

HARMONY FIRE DISTRICT

P.O. Box 360 – 194 Putnam Pike
Harmony, R.I. 02829

The regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board was held at the Harmony Fire Station on Thursday, **August 19, 2010**.

Present: Chief Stuart Pearson; Moderator - Raymond Fogarty, Jr.;
Treasurer - Sandra Owens; Tax Collector - Kimberly Barber;
Board Members - Louise Michaels & George Kain;
Attorney - Fred Mason, Jr.

Absent: Board Members - James Richards (*excused*) & Milton Huston (*excused*)

I. – Meeting Called to Order: **7:03 pm** by Moderator Fogarty.

II. - Approval of the minutes from the May 20th meeting.

Moderator Fogarty asked the board if there were any discrepancies to note on the minutes from the May 20th meeting. If not, he would like to call for a motion to accept them.

George made a motion to accept the minutes. Louise seconded the motion. The motion carried.

III. - Treasurer's Report:

Sandy presented her reports for the months of **April** and **May**. Beginning balance April 1st \$457,998.53 and the ending balance April 30th \$265,124.07. This reflects the large payout of approximately \$175,000 for the new rescue. Beginning balance May 1st \$265,124.07 and the ending balance May 31st \$249,641.86. There were routine expenses in May.

The monthly report for June has been prepared, but Sandy wanted to be able to go over a few of the items with Kim first, before presenting it to the board. She wants to have it finalized to be able to give it to the Auditor. She did state that the unaudited balance as of June 30th is \$214,181.53 and about 92% of the 2009-10 budget was expended. Sandy stated that she would have the June, July and possibly August Treasurer's Reports ready for the next meeting. She wasn't sure about August though, since she would be traveling.

The Audit for fiscal year end 6/30/09 was handed out. Some discussion followed about receiving the audit so late this year. Kim explained that getting the information to the auditor late in the ensuing fiscal year, conflicts with his tax season deadline of April 15th. Then with this year's filing extension until May it held up everything even more. She stated that she had already talked with Sandy about this and they had agreed to get the financial reports to the auditor by about September 1st this year. She also commented that the West Glocester Fire District, who uses Geoff Malo as their Auditor as well, also received their Audit report late. Ray stated that the board would be given time to review the Audit until next month's meeting, when a vote will be taken to accept it.

Louise made a motion to accept the treasurer's report. George seconded it. The motion carried.

IV. - Tax Collector's Report:

The taxes receivable balance as of today's date is \$82,396.57. It has been 3 full months since our last regular monthly meeting, so Kim provided collection figures for them all. May - \$3,023.10, June - \$6,316.79 and July - \$5,563.67.

The tax sale process has begun, with 90 day notices having already been mailed. Collections have picked up some on these accounts with tax payers coming in to set-up payment arrangements and some paying their accounts in full. The date for the sale set for November 2nd. Kim started with 42 parcels and is now down to almost half of that. She stated it was the largest list she has ever had.

Third party billing revenue has been healthy over the last 3 months. May - \$4,573.66, June - \$10,831.11 and July - \$7,167.77.

Some miscellaneous funds have been received. A couple of VFIS insurance claims, one for a pager and portable radio damaged by water and the other for boots, gloves and a pager damaged during the flood. FEMA also paid out our claim for the flood, \$10,876.83. We have received the \$6,500 from Chepachet for ½ ownership of the old Rescue 2. Additionally, we received a quarterly payment from Harmony Hill School for the Firestarter Program.

Sandy asked about the taxes receivable balance of \$82,396.57. How much of this total is for tax sale properties? Kim reviewed a copy of a Trial Balance report with her that listed a breakdown with sub-totals of each year's receivables. Anyone with a bill from 2007 is on the tax sale list. However, when some of these people come in to pay they are paying their 2008 and 2009 bills as well.

Regarding a topic discussed at the last meeting, Motor Vehicle Excise Tax, Kim mentioned that she had received a phone call at the end of June from the Harrisville Fire District's Tax Collector, Brenda Gingell. She was doing an informal survey regarding the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax and Fire District's. She polled all fire district collectors that are members of the RI Tax Collectors Association, asking if they were going to resume the billing of Motor Vehicles. Kim responded to her saying that she did not think so, but our board had not made any formal decision yet. Brenda stated that no one she had talked to was interested in doing it. They all agreed that the revenue vs. the administration expense did not make it feasible.

Ray and Kim had both talked to Chepachet and West Glocester Fire Districts and neither were going to bill for it. George clarified that we do still retain the right to bill in the future, should we choose to do so. Right now it is just not cost effective. Ray agreed stating the last thing the tax payers would like to see at this point in time is another tax bill. Some discussion followed regarding the current revaluation going on in Glocester that will affect next year's tax bills.

George made a motion to accept the tax collector's report. Louise seconded it. The motion carried.

V. - Chief's Report:

Before the Chief started his report, Ray wanted to recognize him. He mentioned that in everyone's folder there was a packet that Kim had put together. The packet contained articles and photos pertaining to the *2010 Fire News Outstanding Leadership Award* that the Chief recently received at the Fire House Expo in Baltimore, Maryland. Amongst the items was a copy of the *Burrillville Town Council News* which stated that the Chief had been recognized at their meeting on August 11th. Information and photos had been submitted to them by Norman Mainville of Harrisville Fire

Department, who was present at the award ceremony in Baltimore. Kim also notified the board that the Gloucester Town Council will be making a resolution congratulating the Chief at their September meeting. Town Clerk Jean Fecteau has taken care of the arrangements.

The Chief stated that this was the 6th year the award has been presented at the Fire House Expo. It was a very nice presentation and yes he did give a small speech. The board gave the Chief a short round of applause for his achievement.

Chief Pearson then proceeded with his regular monthly report.

At the end of May we submitted an \$84,000 AFG grant for an Interoperable Communications System. Hopefully we hear some good news.

In June we started work on the air conditioning system in the building. Also, we had Mulcahey's come in to work on the water system. The first item they found was that the cap for the well out in the driveway was corroded. This made them wonder if the water was being contaminated from road salt. The cap was replaced and sealed. They also took a water sample and had it analyzed. The results came back showing high Potassium levels. A chemical change has been made in the water softener system and the crew has been flushing the system as often as possible to try to clean it out. Another water sample will be taken in December to be retested to see if the potassium level has dropped. Some discussion followed about road salt. George mentioned that studies had been done on this subject by the Town of Gloucester. If the tests prove it is from the road salt, he will get copies of this information for the board to review.

On June 10th the Chief made the presentations for the Gloucester Firefighter Scholarships at the Ponaganset High School Award night.

June 13th was the Annual Northern RI Firemen's Memorial Service & Parade. It was held in Uxbridge, MA this year.

As Kim had discussed earlier, we worked with FEMA on claims due to the flood back in March and April. There are also claims submitted for damaged dry hydrants at Baker Brook on Cooper Road and at Holiday Acres on Snake Hill Road. Ray asked what the total is that FEMA will be reimbursing us. The Chief said that between claims for personnel, equipment, apparatus and dry hydrants it will be about \$13,000. At first they told us 75% reimbursement, now they say we will get another check bringing us up to 90%. The crew was paid out for the flood calls as soon as these funds were received.

George asked if the damaged dry hydrants were still working. The Chief said that they were damaged and silted in, but still operational. Through the mitigation plan that has been put together, they will be rebuilt so we will not have the same problem again.

June 17th the Chief attended the Ground Breaking Ceremony for the RI Fire Academy in Exeter. After many years of work and preparation it was a great day. Some discussion followed about the fire academy. The dedication of the academy will be held in either November or December.

From June 23rd to the 27th the 88th Annual New England Association of Fire Chiefs Conference & Expo was held in Springfield, MA. Five crew members attended and Deputy Chief Segee and Lt. Falco attended a full-day class at the event.

A quick note regarding the legislation passed for Fireworks. The 4th of July holiday went off without a hitch, no problems in Harmony.

Another item regarding the capital improvements projects. Gem Plumbing & Heating has come in and submitted a quote for repair/replacement of the buildings heating and hot water systems. A quote had also been received from Industrial Burners. This project may qualify for EDC grant opportunities as long as an alternative energy solution is included in the design plan. Some discussion about the project followed. The next step for this project will be to prepare a "Request for Proposal" (RFP) and put the project out for bid. The Chief would like to have the boiler room completely washed down and repainted when the old equipment has been taken out.

A letter of thanks was received from the *Guardians of the Ribbon* organization, commonly known as *Pink Heels*. At this year's golf tournament a percentage of the proceeds was donated to them. The board agreed that this was a wonderful gesture on behalf of the association to donate portion to charity. They also agreed that they did a great job at the tournament held at the Connecticut National Golf Course in Putnam, CT this year.

Additionally, three thank you cards were received.

Sandy Owens for a floral arrangement sent upon the passing of her mother, Vera Z. Shashok.

Stephanie Kain for a floral arrangement sent to her during a recent hospital stay.

Susan Walsh for a floral arrangement sent to her during her recent illness.

Sandy thanked George for attending the wake in Willimantic, CT.

Louise made a motion to accept the chief's report. George seconded it. The motion carried.

VI. – Harmony Fire Department & Improvement Association Report:

John stated that progress has been made with the association's computer. They are now working on getting the internet access. The computer they bought needs an air card to get it up and running.

Some discussion followed regarding computer security in general at the station, in light of recent events in the news from neighboring communities.

Next John said that the association will be discussing the patio plan at their next meeting. They intend to have it done by the spring. Ray asked if he could define the project. John said it would be a small project. It would include a patio, a picnic table, a small enclosure to keep the grill in, a fence around the back, some lighting and perhaps a horseshoe pit. It would just be a few things for the crew to use together recreationally. The only thing Ray wanted to suggest is that there be some sort of gate to stop people from driving around the building while there are people back there. Just as a safeguard. George said that would be a good idea for when the crew is training back there as well. Sandy suggested also making it one-way by painting arrows on the pavement. Ray asked that John have a rough sketch of the project drawn up to present at the next board meeting.

Some discussion followed about roadway safety and 'speed bumps' in Gloucester were brought up. The Chief explained that since the first one had been installed studies had been done at sites where resident complaints had been received. These tests recorded vehicle speeds including date, time and license plate. The results have shown that there are not significant problems, as were being suggested.

George said that he is totally against these speed bumps. They are a detriment to public safety as well as a safety hazard to emergency vehicles. For instance, if we have a mutual aid situation and another company isn't aware of the 'speed bump' locations, it could also be a liability issue if their vehicle is damaged or their personnel are hurt. The Chief stated that you cannot go over these 'speed bumps' when you are going the posted speed limit, they are not painted and the proper signage is not in place.

Ray suggested that we should consider as a board making a formal request of the Gloucester Town Council to have the Public Safety Commission look into 'speed bump' issue. The Chief stated that he had already submitted a letter himself, but as Ray stated another letter would show the support of the fire district board. Ray said first we should contact the other Gloucester Fire Chiefs to ask for their districts support. Further discussion followed on the subject.

Upcoming Event: Gloucester Firefighters Scholarship Steak Fry
Saturday, October 2nd, 4 - 8:00 pm – Watmough's Campground

Louise wished to commend the crew on initiating improvements to the station. Not alone for their own comfort, but because they want to be here. If they are here it also improves their response time and that is good for everyone. Thank you!

George recognized John for all of the time he has put into polishing the diamond plate on the trucks, they look great. It is hard work and the trucks look sharp. Thank you!

VII. - Committee Reports:

a. Policies & Procedures Manual – Milton, Unassigned
No report available due to Milton's absence.

b. Charter & By-Laws Review – George, Chair

A vote was taken to approve the By-Law changes as presented at the meeting in May. Louise made a motion to accept the By-Law changes. Since George was the committee chair, Ray seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The Charter revisions need to be submitted to legislation. Since the Chief and Kim have not completed this process before, Kim will contact Senator Fogarty's office to find out the procedure to be followed.

Kim asked if the board wanted to have the Charter & By-Laws posted on our website. The board agreed that it was a good idea.

Kim also asked when the Charter and By-Laws should be reviewed. Ray said that the Charter should be considered as a Constitution, not to be changed very often, if at all. The By-Laws on the other hand should be reviewed at least every 5 years.

VIII. - Old Business: Addressed throughout reports.

IX. - New Business: Addressed throughout reports.

X. - Public Input: No audience.

XI. – Executive Session: None called.

XII. – Adjournment:

Louise made a motion to adjourn the meeting. George seconded it. The motion carried.
The August meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board was adjourned at **8:00 pm**.

The next regular monthly meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board
is scheduled for Thursday, 7:00 pm, **October 21, 2010.**

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kimberly S. Barber".

Kimberly S. Barber
Tax Collector/Secretary