

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, February 17, 2011.**

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

Absent: Board Member – James Richards – excused
Association Representative – John Falco, President – excused

I. – Meeting Called to Order: 7:10 pm by Moderator Fogarty.

II. – Approval of the minutes from the January 20th meeting.

Moderator Fogarty asked the board if there were any discrepancies to note on the minutes from the January 20th meeting. Everyone was provided a copy in advance for review. If there are no corrections, 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:

The board was not prepared for this agenda item and it was not known how it would be handled. It had not been actively used in many years. Some discussion followed. George and Louise thought it was a great idea and although the Treasurer's Reports were available at each meeting, this would give us an extra level of transparency. It was decided after some discussion that a copy of the check register would be included in everyone's folders for the approval to be made each month. This will start at next month's meeting.

IV. - Treasurer's Report:

Sandy presented the Treasurer's reports for the months of **December & January.**

Beginning balance December 1st was \$498,356.12 and ending balance December 31st was \$380,352.24. This is the month with our larger expenditures, the building loan and call pay. Ray asked when the building loan would be paid off, is it 2023? Kim checked the Audit report and confirmed it is 2023.

Beginning balance January 1st was \$380,352.24 and ending balance January 31st was \$359,877.93. January contained routine expenses.

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

The Chief mentioned that the Audit for fiscal year 2009-10 has been completed by Geoff Malo and copies are included in everyone's folders for review. Geoff noted that the title of general ledger item 60230 be changed to Retirement Allowance. The board agreed that would be the proper title. Ray asked that acceptance of the audit be included on next month's agenda, so all of the board members have time to review it.

V. - Tax Collector's Report:

Taxes receivable balance as of today's date is \$132,164.19. Collections have slowed down, past due notices will soon be mailed. A lot of partial payments have been made and most of the tax payers who entered into written payment arrangements last year are staying current with their plans. Some are in default and letters will need to be sent out to them. Taxes collected in the month of January were \$5,430.89.

Third party billing was healthy in the month of January, \$11,617.48.

Since she had missed last month's meeting, Kim had a couple of older items she wanted to fill the board in on. She had attended the Open Government Summit hosted by new Attorney General (AG) Peter Kilmartin on January 13th at CCRI. There were a few items discussed there that she thought would be interesting to the board.

A statistic quoted by the AG's office was, "...18 of 26 formal complaints received last year were regarding the 10 day turnaround time for Access to Public Records Act (APRA)..." Some legislators are trying to reduce this law to 7 days, but for small offices such as Kim's that would be a nightmare.

She also found out that it is a law that we must establish a formal policy for the APRA. This policy should be included in our personnel handbook and on our website. She also suggested that we include a printable or electronically submittable form on the website. Ray asked if she could get copies from other places so we could have examples available to review. Kim stated she has obtained samples from the AG & several websites.

Other laws that must be adhered to are:

- electronic communications amongst the board is only allowed to schedule a meeting.
- agenda's may be amended, but for discussion purposes only.
- any votes taken must be recorded in the minutes as unanimous or each individual's vote must be listed individually.

During the open questions section of the summit Kim asked about filing the Annual calendar with the Secretary of State on-line. The Open Meetings Act only says one has to be filed, but provides no due date to be compliant with. The AG's office representative stated that there is no specific date, but as soon as your calendar is finalized it should be filed. At least before the first meeting of the new calendar year.

Ray asked about these items that Kim has to do each year. If something were to happen to her how would the board know what needs to be done? She stated that she has a task list set up within the calendar on her computer that provides her with reminders. Also she has prepared many "cheat-sheets" for different tasks that she performs. Milt said these will be items that should be listed in her job description in the new personnel handbook.

There was also a RI Tax Collector's Association (RITCA) meeting held on January 20th. At this meeting there was an update given on Tax Sale legislation. RI Housing (RIH) is trying to resubmit a bill proposing to do away with the 90 day notice and is trying to accelerate the foreclosure once they pay for the property, to 1 or 2 years. RIH has yet to present a report stating how many people they have helped stay in their homes. Actually the redemption rate has dropped from 90% to 60% since they have been involved.

Additionally at this meeting a vote was taken to show those in favor of moving ahead with the bill for Certification of Tax Collectors. A majority was in favor. Members had put together a draft for legislation to present to our Representatives and Senators. Once a collector is certified the continuing education credit could be from attending a meeting or class. They are currently working on a handbook and requirements. Jim Savage from the State Department of Administration said he thinks this is a very positive move for the RITCA. Louise asked about the required fees. Kim said that the RITCA is working to keep the fees minimal.

Kim also attended a Human Resources Seminar on January 11th. She picked up on several items regarding terms to use in preparing policies and why. Several miscellaneous employee file record keeping laws were discussed as well. A CD set was purchased that includes pre-written Employment Policies created according to Federal guidelines. This purchase includes receiving updates to any laws as they are made. Also included in this set is a CD to define and develop Job Descriptions.

Kim had also registered to attend the RI League of Cities and Towns Convention, but bad weather prevented her from going. She wants to check with people from the Gloucester Town Hall to see if anyone from there had attended. One session in particular that she wanted to get information on was "No cost web services for Cities and Towns." She was interested to see if HFD qualified for this program. Milt said that Web Services is an entity that helps you integrate data. He wonders if this is the same thing. If so it would be very good because it would give us access to data that we would otherwise not have. He would be interested to find out more about this. Ray asked Milt to do a "Tech Overview" between now and budget preparation time. Just an informal check on our expenditures and see if there is anything further we may need to modernize the district.

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

VI. - Chief's Report:

First the Chief wanted to inform the board that two of the departments lieutenants, Farley and Falco, are now back from their leave of absences. However Private Ryan McAndrews, an active Firefighter and EMT, has left. "Squeaks" has received an educational grant and left to attend four years of schooling in Australia. He will be missed, we wish him well.

A thank you card was received from Ann Dahlquist for the arrangement sent upon the passing of her husband, Dr. Enold Dahlquist.

The Gloucester Firefighters Annual Banquet will be held on May 7th at the Thompson Speedway again this year. 6:00 pm cocktails/7:00 pm dinner.

The Chief asked George if he had an update from the recent Wastewater Management Meeting. George said that the meeting scheduled for February 2nd was canceled due to the weather. The next meeting will be in April. George said he had brought up the issue of the water contamination at a meeting with the Wastewater Management in the past.

We have not heard back from Mulcahey yet about the water testing. After we receive the analysis results if necessary the Chief will attend a Wastewater Management Meeting and present to them the problem we are having here. Then he will move forward with the state if necessary. We do have a water softener installed on our system and we have drinking water delivered. Once we have the water testing done we can consider capital expenditures for the next fiscal year. Some discussion followed about the water issues.

In the beginning of March the Chief will be meeting with another insurance company to receive an outside quote for comparison.

Mr. Kilmartin came in to the station last week. The Chief gave him a tour of the building and he seemed genuinely impressed with the work we do and everything the board has done. He made a \$1,000 donation and asked what we would propose to do with it. The Chief told him about a CPAP machine he had been wanting to purchase for the rescue. He will contact Mr. Kilmartin after it is received, so he can come back to take a look at it.

With the \$1,500 Fogarty grant we received we intend to purchase EZIO equipment for the rescue. It will be a collective purchase with the other departments in Gloucester. The EZIO is a mechanism that establishes a main line with an IV in the patient's bone. They are extremely useful with pediatric patients. It was just added to the RI state protocol and it will be another great tool to add to our truck. Louise asked about training. The Chief said that the company we are purchasing it from provides as many in-services as necessary for us free of charge and we are also buying a training kit.

The new rescue will be going out of service for a couple of days to have some warranty issues repaired. A couple of windows are leaking, amongst other issues.

The reserve rescue had some repairs done to the wheel rotors and brakes. Ray asked if the expense was split with Chepachet. The Chief said that our agreement says we pay every other year. However any expenses over \$500 will be split. He has already talked with Chief Dauphinais and he said no problem, send him the bill.

Fire training has been going on at 190 Saw Mill Road. A total of 18 hours plus preparation time over the last week and a half and this doesn't include the regular drill night. The Deputy Chief and Captain Brackett did a lot of work at this site and the other Gloucester fire departments were also included.

The Chief and Lt Farley recently attended the Woonasquatucket Valley Firemen's League Annual Banquet. The Chief did the swearing in of the officers at this event. Chief Larry Goodnough of West Gloucester is the President again this year.

Ray asked about the speed bump issue. George said that the board had asked that a letter be drafted and presented by the Chief at the next meeting of the Gloucester Public Safety

Commission. The Chief stated that there had not been a meeting of the commission since that time. He will put a letter together and send it to the commission chairman, Earl Newman, on behalf of the district board to request a meeting.

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

VII. – Harmony Fire Department & Improvement Association Report:

Due to John's absence there was no report available to present.

Ray asked the Chief if he had heard any updates on the association's patio area plan.

VIII. - Committee Reports:

a. Policies & Procedures Manual – Milton, Chair

Milt said that due to Kim's extra efforts and the CD's she purchased we should be able to put something together and have something to pass around at the next meeting. We will want to seek a third party to review the project before it is finalized however.

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

George stated that the Charter approval has been moving along. Attorney Mason had been trying to get in contact with Senator Fogarty's office and he has not received a call back. He needs information on the certification procedure, to make sure it is done properly. Kim will call again tomorrow and try to get someone to call Attorney Mason back. George said he will have further to report by the next board meeting.

IX. - Old Business:

a. Review of Boiler Replacement project.

No quote received yet for the additional work on the heating system. The Chief and Kim did a brief analysis of the oil usage and found that we used quite a lot at the beginning of the project. That usage has started to come down and hopefully will level off. George and the Chief agreed that it will be a full year before we can see the full effect of the project.

b. Update of RIDOT road work in Harmony.

We went through Senator Fogarty's office to get information about this project. We were told that the Route 44 project is being done in four phases:

1 – Apple Valley; 2 – Chepachet; 3 – Chepachet to CT; 4 – Harmony

The bridge in Chepachet will be done in the spring. Harmony is still in the planning phase and is still a couple of years away. George feels that letters need to be sent to Representatives Winfield and Chippendale and Senator Fogarty. He would like them all, as well as an Engineer from the RIDOT to attend the April district board meeting. Ray stated that we need to tell them what we want, not ask them what they want to do. George agreed, twenty-two years is too long to have waited for road and sidewalk work to be done in Harmony. The east bound lane of route 44 is a safety issue, the water in the hollow is treacherous. Some discussion followed.

X. - New Business: Addressed throughout report.

XI. - Public Input: No audience.

XII. – Executive Session: None called.

XIII. – Adjournment:

Louise made a motion to adjourn the meeting. George seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. The January meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board was adjourned at **8:15 pm**.

The next meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board is scheduled for **Thursday, 7:00 pm, March 17, 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