

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, September 15, 2011.**

Present: Chief Stuart Pearson; Moderator - Raymond Fogarty, Jr.;
Tax Collector - Kimberly Barber; Attorney - Fred Mason, Jr.;
Board Members - Louise Michaels, George Kain,
James Richards & Milton Huston;
Association Representative – John Falco, President

Absent: Treasurer - Sandra Owens - excused

I. – Meeting Called to Order: 7:07 pm by Moderator Fogarty.

II. - Approval of the minutes from the August 18th meeting.

Moderator Fogarty asked the board if there were any discrepancies to note on the minutes from the August 18th meeting. If everyone has had a chance to review the minutes, 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 unanimously.

III. – Approval of Bills:

A check register of bills to be paid was provided to all board members in their folder. Kim noted that there were no bills out of the ordinary to pay this month. The only new vendor was Community Fire & Police Equipment, whom the Gloucester Honor Guard uniforms were purchased from.

Milt made a motion to approve the bills. George seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

IV. - Treasurer's Report:

Due to Sandy's absence there was no Treasurer's Report available to present.

Ray asked if Kim had anything to inform the board of on Sandy's behalf. She gave an updated on the status of the Audit, as inquired about at last month's meeting. Everything has been completed on her end and Sandy just has a couple more things to tie up, then reports will be submitted to Geoff Malo.

V. - Tax Collector's Report:

Taxes receivable balance as of today's date is \$204,200.06. Taxes collected in the month of August were \$243,551.87. Third party revenue in August totaled \$9,028.57.

The Tax Sale was advertised in the Woonsocket Call starting on September 6th. There were 14 in the original ad, but Kim thinks she should be down to about 5 parcels by the tax sale date of September 27th.

The board had asked Kim to call and speak with the Gloucester Tax Assessor about the “Pilot Program” for Harmony Hill School (HHS). According to Viviane Valentine there is no such program. Gloucester receives 0 dollars for HHS. Special Legislation classifies HHS separately from other schools and churches, but tax exempt. Ray said he would try to find out from someone at the state if there is anything that HHS should do so that Gloucester could receive the money.

Kim also wanted to mention that she had received a notice from Vision, our tax software provider. They sent a letter informing us that next fiscal year (2012-2013) our maintenance agreement will increase from \$1,276 to \$1,750, which is a 39% increase. She called to find out why. Their explanation was that upon taking over Opal they examined the rates being charged to fire districts and found a wide range. They are trying to streamline the fees, to make them all the same. We had started at \$1,100 and have slowly increased to \$1,276. Unfortunately we were on the lower end of the range, thus the drastic increase. Kim stated to the representative that she believed we were being charged less because we are such a small fire district, there are others much larger. He said size does not make a difference with software. Milt asked about the licensing, that was where they would be able to charge by size. Ray asked if we have any other options to this software, if we could put it out to bid. The program is excellent and Gloucester uses the same program, so information flows seamlessly. George asked why we could not piggy back our maintenance with the town’s. Kim stated that she did not think that would be possible, because we are a separate entity. Louise asked if the other Fire Districts used this program. Kim told her they do not. After some discussion the board agreed that Kim should ask Vision for a 3 year contract at the discounted rate of \$1,550.

Ray asked Kim about the tax collections this year vs. last year. He asked Kim to provide the board with a comparative analysis for next month’s meeting.

Jim made a motion to accept the Tax Collector’s report. Milt seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. - Chief’s Report:

At the end of August the Chief and Chief Fred Stanley of the HopeValley/Wyoming Fire District, attended at meeting with Charles Fogarty at the RI Department of Labor and Training (RIDLT). The RIDLT is trying to rectify a problem they are having with unemployment claims for people who receive compensation for being volunteer firefighters. These stipends need to be reported as income. RIDLT had been asking the fire districts to report the income weekly and it was causing a big paper work issue. After some discussion it was agreed that this income should be reported quarterly or semi-annually depending on the fire district. What was once a one rule covers all has been changed to work in better coordination with the fire districts.

The National Grid project punch list has been completed by coordinator Todd Blanchard. George asked if there had been any major issues. The Chief stated that the project had gone very smoothly. We do have some other issues to address, outside this project, with the carriage lights in front of the building.

There was a meeting of the Gloucester Fire Chiefs on August 24th. Amongst other topics discussed at this meeting, the Firefighter I class, which started August 30th, and the upcoming Firefighter II class were gone over. Combining our training efforts in such a way is proven to save all 3 districts money.

On Labor Day weekend the Annual Oakland-Mapleville Fire Department Muster was held. Our crew put together and team to compete and did really well. The brought home 2 trophies. One for 1st Place in the Mystery Event and the other for Overall Champion. The team members were: Lt. John Falco and Privates Mike Grenga, Tom Mallot, Brenden Nichols, Danielle Fiori and Charlie Vota who recently rejoined the department. Private Johnathan Detri also won a trophy for an antique fire truck he owns that he restored himself with his own money.

The 9/11 Memorial Service was held at St. Eugene's Church. The Gloucester Honor Guard was impressive at this service and the Chief expressed to them how proud he was of their professionalism. The organizer of the event and members of the Church congregation expressed to the Chief how extremely impressed they were with all of our fine young men.

Additionally, we have had 2 local residents come in to the station and commend our crew for the exceptional job they had done on 2 separate incidents. Ray also stated that he had received a phone call tonight from a resident who wanted the board to know what an excellent job our crew members had done during Tropical Storm Irene. He ran into our people several times out in the district and he was also helped personal. He was very impressed with the crew's commitment to the community.

Lt. John Falco has just completed a 2 day training conducted by VFIS and is now classified as an *Emergency Vehicle Driver Training Instructor*. He can now train our crew in-house.

As discussed earlier there is also a Firefighter I class going on right now. We have 4 crew members in this class: Privates Josh Leary, Dylan Phillips, Alex Schlageter and Danielle Fiori.

Additionally, we have had another new person join the department, Billy Forte.

The Chief also mentioned that we received a check for \$1,114.24 from VFIS. The refund was due to their transition to a new carrier for our life insurance policy.

One of the new Thermal Imaging Cameras (TIC) that we have received from the \$40,000 USAR grant was put out on display for the board. The Chief also put out one of our old TIC, approximately 7 years old, so the board could see the difference in the technology. The vendor's representative will be coming to HFD shortly to do a training session with the crew. Some discussion followed about TIC, the features and uses.

The Chief then briefly went over the recent Tropical Storm Irene. The board members thanked the Chief and Kim for the e-mail updates that were sent to them, keeping them apprised of the storm and the preparations being made within our fire district. He stated that he has started the process of filing our claim with FEMA for expenses relating to the storm. The chain saws purchased will be reimbursed and they may cover a computer we are having problems with due to the power surges. We are not sure what percentage of the claim they will pay, possibly 80/20.

The crew did an excellent, excellent job. Many were here at the station for the time span of 2 days during the storm, with all 3 trucks manned. Some stayed here 24 hours, some 36. Others came back to the station after going to their regular jobs, to help continue with the clean up.

Before, during and after the event we worked with the Gloucester Town Council, Department of Public Works and the Police Department. Pre-Planning involved meeting with the Burrillville Fire Chiefs, preparing all applicable Federal forms and creating a Incident Action Report among all 3 Gloucester Fire Departments. Pre & Post storm the Chief also had crew members check on shut-ins in the district who were listed on the RI Department of Health's Special Needs Registry. We also assisted the community with water distribution here at the station. For the week following the storm there were meetings held each morning at the Gloucester Town Hall, to coordinate assistance efforts to the community. In about 2 weeks there will be meeting to prepare an After Action Report to go over the Town's overall response.

George mentioned that there was a very complimentary article in the Gloucester Advocate commending all of the Gloucester town officials with their performances during the storm. Some discussion followed about the storm response and restoration of services.

Motion was made by Jim asking that a letter be drafted from the board to the crew in appreciation for all of the hard work they did before, during and after the storm. A separate letter should be placed in each personnel file. Louise seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

A confirmation letter was finally received from the RI State Firemen's League for the grant application we submitted to buy the Promethean Smartboard. However the grant is only for \$2,000 of the original amount we had applied for. We are asking that we take the approximate \$3,500 shortage from the Capital Improvements account for Facility Improvements. Jim made the motion to appropriate the funds. George seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. Ray asked that a demonstration be done with the Smartboard for the district board members after it is installed.

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

VII. – Harmony Fire Department & Improvement Association Report:

Ray extended Congratulations to Eric Palmieri, the newly elected President of the Harmony Fire Department & Improvement Association. Other newly elected or reelected members are: Vice President - Randy Brackett, Secretary – Josh Leary and Treasurer – Johnathan Detri. Eric briefly went over his goals for the association. Organization, fundraising, being active in the community and keeping lines of communication open with the district board. Ray introduced each member of the district board to Eric. Ray also thanked John Falco on behalf of the district board, for his time of service as the President of the association.

Eric announced the date for the 11th Annual Gloucester Firefighters Scholarship Fund Steak Fry. It will be held Saturday, October 1st at Watmough's Campground. Kim has Steak Fry tickets for sale tonight, \$15 each.

George reminded Eric that the board should be provided with a current copy of the associations by-laws and copied on any changes that may be made.

Milt made a motion to accept the Chief's report. Jim seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

VIII. - Committee Reports:

- a. Policies & Procedures Manual – Milton, Chair
Milton presented some draft pages to Kim, for her and the Chief to review. Much of the specific information regarding employee conduct, leave of absences, etc., need to be gone over specifically by them before they will be ready for a draft to be presented to the district board.
- b. Charter & By-Laws Review – George, Chair
A final stamped copy has been received from Senator Fogarty's office. George asked that a binder be prepared for each board member with the final stamped copy for their records.
- b. Broadband Work Team – Milton and Stephen Kut, Co-Chairs
The Chief presented literature explaining the proposal that is being discussed. It shows how broadband could be used in the community and within the Harmony Fire District. This proposal we are discussing is for approximately \$300,000. Milton was nominated at the last meeting to be a chair for this work team, but Ray has spoken with Steve Kut, a Harmony resident who works with RIDOT and the GIS system, and he is willing to Co-Chair this work team. Much discussion followed regarding the opportunities available with the broadband project.

IX. - Old Business:

- a. Update of RIDOT road work in Harmony.
A follow-up letter was sent to the RIDOT representatives and the local elected officials, but not response has yet been received. Ray will be attending a public hearing on October 3rd and he will try to get more information at that time.
- b. Gloucester Public Safety Commission "Speed Tables"
A follow-up letter was sent to the Gloucester Town Council President and copied to the Gloucester Public Safety Commission, but not response has yet been received.

X. - New Business:

Ray talked about putting together a work team to look into the "Pathway to Net Zero" program. He asked Kim to put together a 1 year analysis of the fire district's energy usage for this team to use. Some discussion followed about possible opportunities available.

George is going to look into another alternative energy source that he found out they are using at Dino's Park n' Shop. Tom Mainville had something to do with it and he is going to talk with him.

George asked that there be a corner shelving unit either built or purchased with capital expense account funds. Reason being the crew has received many trophy awards that he feels should be displayed better for public viewing. The Chief said he would look into this.

XI. - Public Input: No audience.

XII. – Executive Session: None called.

XIII. – Adjournment:

Louise made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Milt seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. The September meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board was adjourned at **8:40 pm**.

The next meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board is scheduled for **Thursday, 7:00 pm, October 20, 2011** at the Harmony Fire Department.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Kimberly S. Barber
Tax Collector/Secretary