

**Board of Fire Commissioners
Special Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 18, 2021
7:00 pm**

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1. **Call to Order** - Rick Ives, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. (19:01 hours).

Attendance: Rick Ives; Lou Brodeur; Patrick Gauthier; Michael Podzaline; Jeff Otto; Felix Ramos arrived at 7:05 p.m. James Soler was absent.

Others Present – Jim Warren, East Brooklyn Fire Chief; S. Breen, Mortlake Fire Chief, arrived at 7:02 p.m.; Sandra Brodeur; David Lee; Bill Skeine.

2. **Approve Minutes**
 - a. **Regular Meeting of January 13, 2021**

Motion was made by L. Brodeur to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 13, 2021. Second by J. Otto.

Discussion:

- Correction noted by J. Otto: Mr. Otto would like the Minutes to reflect that he was unable to participate for most of that meeting due to technical difficulties.

Motion to approve, with the noted correction, carried unanimously by voice vote (5-0-0).

3. **Public Comment** – None.

Mr. Ives tabled Agenda Items 4 and 5 as the focus of the Special Meeting is Budget discussion.

4. **Equipment Discussion** - No discussion at this time (see below between Agenda Items 6 and 7).

5. **Department Discussion**
 - a. **Recruitment** – No discussion.
 - b. **Retention** - No discussion.
 - c. **Paid Staff** - No discussion.

6. Financial Reports Discussion (see below following discussion regarding the replacement for Mortlake's ET-190).

a. Budget Discussion

J. Warren presented the proposed 2021/2022 Operating Budget for East Brooklyn:

- Zero percent increase – Total \$106,000: Operating Expenses \$89,730; Safety and Capital Equipment \$16,270.
- They are not sure what the insurance premiums will be.

Mr. Ives requested that he be e-mailed an explanation regarding the Capital.

Mr. Otto asked about estimated insurance cost and property upkeep (\$8,250):

- Insurance was based on what they were billed this year. Mr. Ives stated that he expects insurance to go up, but he has not received the renewal yet.
- Mr. Warren explained that property upkeep is preventative maintenance (under contract) on the doors, generator and air conditioning units.

S. Breen presented the proposed 2021/2022 Operating Budget for Mortlake:

- Zero percent increase – Total \$122,940.
- They went through line by line and made adjustments based on what their spending trends have been.
- They made a best guess estimate regarding increase in insurance cost.
- Mr. Breen explained about IT fees. They budgeted \$1,200 for Internet Services. There is an increase in what they do online and there are expenses due to it being cloud-based now.

Mr. Ives asked about the equipment line:

- Mr. Breen explained that equipment expenses and equipment maintenance stayed the same.

Mr. Otto asked about the following: #1 - The increase in audit and accounting services; #2 - About building maintenance (if there are particular projects); #3 - About the Eversource loan entry; #4 - \$2,000 expected expense under Legal Fees; #5 - \$3,260 Professional Fees; #6 – utilities for garbage; #7 – Still requesting \$30,775 for safety equipment?

- #1 - Mr. Breen explained that they requested a more, in-depth audit this year. They changed Treasurers this year.
- #2 - Mr. Breen explained that there are no major projects for this coming year, just routine basic maintenance and they have a typical punch list of items.
- #3 – Mr. Breen explained that in 2018, they had done an upgrade to an LED lighting system. He said that, hopefully, with the savings in their electric bills, they equal out.

- #4 – Mr. Breen explained that they are researching the capabilities and possibilities of what they can do with the station for renovations to be sure that there are appropriate facilities for paid firefighters (if it comes to that point).
Mr. Otto stated that he feels that this is a worthwhile thing to investigate.
- #5 – Mr. Brodeur explained that it was for hose and ladder testing. Mr. Breen explained that they had to do hose testing twice within a budget year and so it was reduced now that they are back on cycle.
- #6 – Mr. Breen explained that Willi Waste has increased their fees significantly. He said that they have been under budget on that item for quite a while.
- #7 – Mr. Breen stated that there is no change and that it has been the same amount for many years.

Motion was made by J. Otto that the Budget Requests for both Fire Departments be approved for this coming year. Second by F. Ramos. No discussion.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote (6-0-0).

At this time, there was discussion (Agenda Item #4) regarding the new truck to replace Mortlake's ET-190 (their main attack truck which is a 1995):

- Mr. Ives would like to have an idea of final specifications.
Mr. Breen explained that they have received prices from four manufacturers, but they are still finalizing (they are trying to get prices on trucks with comparable features). He has not asked for or received competitive bids as of this time. He said that it is from \$740,000 and up for what they are looking at for the truck and equipment. He explained that he felt that the number that they had put in the Capital Budget was a little low (as he had explained a couple of months ago). He explained that they wanted to have a range (\$650,000 - \$850,000) to be sure that they are in the right ballpark before putting it out for a formal bid process.
Mr. Breen will e-mail drawings and basic specs received from the manufacturers to the Board of Fire Commissioners.
Mr. Breen explained that, in the end, they will have a truck very similar to the one that they now have, but with some additional capabilities. They are anticipating having a truck that is due to go out of service with the hose tender (at the end of its life) and to have a truck with capabilities to take up where that one leaves off. It would be a truck that carries 1,000 gallons of water, 2,000 gallon-per-minute pump, six-man cab, the capacity to carry approximately 1,500 feet of large-diameter hose, one hose reel, cross lays (not currently on their ET).
Regarding value engineering to lower the cost of the vehicle, Mr. Breen explained that they have not gotten to that point yet. They are making sure that they are comparing apples to apples at this time. He said that it is going to come down to what the Department wants vs. the funding that's available.
Mr. Ives stated that with a true bid process, if the low bid is not taken, there has to be a reason not to. Mr. Breen doesn't see this as a problem.
Capital is scheduled to go to the Board of Finance on April 21, 2021. Mr. Breen feels that he can be ready for that date.

There was discussion. Mr. Breen explained that they would like to get the 2000 gallon-per-minute pump vs. a 1500 gallon-per-minute pump, but they could scale back to the 1500, if needed.

Mr. Ives feels that there should be a meeting of the Fire Commissioners to ask questions about the specs, once all have had a chance to review them, and weigh in on it before it goes to Capital.

Mr. Otto commented regarding Financials (Agenda Item #6) - Mr. Otto referred to the Board of Finance meeting of February 17, 2021, in which comments had been made regarding the quarterly financial reports for the fourth quarter for 2020:

- The Board of Finance likes the detail shown in Mortlake's reports and would like to see more detail in East Brooklyn's reports.
- The Chart of Accounts, agreed upon between the Fire Departments and a previous Finance Director, is not present in Mortlake's report. They would like those account numbers to be used.
- Safety Equipment Budget in the reports for both Departments need to show more detail.
- East Brooklyn's report shows a \$500 expenditure for a radio. Radio expenses should come out of the Safety Equipment Budget.

Mr. Otto will send an e-mail summarizing the above to both Departments.

Mr. Ives offered to have the Finance Director contact the Fire Departments to answer questions regarding Chart of Accounts.

7. Other Business

- Mr. Otto commented that the Board of Fire Commissioners needs to have an accurate report of how many responders have been vaccinated against COVID-19. Discussion ensued as to whether this information can be required. Mr. Ives stated that names are not necessary, just the number. Mr. Otto stated that they can answer one of three ways: yes; no; or, I don't wish to report. Mr. Breen stated that he asked those that have been vaccinated to voluntarily provide documentation to the Fire Department.
- Mr. Gauthier asked about insurance certificates. Mr. Ives will provide them.
- Mr. Warren commented, regarding Capital, that this is their third year on the lease for air packs.
- Mr. Otto will e-mail copies of the Emergency Calls Report for January 2021 to those who want it.
- Mr. Breen gave an update on their ambulance which was dropped off the lift when it was in for warranty work in late January. This caused a significant amount of damage. They are working with the repair shop and with the insurance company and with Eastford Fire Rescue. The Department made a claim with the insurance company to ensure that the process moves forward expediently. Everyone has been cooperative at this point. There are concerns about frame damage/body mount damage. A frame shop will laser measure it. He anticipates, if there is no further damage found, that the ambulance will be back in service within three or four weeks.

8. Public Comment – None.

9. Next Meeting – March 10, 2021 (Mortlake). Most likely the meeting will be held virtually.

10. Adjourn

Motion was made by J. Otto to adjourn at 7:53 p.m. (19:53 hours). Second by M. Podzalne. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote (6-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault

Recording Secretary

***PLEASE NOTE: Meetings to continue to be held via WebEx until they are able to be held in person at the Fire Stations.**