

1 STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

2  
3 PROCEEDINGS AT:

4 Town of Coventry, Rhode Island  
5 Annual Meeting - Coventry Fire District  
6

7 IN RE: Coventry Fire District Annual Meeting  
8

9 DATE: December 8, 2015

10 TIME: 7:00 p.m.

11 PLACE: Feinstein Middle School  
12 15 Foster Drive  
13 Coventry, RI 02816

14 BEFORE:

15 Frank Palin, Chairman  
16 John D'Onofrio, Vice Chairman  
17 David Krekorian, Treasurer  
18 John Cook, Board Member  
19 Brenda Rapose, Board Member

20 ALSO PRESENT:

21 William J. Harsch, Esquire, Moderator  
22 Arthur M. Read, II, Esquire  
23 Frederick Tobin, Esquire  
24 Robert Catalfamo, Clerk  
25 Robert Warren, Fire Chief

1 (ANNUAL FIRE DISTRICT MEETING COMMENCED AT 7:00 P.M.)

2 MODERATOR HARSCH: It's 7:00. Could we have  
3 everyone take their seats, please, and get the meeting  
4 underway because I know everybody wants to get to the  
5 business at hand.

6 Everyone attending the meeting should have packets of  
7 information on what's on the agenda. We have a fair  
8 amount of ground to cover tonight, so we'll try to move  
9 along quickly.

10 I will introduce myself first. I'm Bill Harsch. I'm  
11 acting as moderator for your meeting tonight, and as  
12 moderator, it means that I get to set the rules.

13 I think we ought to start off just with the safety  
14 instructions so that we go through the formality, but it  
15 seems to me that we have the required 32 people here, so  
16 I will call the meeting to order. Mr. Chairman, would  
17 you indicate the safety instructions, tips and so forth.

18 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Chief, would you do that  
19 for us, please.

20 CHIEF WARREN: Straight out the exit to go  
21 that way (indicating), to go out that door there.  
22 Straight out the same way you came in.

23 MODERATOR HARSCH: The next item on the  
24 agenda would be the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Chairman,  
25 would you lead the Pledge.

1 (PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE RECITED)

2 MODERATOR HARSCH: There are a couple of  
3 housekeeping matters now following the Pledge before we  
4 get started.

5 For those who did not get wristbands and who are not  
6 residents, they need to be in that section over there to  
7 my left and to your right (indicating), and residents  
8 and taxpayers of the district in either of the other  
9 sections.

10 If we do have press, we're going have them down in  
11 front, but for the moment, one thing I would determine.  
12 Just to keep things in an orderly way is please turn  
13 your cell phones down. We're going to not take  
14 pictures; we're going to not make recordings. I want to  
15 have a situation where everyone feels free to express  
16 their opinions. That's the purpose of an annual meeting  
17 like this. For you all to come out, you deserve to have  
18 an opportunity to be fully heard, and I want to make  
19 sure that that's the case.

20 So, basically, only registered voters who are  
21 residents of the Coventry Fire District have the right  
22 to participate and vote on matters that come before the  
23 meeting. Anyone who's not eligible to vote, not only  
24 remains in the designated areas, but they are not to  
25 make any comments. They do not have the right to

1 participate in any way at the meeting, and I will be  
2 very firm on it.

3 I mentioned no recording devices, cell phones, that  
4 sort of thing. Exception, of course, would be for the  
5 press, if cameras do show up.

6 Now, how we're going to proceed with comments and  
7 statements from the public, what I'd like to ask you to  
8 do is, if you want to make a comment is to stand up, and  
9 let me recognize you. When you've been recognized, come  
10 forward.

11 The first time you give a statement, give your name  
12 and address. If you come and make a statement later on  
13 in the meeting, then you only have to give your name  
14 because we obviously already have your address and know  
15 who you are. So, there's no reason to go through the  
16 formality all over again.

17 Now, the first formal item on the agenda is --

18 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Mr. Moderator, question  
19 to the Chair through you. Item Number 17 on the agenda,  
20 Discussion of the Board of Director Nominees. Mr.  
21 Chairman, could you elaborate for me what the plan is  
22 for that, particularly?

23 MODERATOR HARSCH: Actually, with discussion  
24 with counsel, we felt it was in order that anybody  
25 that's nominated, we should have the opportunity to

1 question them because quite frankly, we don't know these  
2 nominees. It's not like a national election where  
3 everybody knows everybody about everything. A few  
4 questions really should be in order, and it was Mr.  
5 Tobin's suggestion, and I agreed, and I did put it on  
6 the agenda that way.

7 BOARD MEMBER COOK: So, is it more an  
8 introduction of the candidates?

9 CHAIRMAN PALIN: And/or any questions.

10 MODERATOR HARSCH: Let me answer that.

11 BOARD MEMBER COOK: I just never heard of  
12 such a thing.

13 MODERATOR HARSCH: You have some interesting  
14 by-laws in this district, and my conclusion is that  
15 nominations are in order from the floor. It doesn't  
16 even mention the requirement of a second. So, people  
17 who want to put themselves up or put someone else up or  
18 the board members in my view have the right to stand up  
19 and either make a declaration or make a nomination, and  
20 then if a nomination is made, so long as the person  
21 who's nominated accepts it, then you have a candidate.  
22 The by-laws of the district are very general on that.

23 I do feel that it is appropriate, and I intend to  
24 proceed in this manner that all the nominees to the  
25 board come up to the microphone and give a brief

1 description of what they would propose to do as board  
2 members, their qualifications, whatever they choose to  
3 say, and then if there are questions of them, I think  
4 that would be the appropriate time for there to be  
5 questions because nominations may come up at the last  
6 minute, and you don't have in your by-laws a requirement  
7 for advanced notice. This is the time, in my opinion,  
8 for you all to familiarize yourself with the candidates.  
9 Does that answer your question?

10 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Yes, it does. Thank  
11 you, Mr. Moderator.

12 MODERATOR HARSCH: I think let's then  
13 proceed to the agenda. The minutes of the annual  
14 meeting, the minutes of the last annual meeting, 2014.

15 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Mr. Moderator, I'd  
16 like to make a motion that we accept the minutes of the  
17 2014 Annual District Meeting.

18 CHAIRMAN PALIN: I second.

19 MODERATOR HARSCH: Motion's been made and  
20 seconded. All in favor of accepting the minutes of the  
21 last annual meeting, please say aye.

22 THE BOARD: Aye.

23 MODERATOR HARSCH: Those opposed?

24 PUBLIC VOICE: Aye.

25 MODERATOR HARSCH: The ayes have it. The

1 motion passes.

2 (MOTION PASSED)

3 MODERATOR HARSCH: The next item on the  
4 agenda is the Report of the Chief. Chief, if you will  
5 come forward.

6 CHIEF WARREN: We've had somewhat of an  
7 interesting year. We still needed the 1,857 alarms  
8 total; 1,130 were district rescue alarms; 284 were  
9 out-of-district rescues, 258 in-district alarms for  
10 fire; 185 out-of-district alarms.

11 This past year we've been forced to reduce personnel  
12 from 17 on-duty personnel, that would be 4 men per  
13 shift, the current total of 9 firefighters or 2 men per  
14 shift. As a result of this budget deficit, we have lost  
15 8 full-time personnel. With the reduction of personnel,  
16 it's been very difficult to maintain the standard that  
17 you are used to and deserve to have.

18 With the help in the Central Coventry Fire District  
19 and the Hopkins Hill Fire District, we are able to  
20 provide the conventional standard that you're entitled  
21 to.

22 As the fire chief and due to a limited staff this  
23 year, I'm going to ask a favor from all the taxpayers  
24 about your hydrant in front of your house. If we have a  
25 snowy year like last year, help the guys out, and clean

1 the hydrants a little bit. We'd appreciate that very  
2 much.

3 As chief, I pledge to this department we will  
4 continue to provide the best fire and rescue services  
5 for the residents of this community.

6 I just want to say, thank you, to the guys who did  
7 the job because believe me when I tell you, going down  
8 to the amount of personnel we had to the amount of we  
9 have is very difficult, and the guys are still doing it,  
10 and the service has never, ever wavered. Thank you.

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you, Chief. Do I  
12 have a motion to accept the Chief Warren's report?

13 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Motion we accept it.

14 BOARD MEMBER COOK: I make a motion that we  
15 accept it.

16 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: I'll second that.

17 MODERATOR HARSCH: All in favor, please say  
18 aye.

19 VOICE VOTE: Aye.

20 MODERATOR HARSCH: All opposed?

21 VOICE VOTE: (No response)

22 MODERATOR HARSCH: The ayes have it, and the  
23 motion carries.

24 (MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY)

25 MODERATOR HARSCH: The next report is the

1 Board of Director's Report from Mr. Chairman.

2 CHAIRMAN PALIN: I think Chief Warren said  
3 it well. It was an interesting year. If you look back  
4 over the past year from the financial meeting last year  
5 where we had our issues with Chief Labbadia and  
6 eventually we resolved them and he's no longer with us,  
7 a well lit motion that I made to reduce the budget.

8 Basically, some of the problems that we found when we  
9 came in as a new board of directors is, first of all,  
10 there where no records in the office. There really was  
11 nothing at all. Employee jackets had virtually nothing  
12 in them. We had to dig and discover and look at old  
13 financial records. We finally got the records from  
14 three years ago about a month ago. We found them. They  
15 weren't on-site, but we did get them.

16 What the people in the room didn't know, I know I  
17 didn't know when I made the motion to reduce the budget,  
18 that we had an almost \$600,000 deficit at the time, and  
19 the district was on its way to crash and burn, even  
20 without the reduction.

21 I took a very hard line. We had a lot of bad blood  
22 on the board. I'm sure you saw in the press much of the  
23 verbiage that was aimed at the board, the board more  
24 than anything else had made, and I just keep moving  
25 forward because I knew what had to take place.

1 We had to reduce the staff to come up with an  
2 affordable budget because if we didn't this year, we  
3 would be talking about probably a \$4 million budget with  
4 a tax rate that was going to go up at least 50 percent.  
5 That was unobtainable.

6 The only approach, which quite frankly a lot of it I  
7 kept to myself because I did not want to drag other  
8 board members down with me, is we had to convince the  
9 fire department that we were willing to close.

10 Finally at the 11th hour about 6 or 7 weeks ago, I,  
11 for the first time went into negotiations with the  
12 union. We sat down, and we had a very friendly  
13 comfortable discussion. It was a realistic discussion.  
14 It was something that we were able to look at, what the  
15 tax payers could afford, and how do we get out of the  
16 debt that we are in?

17 The firefighters gave a lot, and I appreciate them.  
18 They might not think I do, but I really, really do. I  
19 appreciate Chief Warren putting out the fires in the  
20 firehouse. I appreciate the good words I heard from  
21 many taxpayers privately. I also appreciate some of the  
22 negative words because I did hear them. You may not  
23 have thought I did, but I did, and a lot of things were  
24 taken into consideration.

25 We came up with a contract that I think everybody can

1 live with, which I'll be going into in a few minutes,  
2 but the fire district is alive and well; and it is going  
3 to live. We have some old debt to deal with that will  
4 take a while, but I'm very, very comfortable that we're  
5 moving forward.

6 I want to say thank you to Dave Gorman, Joe Andriole,  
7 Ed Shannon from the department, fire district  
8 firefighters. I'd like to say thank you to Tim Williams  
9 who way back when gave a lot of guidance to this board.  
10 I'd like to thank Arthur Read and Fred Tobin for helping  
11 us come to closure with this.

12 I especially want to thank Dave Krekorian, our  
13 treasurer, who put the financial numbers together for us  
14 so we could figure it out, and he did not charge us  
15 anywhere near the amount of time he was spending. He  
16 was very kind to us; I appreciate that, and I appreciate  
17 everything from our board and from Rob, or Tax Collector  
18 and Clerk, and if I missed anybody I apologize. I also  
19 want to thank my wife for putting up with me because  
20 this took a lot of time that I didn't have. I know  
21 Arthur will testify that I was at his office quite often  
22 at 7:00 in the morning working through projects, but  
23 we're going to move forward, and it's a good thing.  
24 That is the end of my report.

25 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there is a motion to

1 accept the Chairman's Report on behalf of the board?

2 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: I make a motion we  
3 accept the Chairman's Report.

4 BOARD MEMBER RAPOSE: I second that.

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: Motion has been made and  
6 seconded. All those in favor, please indicate by saying  
7 aye.

8 VOICE VOTE: Aye.

9 MODERATOR HARSCH: Those opposed?

10 VOICE VOTE: (No response)

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: Motion passes.

12 (MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY)

13 MODERATOR HARSCH: We'll move on now to the  
14 Tax Collector's Report.

15 TREASURER KREKORIAN: I, as Treasurer, have  
16 been asked by the Tax Collector to submit the Tax  
17 Collector's Report.

18 Some of the highlights of the Tax Collector's Report  
19 are that we have at the end of this year approximately  
20 \$190,000 in taxes receivable.

21 For the last two years at the end of the fiscal year,  
22 that number has been around \$200,000 higher. So,  
23 through the efforts of Rob, our Tax Collector, and also  
24 Country Title, we've been able to be a little bit more  
25 aggressive and go after some of the people that have not

1 paid, like all of the good taxpayers, and that has  
2 enabled us to collect an extra \$200,000.

3 That may be a number to some people, but basically,  
4 that extra \$200,000 enabled us to pay bills for probably  
5 two months. So, it's very, very important that we did  
6 collect those funds, and I want to thank Rob who's  
7 really pitched in a lot; and he helped out on a lot of  
8 other things besides just doing the tax collections, and  
9 Country Title, they've done an excellent job as well.  
10 Thank you.

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: You've heard the Tax  
12 Collector's Report. Is there a motion to accept?

13 BOARD MEMBER COOK: I make a motion we  
14 accept the Tax Collector's Report, Mr. Moderator.

15 BOARD MEMBER RAPOSE: Second.

16 MODERATOR HARSCH: All in favor of the  
17 motion, please say aye.

18 VOICE VOTE: Aye.

19 MODERATOR HARSCH: Those opposed?

20 VOICE VOTE: (No response)

21 MODERATOR HARSCH: The motion carries.

22 (MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY)

23 MODERATOR HARSCH: The next item on the  
24 agenda is a Review of the New Collective Bargaining  
25 Agreement. I believe the Chairman of the Board will be

1 doing that for us.

2 CHAIRMAN PALIN: This is a synopsis of the  
3 union contract for 2016 to 2018. Next slide. First is  
4 staffing. The union workforce has been reduced from 17  
5 to 9. Now, I want to point something out.

6 In 2011, January of 2011, our staffing level was 12.  
7 April 1st of 2011 we moved to 16. During the next three  
8 years, there was never a tax increase to pay for the  
9 \$500,000 a year it took to pay for those 4 men.

10 Additionally, in 2012, a ladder truck was purchased.  
11 We had the opportunity to buy a ladder truck that was  
12 used, 5 years old in very good condition for \$250,000,  
13 but our former chief decided and the board agreed that  
14 they would buy a brand new \$600,000 truck at a cost of  
15 \$61,000 a year, and again, there was no tax increase.

16 Now, the union board force is at 9. The minimum  
17 manning has gone from 4 to 2.

18 Now, a point with the staffing. The ninth man, 2, 2,  
19 2 and 3, that ninth man will be used as a float to  
20 reduce overtime. If someone has a week's vacation and  
21 there's 4-days notice, that man will be moved, so we  
22 will not be paying overtime for that period of time.  
23 There still will be overtime, but it will be reduced  
24 considerably with that. Next slide.

25 Pay raises. This coming year there is no pay raise,

1 zero. In January 1, 2017, there is a 2 percent pay  
2 raise. January 1, 2018, there is a 1 percent pay raise,  
3 and the last day of the contract there is another 1  
4 percent pay raise. This is much more in line with what  
5 businesses is getting in the community versus comparing  
6 with other firefighters.

7 A lot of times during negotiations, conversations  
8 took place. This is what other fire departments were  
9 getting, and quite frankly, I turned around and said,  
10 no, but this is what a business is getting, and we have  
11 plans as a board now in the future to run this district  
12 as a business. We have to because it's everybody in  
13 this room, it's your money; it's my money, and we have  
14 to be responsible.

15 Now health insurance. There is really a big change  
16 here. There is a new health insurance plan which is a  
17 2,000 individual, 4,000 deductible policy. I'm going to  
18 get into why there's a change with that in a second.  
19 That's a reduction of probably approaching 20 percent in  
20 the cost.

21 We're eliminating vision coverage. Now, there has  
22 been in the past a health reimbursement account.  
23 Basically, what that was is the district gave out debit  
24 cards to all the firefighters, and anything that's  
25 deductible, any cost what wasn't covered by insurance,

1 we paid for it 100 percent. Again, comparing to  
2 business, that's just not the way it's done.

3 So, we're going to a health savings account, which is  
4 much more appropriate, compares with business in the  
5 community and what people are doing.

6 In 2016, the Coventry Fire District will pay half of  
7 the contributions to the health savings account. The  
8 employee will pay half. The following year, the  
9 district will pay 25 percent, and the employee will be  
10 paying 75 percent.

11 In 2018, we no longer make contributions. It's 100  
12 percent the responsibility of the employee, and  
13 hopefully, as we move forward, it continues that way.

14 Now, payout on separation. When someone leaves after  
15 20, 25, 30 years, I'm sure you've seen reports about  
16 some of the costs Providence has incurred when they have  
17 a bunch of retirements. The cost can be 50 to \$100,000.  
18 It's supposed to really be paid upfront, and we have  
19 some things that were in the 50 to I think about the  
20 \$75,000 cost range with people that didn't retire. So,  
21 we had to fix that in the future. We can't fix what  
22 took place yesterday, but we can fix the future.

23 People that have retired and have payouts coming,  
24 we're spreading them out over 2 to 3 years, which  
25 softens the blow considerably.

1       Vacation time can no longer be carried over to the  
2 future years, so the so-called bust-out pay does not  
3 exist. Any unused vacation time at the end of the year  
4 will be paid out to the employee at 75 percent of what  
5 the value is.

6       There's a couple of things that that does. A lot of  
7 people will like that check beginning of the next year.  
8 They will tend not to use as much vacation time to get  
9 the check, so it reduces overtime, but there's another  
10 piece of that.

11       When you can carry over vacation time and sick time  
12 over a 20- to 25-year period, if everybody in this room  
13 thinks about how much they were making an hour 25 years  
14 ago and compare it to what they're making today, you'll  
15 understand what I'm talking about.

16       Now, someone might have been making \$8 an hour 25  
17 years ago, and now they're making \$25 an hour today,  
18 that bust-out pay would be at an rate of \$25 an hour,  
19 but we're keeping it from the comparison's sake at the  
20 current rate.

21       Now, sick time used to be 75 percent for that payout  
22 at the end. Now, I do see where they should be able to  
23 accumulate some sick time because if something happens,  
24 someone needs surgery, any number of things, they don't  
25 pay into TDI, so that needs to be considered, but that

1 will be reduced to 50 percent in the future for that  
2 bust-out pay. Next slide.

3 Now, the cost reduction for active personnel for this  
4 coming year is projected to be \$670,700. Now, that is  
5 compared against what we actually paid this year.

6 You've got to remember that we're having a reduction  
7 in force for the last 2 or 3 months. That cost  
8 reduction, if everybody would have worked and everybody  
9 would have stayed on through the end of the year would  
10 have probably approached 8 to \$900,000.

11 So, the union gave a lot of concessions. The people  
12 in this audience need to say thank you to them. We have  
13 to take the animosity from the past and keep it in the  
14 past and move forward. That handshake you saw Dave and  
15 I have when we signed that contract, that was genuine.  
16 We met, I guess it was yesterday, and there are no  
17 problems there. I think we're going to continue to move  
18 forward in a good way. That is the end of my report.

19 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
20 I omitted the Treasurer's Report when I went through  
21 the agenda. We'll get to that next.

22 I would remind a couple of people who have come into  
23 the room since my last announcement, those people who  
24 are not residents of the district and do not have  
25 wristbands are to sit in the area of the auditorium on

1 my left, which is your right, and I also remind people  
2 that there's no use of cell phones. Please put them on  
3 silent mode or turn them off entirely. No filming, no  
4 pictures. We will now move on to the Treasurer's  
5 Report.

6           TREASURER KREKORIAN: The Treasurer's Report  
7 for this annual meeting, I'd like to start with Fiscal  
8 Year 2015 and '16. The budget's been drafted as you can  
9 see. You all have a copy of it. There were several  
10 meetings with Chair Palin, myself, John D'Onofrio, legal  
11 counsel, so on and so forth, and you have the end  
12 result.

13         For the fiscal year 2014 and '15, we do have  
14 financial statements in draft form. The loss will be a  
15 little bit bigger than what is on the budget work  
16 papers. We had to add some extra bills for some of the  
17 retirees, people that are retiring this year, which  
18 added to the loss.

19         In terms of the financial statement, to the best of  
20 my knowledge, there never have been an outside audit  
21 done of the books of the Coventry Fire District. We  
22 have sent out an RFP and advertised for CPA firms to  
23 bid, competitively bid on performing the audit services  
24 for the year ending November 30, 2014, and the year  
25 ending November 30, 2015.

1           So, we'll have the independent people come in and  
2 look at the books and prepare a financial report that  
3 everyone can review and have confidence in.

4           As I mentioned in the Tax Collector's Report, here we  
5 are ahead approximately \$200,000 in collections. One  
6 other point to make is we are up to date with all  
7 filings with the state.

8           The State of Rhode Island, Municipal Finance Office  
9 requires that all fire districts submit quarterly cash  
10 flow reports year to date and projected to the end of  
11 the fiscal year. On a quarterly basis, we are up to  
12 date on that, and we hope to be up to date this year.

13           In terms of operational matters, I'm going to be  
14 meeting with Chief Warren in the next week to  
15 computerize the vacation and sick time with the payroll  
16 service that we use, Datapay. We're going to try to  
17 change the format to reporting payroll on our financial  
18 statements to better account for sick and vacation time.

19           Blue Cross is in the process of being reinstated;  
20 dental is in the process of being reinstated. There are  
21 some issues with retirees and actives regarding medical  
22 bills, and we're working through all of those. HSA  
23 accounts are being set up in accordance with the new  
24 contract.

25           The VFIS insurance premiums for this fiscal year for

1 property insurance and accident and sickness insurance  
2 runs about -- actually, last year it was probably close  
3 to \$100,000. This year, because we have fewer men, it's  
4 down to about 70,000, so we saved almost \$30,000 in  
5 premiums on those policies. Those were all paid as of  
6 December 1. All payrolls that have been for prior  
7 periods, the base pays have all been paid and are up to  
8 date.

9 That's my report. If anyone has a request for any  
10 financial information or financial reports, you can see  
11 me after the meeting, or call my office, and I'll  
12 provide them to you.

13 MODERATOR HARSCH: Do I hear a motion to  
14 accept the Treasurer's Report.

15 BOARD MEMBER COOK: I make a motion we  
16 accept the Treasurer's Report, Mr. Moderator.

17 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: I'll second that  
18 motion.

19 MODERATOR HARSCH: The motion's been made  
20 and seconded. All those in favor of the motion, please  
21 indicate by saying aye.

22 VOICE VOTE: Aye.

23 MODERATOR HARSCH: Those opposed?

24 VOICE VOTE: (No response)

25 MODERATOR HARSCH: The motion is accepted.

1 The report is accepted.

2 (MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY)

3 MODERATOR HARSCH: The next item on the  
4 agenda is a Review of Proposed By-Law Changes. I have  
5 in front of me two proposals. Who wishes to advance the  
6 first one? Please proceed.

7 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Mr. Moderator, I hereby  
8 make a motion to strike Article 4, Section 2, second  
9 paragraph in its entirety and substitute the following:  
10 Section 2, In the event of a vacancy occurring of an  
11 elected official of said District, the Clerk or  
12 Moderator shall call a meeting of the elective officers  
13 of said District during which said meeting shall be held  
14 within 3 days of the after said vacancy occurs. The  
15 said elected official shall select an inhabitant of the  
16 said District to fill out said vacancy for the remainder  
17 of said unexpired term.

18 MODERATOR HARSCH: Perhaps it would help the  
19 audience if you were to explain the purpose of the  
20 amendment.

21 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Yes, Mr. Moderator.  
22 Right now the way the vacancies run is, when a vacancy  
23 occurs, you get appointed. Last year right after the  
24 annual meeting Joel Johnson stepped down. I was  
25 appointed by the board to fill his position.

1           Because of way it's written now, I have to stand  
2 election tonight to keep my seat. So, by doing this,  
3 it'll try to avoid what we're going to be seeing where  
4 we have to elect four people tonight, so there will be a  
5 continuing of a strong board, fluency.

6           MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there any discussion  
7 of the proposed amendment?

8           MS. MORROCCO: I have a question.

9           MODERATOR HARSCH: Please come forward.

10          MS. MORROCCO: Corrine Morrocco, 21 Moss  
11 Lane, C-o-r-r-i-n-e M-o-r-r-o-c-c-o. I just have a  
12 question. Were you appointed by the board itself?

13          BOARD MEMBER COOK: Yes, ma'am.

14          MS. MORROCCO: So, what you're looking to do  
15 is because you were appointed, you don't want to have to  
16 be elected again?

17          BOARD MEMBER COOK: No, no. What happens  
18 is, Joel's seat was up in 2 years. Mrs. Rapose was  
19 elected. She doesn't stand election tonight. Because I  
20 was appointed, I have to stand election.

21          MS. MORROCCO: But you weren't voted in.

22          BOARD MEMBER COOK: I wasn't voted in, no,  
23 ma'am.

24          MS. MORROCCO: So, you were appointed by  
25 someone on the board?

1 BOARD MEMBER COOK: I was appointed by the  
2 board.

3 MS. MORROCCO: Okay. That's all I wanted to  
4 know.

5 MR. READ: Excuse me, ma'am. Are you  
6 seconding that motion? That's what we're trying to find  
7 out.

8 MS. MORROCCO: No. I just wanted  
9 clarification.

10 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Just if I may,  
11 I'll clarify that. The way the board works is you have  
12 usually three members of one year and two another year.  
13 That way you keep a balance. You don't have four people  
14 going two years at a time.

15 MS. MORROCCO: I understand. I just wanted  
16 to clarify that he was appointed and not elected, which  
17 means that he should be elected. That's all I wanted to  
18 know. Thank you.

19 PUBLIC VOICE: Can you explain that better.  
20 I'm not understanding.

21 MODERATOR HARSCH: Mr. D'Onofrio, would you  
22 care to explain that? Mr. Tobin.

23 MR. TOBIN: Basically, the motion, the  
24 by-laws as they currently stand indicate that when a  
25 person is appointed, he has to stand for an election at

1 the next annual meeting, which is, in this case, would  
2 be tonight.

3 The by-law change that's being proposed is that that  
4 person who's appointed would be able to remain in office  
5 for the balance of the unexpired term that he was  
6 appointed to, which could be well past the annual  
7 election. If it's a two-year term, you wouldn't have to  
8 stand election until next year in this particular case.

9 So, it's basically for the remainder of the unexpired  
10 term. That's the change tonight. Instead of coming up  
11 at the annual election, it's for the end of the original  
12 term. I hope I've answered the question.

13 MODERATOR HARSCH: Are there further  
14 questions? Please identify yourself.

15 MS. CASTELLI: Lisa Castelli,  
16 C-a-s-t-e-l-l-i, 15 Chopin Street. So, in other words,  
17 if you say Mr. Palin was appointed and you were  
18 appointed. In other words, what you're saying is that  
19 you want to leave it be as it is? Is that what that  
20 means. Like, we can't vote tonight to vote, say, Palin  
21 out?

22 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Mr. Palin was  
23 elected.

24 MS. CASTELLI: So, we would vote if we  
25 wanted him to stay.

1 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: His term is up.

2 MS. CASTELLI: That's what I wanted to know.

3 Thank you.

4 MODERATOR HARSCH: Am I correct on this,  
5 counsel, that no term on this board is greater than two  
6 years?

7 MR. TOBIN: That's correct. The maximum  
8 term is two years. There are four positions up tonight.  
9 Two of them will be for two years, and two of them will  
10 be for one year. Mr. Moderator will explain how that  
11 will work when it comes time to elect those positions  
12 tonight.

13 MODERATOR HARSCH: Yes, sir. Please  
14 identify yourself.

15 MR. Di PADUA: Robert A. D-i P-a-d-u-a, 62  
16 Laurel Avenue, Coventry. Question for our Chairman,  
17 please. Does this mean, Frank, that this revision is  
18 also going to have to be made as a Charter change at the  
19 State House? This is, I think, very, very important.  
20 Are we going to do this through a Charter change, or are  
21 we just doing this in by-laws?

22 CHAIRMAN PALIN: No. This is just by-laws.

23 MR. Di PADUA: It does not require a Charter  
24 change to do this?

25 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Our legal counsel tell us

1 this is just the by-laws.

2 MR. TOBIN: It does not a require a Charter  
3 change.

4 MR. Di PADUA: Thank you.

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there more discussion  
6 of the pending amendment?

7 ALL: (No response)

8 MODERATOR HARSCH: There being no further  
9 discussion, I'll ask to take a vote on this because  
10 we've already had it moved and seconded.

11 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Mr. Moderator,  
12 I'll second the motion.

13 MODERATOR HARSCH: We have it moved; we have  
14 it seconded. The discussion is concluded. I will ask  
15 those present and eligible to vote to indicate approval  
16 of the motion by staying aye.

17 VOICE VOTE: Aye.

18 MODERATOR HARSCH: Those opposed?

19 VOICE VOTE: Nay.

20 MODERATOR HARSCH: It sounds to me like the  
21 nays have it. Is there any question in the audience as  
22 to whether there should be a hand vote or a standing  
23 vote, or are we satisfied that the nays have it?

24 PUBLIC VOICE: Standing vote.

25 MODERATOR HARSCH: You're not satisfied; you

1 want a standing vote?

2 PUBLIC VOICE: I'll make a motion for a  
3 standing vote.

4 PUBLIC VOICE: I'll second it.

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: We need two counters.  
6 All those in favor of the motion which would involve the  
7 proposed amendment to the by-laws, please raise their  
8 hands. Please keep your hands up until you're been  
9 counted. This is for the motion, only district  
10 residents. These are votes in favor of the amendment.

11 (HAND VOTE TAKEN)

12 MODERATOR HARSCH: The report of the  
13 counters is 32 in favor and 31 opposed, and therefore  
14 the motion carries.

15 (MOTION PASSED 32-31)

16 MODERATOR HARSCH: We'll move on to any  
17 other proposed by-law changes. Are there any other  
18 proposed by-law changes?

19 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: I have the next  
20 change proposed.

21 MODERATOR HARSCH: Please proceed.

22 PUBLIC VOICE: People are confused.

23 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: The motion passed.

24 PUBLIC VOICE: The motion passed? I thought  
25 we were voting against it.

1 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: We asked for those  
2 in favor to raise their hands, and we counted 32.

3 PUBLIC VOICE: Do it over.

4 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: I make a motion we  
5 do a recount on the last motion.

6 PUBLIC VOICE: Standing vote.

7 MODERATOR HARSCH: This time it will be a  
8 standing vote. We have a by-law amendment. We're going  
9 to get this vote done right. Is anyone unclear on what  
10 the proposed amendment is? Yes, sir.

11 MR. GORMAN: David Gorman, G-o-r-m-a-n, 24  
12 Hornbeam Road. There's a lot of unclarity in the back  
13 there. I don't know if there's issues with the speaker.  
14 The point of the motion for clarity, so I understand it  
15 and the people around me understand it, this will  
16 stagger the terms, like Fred said -- I'm sorry. Rather  
17 than having all four re-elected this evening, the one  
18 that was appointed will stay for the remainder?

19 MR. TOBIN: No. It does not affect  
20 tonight's election.

21 MR. GORMAN: Moving toward, this proposal  
22 allows us if there's a vacancy, you appoint, that person  
23 finishes out the remainder of the term so there's no  
24 election, sort of what we do in the Town Council?

25 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Correct. That's

1 correct.

2 MR. GORMAN: Okay, I get it. Thank you.

3 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: The person they're  
4 filling, they'll serve out that person's term rather  
5 than waiting.

6 MODERATOR HARSCH: The object of the  
7 exercise is basically to reintroduce staggered terms as  
8 originally intended in the by-laws and the Charter, and  
9 we're going to revote. This gentleman has a comment.  
10 Proceed.

11 MR. NUNES: I have a question, Mr.  
12 Moderator. My name is Jared Nunes, 52 Phillip Street.  
13 Do you have the proposed change in a text format?

14 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Yes.

15 MR. NUNES: It's difficult to understand  
16 from the back. I heard some comments about a three-day  
17 provision there, and it's not entirely clear.

18 BOARD MEMBER COOK: The three days,  
19 basically, according to the Charter now, by the by-laws,  
20 excuse me, when someone resigns from the board, the  
21 board has to meet within three days to fill that  
22 vacancy. When that vacancy is filled, at the next  
23 annual meeting that person has to stand election.

24 What this proposed change is, going forward, not  
25 affecting tonight, going forward, so whoever sits on

1 this board starting tomorrow morning, if Miss Rapose  
2 decides she doesn't want to be on it in two weeks, she  
3 steps down, she only has a year left; that person  
4 elected, nominated would finish out the term.

5 If Mr. Palin gets re-elected tonight and he has a  
6 two-year term and then come spring decides, I can't do  
7 this no more, then he has a two-year term. Whoever the  
8 board appoints to fill his position will not stand for  
9 election at the next fiscal year. It will be when his  
10 term expires, which in this case would be 2018.

11 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: After tonight  
12 we'll have one person up next December, and I believe  
13 four members with two-year terms by the by-laws.  
14 There's been some discussion on that.

15 MR. NUNES: I would just suggest that please  
16 ask anybody who has a question about it. The way it was  
17 explained is not really what this says.

18 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Is everybody clear  
19 now?

20 THE PUBLIC: (No response)

21 MODERATOR HARSCH: All right. Is there any  
22 further discussion on the amendment? It's been moved  
23 and seconded. We've had discussion. Further  
24 discussion?

25 THE PUBLIC: (No response)

1           MODERATOR HARSCH: Discussion's concluded.  
2 We'll have a vote. At this time it will be a standing  
3 vote. Do we have the same counters, please?

4           The first vote will be those in favor of the motion.  
5 Please stand and remain standing until all have been  
6 counted.

7           COUNTER: I have 38 and 14, and that  
8 includes the board. There's 52.

9           MODERATOR HARSCH: Those opposed, please  
10 stand.

11           COUNTER: Eighteen, and I have 2.

12           MODERATOR HARSCH: So, 20. The motion  
13 passes 52 to 20. The motion is accepted.

14                   (MOTION PASSES 52 to 20)

15           MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there any further  
16 by-law amendment to be proposed?

17           VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: I have a motion to  
18 make. We had an issue this year where a board member  
19 resigned, and it left us, basically, with a split board  
20 on most issues. We couldn't even decide how to fill the  
21 position. So, the district does require a five-member  
22 board. You have to have an odd number of members.

23           So, I'm going to make a motion that's going to  
24 address this where if the board fails to fill that  
25 position within five days, then it goes to a special

1 election and the electors will fill the position. Let  
2 me read the motion to you.

3 I move to amend Article IV, Section 2, Paragraph 2  
4 of the by-laws of the Coventry Fire District. I hereby  
5 amend to read as follows:

6 In the event that a vacancy in any elective office of  
7 the District occurs, the Clerk or Moderator, upon  
8 learning of the vacancy, shall forthwith call a special  
9 meeting of the elective officers of said District, which  
10 said special meeting shall be held within five days  
11 thereafter.

12 At the said special meeting of the elective officers  
13 of said District the sole item on the agenda shall be  
14 the filling of the vacancy, and the said elective  
15 officers shall elect an inhabitant of said District to  
16 fill the vacancy for the unexpired term thereof.

17 If the elective officers do not elect an inhabitant  
18 of said District to fill said vacancy at said special  
19 meeting, then the Clerk of the District shall  
20 immediately call a special meeting of the Coventry Fire  
21 District to be held within two weeks from the date of  
22 the special meeting of the elective officers of said  
23 District.

24 At the said special meeting of the Coventry Fire  
25 District, the sole item on the Agenda shall be the

1 filling of the said vacancy for the unexpired term  
2 thereof.

3 Provided, however, if said vacancy shall occur within  
4 six months of the end of the normal term for said vacant  
5 seat, the vacancy shall remain vacant until the next  
6 annual meeting of the District.

7 MODERATOR HARSCH: Do we have a second for  
8 your motion?

9 BOARD MEMBER COOK: I'll second it, Mr.  
10 Moderator.

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: It is a motion, and we  
12 have a second. Now discussion.

13 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: So, basically, to  
14 avoid the expense of the taxpayers, if it's within six  
15 months of the next financial District Meeting, we won't  
16 hold a special meeting until that because you have to  
17 advertise and spend money to do that. It does not make  
18 that much of a difference, so it's got to be more than  
19 six months until the next meeting to have the special  
20 election occur. Does that make sense?

21 The other thing I did change is, on the prior motion,  
22 in the prior by-laws, the board has three days to fill  
23 that position. Well, that violates the open meetings  
24 laws because we need time to advertise, so I want to  
25 change that to five days, so we're in sync with the open

1 meetings laws. So, five days for the board to fill it.  
2 If they don't, it goes to a special election for the  
3 district.

4 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there further  
5 discussion?

6 THE PUBLIC: (No response)

7 MODERATOR HARSCH: Hearing none, the  
8 discussion is closed. I think the next question is a  
9 vote on the motion. All those in favor, please  
10 indicating so by saying aye.

11 VOICE VOTE: Aye.

12 MODERATOR HARSCH: All those opposed?

13 VOICE VOTE: (No response)

14 MODERATOR HARSCH: The ayes have it, and the  
15 motion carries.

16 (MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY)

17 MODERATOR HARSCH: The second amendment to  
18 the by-laws is done. Now, the next is the review of the  
19 proposed budget for 2015-2016. Mr. D'Onofrio.

20 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: We're back again  
21 from last year. You've heard the Treasurer's Report;  
22 you've heard the Chairman's Report, and now it goes into  
23 a little more detail as to what's behind these numbers.

24 The first slide you're looking at, this is the  
25 breakdown of our spending for the district. The biggest

1 piece, like last year, is personnel. Last year the  
2 number was 74 percent. We're down 64 percent of our  
3 expenses being spent on personnel.

4 The portion of the budget for debt repayment is 9  
5 percent. That's about \$224,000. We have a 5-year plan  
6 to retire our debt. It's about 20 percent of our debts.

7 Admin and legal count for 8 percent of the budget,  
8 and facilities and equipment, which include utilities is  
9 19 percent of the budget.

10 I'm going to give you an overall picture first. I'm  
11 going to get into more details in the numbers on the  
12 next slide. This is just an overall; this is a  
13 year-to-year comparison for you.

14 What you see on the screen now is the budget as we're  
15 proposing tonight. It's going to be a revenue-operating  
16 budget of \$2,255,000. \$1,872,00 would come from tax  
17 revenues. We're going to reduce a bad debt to 5 percent  
18 this year, and we're going to talk about it in a second.  
19 We're going to lose \$93,000 from the levy.

20 Collection from prior years, past due taxes, we're  
21 budgeting \$175,000, and revenue for rescue recovery,  
22 other revenue is \$331,000.

23 On the expenditure side, personnel is \$1,447,700;  
24 facilities and equipment is \$418,700; admin and legal,  
25 \$159,300, and the retirement debt is \$224,300. Question

1 on the other revenue line, that's basically, we have  
2 some assets we can still sell, the fire truck, pump and  
3 the chief's vehicle. So, let me get into more detail on  
4 these numbers because I know you've got a lot of  
5 questions. Rob, next slide.

6 Let's look at the revenue side first. The tax,  
7 \$1,867,000, that's going to require a tax increase of  
8 approximately 4 percent. Now, the reason for that, if  
9 you look at 2015, it's the second column from the right,  
10 if you go to the third line, back taxes and interest,  
11 last year, we had \$412,000 we collected in back taxes.  
12 That's a good story. For those who remember last year,  
13 we had almost a 15 percent -- we recovered a great deal  
14 of that money in 2015. It's not there because we  
15 collected it.

16 So, if you go to the left, the 2016 is only \$195,000  
17 in the budget for back taxes because we simply don't  
18 have as much owed anymore. So, to get to our required  
19 budget numbers, it's going to require a slight tax  
20 increase.

21 The rescue recovery line is \$4,000; basically, you're  
22 rounding and other incomes, as I mentioned, is the sale  
23 of the pump, the fire truck and the chief's vehicle.

24 On the expense side, most of the savings on the  
25 expense side, it comes from downsizing the district,

1 firefighters by approximately 50 percent. There's  
2 \$670,000 in savings there that would be offset by the  
3 downsize happening, and there are some retiree payouts  
4 going to occur. So, \$670,000 will be offset by a  
5 \$125,000 increase in retirees. So, there will be a net  
6 savings of personnel of \$545,000.

7 There's a \$50,000 reduction in our expenses for  
8 facilities. That's going to, basically, be tied to some  
9 litigation out there with Kent County Water and some  
10 National Grid, some litigation. At this point in time,  
11 this is the best estimate we have is to what our  
12 facilities cost. That could actually work in our favor,  
13 litigation, and our cost may come down even more then.

14 On the Admin and Legal side, there's a reduction in  
15 the legal costs. We have, as you know, we've had a very  
16 difficult year. There was a lot of litigation. We  
17 don't expect that to happen in 2016, so we'll find some  
18 savings there.

19 The big addition to the expenses this year is debt  
20 reduction. We went from having \$6,000 in debt last  
21 year, to over a million dollars in debt. So, the plan  
22 is to pay that off over 5 years, so we're going to add  
23 \$199,000 to the bottom line.

24 So, just to summarize this for you, we're budgeting a  
25 total expenditure of \$2,250,000, and there has to be a

1 decrease in expenses next year of \$446,400.

2 Now, when you put the revenue and expenses together,  
3 you get a slight surplus of \$35,000. However, any  
4 surplus at this time would be applied to any outstanding  
5 debt. So, in effect, there really isn't a surplus, but  
6 if you put the two numbers together, that's what you're  
7 going to come up with. Rob, next slide.

8 So, what does that mean to me as a taxpayer? Well,  
9 as I said, to get to this, the bottom line budget it's  
10 going to require a tax increase of 3.9 percent. It'll  
11 set the residential tax rate to \$2.70, and the  
12 commercial, industrial, tangible tax of \$4.05.

13 So, again, what does that mean to you? I put a chart  
14 together here. If you look at the first column of the  
15 chart, that's home values.

16 So, for example, if somebody's property is valued at  
17 \$125,000, with this proposed budget, we'll get an annual  
18 tax increase of \$12.50 or about \$1.04 a month.

19 If you go a little further down, your home's valued  
20 at \$200,000, you'll see about a \$20 increase annually in  
21 your taxes or about \$1.67 a month.

22 If you go way down to the bottom and your home's in  
23 the \$400,000 range, you'll see a \$40 increase in taxes  
24 or about \$3.33 a month.

25 Before I move forward, I'd like to take questions

1 now. There's a lot of numbers here, and I want to make  
2 sure we're clear on what you're looking at.

3 MODERATOR HARSCH: I think we'll have  
4 discussion now, and we'll have a motion subsequently; so  
5 if there are questions and comments, let's proceed.

6 MR. LEBLANC: James Leblanc, 43 Hazard  
7 Street, L-e-b-l-a-n-c. So, when I read the budget, are  
8 you saying that we're going to have 95 percent  
9 collection?

10 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Yes. We went to  
11 13 percent, we increased down to 7 percent, I'm sorry, 9  
12 percent this year.

13 MR. LEBLANC: What was the rates in the last  
14 three years?

15 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: The last three  
16 years, prior to this year?

17 MR. LEBLANC: Yes.

18 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: 2014 was about 13  
19 percent; 2013 was about 15 percent. It was around 15  
20 percent until this year, but we put some things in  
21 place, such as the levy, the state income tax returns.  
22 We've got more aggressive with letters; we've got more  
23 aggressive with tax sales. By the way, there's a tax  
24 sale coming up tomorrow, which may actually improve our  
25 position, depending how that goes.

1 MR. LEBLANC: Now, the audits, the November  
2 30, 2014, November 30, 2015. When should we expect  
3 audit statements to be issued?

4 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: I'm going to ask  
5 that question to the treasurer.

6 TREASURER KREKORIAN: There is an  
7 established set format for an audit for a fire district.  
8 They have a template for a request for proposals. I  
9 have submitted the request; I filled out the template,  
10 and it does have a timetable as to when people should  
11 submit their proposals for audit; I think it's January  
12 10th, and then there's, like, a preselection a couple of  
13 weeks after that, and then the final selection would be  
14 in the middle of February. I can get you an exact date.  
15 If you want, I can give you an RFP.

16 MR. LEBLANC: Sure. I would appreciate  
17 that. Just one final thing. The debt that we have  
18 outstanding. Is it a fixed rate, or is it based off of  
19 the interest?

20 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Some of that is  
21 the loan to the Coventry Credit Union, \$465,000. I  
22 believe it is a fixed rate, so we're paying about  
23 \$25,000 a year interest on that.

24 MR. LEBLANC: I was just going to ask if the  
25 budget was going to account for any increase.

1 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: That's where  
2 they're going.

3 MR. LEBLANC: Awesome, thank you.

4 MODERATOR HARSCH: Other discussion. Yes,  
5 sir.

6 MR. BECKMAN: Jim Beckman, B-e-c-k-m-a-n, 5  
7 Mulberry Court. John, on the debt for 2014-15, last  
8 year, how much was the debt owed?

9 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Last year we  
10 finished with approximately \$600,000.

11 MR. BECKMAN: In the hole?

12 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: In the hole.  
13 Well, we had a \$20,000 deficit at the end of the year,  
14 and we had a long-term debt of \$600,000.

15 MR. BECKMAN: How much was the line of  
16 credit?

17 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: 465. We didn't  
18 add anything to the credit.

19 MR. BECKMAN: You didn't lower it, either.

20 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: We paid the  
21 interest only this year.

22 MR. BECKMAN: Now the deficit is --

23 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: \$365,000 for the  
24 year is the deficit.

25 MR. BECKMAN: What is the debt?

1 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: The debt is 1  
2 million 30.

3 MR. BECKMAN: So, we're up to date on Blue  
4 Cross for the firefighters?

5 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: I believe we are.

6 MR. BECKMAN: And they're up to payroll?

7 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Yes. There is a  
8 payout still being made that's part of this budget.

9 MR. BECKMAN: Well, I don't know how you can  
10 run a business and not pay your employees. So, with all  
11 of this work, this hard work by this board, the debt  
12 over doubled. The debt.

13 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: The debt increased  
14 by \$400,000.

15 MR. BECKMAN: So, did you budget last year  
16 for the hydrants?

17 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Yes.

18 MR. BECKMAN: Did you pay them?

19 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: No.

20 MR. BECKMAN: Did you budget for the  
21 lighting?

22 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Yes.

23 MR. BECKMAN: Did you pay them.

24 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: No.

25 MR. BECKMAN: Okay. So, you didn't pay the

1 employees; you didn't pay the lighting, and you didn't  
2 pay the hydrant, and now you want a tax increase? So,  
3 all that money, where is it? And now you're in the hole  
4 double what you had.

5 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Mr. Beckman, you were on  
6 the board on April 1, 2011 when four new firefighters  
7 started.

8 MR. BECKMAN: Correct.

9 CHAIRMAN PALIN: At a cost of approximately  
10 a half of a million dollars a year.

11 MR. BECKMAN: Yup.

12 CHAIRMAN PALIN: The taxes were not raised  
13 that year. You ate into a surplus. The following year  
14 you did not raise taxes. It was a line of credit that  
15 was entered into for a half of a million dollars.

16 The following year you did not raise taxes. You were  
17 on the Board of Directors. You were chairman for part  
18 of that.

19 MR. BECKMAN: Correct.

20 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Additionally, there was an  
21 expenditure of over \$60,000 that began in 2012 for a  
22 ladder truck that, according to fire standards, Central  
23 Coventry had a ladder truck within 2.5 miles and also  
24 West Warwick had a ladder truck within 2.5 miles.  
25 Technically, we did not need a ladder truck. We could

1 have also gotten one at less than half the cost, but you  
2 were on the Board of Directors and voted for those  
3 increases. So, Mr. Beckman, I think a lot of the  
4 problems go back to your time on the board.

5 MR. BECKMAN: My administration. When you  
6 look at it, you can't rely on a different time to cover  
7 your district. You can't. That's called realization,  
8 and it's not done.

9 The other issue is, under my administration, I was  
10 the chairman. I was on the board for quite a while. We  
11 don't have the debts or the deficit that you have. The  
12 debts, actually. The deficit is minute.

13 CHAIRMAN PALIN: I'd like everyone to note  
14 that the \$600,000 debt is, when he came on board was  
15 when you were on the board.

16 MR. BECKMAN: It wasn't a debt. It was a  
17 lack of collecting of funds wasn't accelerated -- let me  
18 finish, Frank. I signed the paperwork with the state  
19 department to put it where we attached a refund as John  
20 was talking about. I signed the paperwork, plus we had  
21 an aggressive legal counsel doing constant sales, like  
22 you're doing now.

23 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Tell me, why did one out of  
24 six taxpayers were in arrears with their taxes? That is  
25 nowhere near the standards of every city and town and

1 fire district in the entire state. The rates are  
2 actually in the 90s. Quite frankly, Jim, I think you  
3 were sleeping at the switch. You should have been  
4 following that and paying attention.

5 MR. BECKMAN: So, I didn't increase the  
6 taxes. We only had a minor debt, deficit -- debt,  
7 actually, and you have a million dollar --

8 MODERATOR HARSCH: Mr. Beckman, that's  
9 enough time. Would you step forward, please. I'm going  
10 to enforce the 3-minute limit.

11 MR. MACVITTIE: My name is John Macvittie,  
12 M-a-c-v-i-t-t-i-e, 43 Highwood Drive. Is there going to  
13 be a time limit on speakers tonight?

14 MODERATOR HARSCH: There is now.

15 MR. MACVITTIE: Are you going to keep me to  
16 the 3 minutes?

17 MODERATOR HARSCH: I think that you have an  
18 allowance to go longer than that. Are there other  
19 comments?

20 MR. Di PADUA: Robert Di Padua. I  
21 respectfully would like to ask Frank or Fred Tobin if  
22 you can go back to the other slide for just one moment,  
23 please.

24 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Which slide is that?

25 MR. Di PADUA: Our expenses, please.

1 THE STENOGRAPHER: Sir, would you spell your  
2 last name for me, please.

3 MR. Di PADUA: D-i P-a-d-u-a. May I just  
4 respectfully ask, since the negotiations, thankfully,  
5 are over, could you just kindly give us a little bit of  
6 a rundown of why I can see the 238,400 during the  
7 turmoil, but 188 for legal fees still seems kind of high  
8 to some of us. Could you just kind of tell us, why is  
9 that number so high? It used to be, like, 30, 40,  
10 \$50,000. This is, like, triple of what it used to be.  
11 You may as well need it, and I am respectfully asking,  
12 why are we anticipating such high legal fees?

13 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Legal fees, that's  
14 admin and legal, so legal fees are \$50,000, which is  
15 still higher than it was. Some of the other stuff in  
16 that number is treasurer's fees, you have bank charges,  
17 you have --

18 MR. Di PADUA: That's what I was asking.  
19 So, if you could have broken it down, I wouldn't have  
20 gotten up and asked a question, but the way it is on  
21 your screen, it certainly seems like \$188,000.

22 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Fair enough, good  
23 question. If it helps, there are copies broken down in  
24 detail of the budget available.

25 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there more discussion,

1 questions? Yes, ma'am.

2 MS. CASTELLI: Lisa Castelli,  
3 C-a-s-t-e-l-l-i, 15 Chopin Street. If the budget we  
4 proposed last year and we stayed with that before  
5 somebody came up and decided to cut it by 300 and  
6 something, would we be in this scenario that we are  
7 right now? Because he didn't do his homework.

8 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: It's hard to say  
9 because so much has happened in a year. We'll disagree  
10 on this. I say no, and Mr. Palin will tell you, yes.

11 MS. CASTELLI: Well, did you, Mr. Palin,  
12 actually do all of your homework before you came up with  
13 those figures, stood up here in front of everybody and  
14 said, you could cut the budget by that much? Because it  
15 seems like since you cut the budget, there are more  
16 problems, and then when we try to get a hold of you, you  
17 tell us, well, I was on the radio, and people try to get  
18 you, you cancel meetings. You don't keep anybody  
19 informed. You run and hide.

20 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Actually, ma'am, yes, I did  
21 do my homework.

22 MS. CASTELLI: Apparently not good.

23 CHAIRMAN PALIN: As a matter of fact, one of  
24 the reasons that Kent County Water and National Grid had  
25 not been paid is because of things I discovered prior to

1 the last financial meeting, that there is a question of  
2 ownership. We still have not been able to get a  
3 response from both Kent County Water and National Grid  
4 asking them for proof of ownership.

5 MS. CASTELLI: But shouldn't you have done  
6 that before?

7 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Let me respond to you. Mr.  
8 Tobin also identified the same issue 5 years ago, and we  
9 had never spoken; and when I brought it up with him a  
10 couple of months ago, he said, I found the same thing.  
11 There is question.

12 So, there is a question whether we owe money or not,  
13 and one of the things that will happen now that we have  
14 the major fees where the district is still alive, it's  
15 still running, we still have a fire district, we will be  
16 able to sit down with the people from Kent County Water  
17 and also the people from National Grid, show them what  
18 we have, ask them to show them what they have, and  
19 hopefully, we will come up with a negotiated settlement  
20 that may be considerably less than we actually budgeted  
21 for because we budgeted for what the actual billing cost  
22 was.

23 I strongly suspect that number will end up lower, but  
24 we can't anticipate that for sure, but that is the  
25 projection, and that is one of the reasons that I

1 decided to run for the board again because I want to  
2 follow that to its end.

3 MS. CASTELLI: So, did you take into account  
4 when you're figuring out all these expenses on 100  
5 percent people paying their fire taxes, or are you  
6 going, like, at 85?

7 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Actually, in the past, they  
8 did use 100 percent. We didn't? I thought it was. I'm  
9 sorry. We did 95 percent.

10 MS. CASTELLI: Okay, so you're not sure.  
11 So, are we supposed to be clapping and patting your back  
12 because you think you did a great job?

13 PUBLIC VOICE: Sit down.

14 MS. CASTELLI: I can say what I want.

15 MODERATOR HARSCH: Ma'am, this needs to  
16 stop. Come forward, please.

17 MR. DESROSIERS: Marc Desrosiers, 95 Gervais  
18 Street, Coventry. When you did the pie chart and you  
19 showed the personnel costs, it would be 64 percent of  
20 our budget with 9 fireman.

21 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: That is correct.

22 MR. DESROSIERS: What was the budget last  
23 year with 17 firemen? You have to come up, I think, for  
24 personnel would be \$1.4 million this year; is that  
25 correct?

1 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: There's two  
2 numbers here. 64 percent is the active personnel and  
3 any money being paid to the retirees as well. That's  
4 called personnel costs. We can break it out for you.  
5 It's still \$1.1 million for the active personnel.

6 MR. DESROSIERS: \$1.1 million?

7 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Right. We paid 2  
8 million last year.

9 MR. DESROSIERS: \$2 million. So, with the  
10 reduction approximately half of the fire department from  
11 our budget last year, we're still, basically, remaining  
12 at the same tax rate?

13 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Actually, it's  
14 just a slightly higher tax rate because as I mentioned  
15 earlier, the extra income last year we're not going to  
16 have anymore from back year's taxes. We collected a lot  
17 of that now, so that's not coming in anymore, so we had  
18 to offset the loss. It's good news that we finally  
19 collected money.

20 The bad news is, it's not coming in anymore because  
21 it's not there anymore, so we had to offset that loss in  
22 the budget with a slight tax increase.

23 MR. DESROSIERS: Is still doesn't tell me  
24 what you have, 17 firemen and approximately X amount of  
25 dollars, and if you cut that in half, I would think that

1 cost would come down to almost in half, too.

2 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Sir, the cost for this  
3 year, we're about \$2 million. The active firefighters,  
4 the ones that we are keeping, the 9 of them, it's about  
5 \$1.1 million. It isn't a 50 percent drop. It's about a  
6 44 percent drop in staffing, and if you add that up,  
7 it's actually more than that 44 percent to bring us to  
8 the 1.1 million for active firefighters.

9 We do have extraordinary costs because when people  
10 retire or when they leave because of the way the old  
11 contract was set up, there were some considerable  
12 payouts, in the 50 to \$100,000 range per man with a  
13 couple of people.

14 MR. DESROSIERS: Basically, we're paying for  
15 all the retirees all in one shot. You're not spreading  
16 it out?

17 CHAIRMAN PALIN: We're spreading it out.

18 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: It's going to be  
19 spread over 2 years, and in one case I think 3 years  
20 with a 2-year payout.

21 CHAIRMAN PALIN: That's where the difference  
22 is.

23 MR. DESROSIERS: Thank you.

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you, sir. Are  
25 there other questions? We haven't had the motion yet.

1 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Could I make a motion that  
2 we accept --

3 MODERATOR HARSCH: We're in discussion right  
4 now, not of a motion, but questions.

5 MS. COOK: Lori Cook, 1 Centennial Street.  
6 I have a question. The reduction in the budget the last  
7 year, what was the percentage per household?

8 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: It was about 17  
9 percent.

10 MS. COOK: What's your increase for this  
11 year?

12 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: It's 3.9.

13 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you, ma'am. Is  
14 there other discussion or questions for Mr. D'Onofrio?

15 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: In conclusion, the  
16 board of the Coventry Fire District is asking you to  
17 pass this and approve this budget and the proposed 3.9  
18 percent tax increase.

19 If this budget is rejected, it will be level funded  
20 to last year's budget. Last year's budget was \$195,000  
21 higher than this year's budget. So, if you reject this,  
22 you're actually going to get a higher tax increase. So,  
23 I'll make that clear.

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: Do I hear a motion on  
25 acceptance of this budget?

1 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Mr. Moderator, I'd like to  
2 make a motion to accept the proposed budget as presented  
3 by Mr. D'Onofrio.

4 BOARD MEMBER RAPOSE: Second.

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: We have a motion, we have  
6 a second. We will now have a vote. Those in favor --

7 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Mr. Moderator, can we  
8 please have a standing vote?

9 MODERATOR HARSCH: Come forward. What's  
10 your question, sir?

11 MR. MACVITTIE: John Macvittie. I'd like to  
12 know, because of the personnel cuts which have been done  
13 in the district, what is that going to do to our  
14 homeowners insurance?

15 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: I don't think we  
16 have a good answer for that.

17 MR. MACVITTIE: Well, you must have some  
18 kind of an answer for it because I know that our  
19 homeowners insurance is most likely going to go up  
20 because of it.

21 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Actually, we still have the  
22 equipment, and that's what they look it. They look at  
23 the training, and I think it's a long way down the road.  
24 I have heard nothing from anybody about an increase in  
25 your homeowners insurance.

1 MR. MACVITTIE: I'd like to ask if anyone  
2 from the audience here knows what's going to go on with  
3 our homeowners insurance because of all these cuts in  
4 the fire district.

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you, sir. Is there  
6 other discussion on the motion? Yes, sir.

7 MR. BECKMAN: Jimmy Beckman. So, you said  
8 that we have all of the equipment, so that is covered.  
9 So, you have two men on duty, two firefighters. So, you  
10 get a house fire, do they take the rescue or the engine?  
11 That's a question, Frank. It's pretty cool.

12 CHAIRMAN PALIN: It's entirely up to the way  
13 the chief sets it up. I do not meddle in the way they  
14 run it.

15 MR. BECKMAN: Oh, okay. So, let's just say  
16 they take the engine and they rescue the person on the  
17 second floor with severe burns. Where's the rescue?  
18 Because you're only running two personnel. It should be  
19 four. You're going to kill somebody, and your town  
20 budget cut, it's going to cost you millions in lawsuits.

21 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Mr. Beckman, once again,  
22 it's a matter of what the taxpayers can afford, and they  
23 said it loud and clear last June.

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: Yes, sir.

25 MR. CASTELLI: Ronald Castelli,

1 Ca-s-t-e-l-l-i, 15 Chopin Street. I'm a fire chief for  
2 the Johnston Fire Department, and I get calls weekly  
3 when I'm on duty from insurance companies asking hydrant  
4 locations, personnel, and what trucks are in service,  
5 what trucks are not in service.

6 I don't know about other fire departments, but I can  
7 only speak for myself that I do get these phone calls,  
8 so it's just a matter of time before the insurance  
9 company catch knowing how many people are on duty, and  
10 that's when the insurance rates will go up.

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there further  
12 discussion on the motion? Come forward.

13 MR. MACVITTIE: I just want to say, if we  
14 vote this budget so that we can keep our fire taxes  
15 down, there's a good possibility that our insurance  
16 rates for each one of our households is going to go a  
17 lot higher than what we're saving on our fire taxes, so  
18 we better really figure this out. Otherwise, we're  
19 going to be paying higher insurance.

20 MODERATOR HARSCH: Yes, sir.

21 MR. KOTKOFSKI: My name is Manual Kotkofski.  
22 I live at 56 Laurel Avenue in Coventry, Rhode Island. I  
23 have two questions I would like to send to the board.  
24 One is, how come we cannot go back to a volunteer fire  
25 department as they did back in the 50s and 60s? Is

1 there anybody who can answer that question?

2 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Honestly, it was part of  
3 the negotiations. We did discuss it. It's something  
4 that's always going to be looked at in the future.

5 However, one of the problems that you run into with  
6 it is, because I have made a lot of phone calls, is the  
7 number of people that will volunteer has dwindled, just  
8 as the number of people applying for firefighters jobs  
9 has dwindled considerably in the past few years.

10 When push came to shove with the negotiator, I  
11 preferred taking the concessions that we received rather  
12 than pushing the negotiations off the table and over the  
13 edge to demand volunteers.

14 It was a loser. The union was not going to vote for  
15 it. We have a union contract. If I pushed it that way,  
16 we would not have a contract today, and we probably  
17 would be looking at dissolving the district.

18 MR. KOTKOFSKI: My second question is, I  
19 don't think the union would appreciate this, but to go  
20 through private providers for service.

21 CHAIRMAN PALIN: There was a time earlier  
22 this year in the fall that there were a lot of threats  
23 made to walk out of the job because the firefighters  
24 weren't getting paid. There was a lot of rhetoric, and  
25 at that time, Judge Stern asked me, I happened to be the

1 only board member in the court that day, she had come up  
2 with a contingency plan, and that contingency plan that  
3 I came up with was for a private ambulance service to  
4 come in in the interim if, and only if, the firefighters  
5 walked out and also if Judge Stern ordered. It was a  
6 fire storm that took place, and I'm sorry to say that  
7 we're still current -- this investigation is still  
8 taking place on that.

9 MR. KOTKOWSKI: That's how the unions work.  
10 They use tactics like that. Our taxes would be cheaper.  
11 We would have better service and less aggravation.  
12 Thank you for listening.

13 MODERATOR HARSCH: Come forward if you have  
14 a comment, please. Yes, sir.

15 MR. DiCHRISTOFARO: Jeff DiChristofaro,  
16 D-i-C-h-r-i-s-t-o-f-a-r-o, 47 Ginger Trail. I have a  
17 question. You have nine firefighters on duty. What's  
18 it going to cost to put four men back in on the trucks  
19 instead of two?

20 CHAIRMAN PALIN: The average cost for the  
21 past 5 years is about \$125,000, the average cost. So,  
22 you're talking about a half of a million dollars. What  
23 would the tax increase be?

24 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: To add a half of a  
25 millions dollars back in the budget, the tax increase

1 would be 31.74 percent. So, if you're a homeowner and  
2 your house is valued at \$200,000, that would be a \$156  
3 tax increase for the year.

4 MR. DiCHRISTOFARO: For the entire year?

5 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: For the entire  
6 year. It's about \$13 a month it would cost the  
7 homeowner with a value of \$200,000. That's if you  
8 reinstate the firefighters.

9 MR. DiCHRISTOFARO: Everybody's talking  
10 about the homeowners insurance is going up. If I'm  
11 correct I'm hearing from everybody, homeowners insurance  
12 is going to go up if we stay with two?

13 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: It's possible.

14 MODERATOR HARSCH: Ma'am, if you have  
15 something to say, please come forward.

16 MR. DiCHRISTOFARO: Either way we're going  
17 to pay for it. I'd rather see the four guys on the  
18 truck. I'm a retired firefighter. Two guys are not  
19 going to do it. You're not going to get the service out  
20 of two guys.

21 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Not to be the  
22 skunk at the party, but we had two guys on; and one guy  
23 heading to the hospital. We had one guy left, and we  
24 had to close the station for an hour and a half.

25 CHAIRMAN PALIN: We have minimum manning of

1 two. We have a staff of nine right now. When we start  
2 getting out of the financial quagmire that we are in,  
3 Mr. Gorman will even agree to this, I did say during  
4 negotiations that down the road when things are in a  
5 better fiscal state, we will relook at staffing and the  
6 number of people on board, but we just didn't want to  
7 lock into a contract. It will be looked at in the  
8 future as things start to resolve financially with the  
9 old debt.

10 MR. DiCHRISTOFARO: Yeah, but your calls  
11 aren't going to wait. You can wait all you want, but  
12 your calls aren't going to wait, and downsizing to two  
13 men on duty, to me it doesn't work.

14 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you, sir. Yes,  
15 ma'am.

16 MS. MORROCCO: Corrine Morrocco. I just  
17 have a question. Has anyone checked to see what the ISO  
18 rating is going to change to?

19 Currently, the ISO rating for the Anthony Fire  
20 District is a four. Normally, if you have an  
21 understaffed fire department, meaning that they don't  
22 meet minimum manning, your ISO rating is either going to  
23 go from a 7 to a 9.

24 Percentage-wise, in insurance premiums, my insurance  
25 premium right now is about \$1,000 a year.

1 Percentage-wise between a 4 and 7 or a 9, your insurance  
2 rate generally goes up anywhere between 20 and 25  
3 percent or more per year, which on average clearly  
4 indicates that your cost for your homeowners insurance  
5 is going to go up higher than your proposed increase,  
6 and don't interrupt me, your proposed increase, add that  
7 on the firefighters that you're missing to bring up  
8 your minimum manning to four per truck.

9 Now, based on what you just said, you closed a  
10 station for an hour and a half. The ISO rate is  
11 certainly going to change once they find out that you're  
12 closing departments and stations because you don't have  
13 enough staff on duty. That becomes a volunteer. Now  
14 your ISO rating goes from a 9 to a 10 because that means  
15 you don't have the staff to be operational.

16 Now your insurance rates, you run the risk that your  
17 insurance company is not going to even insure you  
18 because insurance companies generally do not insure if  
19 you have an ISO rating of a 10. So, I don't think your  
20 percentages work out correctly.

21 CHAIRMAN PALIN: History has shown us that  
22 our next door neighbor, when they were threatened with  
23 an ISO rating of 10, they almost immediately rescinded  
24 it, and they were going to look at it for another year.

25 MS. MORROCCO: There's no such thing, sir.

1 If you put minimum manning down to a 2 and your stations  
2 were closed for an hour and a half, there's no one  
3 that's going to get your ISO rating to stay at a 4, no  
4 matter what you say. Even if you have to go to a 9,  
5 it's never going to stay at a 4 if you don't have  
6 minimum manning and if you don't have your stations open  
7 24 hours a day. It's never going to happen, and you  
8 should not tell people that their insurance rates will  
9 not change because it's an out and out lie, and you know  
10 it.

11 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Ma'am, also, one of the  
12 things that everybody in this audience has to remember,  
13 there is absolutely no way we were going to get a 30 or  
14 40 percent tax increase for this district.

15 Because you have people hanging from the rafters for  
16 that, and ultimately what would have happened is we  
17 would have been forced to close. So, it's the best  
18 choice we have to bring our taxes under control and to  
19 take the bull by the horns and move from here. We're  
20 together with the union and to provide quality, safe,  
21 affordable, fire service for the district.

22 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Mr. Moderator, I move  
23 the vote, please.

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: Further discussion. If  
25 you want to talk, please come to the microphone.

1 MR. BECKMAN: Jim Beckman. So, you're  
2 willing to wait operational-wise. Chief, if you have 4  
3 personnel on duty and 1 had to go in the hospital, would  
4 you have shut down the station?

5 CHIEF WARREN: No.

6 MR. BECKMAN: So, we're going to wait and  
7 discuss this in a couple of years. In the meantime, now  
8 we can't even figure out how much revenue we lost on a  
9 rescue that had been shut down for an hour and a half;  
10 it's about one run. What's a billable run, 1,500,  
11 1,200? So, it cost about 1,500.

12 So, you're willing to risk the firefighters' lives  
13 for 2 years, and your ISO rating, if it goes up, your  
14 insurance company bills you \$350 more per year. It's  
15 cheaper to hire the firefighter, and it's safer because  
16 two firefighters show up, one sets the pump and the  
17 other one came, so he's just going to squirt water, if  
18 he can, on the outside of the house. That's the rules,  
19 so you might as well just let it burn to the ground.  
20 Nice job, Frank.

21 MODERATOR HARSCH: Are there any other  
22 comments? Yes, sir.

23 MR. MACVITTIE: John Macvittie. For years  
24 I've been coming to the district meetings. I used to go  
25 to all the workshops to prepare the budget months ahead

1 of time. I used to go to all of the financial meetings,  
2 like we are tonight, and I would always try to keep the  
3 tax increases down year after year after year, but I  
4 see what's going on here since last year, all of the  
5 cuts that have been going on and everything.

6 I see what's going to be happening to our insurance  
7 rates and everything, and I really don't want to do  
8 this, but I would like to know, I know we've got a  
9 motion on the floor right now, but I would like to make  
10 a motion somehow to add \$400,000 to the budget for the  
11 purpose of putting more men on the force.

12 MODERATOR HARSCH: This is a proposed  
13 amendment to the budget?

14 MR. MACVITTIE: Yes.

15 MODERATOR HARSCH: We have a motion. This  
16 would be an amendment to the motion. Therefore, we will  
17 vote on the amendment. First, let me see if there's a  
18 second to the motion.

19 PUBLIC VOICE: Second.

20 MODERATOR HARSCH: The amendment needs to be  
21 in writing, so would the gentleman who proposed the  
22 amendment give us the written version.

23 MR. DESROSIERS: Marc Desrosiers, 95 Gervais  
24 Street. I'd like to know, if we add \$400,000 to the  
25 budget, how many firemen would that bring back?

1           CHAIRMAN PALIN: Sir, the contract says 9  
2 men, 2 minimum staffing. I don't know what will happen.  
3 It depends on what the next board says.

4           MR. DESROSIERS: I just want to know how  
5 many firemen would that bring back, the \$400,000?

6           VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: The motion that  
7 has been submitted in writing specifically outlines the  
8 increase to be tied to increase the staffing.

9           Now, I'm not clear how that affects the contract for  
10 the length of the contract. Mr. Tobin, if possibly you  
11 can help there. Mr. Read.

12           MR. READ: The collective bargaining  
13 agreement, that's the contract. That contract fixes the  
14 obligations of the district for the forthcoming 3-year  
15 period. You could make a motion to add \$400,000 to the  
16 budget. It will not affect the contract one bit.

17           So, the answer is, it will not cause any firefighters  
18 to be added to the contract, unless under the existing  
19 contract, a later board decides to do it. There's  
20 always the ability to add firefighters; you can add them  
21 at any time, but a motion would not have any effect on  
22 the contract.

23           MR. DESROSIERS: That's not the question I  
24 have.

25           MR. READ: No, but that's the result of the

1 motion.

2 MR. DESROSIERS: If you did add \$400,000 to  
3 the budget today, how many firefighters would that bring  
4 back?

5 MR. READ: That's what I'm trying to tell  
6 you. None.

7 MR. DESROSIERS: No, no. How many  
8 firefighters can you bring back with 400,000?

9 MR. READ: I believe the average cost is  
10 \$125,000 per firefighter, so I think that's 3, about 3.

11 MR. DESROSIERS: Three. So, \$125,000 per  
12 year, per firefighters. You went from 17 down to 9, and  
13 8 times 125 is over a million dollars.

14 MR. READ: I'm missing your point, sir.

15 MR. DESROSIERS: You had a reduction moving  
16 17 down to 9. You're telling me it's \$125,000 per year,  
17 per firefighter.

18 MR. READ: That's the average cost per  
19 firefighter.

20 MR. DESROSIERS: So, you're talking about  
21 that was an average reduction of \$900,000 for the  
22 firefighters that you lost.

23 MR. READ: Yes. And then your point?

24 MR. DESROSIERS: \$900,000 taken off the  
25 budget, and you're saying it's going to raise our taxes.

1 You just took \$900,000 off the budget because you got  
2 rid of some of firemen. Now to turn around and bring  
3 all of them back, that would add another \$900,000 to the  
4 budget?

5 MR. READ: Maybe I'm misunderstanding, sir,  
6 but are you perhaps missing the fact that in addition to  
7 the cost per firefighter, there's substantial cost this  
8 year for retired firefighters? Maybe that's the point  
9 that you're missing.

10 MR. DESROSIERS: No. The cost per  
11 firefighter, we have to put them back to 17, it's going  
12 it cost us about \$900,000 to get back to 17  
13 firefighters.

14 MR. READ: You want to get back to 17? It's  
15 going to be the better part of \$1 million.

16 MR. DESROSIERS: We just took \$1 million off  
17 last year's budget.

18 MR. READ: Again, the budgets are not equal.  
19 If you recall, I believe there was an explanation I  
20 heard earlier that last year's budget failed to reflect  
21 debt, which is reflected in this year's budget. Does  
22 that answer your question?

23 MR. DESROSIERS: Well, I asked if you were  
24 going to pay the debt off. It's all spread out, but it  
25 seems like a big amount of money we're paying, you want

1 us to pay right now. You took a lot away from us, and  
2 you're raising the budget. We're trying to clean up  
3 everything right away.

4 MR. READ: No. Hardly.

5 MR. DESROSIERS: Thank you.

6 MODERATOR HARSCH: Yes, sir.

7 MR. MACVITTIE: John Macvittie. I'm sorry.  
8 I'm trying to write up that proposal that I made. Did  
9 you say that the money that I'm proposing would not go  
10 to put more firefighters on?

11 CHAIRMAN PALIN: It's entirely up to the new  
12 board. Our contract does not provide for that. We have  
13 9 men, 2 man minimum manning, and as a matter of fact,  
14 the board could decide if there was a \$400,000 tax  
15 increase to pay off --

16 MR. MACVITTIE: That's not what my proposal  
17 was.

18 CHAIRMAN PALIN: I'm just telling you.

19 MR. MACVITTIE: My proposal was that we  
20 would add \$400,000 back into the budget for the purpose  
21 of adding more firefighters.

22 CHAIRMAN PALIN: It is up to the Board of  
23 Directors.

24 MR. MACVITTIE: No. That's up to the  
25 people. You represent the people, and my proposal is to

1 put \$400,000 back into the budget for the purpose of  
2 rehiring more firefighters.

3 MODERATOR HARSCH: Your amendment reads, I  
4 propose an amendment to tonight's budget of \$400,000.  
5 In my opinion, that is the limit of what you can do.  
6 You cannot tie it to a specific line item. That's the  
7 responsibility of the Board of Directors.

8 CHAIRMAN PALIN: MR. Beckman, just so you  
9 know, I tried to tie in the line item and was unable to,  
10 and thank you for your salute.

11 MR. GORMAN: Dave Gorman, 24 Hornbeam Road.  
12 The contract does state 9 firefighters on duty or  
13 overall staffing. However, the clause says it can be  
14 added to at any time. The board can add as many  
15 firefighters as they want at any given time. The  
16 minimum on duty is 9.

17 I understand, I think, what the board is trying to  
18 say or the moderator is trying to say is that \$400,000,  
19 like Mr. Palin tried last year to allocate for a certain  
20 line item, you can't allocate for a certain line item.  
21 You can allocate for the total budget. Am I correct?

22 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Correct.

23 MR. GORMAN: So, we can add 400, 500,  
24 600,000, but not for a specific line item just for the  
25 general fund. So, the question would become, when the

1 new board gets elected, whoever is nominated, the  
2 question is, at that time for that person, do you  
3 support allocating \$400,000 for staffing? Yes or no.  
4 You would vote that way, I would imagine.

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: It really depends, sir,  
6 on what is in the amendment. You cannot by amendment  
7 instruct the board to hire personnel, but it would  
8 appear to me that you could authorize \$400,000 in the  
9 event or for the purpose of hiring additional personnel,  
10 and then it would be up to the board.

11 MR. GORMAN: Who you elect. Okay, thank  
12 you.

13 MR. BECKMAN: I have a clarification for Mr.  
14 Gorman. I just need a clarification. So, if we can get  
15 this \$400,000 put into your budget, which would be more  
16 money into your budget, we could technically, the board  
17 could technically hire 3 more firefighters, so there  
18 would be 3 on the truck on every shift or shifts because  
19 you've got one shift with 3, and 3 with 2.

20 TREASURER KREKORIAN: Are you looking at  
21 24/7 coverage?

22 MR. BECKMAN: I haven't finished my comment.  
23 So, you've got 3 shifts with 2, and 1 shift with 3. If  
24 you were to take the 400,000 and train and hire 3  
25 firefighters and put one on every shift, each shift

1 would have 3. Didn't say anything about changing the  
2 minimum manning to 2. It's for safety reasons, so I  
3 don't think it will affect the contract in which you  
4 signed.

5 So, for safety reasons, you could put the 3  
6 firefighters, hire them, put them on. There's nothing  
7 to do with changing the contract because the contract  
8 says you've got to have a minimum of 9. You can have 20  
9 firefighters on the payroll. The contract only calls  
10 for 9. Correct, Mr. Gorman?

11 MR. GORMAN: Correct.

12 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Chief, I have a question  
14 for you. Could you come to the microphone?

15 CHIEF WARREN: Absolutely.

16 CHAIRMAN PALIN: If we have 3 men in the  
17 house and there is a rescue run, what do those 3 men do?

18 CHIEF WARREN: All get on the rescue, and go  
19 to the rescue run.

20 CHAIRMAN PALIN: We have 2 men in the house,  
21 what do they do?

22 CHIEF WARREN: Get on the rescue.

23 CHAIRMAN PALIN: So, there would be no  
24 change in service.

25 CHIEF WARREN: The only change in the

1 service would be, if there was a fire to send out the  
2 engine or the ladder.

3 CHAIRMAN PALIN: You would be able to send  
4 out one vehicle; is that correct?

5 CHIEF WARREN: That's correct.

6 CHAIRMAN PALIN: So, we need 4.

7 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Chief, how many fires  
8 did we have last year in the district?

9 PUBLIC VOICE: All it takes is one super  
10 one.

11 CHIEF WARREN: We had 5 last year.

12 BOARD MEMBER COOK: And we were at 4 men at  
13 that time?

14 CHIEF WARREN: Yes.

15 BOARD MEMBER COOK: When that went off, how  
16 many trucks did we run?

17 CHIEF WARREN: Out of Anthony?

18 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Yes.

19 CHIEF WARREN: An engine and a ladder.

20 BOARD MEMBER COOK: An engine and a ladder,  
21 so we had four.

22 CHIEF WARREN: Right. If it happens  
23 tonight, you're going to get 2. You're going to get one  
24 truck, if they're in service.

25 MR. GORMAN: David Gorman. I guess, John,

1 you raised this, and I think you started talking about  
2 the hydrants. Hydrants and streetlighting. There's  
3 70,000, \$150,000 difference. Are you comfortable with  
4 that?

5 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: No, I am not  
6 comfortable with that. There's an assumption there  
7 won't be some payments made in the first part of the  
8 year while under litigation. I'm not comfortable with  
9 that, and I'm also not as comfortable as Mr. Palin is  
10 that we're going to win the case. If we lose this case,  
11 our debt's going to go even higher.

12 MR. GORMAN: I guess, Mr. Palin, are you  
13 comfortable with the 70? Do you think it's reasonable  
14 to only pay 70?

15 CHAIRMAN PALIN: I'm comfortable this year  
16 because after the first of the year, if I'm still on the  
17 board, if I'm not, then I won't be able to do this, we  
18 would attempt to enter into negotiations with both of  
19 them, and those things take a while, as you know, and  
20 especially when you're at opposite with where they  
21 stand. There's a very good chance that nothing will get  
22 paid this year, just as good a chance as more will get  
23 paid.

24 Now, if there's a \$400,000 influx in money, one of  
25 the problems that you may have is Coventry Credit Union

1 will come over and say, we want more this year.

2 The other thing that may happen is Kent County Water  
3 and National Grid may become much more aggressive  
4 because they will say, you've got the money, pay me.  
5 That's the concerns. We can't have too much money in  
6 the till when you're negotiating with someone about  
7 payment.

8 MR. GORMAN: Those are the two questions  
9 with regards to that.

10 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you. Yes, sir.

11 MR. GALLO: Bob Gallo, G-a-l-l-o. I'm just  
12 curious. I know you're talking about new firefighters.  
13 I understand the safety issue, but what about the other  
14 districts? You have Central, you've got Hopkins Hill.  
15 Don't they, if there's a major fire, come and support?

16 BOARD MEMBER COOK: That would be an answer  
17 from the Chief, but I can tell you from being a  
18 volunteer, if we have something going on, I believe the  
19 other night when we were meeting, every single rescue  
20 within the town was out. We had no coverage in town  
21 because every truck was on the road, and our truck was  
22 in West Warwick. That can happen at any time.

23 MR. GALLO: That could happen at any time.

24 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Mr. Gallo, let me give you  
25 an example. The City of Providence during the day has

1 somewhere in the vicinity of 400,000 people in it. They  
2 have 7 rescues. That's about 45 to 50,000 per person  
3 those rescues are covering. We have 9,000 residents, so  
4 you have a 9,000 to 1 versus 45,000 to 1.

5 Back in the '90s, Providence actually had 5 rescues.  
6 It was more like 90,000 to 1. The coverage takes place,  
7 and that's what mutual labor is for. I think the  
8 history of our district, quite frankly, I think we have  
9 provided more service to West Warwick, for example, than  
10 they provided to us, and I don't think it's changed a  
11 lot. About 90 percent of the calls, over 90 percent are  
12 rescue runs.

13 MR. GALLO: Thank you.

14 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there any other  
15 discussion?

16 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: I want to speak as  
17 a taxpayer first. John D'Onofrio, 100 -- In Coventry.

18 There's a lot of discussion here on this money. As  
19 most of you have known me in this room, you know I was  
20 very much opposed to cutting the budget last year. We  
21 had a \$2.9 million budget. We cut \$450,000 in numbers.  
22 As a result, we increased our debt by about the same  
23 amount.

24 If we were to add a half of a million dollars to this  
25 budget, we're still \$200,000 lower than we were 2 years

1 ago. We've incurred a lot of debt, and we've incurred  
2 some safety issues and some possible insurance issues.

3 Now, I support the budget we're putting forward  
4 tonight because it's a starting point to where we have  
5 to get to. It's better than having no fire district at  
6 this point in time.

7 However, it was you, the taxpayers, last year that  
8 cut the budget. You decided you did not want to pay  
9 them for fire services, and you see the result of that  
10 decision tonight. We now have a much diminished fire  
11 department, an increase in debt and a deficit of up to  
12 \$40,000 a year and \$365,000. We can't cut money out of  
13 the budget without allocating how you're going to fund  
14 those cuts.

15 So, as a taxpayer, I'm concerned with the direction  
16 of this department. I'm pleased that the board will be  
17 able to come together towards the end of the year and  
18 work with the union and get a new starting point.

19 You're going to be picking a new board tonight.  
20 They'll be 4 new members. You need to understand, when  
21 they come up and introduce themselves, ask them  
22 questions as to how they see the future of this  
23 department and vote accordingly.

24 MR. BECKMAN: Jim Beckman. I have an  
25 operational question for the Chief through the Chair.

1 In 2011 before that board changed the minimum manning  
2 from 3 to 4, when that truck went on a rescue, when that  
3 bell rang for a rescue under the 3-man minimum, how many  
4 trucks went out of the door?

5 CHIEF WARREN: If we had 4 men on duty?

6 MR. BECKMAN: If you had 3 men on duty, how  
7 many trucks went out the door?

8 CHIEF WARREN: One.

9 MR. BECKMAN: Did the engine go and the  
10 rescue? In 2011 when they went on a rescue run, did the  
11 engine and the 3 men, engine and the rescue go and the  
12 engine would come back with one?

13 CHIEF WARREN: Sometimes, yes. That was  
14 prior to my --

15 MR. BECKMAN: You've been there since dirt  
16 was turned over. They can't do that today because  
17 there's only 2.

18 CHIEF WARREN: Right.

19 MR. BECKMAN: When that one, that sole  
20 personnel came back on the engine when the rescue went  
21 to the hospital --

22 CHIEF WARREN: It's a safety issue. If we  
23 went to 1 man now, and Mr. Gorman, I believe, can attest  
24 to this, and you can, too, it's a very big safety issue  
25 for that firefighter. To send that one man out again by

1 himself is obscured. It's truly obscured.

2 MR. BECKMAN: It's a safety issue.

3 CHIEF WARREN: It's a big safety issue. The  
4 problem is, to serve the taxpayers properly, 4 guys is  
5 what we need, and I understand the board's position  
6 where we can't afford it; we can't do this; we can't do  
7 that. If you're going to leave 2 guys on, your service  
8 is going to dwindle. There's no way around it. You  
9 know that yourself.

10 My biggest concern right now is looking at everyone  
11 and saying, let's put the \$400,000 back and listen to  
12 the board say, it's not going towards manpower right  
13 now. That's a concern because their rate, tax rate is  
14 going to go up, and the service isn't going to change.

15 I heard someone say about mutual aid. Mutual aid is  
16 mutual aid. Today we had a fire. There were 2 guys on  
17 duty. Central Coventry and Hopkins Hill came to the  
18 fire, all Coventry guys, and they functioned; they did  
19 well together. So, collectively, the answer is  
20 ultimately one fire --

21 MR. BECKMAN: You can't operate at a normal  
22 house fire with 2 personnel.

23 CHIEF WARREN: Absolutely not.

24 MR. BECKMAN: So, you're relying on other  
25 cities and other districts to finance us?

1 CHIEF WARREN: Absolutely.

2 MR. BECKMAN: Your fire department?

3 CHIEF WARREN: Absolutely, as we do for  
4 them.

5 MR. BECKMAN: Oh. So, when they're out on a  
6 rescue run, 2 guys on duty, 2 personnel, and you need  
7 another rescue --

8 CHIEF WARREN: A rescue comes.

9 MR. BECKMAN: From another district?

10 CHIEF WARREN: From another district.

11 MR. BECKMAN: Okay.

12 MODERATOR HARSCH: Yes, sir.

13 MR. MACVITTIE: John Macvittie. Last year  
14 you mentioned, the last year we all came out and voted  
15 to take the \$450,000 out of the budget. Last year  
16 everyone came over here in a heated rush because of what  
17 happened on the news with the chief last year, and also  
18 what was going on in Central Coventry. Everybody was in  
19 just a rush to do what they could to vent their anger.  
20 Mr. Palin, his anger, came out and said, I want to take  
21 \$450,000 out of the budget.

22 Before last year's meeting, Mr. Palin never came to  
23 this district for one single meeting, and he came here  
24 on that one time in anger and brought by the news  
25 article, and he came and proposed \$450,000 out of the

1 budget; and he didn't know what he was talking about.

2 I think it would be better to do this tonight and to  
3 make amends for that. We've got to put \$450,000 back  
4 into the budget for the purpose of rehiring personnel.  
5 These guys are saying that you're not going to rehire  
6 the personnel, but what we're going to have to do  
7 tonight is to vote for this \$450,000, then we're going  
8 to have people here to step up to go on that board who  
9 are going to use that money towards personnel.

10 MODERATOR HARSCH: I'll take further  
11 discussion and then is this gentleman's amendment to the  
12 proposed motion. Are we prepared vote?

13 Let me clarify as to the amendment. I have it in,  
14 basically, two written forms. One would add \$400,000 to  
15 the budget. One would add \$400,000 contingent on the  
16 addition of firefighters.

17 I don't believe, as a matter of law, that you can tie  
18 the hands of the next board in that way in terms of  
19 actually appropriating the money. You can tell them  
20 that that's what you want them to think about, and  
21 you're putting the money up with that in mind, but you  
22 can't tell them what they're going to do with it.

23 So, I would suggest, sir, that your amendment be  
24 simply the proposal to add \$400,000 to the budget with  
25 the admonition to the next board that the voters would

1 like to see additional personnel hired. Is that  
2 satisfactory to you, sir?

3 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: The tax rate to  
4 add \$400,000, the tax rate goes to \$3.28 per thousand  
5 or a tax increase of 26.19 percent.

6 So, if you have a household valued at \$200,000, your  
7 tax increase would be \$132 a year or \$11 a month. If  
8 your home's valued at \$125,000, your tax would increase  
9 by \$85.11 or \$7.09 a month.

10 PUBLIC VOICE: Would you just repeat what  
11 it's going to be?

12 MODERATOR HARSCH: Would you come down in  
13 front, sir.

14 MR. DESROSIERS: Marc Desrosiers, 95 Gervais  
15 Street. If we add \$400,000, that will be towards  
16 restating firemen? If you turn around and we give them  
17 \$400,000, the Coventry Credit Union will say, pay them,  
18 so you can add \$400,000 and not even get any firemen.

19 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Mr. Desrosiers,  
20 here's the risk that you run. To answer your question,  
21 compared to the original proposal, so if you add  
22 \$400,000 to the budget versus our original proposal, so,  
23 if you have a \$200,000 home, we're asking you for \$115  
24 more than our original proposal. If you have a \$125,000  
25 home, we're asking for \$72 more per year than the

1 original proposal amount. If you had a \$400,000 home,  
2 we're asking for \$231 more than our original proposal as  
3 a comparison.

4 PUBLIC VOICE: Yes, but would that be for  
5 the personnel?

6 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: We cannot, as a  
7 board, we cannot approve it to be designated towards  
8 personnel. That will be up to the next board to decide  
9 that. That cannot be made in the amendment. You do run  
10 a risk.

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: So, the decision before  
12 the house is as to the amendment to the motion is to  
13 whether you wish to add \$400,000 to the budget -- I'm  
14 sorry. Is there somebody who wants to continue the  
15 discussion?

16 MR. BECKMAN: Just a quick question. Jim  
17 Beckman. John, the original budget proposed before Mr.  
18 Palin's cut and this \$400,000 increase, is there much of  
19 a difference?

20 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Yes. This would  
21 have to be \$2.6 million. Last year's budget was 2.9  
22 million, so it's \$3,000 less.

23 MR. BECKMAN: Less than we proposed at the  
24 end of 2014.

25 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: There's also about

1 \$3,000 less.

2 MR. BECKMAN: So, there's a tax increase of  
3 \$130 a year, \$11 a month, would actually be less than it  
4 was originally in 2014.

5 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: No. It's less  
6 that what was proposed last year.

7 MR. BECKMAN: Correct.

8 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: And it's less than  
9 the 2014 budget.

10 MR. BECKMAN: If you were paying \$700 for  
11 fire taxes in 2014 and you're now paying 500, your  
12 increase with this 400,000 would only go up to --

13 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: This is actually  
14 less than what we paid in 2014.

15 MR. BECKMAN: Correct.

16 MODERATOR HARSCH: Yes, sir.

17 MR. MACVITTIE: John Macvittie. I apologize  
18 I'm up here again. I know the night's getting long, but  
19 I just want to clarify what I said.

20 My proposal was for the \$400,000, and it was actually  
21 for the purpose of adding personnel, but I guess I can't  
22 have that.

23 MODERATOR HARSCH: That's correct, sir.

24 MR. MACVITTIE: But what I think you're  
25 saying is that later on tonight we're going to be voting

1 for new board members. We can question those new board  
2 members on what they're going to do with that \$400,000.  
3 If we're not happy with that, we don't vote for them.  
4 That's what I'm saying.

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: Are we ready to vote?

6 PUBLIC VOICE: Yes.

7 MODERATOR HARSCH: The amendment, if I  
8 stated it correctly, is to add \$400,000 to the budget of  
9 the Coventry Fire District, and there is indication that  
10 the voters of the district admonish the board that they  
11 would like to see an increase in the number of  
12 firefighters. Is that an acceptable reading of your  
13 amendment?

14 MR. MACVITTIE: Yes.

15 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there any question as  
16 to how I phrased that amendment?

17 ALL: (No response)

18 MODERATOR HARSCH: All those in favor of the  
19 amendment --

20 PUBLIC VOICE: Paper ballot.

21 MODERATOR HARSCH: Do ten people want a  
22 paper ballot?

23 PUBLIC VOICE: Stand up.

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: We'll try it standing.  
25 Do we have the same counters as before? I'm going to

1 ask --

2 PUBLIC VOICE: Mr. Moderator, point of  
3 order. We have the Board of Canvassers here tonight.  
4 Why don't we have a neutral party count the votes -- I  
5 got a right to speak here just as much as you do.

6 MODERATOR HARSCH: Take order or we will  
7 recess. Okay, 5-minute recess. Thank you.

8 (BRIEF RECESS TAKEN)

9 MODERATOR HARSCH: Can we reconvene, please.  
10 Will everybody be seated, please. During the recess,  
11 the question was explored as to whether the count on  
12 this vote can be done by the Board of Canvassers, and  
13 the answer is, yes. It's a good idea, but once the  
14 Board of Canvassers members are called in to do the  
15 count, the request is that anybody who is standing to  
16 support or opposed, depending on where they are on the  
17 motion, show the wristband so that the Board of  
18 Canvassers members will count them. They will not count  
19 anyone who does not show a wristband when they vote. We  
20 will be doing a standing vote with the Board of  
21 Canvassers members doing the counting from here on.

22 PUBLIC VOICE: Can we vote for the  
23 candidates first and then vote for the budget?

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: No, sir.

25 PUBLIC VOICE: You basically already went

1 out of order, anyway. We'll know whether to vote for  
2 the \$400,000 increase.

3 CHAIRMAN PALIN: There's a motion on the  
4 floor.

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: The agenda is supposed to  
6 rule. I made a mistake in terms of not reading one  
7 line, and I put it afterwards, and those were simply  
8 reports. Those were not motions. So, if the body  
9 wishes to vote to change the order of business, they can  
10 consider it, but right at the moment we have in front of  
11 us one item, and we only deal with one item at a time.

12 The item in front of us is the amendment to the  
13 motion, which was the amendment which is to add  
14 \$400,000, as I stated. The motion to which the  
15 amendment is addressed is the motion to accept the  
16 budget as proposed. Are we clear on what's being voted  
17 on?

18 ALL: (No response)

19 MODERATOR HARSCH: Those in favor of the  
20 amendment to add \$400,000 to the proposed budget with  
21 the admonition that the district members would like to  
22 increase manning but you can't make it mandatory,  
23 obviously, those who are in favor of that motion, please  
24 indicate by standing; and I'll ask the Board of  
25 Canvassers to come in and count the standing members of

1 the district.

2 (COUNT BEING TAKEN)

3 MODERATOR HARSCH: Okay. They have left the  
4 room, so you can be seated. Are you all, Board of  
5 Canvassers, ready to count the other side? All right.

6 Those who are opposed to the amendment to the motion,  
7 those who are opposed to the amendment to the motion,  
8 and remember to show your wristband please.

9 (COUNT BEING TAKEN)

10 MODERATOR HARSCH: Will the Board of  
11 Elections give us the count, please.

12 BOARD OF CANVASSERS: We have 37 for and 36  
13 against.

14 MODERATOR HARSH: Would you please repeat  
15 that?

16 BOARD OF CANVASSERS: Thirty-seven for and  
17 36 against.

18 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thirty-seven in favor  
19 and 36 against. Therefore, the amendment passes.

20 (AMENDMENT PASSES)

21 MODERATOR HARSCH: Now the vote will be on  
22 the budget. We now have before us the budget amendment,  
23 the budget motion as proposed and amended. Yes, sir.

24 MR. RAPOSO: Mr. Chairman, my name is Tony  
25 Raposo, 11 Birchwood Lane. I don't believe the people

1 that were counted have counted the 2 people.

2 BOARD OF CANVASSERS: Yes, sir, we did.

3 PUBLIC VOICE: That motion should be a paper  
4 vote. Why can't it be a paper ballot?

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: We have the report from  
6 the Board of Elections. The decision has been made.

7 PUBLIC VOTE: People have asked for a paper  
8 ballot, and we didn't get a motion on that.

9 MODERATOR HARSCH: That's because we did not  
10 get 10 people requesting a paper ballot, and that's the  
11 requirement in the by-laws.

12 MR. GORMAN: David Gorman, 24 Hornbeam Road.  
13 I think there's been a significant debate on the budget,  
14 an amendment to the budget. I'll ask the moderator to  
15 move the question and just vote on the budget, please.

16 MODERATOR HARSCH: We have a request to move  
17 the question. Is there any discussion on the motion as  
18 amended which is before the body now?

19 ALL: (No response)

20 MODERATOR HARSCH: The next is we'll have a  
21 standing vote again, and in this case, the ayes will be  
22 voting in favor of the district budget as proposed and  
23 amended, which amounts to a \$400,000 increase. Those  
24 opposed will be voting against the motion as amended.  
25 Would those in favor of the motion as amended please

1 stand and show your wrists.

2 PUBLIC VOICE: Time out. What happens if  
3 you vote the second way that they revert back to the old  
4 budget?

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: You've already voted the  
6 amendment, so what's before this body is the motion as  
7 amended.

8 PUBLIC VOICE: If the motion fails, does the  
9 \$400,000 and the \$200,000 take into effect so we raise  
10 it 600,000?

11 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: No. If the budget  
12 is not approved, we revert back to the 2014-'15 budget,  
13 which is about \$195,000 more than what we're asking  
14 originally, before the amendment.

15 PUBLIC VOICE: Didn't you say if the thing  
16 fails, it went back to last year's budget?

17 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: No. The 2.9 I was  
18 referring to was rejected last year. The budget for  
19 last year was \$2.4 million. That's what it will revert  
20 back to in round numbers. So, it's \$200,000 less you're  
21 voting on; \$200,000 more than what the board originally  
22 proposed.

23 PUBLIC VOICE: So, if the motion fails, if  
24 the motion passes, it's this budget plus 400,000, right?

25 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: That's correct.

1 PUBLIC VOICE: If the motion fails, it's  
2 last year's budget?

3 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Which is \$200,000  
4 more than what we proposed.

5 PUBLIC VOICE: How about the \$400,000 that  
6 passed?

7 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: No. At this point  
8 in time, no matter what, whatever happens from now on it  
9 would be at least \$200,000 more than we proposed because  
10 if this fails, you go back to last year's budget.

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there any other  
12 discussion?

13 ALL: (No response)

14 MODERATOR HARSCH: The discussion is closed.  
15 Those in favor of the motion to adopt the budget as  
16 proposed and amended, please indicate their favoritism  
17 by standing and showing their wrists.

18 (COUNT IS TAKEN)

19 MODERATOR HARSCH: The count is concluded.  
20 Would those who oppose, please stand. What is the  
21 matter?

22 BOARD OF CANVASSERS: We were in the process  
23 of counting.

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: Oh, you're still  
25 counting?

1 BOARD OF CANVASSERS: Yes. Now we lost our  
2 count.

3 MODERATOR HARSCH: Those who are in favor,  
4 please stand and show your wrists. So there's no  
5 uncertainty, this is a vote in favor of the motion as  
6 amended.

7 (COUNT IS TAKEN)

8 MODERATOR HARSCH: Has the counting  
9 concluded?

10 BOARD OF CANVASSERS: Yes.

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: There's a question for  
12 the Board of Canvassers as to whether for any reason you  
13 would have counted this side twice (indicating)?

14 BOARD OF CANVASSERS: We just recounted our  
15 original count.

16 MODERATOR HARSCH: You're all set. So, is  
17 it clear now that those who opposed the motion for this  
18 budget as amended with the \$400,000 added, would they  
19 please rise and show the wristband.

20 (COUNT BEING TAKEN)

21 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is the counting finished?

22 BOARD OF CANVASSERS: All set.

23 MODERATOR HARSCH: Would the tellers report,  
24 please.

25 BOARD OF CANVASSERS: We have 40 in favor

1 and 35 opposed.

2 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thirty-five in favor?

3 PUBLIC VOICE: No.

4 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thirty-five opposed.

5 Come on down in front, and make sure we have the numbers  
6 correct.

7 BOARD OF CANVASSERS: Forty in favor, 35  
8 opposed.

9 MODERATOR HARSCH: Forty in favor, 35  
10 opposed. That's the count. The result is that the  
11 motion to adopt the proposed budget with the additional  
12 \$400,000 as amended is adopted.

13 (MOTION PASSED)

14 MODERATOR HARSCH: Now, the next item on the  
15 agenda will be the resolution to set the tax rate. Are  
16 you prepared to do that?

17 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Yes. The  
18 additional money added to the budget, the residential  
19 tax rate would be \$3.28 per thousand assessed, and the  
20 commercial industrial tangible tax rate will be \$4.92  
21 per thousand.

22 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there a motion to  
23 adopt the tax rate as proposed? Do I hear a motion?

24 PUBLIC VOICE: I'll make that motion.

25 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there a second?

1 PUBLIC VOICE: Second.

2 MODERATOR HARSCH: The motion is to adopt  
3 the tax rate as proposed, and I think we will try it by  
4 the ayes and nays to begin with. Would those in favor  
5 of adopting the tax rate as proposed, please indicate by  
6 saying aye.

7 VOICE VOTE: Aye.

8 MODERATOR HARSCH: Those opposed?

9 VOICE VOTE: No.

10 MODERATOR HARSCH: We're going to have to  
11 have another stand-up vote. It has to be voted. We're  
12 going to do a standing vote. Would the Board of  
13 Elections members be available? Those in favor of the  
14 tax rate as proposed --

15 MR. GORMAN: David Gorman. I'm pretty  
16 certain that we don't vote on the tax rate. We vote for  
17 the budget.

18 MR. READ: You have commercial and  
19 residential. You have to separate them.

20 PUBLIC VOICE: If you say so, Mr. Read.  
21 You're the attorney.

22 MODERATOR HARSCH: Are we clear now? With  
23 those who favor the tax rate as expressed in the motion,  
24 please stand show your wrists, and they will count.

25 (COUNT TAKEN)

1 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is the count finished?

2 BOARD OF ELECTIONS: Yes.

3 MODERATOR HARSCH: Are we ready to report  
4 the results? We probably should have a vote of those  
5 opposed. So, those opposed to the tax rate as proposed,  
6 please stand and show your wristbands.

7 (COUNT TAKEN)

8 MODERATOR HARSCH: When the count is done,  
9 we'll have the tellers come down front and report.

10 BOARD OF ELECTIONS: Forty-two approve, 26  
11 reject.

12 MODERATOR HARSCH: So, the tax rate is  
13 passed.

14 (MOTION PASSED 42 TO 26)

15 MODERATOR HARSCH: The next item on the  
16 agenda is, Nomination for the Board of Directors.

17 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Mr. Moderator, I'd  
18 like to make the first nomination to the board, Mr.  
19 Nicholas Ahart. Do you accept my nomination?

20 MR. AHART: Yes.

21 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Do I have a  
22 second?

23 PUBLIC VOICE: I'll second it.

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: Are there other  
25 nominations?

1 MR. RAPOSO: Tony Raposo. I'd like to make  
2 a motion that the following candidates be elected to the  
3 Coventry Fire District, Director of the Coventry Fire  
4 District, and two candidates, that two candidates with  
5 the highest total votes cast to serve two years each,  
6 and that the two candidates with the lowest total votes  
7 cast to serve for a one-year term each.

8 MODERATOR HARSCH: That motion is out of  
9 order at this point. We're doing nominations.

10 MR. RAPOSO: My nominations would be Frank  
11 Palin, Robert Gallo, Robert Rock and Steve Vingi.

12 MODERATOR HARSCH: Were there seconds to  
13 those names?

14 PUBLIC VOICE: I second the motion.

15 MODERATOR HARSCH: Do you accept the  
16 nominations, the gentlemen who were named?

17 PUBLIC VOICES: Yes.

18 CHAIRMAN PALIN: I received an e-mail; I had  
19 a phone conversation with Steve Vingi. He had an  
20 emergency; he had to go out of town. He sent me an  
21 e-mail. He accepts the nomination.

22 MODERATOR HARSCH: Do we have other  
23 nominations, please?

24 MS. GAUDET: I, Sherri Gaudet, 3 Juniper  
25 Court, nominate James Beckman.

1 MR. BECKMAN: I accept that nomination.

2 MS. PERRY: Mary Perry, 473 Fairview Avenue.

3 I nominate Andrew Perra for the Board of Directors.

4 MR. PERRA: I accept.

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: Any other nominations?

6 Yes, sir.

7 PUBLIC VOICE: My name is (inaudible). I

8 nominate John Cook.

9 BOARD MEMBER COOK: I accept it.

10 MODERATOR HARSCH: Any additional

11 nominations?

12 ALL: (No response)

13 MS. GAUDET: Sherri Gaudet, 3 Juniper Court.

14 I nominate John D'Onofrio.

15 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Well, I do not  
16 accept, but thank you.

17 MODERATOR HARSCH: The nominations have been  
18 proposed. Are there other nominations or comments?

19 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Mr. Moderator, in light of  
20 the large number of candidates, I make a motion that we  
21 have a secret ballot.

22 MODERATOR HARSCH: Is there a second for  
23 that motion?

24 BOARD MEMBER RAPOSE: I second that.

25 MODERATOR HARSCH: Yes, sir.

1 MR. MORGAN: Tom Morgan, Marshall Circle,  
2 M-o-r-g-a-n. Mr. Moderator, before we go any further, I  
3 would like to know what pertains to the by-laws of the  
4 district in a conflict of interest.

5 MODERATOR HARSCH: There really is nothing  
6 in the by-laws on conflict with at sole exception of the  
7 provision that employees of the district's firefighters  
8 cannot serve on the board.

9 MR. MORGAN: Is that particularly our  
10 district or does that involve --

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: This district. Yes, sir.

12 MR. MORGAN: Would you repeat that again,  
13 please.

14 BOARD MEMBER RAPOSE: There cannot be  
15 firefighters of the district.

16 MR. MORGAN: There's nothing pertaining to  
17 that in the by-laws, I strongly suggest to the board  
18 that something be put in writing on a conflict of  
19 interest. We seem to have gone through this before, and  
20 it wasn't very favorable.

21 BOARD MEMBER RAPOSE: I asked the question  
22 if we could put into the nomination process that people  
23 who are firefighters, whether they're in our district or  
24 from another district or a family member of a  
25 firefighter not be allowed to serve on the board because

1 of a conflict of interest.

2 MODERATOR HARSCH: Order, please.

3 CHAIRMAN PALIN: During the discussion  
4 period, we're having a discussion period, I just have  
5 some questions for each candidate because I think  
6 everybody should know this. I'd like to go through each  
7 candidate, and I have some questions I would like each  
8 of them to answer.

9 The questions are: Are you a firefighter? Were you  
10 ever a firefighter? Have you worked for any fire  
11 department? Do you currently work for a fire  
12 department? I want for each to go down the list, Mr.  
13 Moderator.

14 MS. AHART: Hi. My name is Lisa Ahart. I  
15 live at the 38 South Pond Drive. I think the fact that  
16 someone in a previous career they have been a  
17 firefighter is completely irrelevant. It may give them  
18 some insight as to what they can do on the board.

19 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Mr. Moderator, I'd like  
20 that question answered in the discussion period from  
21 each candidate.

22 MODERATOR HARSCH: I would think it would be  
23 up to the members of the board individually who are  
24 residents of the district to ask questions of the  
25 candidates because I'm going to ask each candidate to

1 come forward, as I indicated at the start of the  
2 meeting, introduce themselves, and if they would like to  
3 make a few remarks, fine, and if there are questions of  
4 them that would be the time to ask them.

5 Now, why don't we begin with the list of candidates,  
6 and just simply start at the top. If the gentlemen and  
7 the ladies who were nominated would come forward and  
8 address the group and express themselves as to serving  
9 on the board.

10 It's getting late, so it needs to be brief, but we  
11 need to have an opportunity for people to get introduced  
12 with the candidates because a lot of the nominations  
13 occurred tonight, so there was no notice as to some of  
14 these candidacies. Would the first candidate please  
15 come forward.

16 MR. AHART: My name is Nicholas Ahart. I  
17 reside at 38 South Pond, Coventry, Rhode Island.

18 MODERATOR HARSCH: Do you have anything that  
19 you'd like to say to the group as to why you would like  
20 to be on the board?

21 MR. AHART: I want to be on the board  
22 because I want to try and fix this nightmare that we  
23 have right now. I think I'd bring some skill sets to  
24 this group that has not been on the board in the recent  
25 past.

1 I served on active duty for 20 years in the United  
2 States Navy. Yes, I was a firefighter of the United  
3 States Navy. I did ship board and aircraft  
4 firefighting.

5 In my current job I work with unions. I negotiate  
6 contracts. I deal with grievances. I deal with the  
7 union environment every single day, 7 days a week. I  
8 understand that environment, and I understand how to  
9 work out the grievances, the arbitrations and all of  
10 those things that go into it. I think I have a  
11 well-rounded background as far as dealing with people in  
12 that level and also the background that I have with  
13 the firefighting experience.

14 MODERATOR HARSCH: Are there questions for  
15 this candidate?

16 PUBLIC VOICE: Can I ask him a question?

17 MODERATOR HARSCH: Please.

18 PUBLIC VOICE: How do you feel about using  
19 the \$400,000 to hire additional firefighters?

20 MR. AHART: I want to save the fire  
21 department, and 2 on a shift is not a safe fire  
22 department.

23 PUBLIC VOICE: Would you stand behind the  
24 fire department or the taxpayers when it comes down to  
25 the nitty-gritty? Who would you stand behind?

1 MR. AHART: If elected, I'd serve at the  
2 pleasure of the Town of Coventry, this district's  
3 voters.

4 PUBLIC VOICE: Yeah, but you're not telling  
5 me anything. Would you protect the union or the  
6 taxpayers?

7 MR. AHART: I just told you that I'd serve  
8 at their pleasure, so I'd have to take their  
9 consideration --

10 PUBLIC VOICE: You're a firefighter. That  
11 tells me one thing.

12 MR. AHART: I'm not a firefighter. I served  
13 in the U.S. Navy.

14 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Sir, in the Navy, every  
15 person who serves on a ship is a firefighter. Every  
16 member of that crew whether it be a sub or an airport  
17 carrier is a firefighter. They are a rescue person, and  
18 that doesn't count.

19 MODERATOR HARSCH: Are there any other  
20 questions of this candidate?

21 ALL: (No response)

22 MODERATOR HARSCH: May we have the next  
23 candidate, please?

24 CHAIRMAN PALIN: My name is Frank Palin.  
25 People know me here very well. Over the past year, some

1 don't like me, some do like me. What I was trying to do  
2 this past year, and I think I was successful, is to  
3 bring this fire department to a point where it was  
4 affordable for the taxpayers and to open things up.  
5 There were too many secrets, too many records that  
6 weren't in place, and that has stopped.

7 If elected, I want to continue moving in that  
8 direction. I think we've got some momentum moving. As  
9 far as the \$400,000, I won't make any commitment on that  
10 because I really genuinely think the moment the Coventry  
11 Credit Union hears we've got more money, they're going  
12 to want theirs because that debt is well past due.

13 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Mr. Moderator, I'd like  
14 to ask a question.

15 MODERATOR HARSCH: Yes.

16 BOARD MEMBER COOK: John Cook, 1 Centennial  
17 Street, Coventry. Mr. Palin, in today's Times on the  
18 headline it says, if re-elected, I plan on stepping  
19 down; I may step down. Why would you want to put  
20 yourself in front of these people who chastised you for  
21 the last year, point a finger, me too, I'll admit to it,  
22 and I apologize for my outburst that day, but why would  
23 you want to go and stand in front of these people and  
24 say, I want to be up there again, if you're planning on  
25 stepping down?

1                   CHAIRMAN PALIN: Thank you for asking the  
2 question, Mr. Cook. I was actually misquoted. What I  
3 was going to step down from was the chairman's position.  
4 If everything went well, I was planning on staying on  
5 the Board of Directors.

6                   MODERATOR HARSCH: Any further questions of  
7 Mr. Palin?

8                   MR. BECKMAN: Jim Beckman. Do you not like  
9 safety in numbers?

10                  CHAIRMAN PALIN: Of course I do. Do I think  
11 we need more firefighters? Absolutely. Can we afford  
12 them? Not right now, no. What we have to do is move  
13 slow and rebuild from scratch, which is what we are  
14 doing.

15                  MR. BECKMAN: Safety in numbers.

16                  MODERATOR HARSCH: Any more questions of  
17 this candidate?

18                  ALL: (No response)

19                  MODERATOR HARSCH: Next candidate, please,  
20 Mr. Gallo.

21                  MR. GALLO: Bob Gallo, 3 Laforge Drive,  
22 Coventry. Basically, what you've seen today isn't good,  
23 and that's why I want to be on the board, to try to get  
24 the board together working for the taxpayers and the  
25 firefighters.

1 I know being a fireman is a hard job to do, and I  
2 support them 100 percent. We have to live within our  
3 means, and I want to work with the board and the  
4 taxpayers and the firemen to come up with what we can  
5 live by.

6 I'm not a fireman. I'm a photographer. Basically, I  
7 wish the turnout was a lot more. I guess the problem is  
8 there's not enough interest in what's going on in the  
9 town.

10 With the handful of people we have here, you guys are  
11 all concerned. We all have a reason to be concerned,  
12 and safety is very important, but we have to work  
13 together.

14 MODERATOR HARSCH: Questions for this  
15 candidate?

16 ALL: (No response)

17 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you, Mr. Gallo.  
18 Next candidate.

19 MR. ROCK: Hi. I'm Bob Rock, 36 Black  
20 Walnut Drive. How much does this job pay, by the way?  
21 I come from the business community, 30 years at  
22 Honeywell, building businesses, business leaders.

23 We're in a very political situation here, but  
24 resolution is where my expertise is, is working on  
25 bringing people together, finding ways to save money and

1 make that a bottom line. I've worked for for-profit  
2 companies, so the bottom line for the company, this is  
3 getting the taxpayer happy.

4 I'm a ex-volunteer fireman. I agree with the safety  
5 issue 100 percent. I was an EMT as well. So, it's a  
6 scary thought.

7 My first meeting, because I was traveling 100 percent  
8 of the time for the last 5 years, this is my first  
9 meeting. So, I'm pretty impressed, a little bit scared,  
10 but I'm sure we can work together on this.

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you. Next  
12 candidate, unless there are questions of this candidate,  
13 I'm sorry. Are there questions?

14 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Mr. Vingi is in Chicago,  
15 and he did give me his writing that he wished to serve  
16 on the board. He's been a district member for many,  
17 many years, and he would appreciate your support.

18 PUBLIC VOICE: Is he a firefighter?

19 CHAIRMAN PALIN: No, he is not.

20 MODERATOR HARSCH: The next candidate, Mr.  
21 Beckman.

22 MR. BECKMAN: Jim Beckman. Professional  
23 firefighter for over 31 years in the third largest city  
24 in the State of Rhode Island, and yes, I'm all about  
25 firefighter safety. That's about it.

1 MODERATOR HARSCH: Any questions of Mr.  
2 Beckman? Mr. Palin.

3 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Mr. Beckman, you were a  
4 member of the board when the 4 firefighters were added  
5 and the budget was not increased; is that correct?

6 MR. BECKMAN: That's correct, and we did --

7 CHAIRMAN PALIN: You were a member of the  
8 board when the ladder truck was purchased at a cost of  
9 over \$60,000 a year?

10 MR. BECKMAN: Annually, yes.

11 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Thank you.

12 MODERATOR HARSCH: Any other questions?

13 MR. BUDZIAK: Raymond Budziak,  
14 B-u-d-z-i-a-k, 429 Fairview Avenue, Coventry. Jim  
15 tonight voted to increase taxes, so you being a  
16 professional firefighter, I need your opinion. That  
17 fellow straight ahead, right there (indicating), he's on  
18 duty tonight. Does he look like he's worth my taxes?

19 PUBLIC VOICE: If you were in a fire, do you  
20 think he'd carry you out?

21 MODERATOR HARSCH: Are there any other  
22 questions for this candidate?

23 ALL: (No response)

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: Next candidate, please.

25 MR. PERRA: Andrew Perra, P-e-r-r-a. I am a

1 32-year retired member of this department, served over  
2 37 years on the department, volunteer before time. I've  
3 had knowledge of the district, the size of the district  
4 and the population of the district, something that  
5 current board members do not have. I think I could  
6 bring some insight to the board as to how it should be  
7 run. I don't think it's been run properly in the last  
8 year.

9 MODERATOR HARSCH: Any questions for this  
10 candidate?

11 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Mr. Perra, are you going to  
12 get your check from the Coventry Fire District for the  
13 next three years?

14 MR. PERRA: Yes, sir, I will.

15 PUBLIC VOICE: And he deserves it.

16 MR. PERRA: That's it? You just want to  
17 disgrace me?

18 MODERATOR HARSCH: That's out of order.  
19 Now, are there other questions of this candidate? The  
20 exchange is out of order.

21 MR. BECKMAN: I have a question for Mr.  
22 Perra. Did you have a good career?

23 MR. PERRA: I did.

24 MR. BECKMAN: Were you honest your entire  
25 career?

1 MR. PERRA: My whole career.

2 MR. BECKMAN: Very good. Thank you.

3 MODERATOR HARSCH: Mr. Cook.

4 BOARD MEMBER COOK: John Cook, 1 Centennial  
5 Street. I've been on here for a year. Frank and I were  
6 like water and vinegar, but we got the job done. Do I  
7 support what Frank did over the year? It was a split  
8 board.

9 One thing I want to tell you, what does Gerry Ford,  
10 Mike Groan (phonetic) and Jim Melvin have in common?  
11 They're all guys. They're all Eagle Scouts. Mike Groan  
12 says recently a scout who goes through 10, 15 years of  
13 his career recites certain words, 15 words. I'm an  
14 Eagle Scout from 1982. I'm a father of an Eagle Scout  
15 and I'm a mentor for two scouts. I've done nothing but  
16 honest trustworthy work caring for the people in this  
17 district, and I ask you to let me stay on for 2 years.  
18 Thank you.

19 By the way, I was a volunteer firefighter under Chief  
20 Perra, not Chief Perra, Chief Warren, with the Tiogue  
21 Fire District. I was at the Station Nightclub fire. I  
22 served under Detective Gorman at that time, so I know a  
23 little bit of what it's like. I never have lived the  
24 job, but I volunteered.

25 MODERATOR HARSCH: Are there questions of

1 this candidate?

2 ALL: (No response)

3 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you very much, Mr.  
4 Cook.

5 BOARD MEMBER COOK: One thing before we go,  
6 on behalf of the board and the taxpayers, Mr. D'Onofrio,  
7 I'd like to thank you for your service for the last 2  
8 years.

9 VICE CHAIRMAN D'ONOFRIO: Thank you very  
10 much. It was a pleasure serving this district.

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: Do I hear a motion that  
12 the nominations are closed?

13 BOARD MEMBER COOK: I make a motion that we  
14 close the nominations.

15 BOARD MEMBER RAPOSE: Second.

16 MODERATOR HARSCH: All in favor, please say  
17 aye.

18 PUBLIC VOTE: Aye.

19 MODERATOR HARSCH: All opposed?

20 PUBLIC VOTE: (No response)

21 MODERATOR HARSCH: The ayes have it. The  
22 nominations are closed.

23 (MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY)

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: Now we move on to the  
25 election process. Mr. Counsel, would you explain what

1 you arranged in terms of the balloting for the members  
2 of the board?

3 MR. TOBIN: The Board of Canvassers has  
4 ballots outside. We're going to have to ask everyone in  
5 a few minutes to go outside, show your wristband, get a  
6 ballot, fill out the ballot, four names only, and drop  
7 the ballot in the ballot box before you return to here.

8 The last year when we had the election, because of  
9 lost records in the firehouse, it was unclear who had  
10 the 1-year terms and who had the 2-year terms.

11 So, what we did last year and what I would suggest be  
12 done again this year is that the two highest  
13 vote-getters serve for the 2-year terms, and the next  
14 two persons who receive the most votes serve for the  
15 1-year term.

16 BOARD MEMBER COOK: Per the by-laws, it does  
17 state that the officials after they served their initial  
18 term because this goes back to when we put the by-laws  
19 into effect, that all offices shall be elected to a  
20 2-year term so by this case by the by-laws, everybody  
21 tonight should be elected for 2 years. In order to do  
22 what Mr. Tobin's requesting, it would have to go through  
23 a by-law change.

24 MR. TOBIN: Actually, the purpose of the  
25 by-laws as they were originally implemented were to

1 stagger the terms so that you did not have a board that  
2 was completely turned over in a particular year.

3 The original term for the chairman was for 3 years;  
4 for the vice chairman 2 years, and because the records  
5 were lost, the individuals who held those particular  
6 seats could not be determined.

7 We really elected people kind of haphazardly. So, to  
8 get back on the schedule, we don't have a complete  
9 turnover of the board every year. The way to do that is  
10 to have two people come up one year, three people come  
11 up the following year and so on. Keep a record of what  
12 terms those people have so that this doesn't happen  
13 again. The purpose of that was to have alternating  
14 vacancies each year, not all at once.

15 So, my suggestion, again, is that you have the two  
16 top vote-getters get the 2-year term and the other two  
17 get a 1-year term. We have one board member who is a  
18 carryover who has one more year to serve, so you know  
19 that that term expires next year.

20 PUBLIC VOICE: What happens if you get a  
21 tie?

22 MODERATOR HARSCH: If you would like to  
23 comment, please come forward.

24 MR. TOBIN: You'll have to have another vote  
25 here, just with those two members to see who wins.



1                   MODERATOR HARSCH: Can we reconvene, please.  
2 We have the results of the election. Please clear the  
3 hall and come on into the auditorium or get on your way.  
4 I want to get the rest of the meeting locked up. Would  
5 everybody take seats, please.

6                   The results of the list are as follows: 45 votes for  
7 Nicholas Ahart, and that, basically, put him in the tie  
8 for first place with John Cook, who also got 45 votes.  
9 The next person in line is Andrew Perra who got 39 votes  
10 and Frank Palin follows that with 31 votes. Robert  
11 Gallo got 27 votes; Robert Rock got 29 votes; Steve  
12 Vingi got 15 votes and James Beckman got 26 votes.

13                   So, the two 2-year terms will be for Mr. Ahart and  
14 Mr. Cook, and the two 1-year terms will be for Mr. Perra  
15 and Mr. Palin. The election is closed. Now, in order  
16 to wrap up the meeting, we have a couple of formalities.

17                   CHAIRMAN PALIN: Could you ask for the new  
18 board members to come up here?

19                   MODERATOR HARSCH: In a moment. I have to  
20 call for new business. Is there any new business to  
21 come before the meeting?

22                   ALL: (No response)

23                   MODERATOR HARSCH: There being none, we will  
24 move on now to inviting the new board members to take  
25 their seats, and if Senator Raptakis is still here, he

1 can swear them in. Lou, are you around? Lou, would you  
2 come swear the new members, please? Will all four new  
3 members please, rise?

4 SENATOR RAPTAKIS: Please raise your right  
5 hands. Do you solemnly swear to perform the duties of a  
6 board member of the Coventry Fire District and to  
7 strictly observe the Charter and by-laws of the said  
8 Coventry Fire District?

9 ALL: I do.

10 SENATOR RAPTAKIS: Congratulations.

11 MODERATOR HARSCH: Thank you, Senator. The  
12 next meeting of the Board of Directors, is that set?

13 CHAIRMAN PALIN: No, It is not.

14 MODERATOR HARSCH: Because you can't perform  
15 any director functions tonight. So, this meeting will  
16 be adjourned. Do I hear a motion to adjourn the  
17 meeting?

18 BOARD MEMBER COOK: I make a motion to  
19 adjourn.

20 MODERATOR HARSCH: Second?

21 CHAIRMAN PALIN: Second.

22 MODERATOR HARSCH: All in favor?

23 ALL: Aye.

24 MODERATOR HARSCH: All opposed?

25 ALL: (No response)

1 MODERATOR HARSCH: Meeting's adjourned.  
2 (ANNUAL FIRE DISTRICT MEETING CLOSED AT 10:42 P.M.)  
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## C E R T I F I C A T E

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4 I, Heather Marie Finger, do hereby certify  
5 that the foregoing is a true, accurate, and complete  
6 transcript of my notes taken at the above-entitled  
7 hearing.

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13 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereunto set my hand  
14 this 28th day of December 2015.

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HEATHER MARIE FINGER, CSR, NOTARY PUBLIC  
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES 4/02/16

DATE: December 8, 2015

IN RE: Annual Meeting of the  
Coventry Fire District  
HEARING OF: Town of Coventry Fire District