

**Approved 03/14/2013**

**Exeter Fire District**

**(February 28, 2013)**

**(Budget Hearing)**

**Call to Order**

**Chairman Peter Lacouture called the February 2013 budget hearing of the Exeter Fire District to order at 7:06pm. Present were commissioners Lacouture, Wilbur, Chappell, Slater and Nievera. Ms. MacDonald, district treasurer, was also present. There were 23 members of the public in attendance.**

**Presentation of Budgets**

**Mr. Lacouture gave a brief overview of the budget process to date, followed by an explanation of the administrative budget for the coming fiscal year. He noted that the 3% budgeted salary increase for our collector in addition to a \$100 increase in the “Professional fees/Consultant” line item constituted our entire increase.**

**Mr. Lacouture further stated that he had, at the last meeting, asked all departments to attempt to hold their projected increases to the smallest number possible due to the current economic climate.**

**The EFD administration’s current request includes an increase of 2.6% over last year.**

**Chief Chamberlain (EVFD#1) presented his budget stating that he sees the need to replace his “Jaws of Life” equipment. He stated that**

replacement was necessary due to the age of the equipment and the fact that vehicles today are manufactured using much stronger steel/alloy materials, and are much more difficult to cut into. He also has the need to replace a door and do some immediate work on the sanitary facilities in his station #1.

The EVFD#1 current request includes an increase of 2.9% (reduced from 5.5%) over last year.

Chief Franklin (EVFC#2) presented his budget and stated that his organization is also looking to the grant process to replace their Jaws. He cited strong competition among fire/rescue organizations for grant resources, noting that larger municipalities are generally more successful. He stated that he feels fortunate that his run total is down slightly from the prior year.

The EVFC#2 current request includes an increase of 1.9% over last year.

Chief Dennis Colacone (Exeter Rescue Corps) gave a slide presentation to explain his budget request. His presentation covered the number of runs, transports, age and replacement schedules of the vehicles as well as several slides covering salaries and benefits. He rejects the comparison to Hope Valley Ambulance Corps citing the two organizations are more dissimilar than alike. Mr. Nievera asked what percentage of the health care the employees are required to pay and when is the current bargaining agreement set to expire. Mr. Colacone answered that the employees pay 5% of their health care

premiums and that the agreement runs until July of 2014. Mr. Colacone will shop around for better plans with which to align the Rescue Corps. He also stated that his two rescue captains receive a \$5K bonus, paid quarterly, for being captains. There was much discussion/opposition on that point. The sense of the meeting was that, in this economy, this was absolutely unnecessary. Mr. Colacone agreed to report back to the board of commissioners with his newly adjusted figures.

The Exeter Rescue Corps current request includes an increase of 15.3% over last year. This will require a 2/3 majority vote at the annual meeting

Chief Franklin (VP, EEDC) presented the budget for the Dispatch Corporation stating that the dispatchers had requested any additional increase be put towards their retirement plan rather than receiving an increase in pay for the year. The EEDC has requested an additional 1.5% to be added to their standing 6% for a 7.5% increase into pension.

The EEDC current request includes an increase of 5.5% (reduced from 6.5%) over last year.

A member of the public questioned the Rescue's policy of 3rd party billing, and why local resident's insurance companies were not being billed for ambulance runs. It was explained that local residents were promised not to be billed since they were already supporting the organization with their tax dollars.

**There was some confusion on Mr. Colacone's salary and benefits line items. He was asked to bring a comprehensive break down of those items to the March meeting.**

**It was suggested that the rescue do more to attract volunteers. Mr. Nievera asked if the education program, which pays for EMT training was still in use. Chief Colacone answered that it was, but not being utilized very often.**

**Roddy Jordan stated his displeasure at the budget being presented by the Rescue Corps. He stated that in this tough economic time and being retired and living on a fixed income, he could not support this budget.**

**Jeff Henderson suggested that the rescue use more per-diems rather than full time employees. He also asked what "plan B" was should someone at the annual meeting offer a motion to "0" fund the Rescue Corps. No reply was forthcoming.**

**Dave Chamberlain (Chief EVFD#1) asked if the commissioners had a contract with the organizations. Mr. Lacouture replied that we did not.**

**With no other comments or questions Mr. Nievera moved (Mr. Wilbur second) closing the budget hearing at 9:03pm. The motion carried unanimously.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Bill Nievera, Clerk**

**Exeter Fire District**