

## **Exeter Fire District**

**(January 13, 2005)**

**Cheryl Chorney, the Exeter Town Clerk, called the initial business meeting of the Exeter Fire District Board of Commissioners (EFD) to order at 7:33pm in the meeting room of the Exeter public library. Present were: Egidia Vergano, Richard Walker, Oscar Swanson, Thomas Reed, William Nievera, Peter Wilbur and Peter Lacouture. This constitutes the entire board of commissioners. Fourteen members of the public were also present. Cheryl administered the oath of office to the new commissioners.**

**The election of officers was held with the following results:**

**Chairman Peter Lacouture, nominated by William Nievera, second by Peter Wilbur**

**Vice Chairman Peter Wilbur, nominated by Peter Lacouture, second by William Nievera**

**Treasurer Egidia Vergano, nominated by Peter Lacouture, second by Thomas Reed**

**Clerk William Nievera, nominated by Peter Wilbur, second by Peter Lacouture**

**All candidates were elected by unanimous vote.**

**Public Comment**

**Mary-Ellen Thurber wished all newly elected officers good luck in the execution of their duties.**

## **Communications**

**Letters from the four public safety organizations, indicating their choices for representation to the board of commissioners, were read into the record. Representing Exeter #1 is Peter Wilbur, Exeter #2, Peter Lacouture, Exeter Rescue, Thomas Reed and The Exeter Emergency Dispatch Corp., William Nievera. (Letters filed with the clerk's records.)**

## **New Business**

**The appointment of a tax collector was tabled until such time as Ms. Vergano and Messrs Walker and Nievera can meet with the Town Council and current tax collector to determine the feasibility of being included in the current tax billing and collection system used by the town. The general sense of the discussion was that as well as we would be on our own, the cost would be prohibitive at this point in time. Ms. Vergano noted the cost of issuing our own tax bills and collecting the proceeds would eat up most, if not all, of the five percent increase promised to the taxpayers at the public meeting during the campaign to create the fire district. Mr. Lacouture recommended the position of moderator be discussed at the next**

**regular meeting of the board. He also asked for someone to contact the board of canvassers to investigate their willingness to canvas for us. Mr. Nievera will contact the canvassers and report back to the body.**

**The need for insurance was discussed. The two organizations mentioned were the RI Interlocal Trust and VFIS. Mr. Wilbur will contact both vendors and report his findings back to the body.**

**Until the bylaws can be adopted by the membership, at the annual meeting, it was unanimously agreed to provisionally adopt the draft bylaws with the following changes: (a) Add a section allowing a vacancy created prior to the end of a board members term to be filled. (b) Art. V, sect. 3, change chair to board. This sentence now reads, “The board may remove any committee member or chairperson whose selection is not otherwise specified in the bylaws”. (c) Art. VIII, sect. 2, remove from (ii) to operations. This sentence now reads “Any indemnification under section 1 (unless ordered by a court) shall be made by the corporation only as authorized in the specific case upon a determination that indemnification of the commissioner, officer, employee or agent is proper in the circumstances because such person has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in section 1”. As amended, the bylaws were provisionally adopted by unanimous vote.**

**The new budget process was discussed at length. The main points**

being (a) the fire tax rate should be adjusted to reflect any adjustment of the town rate, such as revaluations. Ms. Vergano asked how the tax rate would be adjusted after a town wide revaluation to ensure that it remained in line with the tax revenue needed to support the approved budget. Mr. Wilbur stated the tax rate would have to be kept in line with the town's rate. The process of determining the tax rate was discussed with Mr. Walker explaining the method being used by the town. We will most likely set our rate much the same way the town sets theirs. It was agreed that verbiage would be added to the bylaws to reflect the fact that the tax rate would be adjusted, whether up or down, after a town wide revaluation to ensure that it remained in line with the tax revenue needed to support the approved budget. Mr. Walker also stated the need for a federal ID number. Mr. Lacouture will start that process. (b) Administrative costs cannot be determined as of yet, not knowing whom the collector would be. Or, for that matter, where he or she would be working. All work functions of the collector would have to be duplicated if we go out on our own. Mr. Swanson stated his desire to be on our own and not affiliated with the town. This opinion is held by a majority of the board members. Ms. Vergano and Messrs Walker and Nievera will meet with the town tax collector to discuss the possibilities of being included on the town's mailing for the first cycle. (c) The schedule for budget meetings will be: 02/17 for a budget reviews with the individual organization heads, 02/24 for a budget hearing and 03/03 the deadline for a final budget.

It was previously agreed that the four organizations would front the

**new district \$2500.00/ea for start-up costs. This will be accomplished when our bank accounts have been established. It was also decided to use station #1's address when a building address is needed. Mr. Walker moved (Mr. Wilbur second) the opening of the necessary accounts at the institution of Ms. Vergano's choice, with the checking account requiring two signatures, one from the treasurer and the other from either the chair or vice-chair. The motion carried unanimously. Ms. Vergano will open accounts after hearing from Mr. Nievera with the post office box number and Mr. Lacouture with the federal ID number.**

**Ms. Vergano stated that another promise made to the taxpayers, in print and at the public meeting, during the campaign to create the fire district was the lowering of the town's ISO rating and the accompanying savings to the taxpayers in their insurance premiums. Mr. Reed, who serves as a Deputy Chief on the Kingston fire dist., explained the enormity of administrative work that goes into such a rating increase. It was agreed that one of our goals should be to lower the rating thus saving taxpayers money on their insurance premiums. To this end, the four public safety organizations should create a plan to pursue this goal, including timelines and expected expenses.**

**The board of commissioners will tour the public safety facilities on Saturday January 29. The group will meet at the rescue building at 9:00am.**

**The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Mr. Reed, seconded by Mr. Walker, at 9:18.**

**Respectfully submitted,  
Mr. Wm. Nievera, Clerk  
Exeter Fire District**