

HARMONY FIRE DISTRICT

194 Putnam Pike
Glocester, R.I. 02814

The regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board was held at the Harmony Fire Station on **Thursday, May 15, 2014.**

Present: Chief Stuart Pearson; Attorney – Fred Mason, Jr.
Treasurer – Sandra Owens; Tax Collector/Clerk – Kimberly Barber
Board Members –George Kain, Louise Michaels & Raymond Fogarty, Jr.;
Association Representative – Willy Vota, President

Absent: Moderator – Milton Huston, Jr. – excused
Board Member – James Richards – excused

I. – Meeting Called to Order: 7:04 pm by Ray Fogarty who is filling in for Moderator Huston in his absence.

Ray stated that the first order of business should be to call for a vote to appoint himself as replacement for Milton Huston on the Executive Board for the remainder of the year. He will then need to run for election at the Annual meeting to fill the spot for the remainder of Milton's 3 year term.

Louise made the motion and George seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

II. – Approval of the minutes from the March 20th meeting:

Moderator Fogarty asked the board if there were any discrepancies to note on the minutes from the March 20th meeting. The draft had been e-mailed to the board on April 14th. If there are no corrections, he would like to call for a motion to accept them.

Jim had asked Kim to relay an error he spotted on his behalf. The March minutes have Ray listed as attending as a Board Member, but we had not voted him into the position. The board agreed that the wording should be changed, however we have since corrected that oversight at tonight's meeting.

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

III. – Review of Bills:

As voted on at the last meeting this items title has been changed from "Approval of Bills" to "Review of Bills". A check register of bills that have been paid since the last board meeting 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 asked what this was something new, since she had missed the last meeting. Sandy explained that the wording had been changed because it was not really an approval of the bills,

but actually a review of what had already been paid. Louise asked, but what if we have questions on them? Does it matter if we do or not? Sandy said we just cannot delay payments, it really just isn't practical, especially now with the bi-monthly meeting schedule. Louise replied well then maybe it is just a problem with the every other month thing? Sandy said not really, it would still be the same thing. Some things have to be paid in the interim, credit cards bills and such between meetings. Kim said she has always had check signed twice a month. Ray explained with the system we have, bills are approved by the Chief and Kim and signed by both the Treasurer and Moderator, so there shouldn't really be an issue. Louise said that doesn't matter, it means the board doesn't have a chance to say anything either way until after the fact, it would already be a done deal then. Sandy said they would have a chance during the Treasurer's report, approval would really be redundant. The Chief said that the board would have the opportunity at that time though to question why something was getting paid. Ray stated that none of the other boards that he sits on does an approval of bills, we just thought it would be more open, taking it a step further than other organizations do, by having the board review them all. George asked what would happen in the case of the Chief being incapacitated though? It had happened in the past, long ago a painting job was paid for on the secretary's OK and the Moderator and Treasurer didn't know any better. This was long before Kim came on board, but it did happen back then. Sandy said that must go way back. Kim said it is almost impossible to plan for every single case scenario though.

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

Ray stated that it would be easy enough to just switch back to our regular monthly meeting schedule. We were only actually changing a couple of our meeting dates. He said he didn't have any problem going back, as a board member. Louise stated that in her case for example, by error she missed last month's meeting. So now she is about 4 months behind. Sandy agreed saying with everyone's busy business schedules it would probably make more sense to go back. Ray stated with the three members we have here tonight, we do have a quorum. So if someone would like to make a motion we can.

Louise made a motion to make a change in the By-Laws to switch back to our regular monthly meeting schedule. George seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. – Treasurer's Report:

Beginning balance March 1st \$543,784.28 and ending balance March 31st \$528,700.41.

This month there was a journal entry done to move the tax sale expense from the expense account back to the revenue account. These expenses are fees charged to the tax payers, but some are not collected for quite some time. So it was better to move them back to the income account. Otherwise expenses were routine for that month.

Beginning balance April 1st \$528,700.41 and ending balance April 30th \$517,990.64.

Sandy stated that this month you will see that we are way over on the heat and fuel costs. We will discuss that further during the budget portion of the meeting though.

Louise made a motion to accept the March and April Treasurer's reports as presented. George seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

V. – Tax Collector’s Report:

Kim stated that she was not at last month’s meeting because she was sick, so she has quite a few months figures to go over tonight.

The taxes receivable balance as of today’s date is \$83,403.09.

A Tax Collection Analysis spreadsheet has been included in everyone’s folders. Kim said that this is something she likes to review every year at this time. She checks to see if she on track with collections and with the total balance left. 2013 is right on track at 87% of the current year’s tax levy collected. We are consistently between 85-89% collected at this time of year. Ray asked about the remaining 10+ percent uncollected, do we collect it? Kim said yes we always end up collecting 100%, that is why we have tax sales. The other thing that this spreadsheet shows is the percent of the receivable balance that is made up of Prior Years Bills Past Due. She thought it was worth mentioning that since we have switched to Glenn Carlson handling our tax sale there has been an improvement here. We used to be between 40-49%, now that he has been working with us, the last 2 years have been 24 & 30%.

Kim stated that her collections have stayed at the same level and the only thing that she could propose that might help her collections is to accept credit cards. She added that many, many tax payers have asked about paying with their credit cards over the past several years. It could be at literally no expense to the district. No Sandy said there would be 3% charged. Kim said that could be charged to the taxpayer as a convenience fee. Ray asked if this had been brought up at one of her association meetings, where most people now accept credit cards. Kim said yes. The Town of Gloucester even does. In her opinion she said it is becoming a cashless society. Everyone wants to pay everything with their card. She has called Gloucester and Harrisville Fire District and got some input from their collectors. They said that it hasn’t necessarily increased their collections, but increased the rate which it is collected. So the money comes in quicker. Sandy said then you will have to list 2 different tax rates on the bills, if you pay on-line you have to pay 3% more. Kim said no, the taxpayers would just go on-line to make the payment and the fees would be charged to them then and would be transferred electronically. She thinks it may even post directly to the taxpayers account, eliminating that manual step also. George said so they have to go on-line to pay. Kim said yes and there may be a machine to swipe cards at the station too, she’s not sure. Then they would have to do it on-line Sandy said. There would be an additional expense with the terminal and all that kind of thing. The Chief suggested that maybe Kim research it a little bit more. George said he thought we asked her to gather information on this quite a while ago and we had discussed it then. Kim said yes she had. Ray asked if anyone had any recommendations. Sandy stated that she would feel much more comfortable about it if we ran it by our Auditor Geoff Malo. She wanted to make sure our procedures are correct on it. She would feel more comfortable if he reviewed it. Kim stated that she did already have all the information on the program. Ray said if Geoff didn’t come back with any concerns they could vote on it at the next meeting. Louise thought it was a good idea. Kim asked if this vote would be possible at the annual meeting, since her bills would be going out by August 1st. Ray said yes any business can be brought forth for a vote at the annual meeting. Kim said great she would gather the necessary information. Sandy said if there are any taxpayers here they will be able to hear about it too.

Taxes collected in the month of: January \$10,609.24, February \$4,118.32, March \$4,373.87, April \$5,069.75.

Kim said next will be the third party billing figures. We are doing very and should exceed the estimated \$100,000. Third party billing fees collected in the month of: January \$13,035.91, February \$10,994.48, March \$8,716.11, April \$15,628.13. Ray asked if this would be the highest year ever for third party billing. Kim said she knew we did very well last year too, so she wasn't sure. Sandy said she didn't know and she would look and see. Kim said it would be close. Ray asked if they could do a brief comparison to the last few years.

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

VI. – Chief's Report:

Thank you card received from Firefighter for fruit basket sent on behalf of district board when he was out on medical.

Attended Congressional Fire Services Institute in Washington DC. Expenses paid by the NEAFC. Met with RI elected officials & FM Global executives. The FM Global executives have asked the Chief to sit on a committee with them as a fire representative. As for the time involved, it should only be 2-3 meeting per/year.

A Student came in to do some community service hours. He washed all the windows in the station on a Saturday.

A Quote has been received from Motorola for the town wide radio tower repair project. The Chief said he would discuss this item more during our budget meeting.

We had a small issue with the emergency generator. During several test runs the unit was surging then going into trouble mode with the alarm sounding. The governor control and actuator had to be upgraded and a rebuilt starter was installed.

A newer member of the department Private Rick Waterman, who came to use with much experience and qualifications, has been assisting with Fire Marshal duties. He has done some Plan Reviews, Smoke Inspections and an Annual inspection of an apartment complex.

Two members completed Firefighter II certification, Privates Joshua Leary & Amanda Young. Josh is currently away in the Air National Guard for Basic Training and will be back with us in the Fall.

Lieutenant Kevin Farley and Private Cindy Rodriguez attended a STEMI class at RI Hospital last night. This class is to do with heart emergencies.

Captain Dave Plante and Private John Detri did a station tour with the Fogarty School Cub Scouts. Many thank you cards received from the scouts and their leader, the Chief passed them around for the board to see. Willy said the kids had a ball!

Harmony hosted a Woonasquatucket Valley Firemen's League meeting. The Chief thanked Lieutenant Willy Vota for spearheading the meal preparation on such short notice. He did a great job with help from Privates Rick Waterman and Joe Webster.

Some members of our department have received specialized training and are RIT (Rapid Intervention Training) certified. This team would be used on a fire scene in the event a firefighter or firefighters were in trouble inside the structure. They are trained to go into the building and retrieve those firefighters. The team has been asked by the Town of Burrillville to be on first response to them, Harrisville Fire District & the Oakland-Mapleville Fire District, in the event they have a fire. This is a standard thing nowadays. RIT teams are deployed to almost all building fires as a precautionary measure.

Our probationary class just finished last Thursday. This class gets the new people acclimated to our building and procedures. We started with 10 and have lost 2. The next step for these people is to either get their EMT-Basic license and or complete Firefighter I certification within their first year of membership. Willy mentioned that one has already completed the EMT class. The Chief said yes he just has to take the state test now.

The Chief said he has an upcoming meeting with the other Gloucester Fire Chiefs next week.

Also the Gloucester Memorial Day Parade is coming up on Monday May 26th if anyone would like to attend.

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

VII. – Harmony Fire Department & Improvement Association Report:

The board congratulated Willy for being recently elected to the position of President of the Association. There was a round of applause.

Willy announced that the Banquet was coming up on Saturday, May 31st at Thompson Speedway. If anyone wants to buy raffle tickets he has some tonight. Kim also requested RSVP's from any of the board members who had not yet responded.

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

VIII. – Committee Reports:

- a. Broadband Work Team – Milton Huston, Chair
No report presented.

- b. Apparatus Review Work Team – Jim Richards, Chair
Work Team: Jim, George, Chief, Deputy Chief Segee & Capt. John Falco

The chassis and body have been mounted and equipment is now being custom mounted. Captain John Falco and Lieutenant Willy Vota dropped off tools to be mounted at Tri-Star in Pawtucket. The Chief said he expects delivery within 2-3 weeks. Sandy said she will be away and unable to make payment. The Chief said that should not be an issue at all. The Chief also mentioned that the name for the new apparatus would be Squad 2. A brief discussion followed about the apparatus numbering within Gloucester.

- c. Property Review Work Team – George Kain & Louise Michaels, Co-Chairs
Ray stated that there was a handout prepared by George and Louise in everyone's

folder. This item should be held until the budget section is heard.

IX. – Old Business: None

X. – New Business:

a. Budget for Fiscal Year 2014-15

An emergency meeting was called for Thursday, May 22nd at 6:00. The meeting would consist of a public session for a budget hearing and executive sessions for personnel issues and discussion of property review work team findings. Sandy also mentioned that she would not be able to attend the Annual meeting this year since she would be traveling to Italy. Willy requested that Sandy look for Vesper Scooters for him while she's there!!!

Motion made by Louise. Seconded by George. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Canvass/Correct Voter Lists for Annual Election

Completed by Acting Moderator Raymond Fogarty.

c. The Chief said that we have had another item come up that we need to address.

Kim's computer runs on the Windows XP operating system which is now obsolete and no longer supported by Microsoft. This wasn't budgeted for, but we do have funds left in the line item for telephones. We are asking to reappropriate an amount not to exceed \$1,500 from account# 60140 – Telephones to account# 60150 – IT, to purchase a new computer for the Tax Collector/Clerk. The Chief mentioned that we had discussed getting a new Apple, but her tax collection software and our new Image Trend software will not run on a MAC.

Louise made a motion to reappropriate an amount not to exceed \$1,500 from account# 60140 – Telephones to account# 60150 – IT, to purchase a new computer for the Tax Collector/Clerk. George seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

XI. – Public Input: No audience.

XII. – Executive Session: Addressed under the Budget section of New Business.

XIII. – Adjournment:

George made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Louise seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. The May meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board was adjourned at **7:40 pm**.

The next meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board will be an **Emergency Meeting** scheduled for **Thursday, 6:00 pm, May 22, 2014** at the Harmony Fire Station.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kimberly S. Barber
Tax Collector/Clerk