

# 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, January 17, 2013.**

Present: Moderator – Raymond Fogarty, Jr.; Chief Stuart Pearson;  
Treasurer – Sandra Owens; Tax Collector – Kimberly Barber;  
Board Members – Louise Michaels, Milton Huston,  
George Kain & James Richards  
Association Representative – Paul Perreault, Vice President;  
Attorney – Fred Mason, Jr.

Absent:

**I. – Meeting Called to Order: 7:06 pm** by Moderator Fogarty.

**II. - Approval of the minutes from the November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.**

Moderator Fogarty asked the board if there were any discrepancies to note on the minutes from the November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. If there are no corrections, he would like to call for a motion to accept them.

George 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.

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

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

Beginning balance October 1<sup>st</sup> \$612,525.46 and ending balance October 31<sup>st</sup> \$562,597.94. The big payment in October was the insurance, which is under budget.

Beginning balance November 1<sup>st</sup> \$562,597.94 and ending balance November 30<sup>th</sup> \$528,913.50. In November we had the very large building loan payment and the life insurance payment.

Milton made a motion to accept the October and November Treasurer's reports as presented. George seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

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

The taxes receivable balance as of today's date is \$104,230.10. Taxes collected in the month of November totaled \$45,136.31 and in the month of December \$22,461.04.

Third party billing fees collected in the month of November were \$6,415.73 and in the month of December \$10,030.54

The Tax Sale is scheduled for tomorrow morning at 10:00 am. At this time we are down to 4 parcels. Two are land only and two have houses.

Kim brought to the board's attention an issue she had this past week with a disgruntled tax payer whose property had been on the tax sale list. Originally she had received the 90 day notice in October and called to check her balance to pay her account in full. She never expressed any hardship. Kim explained to her at that time that there would be additional fees assessed as the tax sale proceedings continued and further interest would accrue. She additionally told her that she had up until January 17<sup>th</sup> to pay, but if she waited until too close to the sale date payment would need to be made with cash or a certified check. She mailed her payment in last week and Kim received it Monday when she returned to the office. The taxpayer paid the balance as told to her in October. Kim then left her a message to let her know there was still a balance due on the account, but that it had been removed from the tax sale list. The taxpayer returned the call to Kim and was very upset. Kim explained to her that as she had told her in October there were fees associated with the tax sale proceedings and they were set fees, charged to any account associated with the tax sale. They are charged the same across the board and it would not be fair to credit one taxpayers account and not another. These are fees that the district has to pay to a third party and they must be recouped. The taxpayer was not happy with the response, telling Kim that she was never advised of any of that information. Kim then advised her that she had the right to come before the district board at the next meeting and ask for their assistance. She then asked to leave a voicemail for the Chief. The Chief did return her call and pretty much reiterated my answers to her as well as advising her again that the process would be for her to attend the district board meeting this evening to present her grievance because he really has nothing to do with tax collection. Apparently however she has decided not to attend. She had also made the statement during conversation that she intended to contact her attorney about the matter, so Kim thought it was important to advise the board about the issue and seek their advice on the matter.

George told Kim that he thought she handled the situation very well and the board agreed. Further he said that he believes it is actually a courtesy for Kim to send her past due statements. The bill is the bill and is due and payable whether it was received or not, that isn't the case here, but it is the law. Kim had correctly given her the opportunity to come to the district board meeting to plead her case, but it was her choice not to. Ray asked how far in arrears a taxpayer has to be before going on the tax sale list. Kim stated two years. Ray said that she definitely had received plenty of notice and mailings informing her that she had a bill due. Sandy stated that penalties and interest must be charged the same across the board, because if you credit one then you must credit them all, and then no one will pay on time. Ray stated that every taxpayer does have the opportunity to come before the board and plead their case for an exception though. The Chief said that the taxpayer had told him that she would feel intimidated coming before the board. He reassured her that she need not feel that way, but if she would like to generate a letter instead he will present it for her. She declined and said that she would wait for a response from the board. Ray asked what our current interest rate is. Kim replied that it is 12% per annum. Ray said that matches what the town charges. The board asked Kim to send the taxpayer a letter with an account summary as a courtesy. The balance is due and payable.

Kim said the only other item she had to present this evening was her year end payroll accrual items. The Chief has accrued 15 days Sick time and 3 days Vacation time. According to his contract it should be reported annually.

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

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

The last two months as well as the beginning of January the call volume has been high. In the month of November there were 59 calls alone. He wanted to make mention that the crew was very active over the holidays with calls responded to Christmas Eve and early morning; they did a very good job.

HFD Life Member Russell Steere passed away on Christmas day. His wife has also been ill, but is home now recovering.

Members of the Honor Guard attended a special outdoor ceremony at St. Eugene's Church to pay respect to the victims of the tragedy in Newtown, CT. 26 candles were lit and the church bell was rung in their honor.

Lt. John Falco and members of the Honor Guard collected canned goods and donations at Dino's over the holidays. In total they collected 2 large barrels of canned goods and \$154 for the Gloucester Food Pantry.

A Press Release was submitted to the Gloucester Advocate about installing Smoke Alarms.

A walk through of the Iron Mountain facility was set-up by Deputy Chief Segee. This was a different type of drill that was good for the crew to become familiar with how this type of facility operates. A trip is also in the works for the crew to visit the new E911 headquarters over at the new RI State Police barracks in Scituate.

A Christmas get together was held for the crew at the Pinewood Pub. It was attended by the entire crew, except for he believes 2 individuals who were attending class. He said it was nice to see everyone together having a great time!

The Chief met has met with Joe McGovern, Director of Buildings and Grounds for the Gloucester School Department. At this meeting they went over the schools Security Plan for Active Shooters. This was done in the wake of the events in Newtown, CT. He reminded the board that about 5 years ago that he and Matt Floor had been proactive in creating a safety plan for the schools. At that time the plan had involved numbering doors, lockdown plans, creating evacuation routes, etc. So this was just a case of revisiting, updating and improving on that plan. The objective is safety, without interfering with the fire code.

This past week there were 2 league meetings hosted here. One was the Woonasquatucket Valley Firemen's League, coordinated by our delegate Linda Ferragamo. The second was the RI State Firemen's League, coordinated by our delegates Paul Perreault and Billy Forte. Dinners were served at both events.

2 of our crew members, Lt. Falco and Pvt. Tom Malott, are attending a 2 day ICS 300 class. Additionally, Lt. Kevin Farley is taking a 1021 Officership class.

An upcoming event is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Gloucester Soup Cook-Off at the Harmony Library. Kim stated that the Assistant Director Patti Folsom had stopped by the station and that they would like someone from the department to be a judge. The Chief is not available on that date, Saturday February 9<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 – 3:00 pm, so we were wondering if any of the board members would be interested in judging. None of the board members were available, so Kim said she would be willing to volunteer.

The Chief let everyone know that the banquet has been scheduled for April 13<sup>th</sup> at Crystal Lake again this year. He did give his regrets that he will not be able to attend since he will be traveling with his Grandsons over school vacation at that time.

Additionally the Chief let the treasurer know that she was going to start seeing some expenses come through for tires and maintenance on Car 1. George asked how many miles Car 1 had on it now? The Chief replied approximately 38,000.

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

**VII. – Harmony Fire Department & Improvement Association Report:**  
Report presented by Vice President Paul Perreault.

Paul thanked the Chief for the Christmas Party at Pinewood Pub. Everyone had a great time and it was great to see everyone there.

The Tree Lighting was a success again this year. It wasn't as busy as in previous years, but the kids all seemed to have a good time.

The Duty Night program is continuing to run well still. People are showing up for calls and the truck is getting out the door. Ray asked the Chief how this program works exactly. He stated that it is a voluntary program. We ask that crew members sign up for at least one night a week and be available to respond between the hours of 6pm and 7am. They sign up on a calendar and specify what hours they are available, while spreading out people with different qualifications. We ask that there be at a minimum 1 driver and 2 EMT's scheduled each night. For people who work nights we ask them to fill in daytime weekend hours. If someone can't fulfill their committed time slots, they are to contact the deputy and they try to find a replacement for themselves with equivalent skills. Sandy asked if they have to be in the building. The Chief said no, they just have to be able to respond in a reasonable amount of time. If an individual feels as though they cannot respond in a reasonable fashion they can come and stay in the building.

The crew rooms have been remodeled in such a fashion that all of the comforts of home are provided to them. The Association's latest improvements have been in the exercise room. It was just painted last weekend. Ray asked if there was anything that the district could help with the new equipment purchases. Linda said that they would like to replace the bike, as well as the scale and some other small items. The Chief said another one of the items is a Wi Fitness console that could be used with the new flat screen TV that was installed. The Association Treasurer John Detri and given an estimate of \$2,000 for the items needed. The Chief stated that

we do have funds available in our budget line item #61120 – Facility Improvements. Kim said these are the carryover funds from last year’s capital expenses. Ray stated that after the purchases are made, a report should be presented to the district board showing how the funds had been expended.

A motion was made by George to appropriate up to \$2,000.00 towards the purchase of new Gym Equipment for the station. Milton seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

Ray thanked Paul, Linda and Kim Perreault for taking the time to attend the meeting tonight.

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

### VIII. - Committee Reports:

a. Policies & Procedures Manual – Milton, Chair

Milton made some more updates to the draft and brought it to download with Kim today. He said the next step would be to make the draft available for board review at February meeting. Ray stated that it should be reviewed by crew also before the June meeting. Although this is a public document, it applies mainly to the operations side of the department. An on-line pdf version for our website could be made available after review is complete.

b. Broadband Work Team – Milton & Stephen Kut, Co-Chairs

Milton said that the only thing that is pending is the grant we recently applied for. The Chief said that he had received notification that due to the overwhelming response, approximately 4,000 applications were submitted, the awards have been delayed. Ray asked how much we had applied for and the Chief said \$35,000. Ray asked if we had contacted our local elected officials for support and the Chief said he had, but was told there wasn’t much they could do. Ray said that the RI EDC still has money available that will be running out in 2014. He saw Stu Freiman recently and he had stated at that time that he would like to get together with us again. Ray suggested that the Chief forward our grant project to him, to see if perhaps the RI EDC could fund it instead.

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**

The committee has met a couple of more times and they have been putting together a list of items to put on it. The original intent of the truck was more as a heavy rescue truck. Another words to have all of the stuff you would need when responding to a car accident right there. Right now this equipment is spaced out amongst of our other trucks. The Chief came up with an excellent idea and what we are looking at now is putting a small tank and small pump on it, so this truck will actually be carrying water. So this truck would follow the rescue to calls, having water and all of the needed extrication and other equipment available. Ray asked if a lighting system would be on this truck, like the other one we had donated. Jim stated that it was a

consideration, but we have to look at the weight too. We are trying to balance the size vehicle we need now and also what we will need 5-10 years down the road. Some of the crew members have put together a list of what would need to be carried on this vehicle, the size of it and what it weighs. By looking at that we have concluded that we will need a Class 7 vehicle or a Ford F450, which goes up to 19,600 GVW. The next step up would be a Ford F550 or F650 or a 26,000 GVW. The trade off of course would be that the bigger the truck, the higher the cost. The rough estimates we have come up with for the trucks are \$170,000 for the F450 and \$200,000 for the F550. Ray stated that if the trade off was for the functionality of the vehicle he would hate for us to go with the smaller one. Jim also stated that another aspect with having this truck is that it will be the one chasing the rescue, not the bigger engines. This will save wear and tear on them and use less gas. Additionally, anyone who can drive the rescue now could drive this truck too. Jim said that the committee also looked at what was already available throughout the town, to avoid duplication. Some discussion followed about the specifics of the vehicle.

The Chief asked the board if the \$10,000 price tag on the old truck is firm or if it is open to discussion. The feed back he had received is that it is not going to happen. Jim stated that he has had it advertised on his work website Ballard-Mack, which is seen nationally, for over a month and a half and hasn't received one call. A person that the Chief had talked to that is affiliated with the Antique Fire Apparatus Association of RI told him someone in his group bought a similar truck for \$2,700 a few years ago. Ray said he doesn't think we should quibble if we get an offer. George doesn't feel we should give it away though either. He feels we should advertise a little bit more, he will get information to the Chief, and then we will discuss it again next month.

In order to figure out funds available for the truck purchase, Sandy presented figures for general fund year-end balances: 2009 - \$350,627, 2010 - \$339,000, 2011 - \$406,800, 2012 - \$414,642. She stated she would be comfortable transferring \$50,000 towards the purchase of the new piece of apparatus. With this extra \$50,000 we will have approximately \$200,000 available on 7/1/2013.

Milton made the motion to move \$50,000.00 from General Funds to Equipment Funds. Louise seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

Ray also said that our timeline will still give the Chief some time to explore alternate sources of funding, such as grants or private foundations that had expressed interest to assist us in the past. The Chief said that he would apply for the 2013-14 AFG grant for this purpose.

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

- a. Update on RIDOT proposed Roadwork in Harmony  
No new updates
- b. District/Town-wide Coverage -  
Committee meeting postponed until the end of this month or next month.

George had an item that he wanted to discuss. He said he discovered an old law that had stated EMS services are supposed to get \$4 for each ticket issued in their district. He said he would get a little more information on it, but he wanted to know if the Chief could have an RIAFC lobbyist check to see if it is still an active law. The Chief said he would make an inquiry.

**X. - New Business:**

Jim said that since we met last there have been a few stories over the holidays about pets involved in fires. He presented a suggestion for a new piece of equipment, a pet oxygen mask. It is not an expensive item, approximately \$75. The board agreed wholeheartedly that the purchase should be made. They also asked that Jim thank his wife Kacey on their behalf for making the suggestion.

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

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

**XIII. – Adjournment:**

Milton 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 **8:12 pm**.

The next meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board is scheduled for **Thursday, 7:00 pm, February 17, 2013** at the Harmony Fire Department.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kimberly S. Barber  
Tax Collector/Secretary