



PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE FIRE DISTRICT #2

20 Woodbridge Street, South Hadley, MA 01075

Tel: (413) 534-5748 - Fax: (413) 517-6054

February 20, 2018

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

Convened: 6:00 p.m.

Adjourned: 8:20 p.m.

Present: Prudential Committee Chair: Kenneth McKenna

Members: Richard Constant and Robert Lak

South Hadley District #2: Fire Chief Scott Brady

Treasurer Barbara Miller

Others Present:

Mary Beth O'Meara

Hattie Finkel

Brian Fay

Chad Cunningham

Kirsten Therrien

Michael Cote

Mike O'Neill

Michael Bourbeau

Joseph Fernandes

Tracy Whelen

Frank DeToma

Janice DeToma

Patrick Davis

Meeting called to order by Chairman McKenna

Minutes of February 6, 2018, were read and approved as presented. Motion to approve the minutes made by R. Lak, second by R. Constant.; the motion passed unanimously.

Payroll and Vendor Warrants were reviewed by R. Lak and R. Constant. Per Sections 57-58 of the Municipal Modernization Act and PC vote of 12/15/2016 warrants were previously approved by K. McKenna PC Chair.

PC Chair Report and Discussion Items

K. McKenna introduced Mary Beth O'Meara and Hattie Finkel. M. O'Meara stated that she was at the meeting because she thought there would be discussion regarding the Bike Walk Committee meetings and her concerns regarding people trespassing on her property to get to Lithia Springs. R. Constant stated that he would be attending the upcoming Bike Walk Committee meeting and was interested in hearing from the representative from the State. There was discussion regarding other possibilities for access to Lithia Springs. M. O'Meara and H. Finkel thanked the PC for their time and left the meeting.

Budget Discussion

F. DeToma stated that the Water Department budget was pretty much complete, waiting on PC for their decision regarding staff compensation.

R. Constant suggested reviewing the budget line by line. No need to discuss insurance and employee benefits page. He questioned the increase to Admin. Misc on page 2. B. Miller responded that the line was overspent in FY2017 and FY2018 therefore she increased the budget for FY2019. R. Constant asked the Treasurer if she was comfortable with the \$10,000 contribution

to the OPEB account. F. DeToma stated that WD was contributing the same amount. B. Miller responded that she was comfortable. The contribution had been doubled in FY2018 and now was being double again in FY2019. She further explained that at the previous meeting she had overstated the required contribution amount if they were to fully fund. The newest report indicated \$164,000 annual contribution but she had not realized that the current amount being paid for retiree insurance is deducted from that amount which makes the actual amount \$55,200. She stated that once Chapter 32B Section 20 is adopted at the Annual Meeting she would work with Parker Elmore of Odyssey and develop a long-term plan which will include increases to annual contributions with much larger contributions in the future once the building bond is paid in eight years and additional increases after Hampshire County Retirement System is fully funded (approximately 2034). B. Miller stated that the Water Superintendent had asked her if the contributions would be apportioned based on the number of employees in each department, she indicated that she thought it a reasonable request and would address it when working on the long-term plan with P. Elmore.

R. Constant asked Chief Brady to explain the increase in line 5415 Veh/Equip Repair & Maint. Chief Brady explained that all vehicles had received the state inspection this week and three vehicles failed. R-6 is now out of service due to brake lines. K. McKenna said they should consider taking that vehicle off the road. Chief agreed and said the increase to line 5415 is due to older vehicles requiring additional repairs. R. Constant requested explanation of line 5417. Chief Brady stated that all three inch supply hoses, some as much as 30 years old, need replacing at a cost of \$14,000, there are two gas meters; the backup are not serviceable, he plans to purchase one \$2,000; we need one meter on A1 and one in service in the station. Both thermal imaging cameras (TIC) are over ten years old, the screens are getting dark and the technology is outdated. K. McKenna agreed. Chief Brady continued stating the two cold water rescue suits are damaged and need replacing (suspect the neoprene is gone) cost \$750 each. We also need new low manpower blitzfire nozzle and smooth bore nozzles. New situations related to construction and fire load require 2 ½ inch attack line tactics. Chief Brady stated we can refurbish three existing nozzles \$1,200. Chief Brady added that \$1,200 was included for hand tools and reminded the PC that he had explained, at a previous meeting, the need for bunker gear and SCBA bottles in the next several years at a cost of \$18,000 per year. The plan is to use the MHC equipment annual gift monies. Chief Brady explained that everything in the previous list could be paid for with the combination of Line 5417, the existing MHC gift account funds of \$27,000 and the future MHC annual gift amount of \$20,000. K. McKenna stated that his recommendation will be to use some MHC gift account funds for the new ambulance he further stated that in total there is \$91,000 for equipment as follows:

Fire Line 5415 - \$15,000

Fire Line 5417 - \$12,200

Amb Line 5432 - \$9,000

Amb Line 5441 - \$8,000

MHC currently in gift account - \$27,000

MHC gift amount this year - \$20,000

K. McKenna stated that he feels that is too much. R. Lak asked if line 5415 Veh/Equip repair& maint was for purchases, Chief Brady responded that it is only for repairs and maintenance.

R. Constant questioned the significant increase to line 5418 Dues and Professional Expenses. Chief Brady responded that nearly \$3,000 was spent from that account in FY2017 and to date FY2018 has incurred \$1,490 caused in part by increases to association dues. R. Constant Line 5419 Uniforms is up \$600? Chief Brady explained the additional is for on-call uniforms. K. McKenna asked if it was for dress uniforms, Chief Brady responded that it was not for dress uniforms; it is for work uniforms. Chief further responded that he spends some of the chief allowance on t-shirts and set up fees for screen printing and embroidery.

R. Constant questioned line 5421 Diesel being increased even though it has come in under budget in the past. Chief Brady explained that he based the increase on diesel futures. R. Constant asked that it be reduced to \$1,500. K. McKenna questioned the increase to the computer line 5422 between FY17 and FY18 and to the request for FY19. Chief Brady said it included the Emergency Reporting System (ERS) which has proven to save 8-10-man hours per month. R. Constant asked about the increase to the cell phone line 5424 and asked if we were buying cell phones or reimbursing. Chief Brady explained that the full-time people received reimbursement of a portion of the cost for using personal cellphones for work. He stated that we now require them to have eDispatch on their phones which links directly into ERS; they are using their phones more and he felt they should be compensated. Asst. Chief Calkins added that they also use their cell phones to remotely answer the station phones. K. McKenna asked what the \$8,500 in the training line 5426 was used for. Chief stated that they purchase books and other training materials such as the Essentials Book at \$90 a copy and EMS at \$150, he mentioned that he would also like to offer more on-line training options. There was a question regarding the 75% increase to the communications line 5429. Chief Brady stated that the radios used by the on-call people are business class radios (T. Whelen held up her radio) they are not weather resistant or heat resistant and cost five to six hundred dollars apiece. The department is currently experimenting with a Kenwood radio the costs \$824 and can be used in the rain or on scene at a fire; there are radios up to \$1,250 each but the hope is that the Kenwoods will perform well at a much lower cost. Asst. Chief Calkins stated that the radio T. Whelan is carrying right now, if taken into a fire, would likely stop working and without the radio, if she goes down, we could not find her.

R. Lak stated that it is essential to look at the bottom line more so than each of the individual lines. R. Constant addressed Chief Brady stating that he made good arguments for all of the increases but stated that he was still concerned with 5% increases every year. Chief Brady responded that it was his responsibility to ensure mission readiness this budget achieves that. He pointed out that the Fire Dept. has turned back in to Free Cash \$298,000 over the past five years, he asked the Treasurer what Free Cash had been used for in that time. B. Miller responded that the bond payment has historically been paid from Free Cash, the \$10,000 OPEB contribution this year was coming from Free Cash and the PC/FD portions of the new server and copier/printer came from Free Cash also the contributions to the Vehicle Stabilization fund were primarily from Free Cash. R. Lak stated that the only objection he has is using the bonus of Free Cash to justify a higher budget, we should budget based on need. Chief Brady stated that he needs to budget for what if scenarios. For example the mountain fire in the past used the full force for eleven days. If someone gets injured and is out for weeks or months and there is a cost, we are fortunate that often times vacation and sick time are covered by our on-call people and their rate is much lower than OT rates would be. R. Constant said that there is always a push and pull between budgeting conservatively and the inclination to spend because the money is there. Chief Brady responded, not under his watch. R. Lak asked what would happen in the scenario of a big mountain fire which caused us to run out of money, wouldn't we call a Special District Meeting. B. Miller asked where the money would come from because you can't add to the taxes mid-year, then answered her own question by stating the money would come from the left over Free Cash or else a 2/3 vote could take money from one of the stabilization accounts. K. McKenna stated it's about the safety of the people, that's our job. R. Lak said if we're truly looking at \$1,000 here and a \$1,000 there then we could look at cutting the stipends, as you all are aware, he said, he'd never liked them.

F. DeToma stated that there are, low tax, low service communities, but if we want services that's the price we pay. As WC and PC it's our job to sell that to the taxpayers. Chief Brady stated that he is just trying to present a budget that will do what we need to do.

Chief Brady pointed out that he can no longer use fire prevention funds to pay for details etc. B. Miller explained that the previous practice of treating the fire prevention funds as receipts reserved for appropriation was inappropriate and after discussion with the auditors it was determined that fire prevention revenue would be taken in as general fund receipts and fire prevention expenditures treated as part of the fire department budget.

R. Constant began the review of the ambulance budget asking about the increase to line 5431 fuel. Chief Brady responded that again he had used the expectation of fuel futures in estimating the budget. B. Miller mentioned that there was talk of a 25 cent per gallon federal tax increase. R. Constant requested the line be reduced from \$6,050 to \$4,500. K. McKenna questioned the increase in line 5104 EMT pay per call. Chief Brady stated that nearly half the budgeted funds are spent and we are past the slow season with nearly half the fiscal year still ahead he felt an increase for the upcoming year was warranted. R. Constant asked if the slow season was due to the summer when the college students are gone. Chief Brady acknowledged that to be the correct interpretation. K. McKenna noted line 5433 Amb- disposable supplies expenditures at less than half so far this year and about 75% of the budget the prior year. Chief Brady explained that due to the affiliation agreement we are mandated to purchase some of the supplies thru Holyoke Hospital and he isn't sure what some of those cost may be. These supplies are expensive for example, EpiPen's cost \$600 apiece and we are required to have two adult and two child on each ambulance plus a backup supply, AED pads are \$100 apiece and then there are the batteries and things expire and must be replaced. There was a question regarding line 5434, to which, Chief Brady responded that Outside Service is Glen Davis a retired paramedic that reviews our reports for continuous quality improvement (CQI) we started using his services because we had weak medical control. A new medical control doctor and EMS coordinator have improved CQI so it is possible that our consultant may not be needed in the future. K. McKenna questioned the increase to ALS intercepts line 5437. Chief Brady replied that District 1 increased the rate for ALS intercepts. K. McKenna asked about line 5441 ambulance equipment. Chief Brady responded that we never know what could go on this older equipment. K. McKenna asked if there are any cuts that Chief could make to help out the PC. Chief Brady replied that we are like any municipality that is burdened with maintaining their infrastructure; this equipment is our infrastructure.

K. McKenna stated that one of his major concerns is the future and the OPEB and retirement costs. He affirmed that we are fortunate to have very well trained, dedicated individuals working for us and he wants to make sure we can continue to provide the benefits we currently provide. R. Constant stated that when the District first took on ambulance services the dispatch costs were \$15,000 a year paid to District 1. The current cost of dispatching at \$100,000 is an expense that we never counted on. K. McKenna stated that we are having conversations with MHC regarding dispatching. He emphasized that it is only in the conversation stage.

There was a discussion regarding the number of personnel we have in the fire department. The fire chief stated that we currently have 6 full time and 30 on call. R. Constant questioned the number, he thought we had 43. Chief Brady explained that there are a number of non-participating on call people. Non-participation might be due to illness, injury or some other reason. The national standard is fifty on-call firefighters on the roster to get five for a call. Our average is 10-12 for a call and if it is a serious call we will get 30. Chief Brady further stated that other departments often experience antipathy between the on-call and fulltime people, but there is none of that here; they feel supported by each other.

R. Constant stated that he agrees with everything the chief has said and that he [the Chief] made good arguments for everything. Further stating that if we have the opportunity to work with

MHC for dispatching he hopes there will be cooperation. Chief Brady stated that his only concern is that his people feel safe. R. Lak stated that he would imagine we'll make certain all needs of the department are met. K. McKenna added that absolutely and the Chief will be involved.

R. Constant stated that the COLA was presented in the budget at 3% he asked if the WC had voted. F. DeToma stated that they generally wait to hear what the PC votes adding that they are not required to do the same percentage but they have in the past. The WC salary line is down due to T. Calkins who went to the Fire Depart. Being replaced by a new person at a reduced wage. R. Constant stated that he is not comfortable with 3% and would only support a 1.5% COLA increase. R. Lak asked what the CPI percent was. B. Miller responded that the SS number was 2.1 in November and the CPI January to January came in at 2.5%. R. Lak stated that it is a dangerous job and he doesn't think anyone ever gets paid enough to do this job. There was discussion regarding health insurance costs and OPEB liability. F. DeToma suggested a future consideration may be 50/50 for new hires. R. Lak stated that his personal insurance situation has changed drastically; four years ago his company sponsored insurance had \$10 co-pay and no deductible and now he has a \$12,200 deductible. F. DeToma asked if he [Lak] was saying that our current insurance benefits are generous. R. Lak stated that he would like to see a match of the CPI at about 2%.

T. Calkins brought back up the discussion about dispatching stating that he hopes MHC comes out ok but he thinks we need to go to the Town with real numbers. R. Constant reiterated that it is a big expense. K. McKenna stated that our legal counsel and insurance agent have expressed concerns. Chief Brady stated that the solution exists but it will never happen: There are two PCAPs, Town of Granby and Town of South Hadley, they are linked and provide back up to each other. They are each equipped for two dispatchers and have only one working the shift. If they put both people in one room and alternate locations (Granby/South Hadley) they could service both towns and both districts, but there are the obstacles of different unions and different municipalities; the problem will be with the politics.

K. McKenna asked that the conversation return to the COLA. R. Lak stated that he did not think 2% was unreasonable taking into consideration the overall budget the difference between 1.5% and 2% is roughly \$4,000 if the elected officials gave up their stipends that would be \$3,000. R. Constant stated that if it were unanimous he would go to 2% but he did not want to go higher than that adding that he has a problem with the budget increasing 5% every year.

R. Constant made a motion to approve a 2% COLA increase, R. Lak seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Constant stated that there would be a meeting the following day with himself, M. Wozniak, Chief Authier and Chief Brady to discuss areas of cooperation between the two Districts. R. Lak questioned if this was in lieu of the merger talk. R. Constant stated that it was. Chief Brady said that he [Wozniak] is a very nice guy, stating that he has met with him several times.

K. McKenna stated that he met with MHC yesterday, and provided copies of an MOU (attached) for review. There was discussion of the MOU. T. Calkins reminded the PC that there had been opposition to the final bullet of the MOU at the District Meeting when the fire truck was on the warrant asking if we could request it be removed. K. McKenna said he could make that request qualifying that by stating that he had no idea if MHC would agree to remove it. In the mean time he asked Chief Brady to start getting quotes. K. McKenna stated that he would like to consider purchasing the ambulance without a bond. He proposed using monies from the MHC gift account, ambulance revenues reserved for appropriation and take the remaining amount needed

from the FD Vehicle Replacement Stabilization account, stating that the District would save \$26,000 in interest and could pay back the stabilization account with ambulance receipts. B. Miller stated that the auditor is not a fan of the co-mingling of funds but further stated that stabilization funds could be used for any lawful purpose if approved by 2/3 vote at a District meeting. T. Calkins stated that he disagreed with the FD Vehicle Stabilization funds being used to purchase an ambulance and he did not feel it would pass at District meeting.

- The next regular District meeting will be March 6, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Miller, Treasurer

Minutes approved _____