

FD Paid Staff Sub-Committee
Special Meeting
Wednesday, May 11, 2022
6:00 pm via Zoom & In Person
Clifford B. Green Meeting Center
Suite 24, 69 South Main Street, Brooklyn CT

To join this meeting, follow the below instructions:

Join Zoom Meeting

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MINUTES

- 1. Call to Order** – Michael Podzalne, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. (18:07 hours).

Attendance: Michael Podzalne, Chairman; Lou Brodeur, Selectman; Joe Voccio, Selectman; Steve Breen, Mortlake Fire Chief; Brian Pepin, East Brooklyn Fire Chief (all present in person).
Felix Ramos was absent with notice. Austin Tanner, First Selectman, was absent.

Also Present – J.S. Perreault, Recording Secretary (in person).

Audience (in person) – David Lee, Board of Finance; Gil Maiato; Leo Berube (arrived at 6:48 p.m.).

Via Zoom – None.

- 2. Approve Minutes**
a. Special Meeting of April 13, 2022

Motion was made by L. Brodeur to approve the Minutes of the Special Meeting of April 13, 2022, as presented.
Second by J. Voccio. No discussion.
Motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).

- 3. Public Comment** – None.

- 4. Report from Fire Chiefs**

Chief Pepin:

- He and Chief Breen spent about four hours at the Transfer Station on Earth Day handing out their pamphlets (copies were provided at this meeting). No new members were recruited at this point, but they have other things in the works.
- He spoke about the joint application for both Departments. They got good feedback. Kudos to Christine for all her work on this!

- The Chiefs feel that if one Department gets a new member, they both have a new member.

Chief Breen:

- He said that they had received positive feedback from those they spoke with on Earth Day at the Transfer Station. It was good PR.
- 2,500 pamphlets were printed. He is looking into doing a bulk mailing of them. He will leave some in the Town Clerk's Office tomorrow.
- Both Departments now have put in place 24/7 automatic dispatch for any fire-related incident or MVA (motor vehicle accident) in Town. This is working out very well.
- They also put in place protocol to have Health Departments dispatched for EMS response and R-1 response (cardiac and respiratory arrests).

5. Discussion & possible action on volunteer tax abatement program

Michael Podzalone presented his revise of the draft, which was originally submitted by David Lee (copies were provided at this meeting). He explained that he worked on breaking down level of qualification/level of service while trying to keep it as simple as possible. He added a provision for those who cannot perform their duties or meet the eligibility criteria due to a Department-related injury. He asked for feedback.

Chief Breen explained about and provided sheets showing the percentage of calls (included medical calls) responded to by Members for the last six months of 2021 (copies were provided at this meeting). He feels that anyone making over ten percent of the calls would step up to make the proposed twenty percent needed as a qualification. There was discussion about percentage of calls. There was agreement expressed that 20 percent be maintained for nine of the twelve months. Chief Pepin stated that his breakdown covers the beginning of the year through May 9th and all of his active members have made over 20 percent for those five months.

There was discussion regarding the difference between interior vs. exterior tiers. East Brooklyn has 4 or 5 that are interior qualified and Mortlake has 8-12 that are interior qualified. Interior Firefighter is certified to a minimum of Firefighter 1 which includes medical.

There was discussion regarding the need for all members to be certified in something (e.g. CPR and traffic incident management as a bare minimum).

Mr. Podzalone stated that he would like to get this to the Selectmen over the next month or two. Need to finalize wording, definition of Interior Firefighter, and specify the number of months needed to maintain the 20 percent.

Mr. Voccio suggested considering the notion of "good standing" (e.g. if someone has past-due taxes, rather than making them ineligible for the benefit, that the benefit would be applied to the past-due amount first).

Mr. Lee suggested researching whether the Town has existing language that is already applicable to other tax abatements that would be sufficient.

6. Discussion & possible action on volunteer compensation program

Mr. Podzalone stated that he did not have any new information regarding the compensation program at this time.

7. Discussion on long-term paid staffing strategies: fire & ambulance

Chief Breen explained that Vin-Tech was not filling their paid staff, even during the day (due to a lack of manpower). He met with Vin-Tech at the beginning of May. They are now being more pro-active in drawing their employees in from other locations to be certain that we will be staffed 12 hours a day. We have been fully staffed since that meeting (12 hours/day, 7 days/week). On July 1st they will be increasing the pay rate for EMT's to \$18.50/hour. Their goal is to get the rate to \$20/hour over the next two years to attract more personnel. Also, beginning July 1st, their Friday and Saturday coverage from 6 p.m. – midnight

will grow to also cover Thursday nights and Sunday nights. So, Thursday through Sunday will be staffed 18 hours per day with paid staff (the other three days are paid staffed 12 hours per day).

A follow-up meeting with Vin-Tech has been scheduled for early June and he intends to meet with them regularly to ensure that they are continuing to move down that path. There was discussion. Chief Breen explained that there is incentive for volunteers to pick up a shift through the stipend program.

Mr. Podzalne stated that the long-term goal is to have zero dropped calls.

There was discussion regarding the possible future need to have a paid administrator in place to keep the management closer to home. There is a lot to keep track of.

For the next meeting, Mr. Podzalne will create a set of questions for the Chiefs and the Selectmen to determine what their strategic goals and concerns are.

8. Discussion on Next Steps to Proceed

See discussions above.

9. Next meeting schedule

Mr. Podzalne suggested and there was agreement for having bi-monthly meetings, beginning July 13th (no meeting in June).

10. Public Comment

David Lee stated agreement with Mr. Voccio regarding defining “Interior Firefighter” for the tax abatement program. He voiced concern for those not certified, but still provide value to the organization and should get something for it. There needs to be more discussion on how to quantify it.

Mr. Lee stated that he feels there is value in the third-party vendor concept, if managed properly. We need to continue with it as long as we can because the alternative could be pretty costly to the Town.

11. Adjourn

Motion was made by S. Breen to adjourn at 6:52 p.m.

Second by L. Brodeur. No discussion.

Motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault
Recording Secretary