

**Approved 02/28/08**

**Exeter Fire District**

**(February 7, 2008)**

**Call to Order**

**Chairman Peter Lacouture called the February meeting of the Exeter Fire District to order at 7:44pm. Present were commissioners Vergano, Lacouture, Wilbur, Nievera and Gallagher. Also present was district treasurer, Ms. Caito. There were 7 members of the public in attendance.**

**Public Comment**

**Mr. Lacouture requested that any questions or comments concerning budgetary matters be held until that section of the agenda had been reached. There was no public comment.**

**Treasurer's Report**

**Ms. Caito reports a beginning balance of \$317,528.76 as of Dec. 11, 2007. Activity within the accounts for the period of Dec.11 thru Jan 9, 2008 brings the balance to \$243,151.92. Mr. Nievera has compared the reports of the treasurer with the corresponding bank statements thru Jan. 9, 2008 and is satisfied with their accuracy. Mr. Nievera moved (Mr. Wilbur second) accepting the report of the treasurer. The motion carried unanimously.**

## **Previous Month's Minutes**

**Ms. Vergano moved (Mr. Wilbur second) acceptance of the minutes of the January 10, 2008 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

## **Communications**

**Mr. Nievera reported that all operational mail had been given to the treasurer for her action. He also reported that the RI Ethics Commission had made their annual request for the contact information for all of the commissioners on the board. He has responded with the most recent commissioner list. Additionally, a letter of thanks had been sent to Senator Breene for the legislative grant received last month. He also stated that all budgets had been received from the individual organizations and that in addition to posting for this meeting, the meeting schedule for the remainder of the year had been posted on the Secty. of State's website, as well as the regular locations around town.**

**Mr. Lacouture has received information from VFIS pertaining to the insurance coverage for the commissioners. There was some confusion at the mention of workman's comp. insurance. He will contact VFIS to clarify the intent of this communication.**

## **Old Business**

**Mr. Lacouture explained the administrative budget. Ms. Vergano inquired of the interest income and why it is the same as last year. It was agreed that the interest income line could safely be increased. It was further agreed to leave the abatement figure as it has been in the recent past. She also suggested polling other fire districts with regard to compensation for their collectors. The administrative increase over last year is 2.6%.**

**[Subsequent discussions have changed the administrative budget increase to 4.4%]**

**Woody Davis (Pres. Exeter VFD#1) was present to explain their budget request. He offered that their budget was, “pretty much, a bare bones budget”. He further explained that the fire prevention program had to be cut back to lessen the appropriation request from the district. Ms. Vergano questioned the “other income” figure of \$10,200. Mr. Conroy (treasurer, EVFD#1) explained that about \$2,000 was carried over from last year’s training line item and that about \$8,000 was from a Job Corps grant. Mr. Wilbur asked how the company faired with the district support from the previous year. Their response was that they found they were able to operate, but could have done more with more. Mr. Conroy further offered that their “seemingly high” \$31,000 truck payment was being used to purchase a newer technology CAFS (compressed air foam system) truck. “This technology makes water wetter and thus allows it to suppress more fire”. “This vehicle is replacing two trucks” offered Mr. Conroy.**

**EVFD#1 increase over last year is 4.9%.**

**Robt. Franklin (Chief, EVF Co. #2) was present to explain their budget request. Ms. Vergano asked why the truck payment and loan fund occupied the same line. Chief Franklin cited the possible confusion and lack of willingness to reinstate the line once it had been “paid off”, then restarted. Mr. Lacouture said the he would contact the fire company treasurer, who was unable to attend this meeting, for a possible solution. Ms. Vergano asked if the “professional fees” line item was to compensate Mr. St. Jean. Chief Franklin replied that it was. Chief Franklin also stated that the growth of the town requires more and specific equipment with which to operate. He also noted that there are many more rules and obligations that we are required to follow. EVFC#2 increase over last year is 5.4%.**

**Dennis Colacone (Treasurer, Exeter Emergency Dispatch Center) was present to explain their budget request. Mr. Colacone stated that the lion’s share of their request was employee related. The dispatch center is attempting to bring about some parity between their dispatchers and those of nearby towns. There is also an increase for payroll and tax preparation services totaling 22%. EEDC increase over last year is 13.6% and will require a 2/3 majority at the annual meeting.**

**[Subsequent discussions have changed the EEDC budget increase to 12.7%, and continues to require 2/3 majority at the annual meeting.]**

**Tom Caito (Chief, Exeter Rescue Corps) was present to explain their budget. He noted that the run count has increased due in part to the number of runs to the Phoenix House and the Job Corps facility. Additionally Mr. Caito notified the board that a new Rescue vehicle would be needed in the next (2009/2010) budget cycle. He also is attempting to bring parity to the wage scale for the employees of the Rescue Corps. Mr. Nievera asked who was used for comparative purposes. Mr. Caito replied that the towns of South Kingstown, Cumberland and a private ambulance service, Alert Ambulance, were used. Mr. Nievera noted that it would be extremely difficult to bring all dispatch and rescue employees to parity within the same budget cycle. Mr. Lacouture suggested that Mr. Caito meet with the Dispatch Corp. to search for a more cost advantageous way to achieve this parity. Mr. Caito also reported that the drawings for the Rescue addition will go out to bid later this week. Exeter Rescue Corps increase over last year is 14.2% and will require a 2/3 majority at the annual meeting.**

**[Subsequent discussions have changed the Exeter Rescue Corps budget increase to 5.4%, requiring a simple majority for adoption.]**

**Ms. Vergano will re-circulate all budgets on the 15th of February. Any changes or edits must be in her hands by the 14th.**

**Mr. Nievera will ask the town tax assessor if she has an estimate of the net assessed valuation of the property for the town. He will report back to the board the next time that they assemble.**

**There followed a short discussion on the bonding requirements of**

the board. It was agreed to increase the bond on the treasurer and collector and add the chairman to the package.

Ms. Vergano asked Ms. Caito to confirm that her check signing authorization had, in fact, been removed from district accounts. Ms. Caito replied that it had, but she would investigate further and, if necessary, take appropriate action.

Mr. Nievera has asked that the resolutions voted upon at the annual meeting include (1) a change in the due date for quarterly payments from the 15th to the 1st of the month in which they are due. This will keep us in line with the town and help to eliminate some confusion. And (2) that the “amount due” field in the Q2 thru Q4 payments be “0 filled” on accounts with annual amounts due of \$100 or less. This is causing some confusion with some of our older taxpayers. Mr. Wilbur moved (Mr. Gallagher second) adoption of the previously discussed changes. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Nievera reported on the progress of the tax sale. He said that there were 19 properties that will be included. Mr. Lacouture will review the contract with RI Tax Titles LLC and contact Mr. Nievera by the week end with his final authorization to sign and return the contract.

## **New Business**

There was no new business discussed.

## **Next Meeting**

**A budget hearing is scheduled to be held on February 28, 2008 at the Exeter Volunteer Fire Dept. #1 located at 305 Ten Rod Rd. The hearing will start at 7:00pm.**

**The next regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners will be held on March 6, 2008 in the program room of the Exeter Public Library. That meeting will begin at 7:30pm.**

## **Adjournment**

**Ms. Vergano moved (Mr. Wilbur second) adjournment at 10:05pm. The motion carried unanimously.**

**Respectfully Submitted,  
Bill Nievera, Clerk  
Exeter Fire District**