

**HOPE VALLEY/WYOMING FIRE DISTRICT  
996 MAIN STREET  
HOPE VALLEY, RI 02832**

**SPECIAL WORKSHOP MEETING  
JANUARY 29, 2015  
7:00 P.M.**

**Those present:** Board Members: Chairman, David Holt, Vice-Chairman, Pasquale DeBernardo, Georgia Ure, Paul Schaarschmidt; District Clerk, Julie Kelley

**Those not present:** Auditor, Pete Stefanski; Board Member, Elwood Johnson; Treasurer, Deborah Nicotra; Tax Collector, Susan Bok

The meeting commenced and was called to order by Chairman, David Holt at 7:00 p.m. with a salute to the flag and a moment of silence.

This Special Workshop Meeting was held to have an open forum to allow the public, all officers, and firefighters, the opportunity to discuss what they would like to see in the qualifications for a new District Fire Chief, and/or changes they would like to see in said position. It was also to allow for an open forum to discuss suggestions in regards to a Retirement party for the current Acting District Fire Chief.

Chairman Holt began the meeting by announcing that this was a public forum. Chief Stanley has decided to not be in attendance this evening to allow the opportunity for open comments. Chairman Holt also announced that Chief Stanley has officially responded with a letter of resignation. He has filed with the retirement board and will officially be retiring as of June 30, 2015. There will be an oral and written exam for anyone who is qualified and would like to apply for the position.

Chairman Holt discussed that the board is still in the process of reviewing the charter. The charter states, in order to be eligible for District Chief, a person must: (a) have seven (7) years progressively responsible firefighting experience; two (2) years of which must have been in a supervisory capacity, and other qualifications as listed in the Charter under Section 6, Section (A) of Article XI in Chapter 171 of the Public Laws of 1982, as amended, entitled "An Act Creating the Hope Valley/Wyoming Fire District". The Charter also states that the applicant must be a resident of the Hope Valley/Wyoming Fire District and have been an active member of an active fire department within said fire district for seven (7) years.

The board has the option to go outside if no qualified individuals meet the qualifications. In the event that a vacancy exists in the District Fire Chief's position and the board of directors deems that no person meets the qualifications and/or no one is seeking said position, the board of directors may appoint a special committee to determine which qualifications may be modified in order to fill said vacancy.

Deputy Brian Champlin made a comment that he would like the District to advertise within as well as outside to ensure we get every possible candidate. This will allow the board to conduct the oral and written exams once and not duplicate the efforts during two (2) different times, but to ensure the outside candidates are aware that in-house candidates would have preference. It was discussed that when the Charter was last amended it was intended to go outside, however, the language did not include that when it went through legislation. In order to address any changes to the Charter, we would have to file legislation and it would have to go through the process. If we find that there are no qualified individuals, based on the testing and oral boards, then we can seek a candidate on the outside. A Lieutenant and higher would be qualified to make application.

Chairman Holt then reviewed some of the qualifications as listed on the Class Title of Fire Chief, also enclosed within. Chairman Holt indicated that the administrative job is the tough part of the job, listing a few of the functions being to Prepare the budget, ability to work with legislation, be an effective Supervisor, HazMat responsibilities', along with working on Fire grounds.

Mr. William Day commented that this is by no means a reflection on Chief Stanley, but that he feels a need to have a Chief that would be willing to come in and make changes. He feels the Volunteers have very little input, nepotism occurs, and he feels Lieutenants are held to different standards than Deputy Chief's and Captains. At times, people do not make themselves heard from fear of speaking out and possibly being black balled.

The oral and written board was discussed. The oral board will consist of two (2) Professional Firefighters from out of state, as well as an attorney and a public administrator that are also willing to serve.

The discussion went into further length regarding the Job Functions of the Fire Chief (Examples 1-21), and other Job Functions, (Please review the attached document, Class Title: Fire Chief).

It was discussed that the Board of Engineers do not always speak with the volunteers. As part of the training captain's duties, their job is to relate this information to the Chief. It was discussed that the new Chief should be more involved with everyone or strengthen the current Chain of Command. It is felt that currently, the chain of command is being circumvented. They would like a Chief that is accountable/present. They did agree that it should go through the chain of command and if we find that if there is no resolution then you can go to another Deputy Chief to assist in resolving the issue. They feel the Chain of Command is not working and there is no current discipline for those actions. They also feel that between the daytime hours to the nighttime hours they find there is a lack of communication. The volunteers would like to see/hear from the new Chief and have a good rapport with the Chief.

Chairman Holt commented that selecting a new Chief would be a difficult decision for the Board of Directors. The new Chief would be on a three (3) year contract with evaluations every year. If performance is poor, then there will be corrections made and/or possible dismissal. If performance is good, then there will be a renewal of the three (3) year contract.

Deputy David Caswell, commented that he feels all the members have a huge stake in this decision and would like to have the board come up with something that allows the members to have a vote on this. This is something he would really like the board to consider. He also stated that he does not agree on going outside the department.

One individual spoke on behalf of all officers to be submitted to the board for consideration, (Please refer to the attached document "Opinions of the Hope Valley/Wyoming Firefighters regarding Qualities wanted in our New Fire Chief")

In addition they added/further clarified the following:

- A few firefighters interest in run nights, duty crews or duty weekend to ensure coverage on scene.
- Would like to make it a priority for Physical and Mental well being. (Physical Fitness and Counseling)
- Recruitment and retention of Active Volunteers.
- Fire Chief vehicle should be a dependable vehicle, which the district has full control over.
- The new Fire Chief should be fair, even and consistent.

One of the highest concerns is that officers don't know who is going to respond to a call and would find it easier to have a roster. The firefighters would like the new Chief to review some of these issues with the Board of Engineers.

During the next Board meeting the board will make revisions of the draft documents, review the benefit packages and go over the advertisement of the position. If more time is required, then another special meeting will be held.

We expect to advertise by the end of March early April. The written exam will be scheduled in April and the oral board will be held around the end of April with an appointment/hire date of July 1, 2015.

**Retirement Party**

- There is currently no budget for the party.
- Affecting our current budget will be the severance pay of the current Chief's position and the New Fire Chief's position.
- How many people should we have in attendance for the retirement party?
- Possible Parade/Fred Stanley Day?
- We can hold "A Roast".
- Naming the Building on his behalf.
- Possible locations to have the party, Yawgoo Bakes or Washington County Fair grounds?
- Set up a committee and obtain the assistance of the Ladies Auxiliary.

A subcommittee will be added to next month's agenda to assist in further discussion of this issue.

**ADJOURN**

A motion was made to adjourn at 8:57 p.m. by Mr. DeBernardo and seconded by Ms. Ure. With no further discussion, all in favor, all aye, motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Mr. Holt-yes; Mr. DeBernardo-yes; Ms. Ure-yes, Mr. Schaarschmidt-yes

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Kelley  
District Clerk