

Franklin Township Fire District No. 1
Meeting Minutes
July 14, 2020

Meeting opened with the Flag Salute

The 231st meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Franklin Township Fire District No. 1, Township of Franklin, County of Hunterdon, was called to order by President C. Patkochis at 6:30 PM.

ANNOUNCEMENT: “This meeting is convened in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice of the meeting has been provided by furnishing announcement thereof, to the *Hunterdon County Democrat*, and/or *The Express Times*, and/or the *Star Ledger*, and/or the *Courier News*, by posting notice in the Municipal Building and by filing a notice with the Municipal Clerk.”

ROLL CALL: President C. Patkochis, present; Treasurer G. Reichert, present; Secretary P. Enea III, present; Vice President, E. Kolibas, present; Assistant Secretary, H. Laine, present.

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MONTH: A Motion to accept the minutes of the June 9, 2020 meeting as submitted with the spelling of Mr. Polachek’s name corrected by E. Kolibas, was made by G. Reichert, seconded by P. Enea. All in favor, Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT: G. Reichert advised of a total income of \$ 128,419.76, which included the payment received from Franklin Township, and bills totaling \$20,940.96 for the period of June 10, 2020 through July 14, 2020.

Motion to pay the bills for the period of June 10, 2020 through July 14, 2020 was made by G. Reichert, seconded by P. Enea. Roll call vote, G. Reichert, aye; P. Enea, aye; E. Kolibas, aye; H. Laine, aye; C. Patkochis, abstains. Motion carried.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS:

C. Patkochis called on G. Reichert to update the Board on the handbook and any outstanding non-life hazards.

G. Reichert reported that a list has been generated of non-life hazards for the Fire Marshal to look into to see that they are in compliance. On the matter of the handbook, G. Reichert reported that he believes it is complete or nearly complete and should be ready by the end of the month to be distributed to the Fire Company. C. Patkochis inquired if the Fire Marshal will be visiting these businesses or how he would be contacting them. G. Reichert advised that he believed R. Dziminski was going to be contacting them individually.

C. Patkochis asked E. Kolibas to advise the Board on the status of the Re-call Policy.

E. Kolibas advised that he had emailed the Board with his suggested revisions to the Re-call Policy. He asked if any member of the Board had any input or questions regarding the proposed changes. H. Laine advised that he had questions regarding compensation for re-called employees and wording specific to response areas being confusing/conflicting in the flow of the policy. G. Reichert also inquired as to the authority authorizing the re-call. C. Patkochis advised that he felt that the re-call should only be authorized by the Chief, Deputy Chief, Officer in Charge or Fire District Board and EMS wording should be removed completely to avoid issues including billing. R. Dziminski inquired if the hours of

compensation for a re-call situation would include travel time. The Board agreed that the wording should reflect that compensation would begin at the time the request to re-call is received and include travel time with a two hour minimum for any re-call. E. Kolibas will make the discussed revisions and send out a revised copy prior to the August meeting.

C. Patkochis asked P. Enea to advise the Board on the Election process for this year. P. Enea advised that this is the first year that we will be participating in the November General Election day. Anyone interested in running for the Board of Fire Commissioners needs to have a completed petition submitted to the County Clerk's Office by July 27, 2020. There will be one open seat. The petition must be signed by 10 Franklin Township residents and must be registered to vote. C. Patkochis added that the Board of Commissioner's seat would be the only item regarding the Franklin Township Fire District No. 1 on the ballot as the budget is under the 2% increase allowed without requiring voter approval.

C. Patkochis inquired from H. Laine if he had anything to report on the policies. H. Laine advised that he has a copy of the policies but is unsure if they are complete and the most current. H. Laine was advised by C. Patkochis that he should get in touch with B. Crampton to go over them. H. Laine advised that he would do so.

C. Patkochis advised that the District is looking into going to twice monthly payroll which would essentially double the amount we are presently paying for payroll services to approximately \$109.00 per month. C. Patkochis said that he believes the employees would appreciate this and the logistics of getting the checks signed between meetings. Direct deposit would eliminate the necessity of signing checks. C. Patkochis asked for any input from the Board regarding this and there was no objection to looking into this further.

C. Patkochis advised on the hiring of Andrew Buterbaugh Per Diem Fire Fighter/EMT, extensive background as Jersey City Fire Fighter and was previously the Fire Marshal for Bernards Township. He will be paid at the rate of \$16.00 per hour as FF/EMT and \$ 18.00 for Fire Inspections. A copy of his resume was distributed. All background checks with the exception of the County have been completed and are clear. Due to the closure of the County this will not be completed anytime soon.

P. Enea made a Motion to hire Andrew Buterbaugh FF/EMT, seconded by H. Laine. All in favor, Motion carried.

C. Patkochis reported that we need to purchase 175' of 5" hose for Tender 2 at a cost of up to \$ 1500.00 from the Fire Store. G. Reichert made a Motion to make this purchase, seconded by P. Enea. All in favor, Motion carried.

FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT: C. Patkochis read the report for the month of June that included 15 Inspections, 13 Smoke Certifications, 1 Re-inspection, 0 Permits and 0 Complaints. The report advised that Commercial Inspections have resumed with PPE being worn and contact with staff being limited. All outstanding fines have been paid. The Fire Marshal is working on new businesses in the township. The Fire Marshal has also prepared 5 new and/or updates to current ordinances that he would like to have submitted to Franklin Township for approval. These include fee increases, resetting of fire alarms, interference with Fire Department Operations and Fire Department Connections at Walmart Plaza, etc., and C. Patkochis asked that G. Reichert and E. Kolibas review these prior to submission to the Township. C. Patkochis noted that there was a tremendous increase in the number of inspections this month, meaning that houses in the area are selling. G. Reichert inquired if the Verizon fines were paid. It was reported that they were paid by a management company. Regarding 363 Pittstown Rd., the fine was paid without incident.

QUAKERTOWN FIRE COMPANY CHIEF'S REPORT: D. Desaulniers gave the report for the month of June, reporting 60 incidents. During the month of June members resumed in person meetings and training in engine company operations, rural water supply operations, “right front seat” training and rope rescue training, which was put to use two weeks later.

The Executive board members interviewed 3 candidates for the QFC per diem position, specifically to cover weekends. Several candidates are FF/EMTs and asked whether they would be allowed to participate in firefighting activities. These employees would greatly reduce the response times to emergencies in QFC response areas.

D. Desaulniers would like to recognize G. Bunting and R. Nallamala as they were key in assisting QFC volunteers in a rope rescue call that took place on July 4th that was almost identical to the training held just two weeks before. Because of their knowledge and advanced training, the methods used resulted in a successful and timely extrication of the patient. It also became apparent that QFC is lacking in some of the necessary equipment needed for these types of rescues in the future. The QFC is requesting the District purchase 4 Class 2 type harnesses for which prices would need to be obtained. D. Desaulniers also questioned whether billing for these rescue service would be done by the District and if not would the QFC be able to bill either through the ambulance billing company. If it cannot be billed through these avenues, the QFC would like to work on billing for technical rescue incidents.

C. Patkochis advised that he feels that rescue-type calls should be handled/billed through QFC as these calls are not Fire District related. Insurance companies are becoming more and more reluctant to pay claims that have been submitted related to motor vehicle accidents, etc. for fire services. C. Patkochis advised that if the fire company wants to attempt to bill that would be up to them to pursue.

Lastly, D. Desaulniers inquired if the District would replace the medical items and supplies removed from District apparatus by District staff that had expired. These medical supplies, medical bags and AEDs that were for use by and for the District Staff and volunteers. C. Patkochis advised D. Desaulniers to present the District with a list of the items and cost to replace and the District will decide whether to replace or reimburse the QFC for the equipment. D. Desaulniers will either make a list or have someone make a list to present to the District.

QUAKERTOWN FIRE COMPANY PRESIDENT'S REPORT: J. Nieliwodski advised that the parking lot paving project was completed in June. Primary Elections were held with the cooperation and patience of the staff and District employees, it went off without any problems. General maintenance continues. Air filters are being replaced on a monthly basis throughout the summer months.

OLD BUSINESS: C. Patkochis reported that all hose, ladders and pumps have been serviced and returned to service. The TNT tools have all been serviced.

Per diem employee surveys have been received and need to be reviewed and discussed, perhaps at the next meeting. C. Patkochis did indicate that in almost all of the surveys received, the chief complaint is cleaning up after the volunteers.

NEW BUSINESS: C. Patkochis advised that 5 new nametags for turnout gear need to be purchased at a cost of approximately \$ 250.00, 4 for District employees and one for a QFC member. To be purchased through the Fire Store.

C. Patkochis brought up the issue of whether the District should require an employee to self-quarantine for a period of time after returning from a State on the Department of Health list. A lengthy discussion was had between members of the Board and QFC personnel present with insight into how it could directly

affect not just the health and wellbeing of employees and membership, but also ability to staff for calls for service. D. Strange advised that at this time there is nothing in writing for QFC but feels whatever is decided should be mirrored by the District. G. Reichert advised that in the corporate setting, for example, if there is a trip or vacation to a State on the list, you stay home and self-quarantine. D. Strange advised his place of employment requires that masks be worn by anyone inside the building after returning from a State on the list. D. Desaulniers indicated that the self-quarantine is recommended but not required by the Department of Health. C. Patkochis advised that the issue puts the District in direct line for liability if someone becomes sick. E. Kolibas agreed that the District could be risk if an employee or member were to become ill after someone knowingly does not self-quarantine after travel. C. Patkochis added that this policy needs to be done sooner rather than later, before the next meeting if possible, so that people are aware prior to making travel or vacation plans.

G. Reichert advised that he has concerns regarding Box Alarms related specifically with frequent calls for service into Delaware Township for wires down and other calls like that where they should be able to respond, especially evenings and weekends. Is there any recourse, financially or otherwise? D. Desaulniers advised that if the District would like to discuss it, it would be with the Chief of Sergeantsville Fire Co. Box Alarms are between 6am to 6pm and 6pm to 6am every day, so there is no difference in alerting between weekdays and weekends. D. Desaulniers added that a report could easily be generated to reveal true numbers but feels that it is not that many calls. D. Strange indicated that the Chief of Sergeantsville had been approached by another agency with this same concern and it ended with alerting being changed. D. Strange said he does not feel that the number of calls for service is worth jeopardizing the good relationship with have with Sergeantsville Fire Co. G. Reichert advised that he now has a better understanding and appreciated the input. G. Reichert agrees at this point that it's not necessary to make any changes.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business a Motion was made to adjourn at 7:18 PM by G. Reichert, seconded by P. Enea. All in favor, Motion carried

Respectfully submitted,

Elise Ennis

Charles Patkochis, President