

# 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 **Wednesday, February 27, 2013.**

*Note: This meeting was rescheduled from February 21, 2013, due to the lack of a quorum.*

Present: Moderator – Raymond Fogarty, Jr.; Chief Stuart Pearson;  
Treasurer – Sandra Owens; Tax Collector – Kimberly Barber;  
Board Members – Louise Michaels & James Richards  
Association Representative – Linda Ferragamo, President;  
Attorney – Fred Mason, Jr.

Absent: Board Members – Milton Huston – excused  
Board Member – George Kain

**I. – Meeting Called to Order: 7:00 pm** by Moderator Fogarty.

**II. - Approval of the minutes from the January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.**

Moderator Fogarty asked the board if there were any discrepancies to note on the minutes from the January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. If there are no corrections, he would like to call for a motion to accept them.

Louise made a motion to accept the minutes. Jim 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. Moderator Fogarty asked if there were any comments or questions on these expenses. If not, he would like to call for a motion to accept them as presented.

Jim asked what the bill was for Breaking News Network. The Chief explained that it is a messaging service that goes directly to his cell phone.

Jim made a motion to approve the bills. Louise seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**IV. - Treasurer's Report:**

Beginning balance December 1<sup>st</sup> \$528,913.50 and ending balance December 31<sup>st</sup> \$515,491.42. Big outlays for Call Pay and Incentive Pay this month. Sandy stated that it looks like we are over in call pay. Kim explained that due to the fact that a few people had left and their call pay had been paid out, it reflected in the balance. Had they stayed, these call pay amounts would not have been paid out until December 1<sup>st</sup>, which falls in the next fiscal year budget. Additionally we have paid out detail pay for Hurricane Irene and the recent Blizzard, which also effect this account.

Beginning balance January 1<sup>st</sup> \$515,491.42 and ending balance January 31<sup>st</sup> \$510,358.14. More routine expenses. On page 2 however you will notice that the \$50,000 has been moved from general fund to a new equipment fund. Sandy mentioned that depending on when the new truck

is purchased there will be early withdrawal penalties on some of the CD's we will need to take money from.

Louise made a motion to accept the December and January Treasurer's reports as presented. Jim seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

#### V. - Tax Collector's Report:

The taxes receivable balance as of today's date is \$87,235.80.

Taxes collected in the month of January totaled \$33,159.04.

Third party billing fees collected in the month of January were \$9,332.30.

Kim stated that our Accountant Geoff Malo had been in on February 14<sup>th</sup> to pick-up all of the paperwork to begin our audit for year-end June 30, 2012.

Under HR she mentioned that the Chief has accrued an additional 11 hours comp time for hours worked during the Blizzard, February 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.

Legislative items have come to Kim and the Chief's attention today, by way of the RIAFC's lobbyist and their website. The first item pertains to Minutes, 2013 - H 5179, referred by the House Judiciary Committee, introduced January 29<sup>th</sup>. The proposed change to RIGL § 42-46-7(f) reads, "*All independent fire districts shall post the draft minutes of their own district/department website or the local municipal website, and if these websites are not available then on the secretary of state's website. These minutes shall be posted within twenty-one (21) days of the meeting or seven (7) days before the next regularly scheduled meeting, whichever is earlier.*" Kim stated that she does not have a problem posting the minutes, but questions the inconsistency of the rule that is being proposed compared to those pertaining to cities and towns. According to RIGL § 42-46-7(b) public bodies must make available at their principal office the unofficial minutes of a meeting: (a) within thirty-five (35) days of the meeting, **or** (b) at the next regularly scheduled meeting, whichever is earlier. Why are they asking us to post quicker and on our website or the secretary of state's website? She feels the law, in enacted, should be consistent to be fair, as well as to avoid confusion. Louise asked why this is even necessary when we have Access to Public Records laws. The board agreed that letters should be sent to our local Representatives Winfield and Chippendale.

The second item pertains to the Maximum Tax Levy, 2013 – H 5271, referred by the House Finance Committee, introduced February 6<sup>th</sup>. This legislation appears to be the same item that did not pass last year and is just being represented. The Chief asked if Kim could see if the RI Tax Collector's Association (RITCA), which she is a member of, is tracking this legislation.

The third pertains to Powers and Duties of Fire Districts, 2013 – H 5176, referred by the House Finance Committee, introduced January 29<sup>th</sup>. Kim said she feels this addition to the tax law may have arisen after the issues going on with the Central Coventry Fire District. She explained that this legislation will provide fire districts with the power to adopt tax classification rates, adopt supplemental taxes and operate under a previous fiscal year's budget under certain circumstances. It would also subject fire districts to audit of accounts and installation of systems. The Chief said the tax rates may be beneficial at some time, but the section regarding audit and installation of systems was something he was questioning. The proposed addition of RIGL § 44-5.2-5 titled Compliance reads, "*Unless otherwise provided, the division of municipal finance in the department of revenue shall monitor fire district compliance with this chapter and issue periodic reports to the general assembly on compliance.*" Does this mean we would have to submit additional periodic reports to the state? Sandy said that the tax classification rates

actually sound anti-business. Ray said, and the board agreed, that this legislation should also be addressed in the letters that will be sent to Representatives Winfield and Chippendale.

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

#### **VI. - Chief's Report:**

As you are all aware long time member Lieutenant Milton Aldrich has passed away. The Gloucester Fire Honor Guard served at his funeral service at the request of his family. The Chief said the Lt. John Falco orchestrated their service at the event and not enough can be said about the wonderful, professional job they did. The service was held during the day, was well attended and was a proper send off. A few donations have been received in his honor. Mrs. Kerry Foster, wife of firefighter Dennis Foster, donated her time to stitch the fire department casket drape that had patches from all of the fire departments Milton was involved with; Harmony, Chepachet, West Gloucester and Smithfield.

An ice rescue drill was conducted by Lt. Falco at the Marion Irons Beach on Snake Hill Road.

On January 23<sup>rd</sup> the Chief met with Ralph Nahigian, Communications Director for North Providence, at the Gloucester Police Department to ask his expertise while going over some radio and dispatching issues. We have been put many hours into investigating the radio communications and tower issues throughout the town.

Gloucester Fire Inspectors met with the Gloucester Building Inspector, Carl Riccio, to go over Fire Code issues involving the installation of emergency back-up generators. The building inspector will be putting together an informational notice, not an ordinance, to assist the general public. Then the Chief will be addressing the issue about the use of generators in residential areas when the Fire Code Board prepares their code amendments in March.

Private Corey White of the Warwick Fire Department came in to instruct a mandatory drill on a new piece of rescue equipment, the King Airway. Additionally, the equipment discussed at our last meeting, a pet O2 mask, has also been purchased and put on the rescue and engine.

The February quarterly meeting of the New England Association of Fire Chiefs (NEAFC) was rescheduled due to the recent blizzard.

During the blizzard, February 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, we put on paid Engine and EMS Crew details to ensure coverage of the district, as a proactive measure. The event proceeded smoothly with 7 runs total during the event including 1 smoke in the building investigation. The Chief will be sending a letter to the Gloucester Highway Director, Gary Trembl, thanking him and his department for their assistance during the storm. Another letter will be sent to the Gloucester Town Council.

In the middle of the month the Chief traveled to Boston, in the capacity of NEAFC President, to meet with Boston Fire Commissioner, Rod Roderick. He will be acting as a Moderator for an event there in November.

While researching Insurance company options for our Insurance Risk Analysis, Kim came up with some vendors through the recent convention of the RI League of Cities & Towns. They are American Fidelity Insurance, Life Plus Insurance Agency, RI Interlocal Risk Management Trust and Segal Company. The Chief was looking for direction from the board, because this is something that we should be doing now, with the upcoming budget right around the corner. Specifically there are some items that the Chief and Kim need answers for that pertain to the

personnel handbook. Ray asked if the Chief had any gauge of the expense. The Chief said that none of the companies had been contacted yet. Sandy asked if there were any other fire districts where we could get recommendations from. The Chief suggested that Kim contact the RITCA and see if she could get any information through that organization. Ray asked who our current insurance broker is. The Chief told him VFIS – Glatfelter Insurance. The Chief said he doesn't have an issue with the property and automobile policies, it is the Accident and Sickness policy. The rates have spiraled out of control.

The Chief said that the RI DEM is activating a new Fire Fighter Property (FFP) program. It is for the acquisition of federal excess property from the Department of Defense and making it available to eligible fire departments "on loan". The equipment is of potentially higher quality that may be available at no cost. The Chief has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the fire department and RI DEM, amongst other applicable forms. Kim said that in addition an official motion must be made in our minutes, authorizing the Chief to enter into an agreement with the RI DEM.

A motion was made by Louise and seconded by Jim to authorize Chief Pearson to enter in to an agreement with the State of Rhode Island, Department of Environmental Management, Division of Forest Environment, for the purpose of acquiring excess federal property under the Department of Defense Fire Fighter Program (FFP) and to provide such additional information needed and required to execute such an agreement. The motion carried unanimously.

There has also been some more crew training going on. Lt. Falco and Pvt. Tom Malott have completed the 2 day course – ICS 300. Lt. Kevin Farley has completed the NFPA 1021 – Fire Officer course. And Deputy Chief Mike Segee has received his NFPA Fire Inspector I – 3 year renewal recertification.

On February 1<sup>st</sup> Pvt. Bob Pierce retired after serving 35 years as a volunteer for Harmony. The Association is planning a surprise retirement party for him on March 9<sup>th</sup> at Chester's. Tickets are available for \$20 each.

The Chief also received a letter from Pvt. Alison Philbrick. Ali is requesting a leave of absence from the department as of March 5<sup>th</sup>, while she attends basic training for the Coast Guard. Jim made a motion to accept Ali's request for a leave of absence. Louise seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. The entire board wished her well!

The Fogarty Grant has been submitted and a grant has been received from the Kilmartin Foundation for \$1,500.

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

#### **VII. – Harmony Fire Department & Improvement Association Report:**

In regards to the exercise room upgrades the Chief has purchased the new scale and a couple of other small items. We should have a quote with the next week or so for the new rowing machine. The air conditioner has been checked and it is OK, so the project should be complete by the end of the next month. The Chief said that the use of the exercise room has really increased too, which is good for the general health of the crew.

Linda reported that, as the Chief said, the Association is planning a surprise retirement party for Bob Pierce on Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at Chester's. Tickets are being sold for \$20 a piece. Bob's

wife Doreen told her there will be approximately 10 people from their immediate family attending. It will be finger food and cocktails, just casual and fun.

At the last Association meeting committees were selected. One is for an Open House they are hoping to have in May. There may be a CPR class in conjunction with the Open House, but they are not sure yet. They will also promote department recruitment at the event. Some discussion followed regarding recruitment.

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

#### **VIII. - Committee Reports:**

- a. Policies & Procedures Manual – Milton, Chair  
Due to Milton's absence the Chief spoke for this committee. He stated that Milton had passed the boiler plate draft of the manual on to Kim and himself for further review. A complete draft was not available for tonight's meeting, but the Chief asked is the board would like sections of the document e-mailed to them for review one at a time until it is complete or if they would prefer to have a hard copy printed for each of them of the entire thing. Ray said he would prefer to wait and get a hard copy and the board agreed. Ray also asked if there has been any input on the document from the crew. The Chief said that it hasn't come to that point yet, since it is not complete. Ray said that they should have time to review it before it becomes a public document at our annual meeting.
- b. Broadband Work Team – Milton & Stephen Kut, Co-Chairs  
Ray mentioned that he will be meeting with Stuart Frieman, RIEDC, this coming Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. So he will bring the board an update at the next meeting.
- c. Property Review Work Team – George & Louise, Co-Chairs  
No new information.
- d. Apparatus Review Work Team – Jim Richards, Chair  
**Work Team: Jim, George, Chief, Deputy Chief Segee, Lt. John Falco & Pvt. George Nichols**  
Jim reported that the work team did an on-site visit to view an apparatus in Temple, NH with American LaFrance company representative, Dave Gaiewski. The department up there was very friendly and receptive to our visit and answered all of our questions. The work team will be having a meeting next month and a road trip to see another vendor's truck will be scheduled. Some discussion followed on the new apparatus in general.

#### **IX. - Old Business:**

- a. Update on RIDOT proposed Roadwork in Harmony  
Ray stated that Route 44 was paved 21 years ago. At this point he feels that we at least need tar. Despite their time frames, we are in need of resurfacing at a minimum to make the roads travelable. Ray asked that when the next letters go out to the elected officials could we ask them what the latest plan is for our section of Route 44 between West Greenville Road and the center of Chepachet. Some discussion followed about plans for and the state of the road in general.
- b. District/Town-Wide Coverage  
The next meeting of the 3 districts, Fire Chiefs and members of their District Board, is

scheduled for March 6<sup>th</sup>. Ray said he would not be able to attend, Jim is already scheduled for a Apparatus Review meeting and Wednesdays are not good for Louise. The Chief said he will check with Milton and George to see if one of them can attend.

Kim asked Ray if the Alex & Ani project should be added to the agenda under Old Business. He said not at this time. It is still in discussion phase. Another meeting needs to be scheduled and he will keep the Chief informed. A brief discussion followed describing the proposed project.

**X. - New Business:**

Ray stated that he has spoken with the Smithfield Fire Chief and he told him that they are putting another rescue on. The number of calls and mutual aid use has just gotten out of control. The Chief said that he had already spoken with him as well.

The Chief said that when he met with the other Gloucester Fire Chiefs recently they talked about a group purchase for the upcoming fiscal year. The item that they discussed is called a Vision System that handles the notifications for public fire alarm systems in the town. The initial system was purchased about 11 years ago through the school system at almost no cost to the fire districts. We would like to purchase the back-up for the system that would have it run in redundancy and bring it into compliance with Fire Code. The total cost for the system is \$32,000 and this cost would be split with Chepachet and West Gloucester, and the school department may also chip in. Ray asked the Chief if he knew of any grants out there for this. The Chief said that he could put in for a 2013 AFG Grant, but we won't know until next week's happenings in Washington if there will even be a grant. He will keep the board posted.

**XI. - Public Input:** No audience.

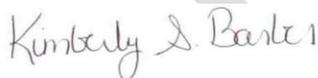
**XII. – Executive Session:** None called

**XIII. – Adjournment:**

Louise made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jim seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. The February meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board was adjourned at **7:54 pm**.

The next meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board is scheduled for **Thursday, 7:00 pm, March 21, 2013** at the Harmony Fire Department.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kimberly S. Barber  
Tax Collector/Clerk