

## **Exeter Fire District**

**(July 14, 2005)**

### **Call to Order**

**Chairman Peter Lacouture called the July 14th meeting of the Exeter Fire District to order at 7:18PM. Present were Commissioners Vergano, Lacouture, Nievera, Swanson, Walker and Reed. Also present was one member of the public.**

### **Public Comment**

**There was no public comment.**

### **Previous Month's Minutes**

**Ms. Vergano moved (Mr. Walker second) acceptance of the minutes from the June 16th meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

### **Treasurer's Report**

**Ms. Vergano reported a balance of \$6776.00 remains in the checking account, as of her most recent bank statement. Uncleared and new transactions show the balance in the checking account to be \$1,434.89. Ms. Vergano also produced a reconciliation detail**

**statement (see attached) indicating exactly where all spending to date has taken place. Mr. Nievera has reviewed the reports and is satisfied with their accuracy.**

## **Communications**

**Mr. Nievera reported that he had received several communications including a letter and “petition to organize” the Rescue personnel into the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF). He also reports receiving an application for a \$1,000 legislative grant, the necessary paperwork to establish an account with American Payroll Service and our first tax payment, the result of a real estate closing.**

## **Old Business**

**Mr. Lacouture explained that because there was no compelling reason for her presence, Ms. McMahon was not in attendance at tonight’s meeting.**

**Ms. Vergano gave an update on the status of billing and other tax collection and collector issues. She stated that the bills would be in the mail tomorrow (07/15) and that the rate had been locked at \$1.42/\$1,000. She additionally stated that the total collectable levy is \$828,929.36. The difference in the collectable levy and the \$824,950 figure announced at the annual meeting is the rounding up of the tax rate. She also stated that approximately \$735 of the total tax levy is**

currently non-collectable, as it is linked to fourteen (14) “owner unknown” accounts. Any effort to research these fourteen accounts will have to start with the tax assessor. The sense of the meeting was that the cost would be too prohibitive to search the titles of these properties considering the relatively small gain.

Mr. Nievera explained the signage that had been posted in and around the tax collector’s office.

There followed a short discussion pertaining to a warrant necessary to collect taxes. Since we have no such language in our charter it was decided to forgo the warrant.

Treatment of the eight (8) “frozen” (by way of a 1978 ordinance) accounts was moved to item seven (7) on this agenda.

Mr. Lacouture has been in contact with Brad Preston (VFIS) with regard to workman’s comp insurance. We have been informed that it will be necessary for the district to cover the tax collector with this insurance. The annual premiums are expected to be in the range of \$200 - \$250. Mr. Reed moved (Mr. Swanson second) to purchase workman’s comp insurance to cover the district tax collector. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Preston will initiate the necessary paperwork with Beacon Mutual Ins. Co.

Ms. Vergano suggested that Mr. Nievera send letters of thanks to

**those who have donated items to the district. Mr. Nievera will have a draft for the next regular business meeting.**

**Mr. Lacouture suggested drafting a press release informing the general public that the district tax office was open and collecting taxes. He will contact Ms. Bellemore of the Standard Times.**

**All changes in the agreement between the district and station one were reviewed and explained by Mr. Lacouture. Ms. Vergano asked about several topics not specifically addressed in the agreement, namely (1) the removal of junk cars from the rear of the building and commitment to provide ample available parking for the tax payers, (2) snow removal and salting of the driveway and walkway to the office, and (3) food storage and retrieval by the Exeter Food Bank being specifically limited to being done in the presence of a Fire District Board member. Mr. Lacouture will contact Chief Kettelle on these matters and report back to the body.**

**Ms. Vergano reported that the tour of the facilities by APCC netted the fact that much equipment is in need of replacement or updating. Mr. Ives has offered an individual UPS unit for the office until the replacement units arrive from APCC. Until that unit arrives Mr. Reed and/or Mr. Nievera have a UPS unit that can be used for data protection in the tax collector's office.**

**Ms. Vergano suggested the next meeting as the date to set the first meetings of the “grant” and “cost consolidation” committees. All board members agreed. Mr. Reed commented that he had some leads for Mr. Nievera and his grant committee. He will scan them to Mr. Nievera at his earliest convenience.**

**Mr. Lacouture told the board that he would work with Chief Franklin to have his ISO rating plan presented to the board at the September meeting.**

### **New Business**

**A discussion was held on the tax freeze ordinance currently being considered by the Exeter Town Council. Mr. Nievera asked Mr. Walker to explain the history behind the tax freeze and the sliding scale tax relief ordinance. Mr. Walker explained that the sliding scale replaced a freeze that was put in place by a previous council. And, that it was based on steps of 20% over an income range. The current council favors a freeze rationalizing that fewer homes will be sold to younger adults of child bearing age, thus reducing future strain on the school system. A public hearing will take place on Monday, July 25. Ms. Vergano stressed that although some members of the board would be out of town and thus not available for the hearing, as many members as possible should attend to voice their displeasure with the proposed freeze. After a short discussion it was agreed upon that the board would not take a position on the ordinance. Additional**

**discussion centered on the eight accounts whose taxes are currently frozen in both the municipal and fire district tax rolls in Exeter. For the fire district, this accounts for a loss of approx \$1400 in tax revenue. Ms. Vergano discussed that based on conversations with several other fire districts as well as OpalData Technologies, no other fire district in the state honors tax freezes. In fact, it is uncommon for fire districts to offer any exemptions at all.**

**The need to amend the Fire District Charter to exclude future tax freezes was discussed. All boards members except Mr. Swanson were in agreement on the need to do so.**

### **Next Meeting**

**The next meeting will be held on August 18, 2005 at 7:00pm at station #1. Mr. Nievera will check with Chief Kettelle on the availability of the meeting room. Board members were encouraged to arrive early and visit the new Tax Collector's office prior to the start of the meeting.**

### **Executive Session**

**Mr. Nievera moved (Mr. Swanson second) opening the executive session pursuant to RIGL (§ 42-46-5(a)(2)) to discuss the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) petition to organize. The motion carried unanimously.**

**At 9:00pm, Mr. Reed moved (Ms. Vergano second) to conclude the executive session and return to the regular business meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

## **Adjournment**

**Mr. Walker moved (Ms. Vergano second) adjournment at 9:07pm. The motion carried unanimously.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Bill Nievera, Clerk**

**Exeter Fire District**