

**Franklin Township Fire District No. 1**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
August 11, 2020

Meeting opened with the Flag Salute

The 232nd 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 July 14, 2020 meeting was made by G. Reichert, seconded by E. Kolibas. All in favor, Motion carried.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** G. Reichert advised of a total income of \$284.49 and bills totaling \$30,298.87 for the period July 15, 2020 through August 11, 2020.

Motion to pay the bills for the period of July 15, 2020 through August 11, 2020 was made by P. Enea, seconded by G. Reichert. Roll call vote, G. Reichert, aye; P. Enea, aye; E. Kolibas, aye; H. Laine, aye; C. Patkochis, abstains. Motion carried.

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS:**

G. Reichert advised that he had made notes and suggestions to the Fire Marshal regarding the proposed changes and new Ordinances that the Fire Marshal would like to submit to the Township for approval. He had no new information on status of Non-Life Hazards, but does believe the Fire Marshal is making every effort to get this done.

E. Kolibas updated the Board on the Re-Call Policy. He has made the suggested changes from the last meeting and submitted a final draft for the Board to review and approve based on those changes.

G. Reichert made a Motion to approve the Re-Call Policy, seconded by H. Laine. Roll call vote, G. Reichert, aye; P. Enea, aye; E. Kolibas, aye; H. Laine, aye; C. Patkochis, aye. Motion carried.

H. Laine advised that he met with B. Crampton regarding policies and updating the Policy Manual. H. Laine indicated that there is work to be done as there are many overlaps and a lot of policies that need to be aligned with current procedures. Will continue to work on it.

C. Patkochis reported regarding maintenance on equipment and vehicles. All have been brought up to date with an additional expenditure of \$ 1900.00 on the Rescue for the turbo to be replaced and the tailpipe rebuilt. Additionally, the 5” hose was supposed to be delivered, but as of 3PM it had not been delivered. B. Patkochis asked what the status of the repairs to the 4 gauges/valves leaking on Tender 2, whether it was worth the cost of fixing. C. Patkochis advised that we would need to get a price.

C. Patkochis would also like to recognize the QFC for their efforts during Hurricane Isaias last week.

**FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT:** Not Available. G. Reichert did advise that he had seen R. Dziminski over the past month while he was out doing inspections, etc. He wanted to recognize that R. Dziminski acted in a professional and responsible manner both interpersonally and while driving back to the office, considerate of the traffic laws. He felt this was a refreshing and good example of what we want to see of our employees.

**QUAKERTOWN FIRE COMPANY CHIEF'S REPORT:** D. Desaulniers reported 53 incidents in the month of July. In person training continues as well as meetings following state guidelines. Duty crews are conducting training several nights a week that include engine company operations and driver training. Cleaning and organizing of the station continue.

D. Desaulniers advised that the QFC has hired 2 Fire Fighter EMTs and are awaiting the background and medical clearance to hire a third. An offer of employment has been extended based on successful completion. This is being done in an effort to fill gaps in coverage on the weekends and where there are openings in the schedule.

D. Desaulniers and J. Nieliwodski met with G. Reichert and P. Enea to discuss ways the QFC and District could work more effectively together to share costs, etc.

Additionally, D. Desaulniers inquired if the District would be interested in a demonstration, based on recent discussion to create and update the policy handbook, in a demonstration with a document management company called PowerDMS. This program would allow online access to the current handbook as well as new policies, policy changes, for example, to be in one place and then when changes or updates are made, each member would receive notification and be required to read and sign off electronically. D. Desaulniers feels this would help in the sharing of information with all members more effectively as well as accountability of all members.

C. Patkochis advised that he and B. Crampton had attended a demonstration from this company back in the winter and the cost is \$5800 per year for this program, reoccurring. C. Patkochis indicated that only the twelve District employees are the responsibility of the District and was this something that the Commissioners wanted to pursue cost-wise. P. Enea suggested that all of the QFC members technically fall under the District as we insure them. B. Patkochis inquired regarding the handbook and how the District planned on distributing and maintaining it. G. Reichert advised that it would be put out electronically to the membership. B. Patkochis had several questions regarding access to and securing of the document, for example, on a fire scene to access a policy. He added that there were members that felt that a similar program could be created in Google Docs for free but more information would be needed to complete the process. PowerDMS is an application that could be placed on a member's phone and policies accessed easily electronically and also be secure. J. Nieliwodski added that these would be read-only documents, changed only by certain people with dates of changes easily accessible. D. Desaulniers added that he feels the demonstration would be helpful to the right people who may be able to create a program for less money. H. Laine asked for clarification that the program would provide accountability and modernization. B. Patkochis said that at this point we work off of paper copies with little or no document security. B. Patkochis advised that having Standard Operating Guidelines available would be helpful as well. By opening the program in PowerDMS the member would be acknowledging receipt of the policy, eliminating the need to chase people down to read and sign off. Many examples for the use of this program were discussed. D. Desaulniers advised the demonstration is free. E. Kolibas feels that a document management system of some type would be beneficial and researching one, or many vendors would be the way to go. G. Reichert advised that he would attend or if there is a website, or webinar

available. B. Patkochis will forward the information on PowerDMS to H. Laine as he is updating the policies.

**QUAKERTOWN FIRE COMPANY PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** J. Nieliwodski gave the following report. A meeting was held between himself, D. Desaulniers, G. Reichert and P. Enea on August 1, 2020 to review year to date, general staffing concerns, potential synergies and the QFC EMS Career Members for weekend coverage. Octoberfest as been canceled, unfortunately, but in lieu of it, a drive thru BBQ is scheduled for August 16<sup>th</sup> with delivery to Franklin Township Seniors.

Additionally, the QFC would like to present three new QFC Career Members: Andrew Rudd, Darryl Higgins and Sean Gilmore as EMTs. The QFC is asking for permission for these employees to ride fire apparatus. G. Reichert wanted to clarify that during the meeting of August 1, 2020, there was discussion about insurance coverage, levels of insurance for volunteers and paid staff as well as discussion about QFC potentially hiring for coverage, however, no names were presented at that time. The concept for paid weekend staff for EMS coverage was discussed but that would all be the responsibility of the QFC. C. Patkochis advised that we have received no paperwork on any of the prospective new hires by the QFC. B. Patkochis asked for clarification on the other EMTs and whether the District has a file for them. C. Patkochis advised that there is a file for everyone. B. Patkochis advised that it is a work in progress as the QFC cannot continue to operate without weekend coverage and this is the solution they came up with. The discussion has been taking place since December of 2019. They need coverage for ambulances, finding the correct way to do it is the issue. G. Reichert expressed concerned that we need to stick to a procedure of vetting each employee and this is not being done with these new hires. J. Nieliwodski admitted that the application process has had problems in the past but assured the board that those concerns have been addressed and that applications, resumes, backgrounds etc. are being done for each of these new people. G. Reichert advised that the Board does have concerns. B. Patkochis advised that he understands the Board's concerns and assured the Board that they are not being issued turnout gear or riding fire apparatus. The QFC was attempting to gather information on the insurance situation, payroll as well as billing and it is all happening rather quickly due to the staffing shortages. G. Reichert acknowledged the QFC in their efforts to come up with a solution to the staffing issues but more thought and procedural guidelines need to be in place prior to putting their plans for staffing into motion.

After much discussion involving QFC members in attendance, C. Patkochis proposed a Special Meeting for August 25, 2020 at 7PM with the entire Board and the QFC Executive Board and Line Officers. A list of questions from the Board will be distributed that will need to be answered before any decisions are made. Citing one issue of a Budget for 2021 that needs to be prepared with this information in mind, both entities need to have input. The Board cannot operate without this information. A presentation from the QFC is welcomed. This meeting will be advertised as a Special Meeting with Executive Session on Personnel Matters.

Additionally, B. Patkochis advised the Board that the QFC is interested in the purchase of a Pierce Quint that is for sale by Upper Makefield Fire. It would be "part of a package" involving the liquidating of apparatus including the Squad, Tender 1 and the Tower Ladder and budget for the next two years to purchase a new tender. The price for the Quint is \$450,000. C. Patkochis advised that the District does not have the money. B. Patkochis advised that is why apparatus would need to be sold. B. Patkochis advised that the Quint is in perfect condition. He has reached out to them as well as C. Vallat contacting the Chief and is waiting to hear back but thinks it is worth looking into.

**OLD BUSINESS:** N/A

**NEW BUSINESS:**

C. Patkochis asked for a Motion to hold the Special Meeting on August 25, 2020 at 7:00 PM to discuss Personnel Matters. A list of questions will be distributed to the QFC.

G. Reichert made the motion, seconded by P. Enea. All in favor, Motion carried.

B. Patkochis inquired the amount of money remaining in the equipment budget and if there were fund available to purchase equipment for Technical Rescue Operations, for water or high angle rescues as there have been two in the past month with members using their own equipment. He asked that the District consider using some of the funds to purchase two dry suits. There was a short discussion on whether this falls under the District's budgetary responsibility.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business a Motion was made to adjourn at 7:12 PM by G. Reichert, seconded by P. Enea. All in favor, Motion carried

Respectfully submitted,

---

Elise Ennis

---

Charles Patkochis, President