



PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE FIRE DISTRICT #2

20 Woodbridge Street, South Hadley, MA 01075
Tel: (413) 534-5748 - Fax: (413) 517-6054

Minutes of January 12, 2023

Convened: 5:40 p.m.

Adjourned 7:03 p.m.

Present

Prudential Committee Chair: Kenneth LeBlanc

Members: Robert Bak

John Moriarty

Clerk/Treasurer: Barbara Miller

Fire Chief: Todd Calkins

Meeting called to order by Chairman LeBlanc. It was announced that the meeting is being recorded.

Payroll and Vendor Warrants were reviewed by R. Bak and J. Moriarty. Per Sections 57-58 of the Municipal Modernization Act and PC votes of 12/15/2016 and 3/10/2020 warrants were previously approved by K. LeBlanc, PC Chair.

Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of December 8 and 15th of 2022 made by R. Bak seconded by J. Moriarty. Motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Fire and Ambulance Report

Chief Calkins reported one firefighter is out on medical until further notice; adding that he met with Chairman LeBlanc to discuss it earlier in the week. There was a structure fire on Ethan Circle. Chief Calkins thanked Asst. Chief Moriarty, the Mass. State Police and all the mutual aid companies Westover, Granby, Hadley and District 1. There was an investigation that night and into the next day through the following week with insurance companies. Chief stated that we have been approved for the DFS Grant for equipment \$15,000. The S.A.F.E. grant has been awarded but was reduced from previous years, due to our being a District, he is still working, trying to get it increased to prior amounts. Cpt. Moore has begun the paperwork for the AFG Grant. Chief reported that there are a few new Call-FF on the roster. He also reported that the call volume is way up. We were toned for 560 medical calls in 2022 versus 412 in 2021.

PC Chair Discussion Items

By-law Change Request

There was discussion regarding a request to place a warrant article on the May 1, 2023 Annual District Meeting (ADM) warrant, to change the Moderator term from one to three years. There was a brief discussion.

R. Bak made a motion to increase the Moderator term from one to three years, which will be done with an article on the Annual District Meeting warrant. J. Moriarty second. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Employee Handbook and Benefit Package

B. Miller stated that many years ago the Water Dept. created an updated version of the Employee Handbook and Benefit Package with the intent that the PC would go through it making adjustments if necessary and one version would be adopted for the District. However, when she was training with Sandy Selkirk, she was told that there were two policy/employee handbooks, one for Water Dept. and one for PC. She stated that she felt there should be one handbook for the District, with portions attributable to each department. The Water Commissioners have recently updated their Water Department Employee Handbook and Benefit Package and she asked T. Cauley, Water Superintendent, if they would give the PC the opportunity to look at it in an attempt to come up with one comprehensive version. B. Miller will talk to T. Cauley to get a digital copy and send it to R. Bak and Chief Calkins for their review.

Budget Discussion

Deck Project

Chief Calkins stated the FD workforce is 75/25, men/women and there has been discussion in the past regarding the deck being converted to bunk rooms. They have the manpower and only need the funding. Chief will meet with Damian Cote the Building Inspector; K. LeBlanc asked to be told the date and time as he would like to attend the meeting. B. Miller said that it had been mentioned that the carpet in the training room should be done when the bunk rooms were done.

Dispatch Contract

K. LeBlanc stated that the Dispatch contract with Mount Holyoke College is up in June. Chief Calkins provided a breakdown of call volume and stated that it has been going very well. There was discussion regarding how to approach the renewal, understanding that we are appreciative of all that they do. And taking into consideration that, with the dispatch contract, we lost the annual \$20,000 equipment gift MHC previously provided.

Fire Department Preliminary Budget Discussion

K. LeBlanc suggested starting with salaries and wages. B. Miller stated that the Bureau of Labor Statistics cited the Consumer Price Index increased 6.5 percent over the last 12 months and Social Security announced an 8.7 percent increase for 2023. Chief Calkins provided proposed FY24 salaries. K. LeBlanc said he and the Chief met and discussed a 4% increase for the fulltime staff; other than Cpt. Moore who would get 8%. J. Moriarty asked for clarification on the 8%. Chief Calkins explained that he compared the salary to area communities and the Ambulance Director/EMS Coordinator position was below the norm. He added that the position has proven to be huge to the success and control of the ambulance revenue. J. Moriarty said the bookkeeping end of the position and tracking everyone's certifications and keeping track of the ambulance inventory and inspections is huge and he doesn't have any issue with the 8%. R. Bak said that he thinks the position should be compensated for the responsibilities. K. LeBlanc said we are small and we need depth in every position. R. Bak agreed saying in order to keep good people you need to have competitive salaries. K. LeBlanc said he doesn't have any problem with it either. There was discussion regarding contracts. J. Moriarty said the Chief would write a letter making a request that the PC renew his contract and the PC would meet in executive session to vote on it. K. LeBlanc said it should be done for the Chief and the Clerk/Treasurer. There was discussion regarding shift coverage being paid at the same rate as the fulltime since they are expected to perform all the duties of the fulltime position and the on-call pay increasing to \$15/per hour. Chief stated the per-diem is going really well, he provided a monthly breakdown. He said that he would provide a presentation on per-diem at the ADM. Chief requested the per-diem rate be increased to \$23.00. Chief said we are the lowest per-diem per hour rate in the area. He also asked for a \$2 increase to the EMT stipend per medical call for the on-call person, it has been \$28 for many years. There was discussion regarding the benefits of

per-diem employees. B. Miller asked if any of the per-diem employees have complained about the \$20.50 rate. J. Moriarty said he had not heard any complaints and in fact they were impressed when that change happened and they were very willing to step up because of the change. B. Miller said she thinks it is a large increase for a position that was only created last year. Adding that she's seeing dollar signs like crazy and it's only the first step in the budget process. There was discussion regarding the need to see the full proposed budget and comparison to current and prior years. The discussion included reference to prior budget policy of cut, cut, cut. And now we are playing catchup but we don't want a tax rate spike either. There was discussion regarding what drives the cost increase/decrease for OPEB and HCRS. B. Miller provided projected costs for a new server (\$20 to 22 thousand), PC replacements (\$1,500) and laptops (\$2,000), there will also be software costs.

The next Prudential Committee meeting will be Tuesday February 9, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Miller, Treasurer

Minutes approved _____