

Exeter Fire District

(February 9, 2006)

Call to Order

Chairman Peter Lacouture called the February 9th meeting of the Exeter Fire District to order at 7:05pm. Present were Commissioners Vergano, Lacouture, Wilbur, Nievera, Swanson, Walker and Reed. There were seven (7) members of the public in attendance.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Previous Month's Minutes

Mr. Wilbur moved (Mr. Reed second) acceptance of the minutes from the January meeting as corrected. The motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

The opening (cleared) balance for the period is \$317,999.68. Cleared transactions of \$85,809.76 (\$111,633.02 in checks and payments and deposits and credits of \$25,823.26) leave a cleared balance of \$232,189.92 as of 01/10/06. Uncleared transactions of \$88,415.06 bring

our register balance to \$143,774.86. New uncleared transactions of \$34,855.98 (\$3,139.97 in checks and payments and \$37,995.95 in deposits and credits) leave an uncleared register balance of \$178,630.84. Mr. Nievera moved (Mr. Wilbur second) acceptance of the report. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Nievera has reviewed the bank statement and is satisfied with its' accuracy.

Communications

Mr. Nievera reported the receipt of the budget requests from each of the public safety organizations. The Exeter Town Clerk has forwarded a notice announcing that a hazard mitigation plan for the town of East Greenwich is available for viewing at the town hall. He has also received an application for a state legislative grant in the amount of \$1,000. It was agreed that the application would list a lap top computer to be used by the treasurer and a copy machine for the office be the purchased items should our application be approved.

Mr. Lacouture has received a report on a December 5th training from Brad Preston (VFIS).

Old Business

Ms. Vergano gave a report of the status of collections as of 01/31, stating that our collection rate is approx. 72%. Mr. Nievera added that the delinquency rate is unchanged from last month citing that we are in the middle of a collection period and no additional accounts would

be considered delinquent until the 16th of the month is reached without receiving the required payment.

A short discussion ensued on the forms required by the IRS. Mr. Lacouture has investigated this question and discovered that the only definitive answer would be in response to a “private letter ruling” costing approximately \$5,000 to file. It was agreed that Mr. Nievera would contact the Charlestown Fire District and Ms. Vergano would contact one of the Coventry fire districts to determine their actions on this subject. Mr. Lacouture will review the Federal EIN certificate.

Mr. Nievera stated there has been no action on the Grant Committee. He noted that the Champlin Fdn. no longer offers financial support to volunteer fire and rescue services. He also reported that the federal money from the Homeland Security Dept. has been re-directed to the larger and more populous communities and is generally no longer available to smaller communities such as ours.

Although Ms. Vergano’s Cost Consolidation Committee has not yet met, she has contacted VFIS Insurance and is in the process of obtaining an estimate from Brad Preston to consolidate all the insurance within the fire district.

Mr. Wilbur’s Capital Cost Committee met immediately prior to our meeting. He explained the spreadsheet that his committee has constructed and how monies collected would be used going forward. Mr. Swanson wanted all the truck funds to be controlled by the board rather than the individual departments. Mr. Lacouture reviewed the

last two truck purchases made by Station #2 and the advantage of having a small amount set aside annually. Mr. Caito said the Rescue Corps has a ten year loan on a truck that will be lucky to last six or seven years. He noted that this situation was left over from a prior administration.

Mr. Lacouture has contacted Mr. Dowdy from ISOSlayer.com but his email has not yet been returned. He expects to hear from Mr. Dowdy in the near future noting he is usually very responsive to requests for information.

New Business

Mr. Lacouture reviewed a timeline to be used for the annual meeting. Mr. Nievera read the legal ad to be placed in the Standard Times announcing the meeting and open position. A budget hearing will be held on Feb. 23rd (7:00pm.) at station #1. At that meeting the budget will be presented to the district for member input and approval. The final budget will be presented to the members at the annual meeting in April. Mr. Nievera has finished the warrant for the annual meeting. Mr. Lacouture will review it and return it to Mr. Nievera for action and posting. Mr. Lacouture reports the stenographer has been hired for the meeting.

Ms. Vergano explained how she arrived at the figures for the administrative budget. Mr. Swanson inquired as to when the books

are audited. He was told funds have been identified for an investigation of the funds of the district. This is not a forensic audit. Ms. Vergano stated it would make more sense to wait until the end of the collection year. A discussion on the tax collection shortfall and how it would be realized took place next. Ms. Vergano indicated that the administrative operation should not be cut for any reason. Mr. Nievera agreed with this opinion. Mr. Swanson wants any shortfall to be taken from the truck funds held by the individual organizations. Several commissioners attempted to explain the purpose and advantages of truck funds currently being utilized by the organizations.

Chief Caito was questioned concerning his submitted budget. His two major increases are for additional coverage from 6 to 11pm and funding to put the rescue box on a new cab & chassis rather than purchase a new vehicle at a cost of approx. \$140,000 to \$150,000. The funding for the ISO consultant is not in the admin budget. Ms. Vergano feels that the funds to support the ISO consultant should be the responsibility of the fire companies since it was they who used ISO as a benefit to starting the district. Chief Franklin (Station #2) offered that funds given to him for support of his fire company were for specific items in this year's budget and he is unable to utilize them for something else. Mr. Swanson once again voiced his opinion that the district should control the truck funds maintained by the fire and rescue companies. Mr. Reed moved (Mr. Wilbur second) to leave the capital expenditures as is, with the companies for the 06/07

budget year. There was no discussion. The motion carried 6 to 1, with Mr. Swanson casting the only opposing vote. Mr. Wilbur noted that the reality is that things change and we must address the reality of the situation. Mr. Wilbur also felt that the legal expenses as well as the ISO consultant fees should be within the administrative budget. Mr. Lacouture suggested two lines for special consideration, one for the ISO consultant and the other for the additional coverage requested by the Rescue Corps. Mr. Nievera moved (Mr. Wilbur second) removing the ISO consultant as well as the additional Rescue coverage from the 06/07 budget and including them as their own line items to be considered separately. Mr. Swanson stated that he wanted a full time employee rather than coverage by current employees compensated with overtime. Chief Caito explained that it would be less costly using overtime coverage in place of hiring a new employee. Mr. Walker moved (Mr. Wilbur second) removing urgent and different items from the budget and considering them separately. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Nievera moved (Mr. Wilbur second) an increase to \$5,000 in the legal line of the budget for our defense of the union organization attempt currently underway. The motion carried unanimously. Ms. Vergano stated that the admin budget is now up 3.7%.

Ms. Vergano inquired if the salary for the fire prevention officer (Chief St. Jean) was split between both fire companies. Chief Franklin stated that it was. Mr. Swanson wanted to know why this position was necessary. Mr. Morgan (Dispatch Ctr.) stated "Station Night Club fire." The state has implemented new fire code regulations that must

be met. Ms. Vergano also asked of the sharp increase in the equipment line in the fire company's budget and the increase in vehicle maintenance which had been increased by \$2,000 last year to specifically cover 8 new tires for Tanker 6, yet had not been reduced once that purchase was made. Chief Curry explained the current purchase of Scott Packs (SCBA's) and the fire company's obligation in accepting the grant to purchase them. Questions concerning vehicle maintenance and fuel were asked of Chief Curry. He explained that the trucks needed periodic maintenance and "just because you put tires on an engine this year, that's no guarantee you won't have a need for tires next year." The difference in the line items for fuel was most likely due to the number of apparatus station #1 sends on a first run basis. They typically sent more apparatus than station #2. Ms. Vergano asked if there had been an increase in runs this year that would account for the increase. It was reported that Exeter #1 had 283 runs in the 2004 calendar year and 289 in 2005. Chief Caito mentioned that Rescue had made 769 runs in 2005.

Mr. Lacouture, as president of station #2, gave a brief synopsis of their budget. Ms. Vergano asked whether grants were listed in the budget. Mr. Lacouture responded "no" stating that the grant was approved in October of 2005 and spent within one year.

Ms. Vergano questioned the truck fund in Exeter #1 and truck replacement and capital improvement funds in Exeter #2. Chief Curry stated that the \$25,000 allocated to their truck fund was actually a loan payment. In addition, Mr. Lacouture identified the \$29,500 truck replacement fund as a partial payment on a 3 yr \$100k loan with

approximately \$33,000 plus interest being paid each year. The balance of the loan payment would be covered by allocations to the capital improvement fund. Mr. Walker expressed his concern that contractual debt obligations were not clearly identified. Ms. Vergano concurred and asked that loans and other debt obligations be clearly disclosed.

Mr. Morgan explained the insurance line in his Dispatch Center budget.

Chief Caito presented his budget request. The main discussion centered around three items, the rescue coverage from 6 to 11pm daily, a new vs. re-mount vehicle and an approx. 900 sq ft. addition to the rescue building to include bunk space for the on-duty EMT's as well as office space for the Rescue Corps administration. Chief Caito mentioned that he currently has accumulated \$7600 for the first year's payment on the building renovation. Several commissioners objected to the Rescue Corps starting a building project and then notifying the voters of the district of its existence. This project will obligate the district for 20 years, thus the voters should have a say in its undertaking. It was agreed that funding for additional coverage would be placed on a separate line item so the voters could decide this issue. Chief Caito would opt for a re-mount rather than the purchase of a new vehicle and he would include the sum of \$7,600 in his budget as a payment for an addition. Chief Caito will forward an amended budget to the board at his earliest opportunity. Mr. Reed moved (Mr. Wilbur second) presenting the current budget, with the updated Rescue Corps figures, to the district at the budget hearing.

The budget calls for \$955,654.00 with two separate line items to be decided by the voters. The motion carried with four commissioners (Messrs. Lacouture, Wilbur, Reed and Nievera) voting for the motion and three (Ms. Vergano, Messrs. Walker and Swanson) opposing.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Exeter Fire District will be held on February 23rd at 7:00pm at the Exeter Volunteer #1 Fire Dept. on Ten Rod Rd. The meeting will be a budget hearing followed by a special board meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. Walker moved (Mr. Reed second) adjournment at 10:36pm. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Nievera, Clerk

Exeter Fire District