

Board of Fire Commissioners

Special Meeting

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

7:00 pm via Zoom &

Community Center

31 Tiffany Street, Brooklyn, CT

To join this meeting, follow the below instructions:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88417693055?pwd=alh6K1NkellZL1lLcHJC�klqV3pWQT09>

Meeting ID: 884 1769 3055

Passcode: 438618

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MINUTES

1. **Call to Order** – Michael Podzaline, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. (19:04 hours).

2. **Attendance:** Michael Podzaline; Austin Tanner, First Selectman, Leo Berube; R. David Lee, Board of Finance Liaison; (all present in person). James Soler was present via Zoom. David Costa resigned.

Others Present (in person) – Joe Voccio, Selectman; J.S. Perreault, Recording Secretary.

There were two additional people present in the audience: Bill Skene and Amy Genna.

Present via Zoom – There were six people present via Zoom: Bill Green; Jenn Nemeth; Kayla Burgess; Carrie Juhasz-Horton; Sandra Brodeur; John; and one unidentified person.

3. Update and discussion on East Brooklyn Fire Department

M. Podzaline gave an update that David Costa had resigned from the Board of Fire Commissioners as well as from the East Brooklyn Fire Department. He explained that, due to resignations, he and Mr. Tanner had met with the remaining Members of the East Brooklyn Fire Department and Mortlake regarding the status of fire service in Town. He said that an individual has stepped up to replace the role of Chief Pepin.

Mr. Lee commented that there was a meeting of the Board of Selectmen where there was discussion regarding an interim Chief who would expect to become the Chief permanently. He feels that this conversation should have taken place with the Board of

Fire Commissioners first. He said that there was a post on Facebook that applications were being accepted. He does not know how the application process is going.

Mr. Podzalne stated that things have changed since the discussion at the Selectmen's meeting and he said, for the Record, that Bill Skene, who is a phenomenal asset to the Town, is willing to take over the role of Chief in East Brooklyn (to be appointed tomorrow night). Mr. Podzalne explained that Mr. Skene will not resolve the existing major problems such as daytime response. The goal of consolidation is still moving forward with the two-year goal.

Mr. Tanner spoke about how they are making sure that there is coverage for the Town with people responding. He feels that we are okay for now. Mr. Podzalne explained that there was a safety net already in place and he spoke of how he had been told that Chief Breen and Chief Pepin had brought the two Departments together better than it had ever been in the past. Therefore, Mortlake was still responding even though there was a vacuum of leadership at East Brooklyn FD.

Mr. Podzalne stated that he hopes to get a representative from East Brooklyn for the BoFC. Mr. Tanner is working on this. There are also vacancies for Citizen Members.

There was discussion regarding merging the two Departments. Mr. Berube voiced concern regarding that he feels that it would be a lot easier if the District situation and the lawsuits were taken care of first. There was agreement expressed and Mr. Tanner stated that they are working on some things that may help which will be discussed in the Executive Session, maybe make the District non-functional.

4. Public Comment

- **Bill Green** asked about the consolidation.
Mr. Tanner and Mr. Podzalne gave an explanation that both Departments are in agreement with consolidation and spoke about the benefits of it.
- **Jenn Nemeth** gave a reminder that, during the Executive Session, there should be no potential negotiations without the Attorneys present.
- **Carrie Juhasz-Horton** stated that she is glad that there is a new Chief in place and that there were no calls that went unanswered during the time when there was no Chief. She hopes for more movement toward resolution between Mr. Costa and Mr. Provost as discussed at the Selectmen's meeting.
Ms. Juhasz-Horton suggested consulting a CPA because East Brooklyn Fire Department will lose its 501C3 status. She voiced concern about the liability that the Town would be taking on with the two Departments merging.

5. Executive Session – Possible Negotiations

Motion was made by R.D. Lee to enter into Executive Session, corresponding with the Agenda, at 7:23 p.m.

Second by M. Podzalne.

There was discussion regarding who would be included.

Included in Executive Session: Austin Tanner; Michael Podzalne; Leo Berube; R. David Lee; James Solar (via Zoom); Joe Voccio; Amy Genna, Public Member; William Skene, Incoming Chief at East Brooklyn Fire Department.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote (5-0-0).

Executive Session ended at 8:17 p.m.

A statement was made by Michael Podzalne clarifying that the Executive Session was in no way regarding the ongoing lawsuit between the Ice Box and the Brooklyn Fire District/East Brooklyn Fire Department.

6. Adjournment

Motion was made by L. Berube to adjourn at 8:18 p.m. (20:18 hours).

Second by R.D. Lee.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote (5-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault

Recording Secretary