station, the ins and  
21 outs of the station, I know very well. I would like to  
22 dedicate my time. I think there are a lot of changes that  
23 need to be made and I'd like to be part of that. Any  
24 questions?

25 AUDIENCE MEMBER: What kind of changes?

74

1 MR. PANKOWICZ: I believe there is a lot

2 to do with the tax base, the merger. The merger, I believe  
3 it would be healthy, but I don't think we should be thrown  
4 into it. I think we should know the pros and cons and  
5 decide, but I think we should step forward because our tax  
6 base is not going to grow and the money is going to cost  
7 more and more, so I think a merger would be healthier if it  
8 is done the right way. Thank you.

9 MODERATOR FLORIO: The next person is  
10 David Gorman.

11 MR. GORMAN: Hello, everyone, I'm sure you  
12 know my name by now. David Gorman. I am a firefighter  
in  
13 Central Coventry, that is what I do for a living and I feel  
14 that I have a lot to offer this department. What I've done

15 in the last four or five years in leading or spearheading  
16 the opportunity to get a board of directors that are  
17 taxpayers, the old regime was appointed by the fire chief,  
18 it was 40 years of the same old, same old. What I did  
19 singlehandedly -- I had a partner with me, and we went to  
20 the State House on our own time. We were able to get

21 legislation passed and the charter changed. When we  
asked

22 the district for years to change the charter, the old

23 regime refused. We lobbied the State House, we were at  
the

24 State House until nine or 10 o'clock one night, 90 degrees,

25 myself and this other person, and we were up there and we

1 waited and waited and we testified on this bill, or spoke  
2 on this bill, and we were able to get it passed. I was a  
3 big part of why the board is what it is today and why these  
4 people sit in front of you today. I feel now is a great  
5 opportunity for me to come forward and place my name as  
a  
6 candidate today to really try to come out and help you  
7 people merge with the Central Coventry Fire Department,  
get  
8 the services that we deserve at a tax rate that we all  
9 should afford.

10 On a personal issue, I live in the Anthony

11 Fire District, my neighbor directly next door is in the

12 **Central Coventry Fire District. Our houses are evaluated**  
13 **at the same sale price. They pay almost \$400 a year less**  
14 **than I do. To me that is absurd.**

15 **The other issue is this board just hasn't**  
16 **proven themselves to me over the last three years, and I've**  
17 **given them ample opportunity to do that. I will entertain**  
18 **any questions.**

19 **MS. MURPHY: As president of your union,**  
20 **how can you vote in the Coventry Fire District as a board**  
21 **member for anything to do with the firemen: Firemen's**  
22 **union, grievances, arbitration? 90 percent of the time you**  
23 **will be recusing yourself, and then we'll be down to two**  
24 **members of the board that are not firemen. We have**

enough

25 firemen on the board.

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1 MR. GORMAN: I understand. What I'm

2 hoping to achieve on this is to try to bring some peace and

3 tranquility to the labor/management disagreements up  
there.

4 I'm a very -- under normal circumstances -- except in this

5 issue -- very levelheaded and I have a very unique

6 relationship with my management team in Central Coventry.

7 I'm a solution-oriented person. I want to bring these

8 people to the table and sit down and settle grievances. I

9 don't feel personally we need \$33,000 in this budget in

10 legal expenses. We can settle these issues amicably.

11 MS. MURPHY: You were responsible for

12 getting Chief Mruk that \$120,000 severance pay.

13 MR. GORMAN: Absolutely.

14 MS. MURPHY: Which almost buried this

15 district.

16 MR. GORMAN: I was responsible, I brought

17 the resolution, the taxpayers were the ones that voted on

18 the resolution.

19 MS. MURPHY: You pushed it.

20 MR. GORMAN: That was our last resort, was

21 120,000 to get Chief Mruk out the door for the safety of

22 the firefighters, the safety of the taxpayers. It was the

23 best thing we did, was to get Chief Mruk out, to get a  
24 chief finally here.

25 MS. MURPHY: Not for \$120,000.

77

1 MODERATOR FLORIO: That is enough of this  
2 discussion.

3 MR. GORMAN: Any other questions?

4 MR. JOHNSON: This lady just raised the  
5 issue of recusing yourself. I imagine if there was a vote  
6 on the merger that you would have to recuse yourself if  
7 you're an employee of Central Coventry.

8 MR. GORMAN: I imagine I certainly would.

9 I wouldn't want to be in the middle of that. All I'm  
10 looking to do is get these two sides to the table. I can't  
11 afford the taxes in this district any longer.

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: What would you be able  
13 to vote on?

14 MR. GORMAN: Any matter that doesn't  
15 benefit me financially directly. From the ethics  
16 commission, any matter that doesn't benefit me personally.

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Have you received a  
18 letter ruling to that effect from the ethics commission,  
19 and have you requested one?

20 MR. GORMAN: No, I have not requested one.

21 I know this issue has been brought up many times

throughout

22 the fire districts and the rest of the town, there are  
23 firefighters, and the firefighters seem to be the only ones  
24 that want to get on the board and the rest of us don't  
25 realize the problems.

78

1 MS. FLANAGAN: With all due respect, I'm  
2 in a similar situation, or I was as to what you're in, and  
3 I did write for a letter ruling from the ethics commission.  
4 And what you're saying you want to do, to be involved in  
5 the discussions and the negotiations that would lead up to  
6 a merger, I can promise you 100 percent the ethics

7        commission would entirely disagree with you and they  
would

8        not allow you to have any part in that conversation at all.

9        With that knowledge, what can you bring to the table?

10                    MR. GORMAN: I think I can bring to the

11        table, I have several years of business experience, I think

12        I can hold my business experience. I also own a

13        landscaping construction company with 12 employees. We  
do

14        large sales, I run budgets, I manage, I direct people.

15        That is what I do, also. I think my budgetary experience

16        working with, not only my business, but with the Central

17        Coventry Fire District can surely benefit this fire

18        department and this district, and I would have to think my

19 budget experience alone will surely outmatch any other  
20 candidate here.

21 MODERATOR FLORIO: Shirley Matthews.

22 MS. MATTHEWS: Shirley Matthews, 566

23 Knotty Oak Road. I've been on this board for three years,  
24 and I've worked very hard, I feel that I've done a good  
25 job. We had a lot to do going in, and I'm not a

79

1 firefighter, and we've been learning just like you people  
2 have learned tonight. It is really interesting to sit here  
3 because last year we could not -- we had to call people up  
4 on the phone to get them to come to have enough people to

**5 hold this meeting. We had budget meetings for weeks and**

**6 weeks and they have been advertised -- actually budget  
work**

**7 sessions, not meetings. And I really feel that it is too**

**8 bad a lot more people didn't take interest to show up**

**9 because a lot of these things could have been addressed.**

**10 Yes, we still have to do a lot of work.**

**11 I also agree with the merger, but I would**

**12 like to see a merger where the whole town merges because**

**13 think it would benefit everybody. I personally do not**

**14 think the Anthony Fire District merging with Central is the**

**15 answer. We need to merge as a whole town, and possibly**

**16 municipal fire department. We have a great chief that**

**17 we've put into place, we're working to do the fire**

**18 department, and it is a full-time job to be on this board**

**19 with no compensation. No complaints, we work hard. I  
also**

**20 have to say that there already are two firemen on the**

**21 board. If you really, in good conscious, can vote another**

**22 firefighter, another union firefighter who also is a**

**23 president of the Central Coventry union to this board and**

**24 again only two people will be able to vote on a lot of**

**25 things that affect the district, you really need to rethink**

**80**

**1 that. I've done the best I can do. If I'm voted out**

2 tonight, I have no regrets. I've done the best I can do  
3 for the taxpayers. Thank you.

4 AUDIENCE MEMBER: You say you don't feel a  
5 merger with Central Coventry Fire District is feasible or  
6 you don't think it is the solution. What research or what  
7 evidence do you have to support your suspicions?

8 MS. MATTHEWS: One of the things I'm  
9 uncomfortable with for the taxpayers of the Anthony Fire  
10 District is, it is my understanding when the other  
11 districts merged, the elderly lost their freeze exemption  
12 and they didn't know that, and I know that a lot of the  
13 elderly people went actually to the town hall to the  
14 taxpayer there -- and I had a conversation with her, so I

15 can stand behind what I'm saying -- because their  
16 exemptions were gone. They didn't know when they were  
17 merging with Central Coventry that they were going to lose  
18 that exemption. In our district we have a lot of elderly  
19 people. I would hate to see them lose that. It comes down  
20 to people having to lose their houses because they can't  
21 pay their taxes, as well as a lot of other issues.

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Great point. Why not  
23 sit down at the table and bring that to them? You have not  
24 met with the other district once in three years when this  
25 district has been directed --

1                   **MS. MATTHEWS:** There were meetings that  
2 started last year and they just kind of petered out.

3                   **AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Meetings is plural.

4                   **MS. MATTHEWS:** There were meetings.

5                   **AUDIENCE MEMBER:** It was one, sole

6 meeting. My issue, you have been directed by the  
taxpayers

7 the last three years to sit down and actively pursue a

8 merger, not only with Central, with any fire district, to

9 actively do it, and you have not done that for us. That is

10 why I will not support you tonight.

11                   **MS. MATTHEWS:** That is fine, that is up to

12 you. Thank you.

13                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** I guess I would like to

14 know your feelings and thoughts on the rights of the  
15 taxpayers to have input into the budget, to publicly voice  
16 their opinions. I got the impression tonight that my  
17 making a motion was too much trouble for you personally  
to  
18 listen to.

19 MS. MATTHEWS: We had multiple work  
20 sessions and I really wish you had come.

21 MS. FLANAGAN: I can't make a motion at a  
22 work session, with all due respect. I pay my tax bill, I  
23 serve this community, and if I choose to stand up and put a  
24 motion on the table, I feel you behaved completely  
25 unprofessionally.

1           **MS. MATTHEWS:** I apologize for that.

2           **MS. FLANAGAN:** That is why you don't have  
3 my support tonight.

4           **MS. MATTHEWS:** I apologize, thank you.

5           **CHAIRMAN COTE:** Hi, everybody. Me, again,  
6 Gary Cote. I'm seeking reelection to the board of  
7 directors. I think we've done some good things in the last  
8 three years. Did I have all the answers when I walked into  
9 the door? Absolutely not. Never claimed to have the  
10 answers. There was a learning curve. I'm still learning.  
11 I knew less about fire service when I walked into the door

12 at Anthony than probably people like Mr. Gorman have  
13 forgotten in their lifetime. It's a learning curve and it  
14 was hard to do. I think what I've accomplished, what the  
15 board has accomplished, I'm proud of. I think we've served  
16 the people well. Have we got everything accomplished that  
17 the taxpayers wanted? Absolutely not, there is still work  
18 to do. We had 40 years to clean up. I'm sorry, we didn't  
19 get it all done in three years. My apologies to the  
20 taxpayers, I'm sorry we didn't get it all done. We got  
21 done what we could with what we had to work with. These  
22 three years we've gone through four or five different  
23 chiefs. You can't get a lot when you have an interim chief  
24 for three or four months. We finally found Chief Labbadia.

**25 He's been with us a year and a half, going on two years.**

**83**

**1 We've made a lot of forward progress with Chief Labbadia  
2 there to help us as a steering mechanism for this  
3 committee, which we needed. We needed somebody with  
4 experience in fire service to lead us in a direction that  
5 this department needed to go forward in the future. I'm  
6 proud of what we've done these three years, that is why I'm  
7 seeking reelection. I ask you to vote for me. I hope you  
8 will. If you don't, I will not take it personally. Thank  
9 you for allowing me to serve the last three years and I  
10 hope to be able to serve at least two more. I will take**

11 questions.

12                   **MR. JOHNSON:** I'm going to make a  
13 statement. When I ran for the council last year Gary was  
14 campaigning for my opponent, but I'm going to lay that  
15 aside and support Gary Cote.

16                   **MS. FLANAGAN:** I would like to ask you for  
17 your commitment in this next term, if you're elected to  
18 take on this issue with the audit of the finances of this  
19 department and if you commit to me that you will do your  
20 best to ensure that is straightened out and corrected so  
21 next year we have a beautiful audit. If you do that, I  
22 will support you.

23                   **CHAIRMAN COTE:** If nothing else, I'm going

24 to go to my grave being a man of my word.

25 MS. FLANAGAN: You campaigned for my

84

1 opponent, too, and you have my vote tonight.

2 CHAIRMAN COTE: You have my word. You

3 have my word, we are going with a licensed CPA next year,

4 we will not have the kind of report we have had this year

5 or in the past. I have to take responsibility for that as

6 chairman of the board. I didn't do the things I needed to

7 do to correct that.

8 MR. COTNOIR: Ernest Cotnoir. I would

9 like to have something clarified. Is the five-member board

10 of directors, weren't the members on a rotating basis: One  
11 year, two years, three years?

12 CHAIRMAN COTE: Yes, sir. The way it  
13 fell, you have two members up for reelection this year,  
14 next year you'll have three. So you're not replacing the  
15 entire five member board in the same year. Under the  
16 rotating schedule that was set up when the bylaws were  
17 changed, when the charter was changed to allow the board  
to  
18 come into existence you have a rotating election schedule.  
19 Two members one year, three the next.

20 MR. COTNOIR: What two members are due for  
21 reelection?

22 CHAIRMAN COTE: Me and Shirley Matthews

23 are up for reelection; the three that are not are Edward  
24 Matola, Edward Webster and Keith Calci.

25 AUDIENCE MEMBER: This is my first

85

1 meeting.

2 CHAIRMAN COTE: Thank you for coming.

3 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think I learned a lot

4 tonight and I think everybody else needs to learn a lot,

5 too. I love Coventry. You need to listen to the people

6 more. You can't drain us. I haven't had a pay raise in

7 three years. My husband hasn't had a pay raise in two

8 years. He lost his Christmas bonus and his company does

**9 not put any money towards his 401(k). You cannot be coming**

**10 to us all the time for money. You have to put a budget in**

**11 place that is reasonable. We have to live on a budget, we**

**12 have our own budgets; we can't go over ours, you can't go**

**13 over yours. Just be respectful of us, too. Our pockets**

**14 aren't that deep anymore. Times are tough for us, too.**

**15 You have to remember that. We all have to learn to come to**

**16 an agreement. I think the best thing for us is all fire**

**17 departments have to come together, become a municipal**

**18 department and work together. You guys are supposed to be**

**19 brothers, but it seems like you guys are against each**

20 other. You need to work together and work for Coventry  
21 itself, and the people in Coventry.

22 CHAIRMAN COTE: Thank you. I am  
23 sympathetic to your situation. I am a union truck driver,  
24 every member in my company has voluntarily signed their  
25 raises away for the last four years to help my company  
stay

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1 in business. I work for a small company. I, myself, have  
2 just been put out of work by a doctor for some pretty  
3 serious medical issues that me and my family are going to  
4 have to address. My pay just got cut in half, so I'm in  
5 the same boat with a lot of taxpayers in the Anthony Fire

6 District, so that is why we have worked very hard. There  
7 are members of this audience that have attended our work  
8 session. We worked very hard to be able to present a  
9 budget to the taxpayers tonight that would not call for an  
10 increase on the residential, commercial or industrial side,  
11 because I know what the economic condition in the Town  
of  
12 Coventry is and I am very sympathetic to that because I am  
13 a part of it.

14 MS. FLANAGAN: I think that is a very  
15 admirable budget that you all worked very hard to put  
16 together. You went through a lot of tough questioning  
17 tonight, for the most part you were very professional about

18 it. I do think you delivered something responsible to the  
19 taxpayers and I commend you for that.

20 CHAIRMAN COTE: Any other questions?

21 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I've also taken a 10

22 percent cut. The well's run dry, boys. It's running dry.

23 CHAIRMAN COTE: There is no tax increase

24 here. Not one penny for us. Along with the chief and

25 along with the help from our union, I believe we're going

87

1 to get help from the union, I believe they're going to step

2 up and do the right thing for the taxpayers, I have to

3 believe that until they tell me they're not going to.

**4 We're going to put more manpower on the floor, a new truck**  
**5 in the station, everybody in this community is going to be**  
**6 as safe as possibly can be. If a merger is what the**  
**7 taxpayers want, I will do the job. I will do the work.**

**8 We, the board of directors, will do the work. If that is**  
**9 what the taxpayers want. It is not up to the board, it is**  
**10 up to the taxpayers, but we have to have some cooperation**  
**11 from the two unions, too. The two unions have to sit down**  
**12 and hammer out their differences. There's big differences**  
**13 in the union contracts. We have to get parity between the**  
**14 two unions. We have to get their taxpayers to agree to**  
**15 take us on. We have to get our taxpayers to understand**  
**16 whether that is or is not the best thing for this district.**

17 We have to get their chief willing to take us on. This is  
18 not a decision made by the board of directors, no matter  
19 who sits on the board. It is way above our pay grade.

20 MS. FLANAGAN: That gentleman raises a  
21 good point. \$2.10 cents per thousand is not just the  
22 highest rate anywhere in Rhode Island, it is one of the  
23 highest rates in the country.

24 CHAIRMAN COTE: I went over the list with  
25 the chief. He has the list of every district in the State

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1 of Rhode Island. Paid districts average 1.70. There are  
2 some out there as high as 1.79. We're 2.10. With that

3 being said, we were 2.10 when the board came into  
4 existence. This board has not raised the rate.

5 MS. FLANAGAN: If we reelect you tonight,  
6 how long is your term?

7 CHAIRMAN COTE: Two years. The rate we  
8 set tonight with the taxpayers is the rate that the board  
9 walked into.

10 CHIEF LABBADIA: To help you understand  
11 where we're going, the same tax treasurer for Central  
12 Coventry is going to be handling our books. In the event  
13 that that merger did happen, that is going to make it  
14 happen a little faster because he is going to know the ins  
15 and outs of the district before he actually takes the

16 district.

17 MODERATOR FLORIO: I want to explain why I

18 was asked to be moderator this evening. On January 27th

19 the Coventry Fire District, Anthony Station, the rescue and

20 the fire truck responded to my home because I was  
choking

21 to death. They picked me up, I was dead, they brought me

22 to Kent and saved my life. When I was asked this evening

23 if I would be moderator here -- I haven't been to a meeting

24 since 1985, and I was asked by the board if I would

25 moderate this meeting, I said fine. Reluctantly. If

1 anybody has any questions or concerns as to who I am or

**why**

**2 I moderated this meeting, it is because my life was saved  
3 by the Coventry Fire Department and the Anthony District.  
4 That is my only interest. I have to say they did one heck  
5 of a job. Whether they are union, nonunion, I don't care.  
6 Shall we distribute the ballots?**

**7 (BALLOT VOTING)**

**8 CHAIRMAN COTE: William Potter and Louis  
9 Cote, Jr., are on the ballot. If you vote for them, they  
10 will not count, because they have withdrawn.**

**11 (BALLOT VOTING)**

**12 MODERATOR FLORIO: I'm going to read all  
13 the outcomes on everyone. Gary Cote, out of 64 ballots**

14 cast, received 55 votes; David Gorman, 16 votes; Shirley  
15 Matthews, 29 votes; and Peter Pankowicz, 28 votes. Gary  
16 Cote and Shirley Matthews are reelected as district  
17 directors for the Coventry Fire District.

18 CHAIRMAN COTE: I would like to thank  
19 everybody who voted for me. I would like to thank  
20 everybody who came out tonight.

21 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Motion to adjourn.

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Second.

23 MODERATOR FLORIO: All in favor?

24 (VOICE VOTE, MOTION PASSED)

25 (MEETING CLOSED AT 10:12 p.m.)

**CERTIFICATE**

**I, MELANIE M. CHACE, RPR, Notary Public, do hereby  
certify that the foregoing is a true, accurate, and  
complete transcript of my notes taken at the above-entitled  
proceeding.**

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand  
this**

**13th day of January, 2010.**

**MELANIE M. CHACE, RPR, NOTARY PUBLIC**  
**MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: 04/07/11**

**IN RE: Anthony Fire District Annual Meeting**