



## PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE FIRE DISTRICT #2

20 Woodbridge Street, South Hadley, MA 01075

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### Minutes of March 10, 2020

Convened: 5:30

Adjourned 7:05 p.m.

#### Present:

Prudential Committee Chair: James Menard

Members: Kenneth LeBlanc, Robert Bak

South Hadley District #2: Asst. Chief Todd Calkins

Treasurer Barbara Miller

#### Others Present:

Mike O'Neill

John Moriarty

Linda Young

Joe Lajoie

Brian Fay

Collin Mick

Ira Brezinsky

Meeting called to order by Treasurer/Clerk B. Miller. She announced that the meeting is being recorded via video and audio and will be posted on the website.

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

B. Miller welcomed Robert Bak to the Prudential Committee and thanked him for his willingness to serve.

K. LeBlanc made a motion to nominate Jim Menard as Chair. R. Bak second. K LeBlanc and R. Bak voted in favor.

R. Bak made a motion to nominate Ken LeBlanc as Clerk. J. Menard second. J. Menard and R. Bak voted in favor.

K. LeBlanc made a motion to approve the minutes of January 7 and 14 of 2020 as presented. J. Menard second. K. LeBlanc and J. Menard voted in favor.

B. Miller explained the provisions of Section 57-58 of the Municipal Modernization Act.

K. LeBlanc made motion that the new Chair Jim Menard approve the warrants according to . Sections 57-58 of the Municipal Modernization Act previously accepted 12/15/2016. R. Bak second. Motion passed unanimously.

J. Menard stated that M. O'Neill wished to speak on behalf of the full time Firefighters and the Association. M. O'Neill stated that it had to do with the Strong Chief; he asked if he could wait for that discussion to speak.

#### PC Chair Discussion Items

##### Budget

J. Menard provided a brief review of the budget for the benefit of R. Bak.

The PC discussed cost of living increase options and the cost of other employee benefits.

K. LeBlanc made a motion for a 1% COLA increase. R. Bak second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Fire Truck Discussion

J. Menard said he doesn't want to put a fire truck on the tax rate and said that the Fire Chief and firefighters came up with a lease to own option. We could use \$476,000 from the fire vehicle stabilization and the annual payment of roughly \$20,000 can be taken from the MHC gift account which receives \$20,000 annually from the college. This will leave \$100,000 in the stabilization. B. Miller said that the lease payment will be \$24,000. J. Menard said the MHC account will be kept exclusively for this payment so the additional funds in the account will cover the payment amount that exceeds the \$20,000.

K. LeBlanc made a motion to put a fire truck on the Annual District Meeting warrant. Second by R. Bak. Motion passed unanimously.

K. Prough asked if the Stabilization Fund was specific to fire truck purchase. B. Miller explained that there are multiple stabilization accounts, this one was set up for the purchase of fire vehicles but technically the money could be spent on anything the district meeting passes with a 2/3 majority. J. Menard said the PC voted in July to annually add \$65,000 to that account and they listed three items they wanted to try to fund. He stated the amount should be more than they have allocated but there is only so much money. Asst. Chief Calkins said that Engine 2 will be 30 years old in 2027.

#### Strong Chief Discussion

J. Menard stated that at the last meeting they voted to put an article on the warrant to eliminate the Strong Chief Act. Lt. Mike O'Neill made a statement on behalf of the full-time staff in favor of retaining the strong chief. He said going to the weak chief would be devastating to the department. They feel with the strong chief they have protection through the Chief. To keep the strong chief the PC could create policies and procedures, as many other departments have. I. Brezinsky stated that he completely concurs with what was just said. He feels it is important to professionalize everywhere that you can and for elected boards to fulfill their role as policymakers, budget approvers and oversight role for those professionals that are hired. R. Moore agreed with M. O'Neill, he feels it is especially important that everyone be in agreement on every topic on the District meeting warrant. They spoke at this meeting because they wanted the PC to know that they are not in favor of a weak chief. There was discussion regarding what controls the PC could have under strong chief/weak chief and how to work better together. Multiple FF spoke in support of the strong chief and the importance of moving forward together. B. Miller said that she wanted to speak in defense of the \$115,000 loss that J. Menard previously mentioned. She said that she spoke with the auditor and he feels the actual loss is much lower than that. Asst. Chief Calkins restated that he would like a meeting specific to ambulance.

#### Election

There were 371 participants, which was higher than last year and much higher than prior years. It all went very smoothly.

#### Chief Report

Run numbers are up for both Districts and the Districts work seamlessly together. Asst. Chief Calkins met with B. Piquette of Metras Insurance and provided a breakdown of the positions for

the VFIS insurance. Coronavirus update, he met with Sharon Hart and was able to get additional supplies. MHC cancelled classes as did Smith and Amherst. The department is being even more diligent with cleaning etc. Ambulance billing rates for Comstar will stay the same. The TRIAD table went very well at the election. There was a lot of interest in the lock boxes for the houses and several people signed up for the smoke and CO detectors from American Red Cross. He gave permission to Mosier School to add a fire truck ride to school, for one child, as a prize for their BINGO fundraiser. They are coordinating to have a table at the BINGO with stuff for the kids. He expressed how happy they are to have a fire truck put on the District meeting warrant. There was a brief discussion regarding holding an informational meeting before the ADM.

The next Prudential Committee meeting will be Tuesday, March 24, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Miller, Treasurer

Minutes approved \_\_\_\_\_