

**Board of Fire Commissioners
Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 14, 2018
7:30 pm Mortlake Fire Department**

- 1. Call to Order** **Call to Order:** First Selectman, Richard Ives called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. (19:30 hours).

Attendance: Rick Ives; Lou Brodeur; Patrick Gauthier; Jeff Otto.
James Soler was absent with notice. Felix Ramos was absent.

Others Present – Stephen Breen, Mortlake Fire Chief; Jim Warren, East Brooklyn Fire Chief; Sandra Brodeur; John Livernoche, East Brooklyn Fire Department.

- 2. Approve Minutes of Special Meeting of January 10, 2018**

Motion was made by J. Otto to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 10, 2018, with the following correction:

- Page 2, last paragraph, second sentence, should read as follows: Mr. Brodeur explained that the extra cost was due to burying the LP gas tank.

Second by L. Brodeur. Motion carried unanimously (4-0-0).

- 3. Public Comment** – None.

Motion was made by L. Brodeur to add budget discussion to the Agenda. Second by P. Gauthier.
Motion carried unanimously (4-0-0).

- 4. Equipment Discussion**

S. Breen had no comment. L. Brodeur stated that everything is operational.

- 5. Department Discussion**

- a. Recruitment**

P. Gauthier started discussion regarding the firemen's pension because he said there is a line item (Retirement Program) in the Town's budget that makes it look like the Fire Departments get \$100,000.00 every year. Mr. Ives stated that there are people that are being paid retirement. Mr. Otto explained that if the fire departments were to propose that additional funds be provided for recruitment or retention, and it were approved by both the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Board of Finance, it could be titled differently.

J. Warren asked about the tax abatement program that other towns have implemented. Mr. Ives stated that the Town has not been officially asked yet. Discussion ensued. S. Breen stated that it would be worthwhile looking into the pros and cons and he feels that it would be a good tool for both recruitment and retention. Before moving forward, J. Otto suggested that information be gathered from other towns that have had programs in use for several years to determine if having such a program helped with recruitment/retention.

b. Retention – See above.

6. Financial Reports Discussion

J. Otto asked questions about the Mortlake quarterly report that will be going to the Board of Finance for review next Wednesday regarding a large number of unbudgeted expense items: audit; bank fee; alarm system; sewer charges; disposal charges; equipment expense; gasoline; and radios.

S. Breen explained that a lot of the expenditure items that do not show a budget for were included in other categories (which now have been broken out further). For example, gas was all under vehicle fuel and is now broken out to gas and diesel. He explained that it coincided with the new chart of accounts. Mr. Breen and Sandra Brodeur explained how each of the items fell under other categories. Mr. Otto was satisfied with their answers and stated that he assumes that it will be remedied for the new budget. Mr. Brodeur and Mr. Breen agreed that it would be.

There was discussion regarding radios which, Mr. Otto explained, were intended to be included under the Capital Program. It was explained that it is more expensive these days to swap radios between vehicles and the need to hire out to do it as the wiring is now more complicated.

There was discussion regarding expenses relating to wages, taxes and payroll. S. Breen and Sandra Brodeur explained that the clerk that was hired to handle ambulance scheduling and ambulance-related expenses also takes care of a lot of the reporting for the fire department and does some fire department functions as well, so they shifted a portion of the expense to the fire department. Mr. Otto stated that a policy item like this should have been brought before the Board of Fire Commissioners for discussion. Mr. Gauthier agreed and stated that there should be consistency. Mr. Otto stated that the labor issue is different than sharing heat/light and he said that seeing labor expenses on a volunteer fire department budget was surprising.

Budget Discussions:

Both, Mortlake Fire Department and the East Brooklyn Fire Department provided copies of their proposed budgets for the 2018/2019 Fiscal Year.

a. East Brooklyn Fire Department:

J. Warren stated that there is no increase and that they are looking to get a new truck this year. Their Capital was spent on the new air packs. They are all set with everything else. He asked if it is known yet if there will be an increase in insurance costs.

J. Otto stated that he and Mr. Ives had met with VFIS and reviewed the elements of their package policy against the current EVIC policy. The review was generally favorable for VFIS, however, the coverages are not the same and cost has not been determined yet. Mr. Otto explained that if they use the current policy parameters to write a proposal, it would not be correct because of vehicle valuations, total disability amounts and building coverages. VFIS will be coming back and discussions will begin regarding these items, but it will be difficult. Mr. Ives explained that a placeholder number could be used for insurance. Mr. Ives does not recommend working with Wilcox and Reynolds any longer. However, McNeil could have another agent. Mr. Ives suggests speaking with VFIS and possibly another agent from McNeil using the same values. Mr. Otto stated that the change in coverage could be characterized as Professional Service. Discussion continued.

J. Otto stated, regarding the East Brooklyn proposal, that there was no change in funding, but there may be some changes with insurance. He feels that, since they have a higher number in the insurance line item than last year, even if there is an incremental change, they can probably handle it.

Motion was made by J. Otto to approve the proposed 2018/2019 Budget, as presented by the East Brooklyn Fire Department, for the purpose of moving it on to the Board of Finance for discussion. He explained that the overall financial situation with the Town may require that changes be made. Second by L. Brodeur. Motion carried unanimously (4-0-0).

There was discussion regarding Capital. J. Otto stated that he feels East Brooklyn's proposal for apparatus is a generous one and is based on apparatus that has been around Town for a long time and it is something that the Board of Fire Commissioners should support, but they could be asked to make it run another year or two.

b. Mortlake Fire Department:

S. Breen explained that they spent a lot of time reviewing last year's budget and made adjustments as educated as they possibly could and it adds up to significantly more than what was budgeted for 2017/2018. He said that they need to pay close attention to expenses moving forward. They will do everything that they can to hold to \$112,150.00

J. Otto asked about the equipment repair budget. Mr. Breen explained that, with the change in officers/staff, there are a number of expenses that they know will be coming up (such as tire issues with ET-290). He said that if they take care of some of the expenses this year, he feels they may be able to hold it there. Sandra Brodeur explained that, for the 2017/2018 budget, equipment and equipment repairs were together and now they are broken apart (some expenses replacing with LED lights, power washer).

J. Otto asked about a \$1,000.00 legal fee entry. S. Breen stated that there had been discussion regarding paid fire staff and he was anticipating the need to obtain legal advice. Mr. Otto advised that the employment of paid staff fire fighters is a major policy shift that would need every aspect to be discussed by the Board of Fire Commissioners.

There was discussion regarding water and sewer numbers. Sandra Brodeur explained that part is paid by the ambulance. There was discussion regarding fuel costs. Mr. Otto explained that, under the Superintendent, they will have access to the numbers and how it was calculated.

Mr. Otto noted that labor costs (wages, payroll services, tax expense) represent 50 percent of the actual projected cost. Mr. Breen stated yes.

Motion was made by J. Otto to approve the proposed 2018/2019 Budget, as presented by the Mortlake Fire Department, for the purpose of moving it on to the Board of Finance for discussion. He explained that the overall financial situation with the Town may require that changes be made. Second by R. Ives. Motion carried unanimously (4-0-0).

J. Otto reviewed Capital Funding. Not proposing any Capital Funding for the upcoming year. However, in the following year, they will be asking for \$77,000.00. L. Brodeur explained that they had put I \$50,000.00 next year for the replacement of ET-190 and it will probably keep getting pushed back. The truck is at a point where they need to spend money on it. There was discussion regarding putting it on the schedule to be replaced (2021). L. Brodeur explained that a 5-year plan had been requested. Mr. Ives stated that a Capital Meeting may not be held until March.

7. Other Business – None.

8. Public Comment – None.

9. Next Meeting – March 14, 2018, at East Brooklyn Fire Department

10. Adjourn

Motion was made by J. Otto to adjourn at 8:21 p.m. (20:21 hours). Second by L. Brodeur. Motion carried unanimously (4-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault
Recording Secretary