

**Suite 24, 69 South Main Street, Brooklyn, CT**

(See Agenda Item 7. Other, a. Election of Chair)

#### 4. Equipment Discussion

Both Fire Chiefs, S. Breen and B. Pepin stated that everything is running. There was no further discussion.

#### 5. Department Discussion

##### a. Recruitment

**S. Breen** stated that they recently held Mortlake's annual election of officers and they have laid out their goals for the year, one being that they plan to work on recruitment.

**B. Pepin** noted the importance of recruitment and retention and he stated that East Brooklyn will be working hard on those items. His goal is to roll out of the firehouse with a full truck on almost every run. He said that East Brooklyn and Mortlake will be doing some training together.

##### b. Retention – See above.

##### c. Paid Staff – Subcommittee Update

**M. Podzalne, Chair of the FD Paid Staff Subcommittee**, reported that their first meeting (February 1<sup>st</sup>) was successful and priorities were set. There was discussion regarding that the second meeting date/time of the Subcommittee may need to be moved due a possible location conflict.

D. Lee commented that he had attended the meeting and that one answer does not fit everything.

#### 6. Financial Reports Discussion

##### a. Budget Discussion

**B. Pepin** presented East Brooklyn's proposed budget, noting a modest increase. Copies of the proposed budget for East Brooklyn, for the fiscal year 2022 / 2023, were provided at the meeting. Also provided were two sheets entitled: *East Brooklyn Fire Department Fire & Safety Equipment Replacement Program Safety & Capital Equipment Plan – Account 57391*; and *Town of Brooklyn 5-Year Capital Funding Program East Brooklyn Fire Department*.

**P. Gauthier** explained about the increases in insurance (\$1,400), waste disposal (\$60) and gasoline (\$400). Mr. Gauthier also discussed Safety & Capital. He explained that, since he has been with the Department, East Brooklyn has been getting \$16,270 per year (for at least 15 years) to cover the replacement cost for all of the products listed on the document provided. He explained that last year, they looked at what they actually have, what the real prices were, and what they believe would be the replacement costs. There was discussion regarding the following: SCBA Packs (had 15 and now have 10, but prices have greatly increased); SCBA Bottles (had 30 and now have 15); Hose; Radios; PPE; and fundraising. S. Breen explained that Mortlake has not gone through their list as East Brooklyn has. Mr. Breen explained that each year, you have to decide what you need to spend the money on and, even though the number of units may have gone down, the cost continues to go up. Discussion continued. Mr. Lee stated that the Town has never asked for an accounting of how the money is spent. Mr. Gauthier stated that the Departments provide a detailed expense report to Mr. Otto every month. Mr. Lee stated that the Board of Finance no longer requires it. Discussion continued with questions from the Commissioners regarding each of the specific line items in the proposed budget. There was discussion regarding Fire District being separate. Mr. Gauthier explained that they donate a set of turnout gear every year.

There was discussion regarding the *5-Year Capital Funding Program* sheet and Mr. Gauthier explained about the Capital Project regarding extending the water line. He said that the Fire District is going to pay for re-plumbing all of the water lines and heating system inside the building. Mr. Lee commented that it may be a challenge doing the Exhaust System if you don't have bunk rooms which are projected further down. Mr. Tanner commented that he would look into whether ARPA Funds may be able to be used for this item (\$150,000). Mr. Gauthier stated that the amount was unofficially quoted (not in writing) by Connecticut Water approximately 16 months ago or longer.

Mr. Lee's suggestions for the next meeting:

- The \$5,000 increase in Safety may be a challenge. He suggested looking at it to see if they can cut back on the increase.

Discussion continued including about PPE, SCBA Packs/Bottles (Scott's/Avon), and hose. Mr. Lee mentioned that there are funding sources out there. Mr. Gauthier stated that it was very conservatively done and that prices are to go up significantly.

**S. Breen** presented Mortlake's proposed budget, noting an increase of \$28,577. Copies of the proposed budget for Mortlake, for the fiscal year 2022 / 2023, were provided at the meeting. Also provided was a sheet entitled: *Town of Brooklyn Capital Funding Program Mortlake Fire Company*.

**S. Breen** explained that they have had the same budget for several years and have looked at it more closely. He stated that there are some things that need additional attention in the coming year. He went through the line items noting the increases: Building Maintenance (9 overhead door openers need to be replaced - \$4,480 is the price for two); Cleaning (previously no line item for this and it came out of other line items); Equipment Repair; Eversource Loan (2 more years in budget); Insurance; Internet Services (need for greater wireless capabilities); Payroll Expense (see Wages); Professional Fees (increase in fees for in-house maintenance of computer systems – Savage Systems); Software Licenses; Utilities – Cable (previously in with Internet); Utilities – Telephone; Vehicle Fuel (Diesel Fuel); Vehicle Maintenance (tend to go over the \$21,000 budgeted over the last few years); Wages (new line item to hire a part-time bookkeeper to supplement the volunteer Treasurer).

There was discussion regarding the overhead doors. Mr. Tanner suggested doing it under Capital. Mr. Breen explained that he has been hesitant to put building-related items into Capital requests.

There was discussion regarding the radios that Mr. Otto had suggested possibly getting, through ARPA Funds, for the Departments, which would be more of an add-on that would allow interconnectivity between other agencies. Mr. Breen commented that there are still more questions than answers.

Mr. Lee asked about the following line items:

- Building Maintenance  
The \$4,000 increase is just for the overhead doors. Mr. Breen explained that he can actually do a couple more doors with this year's budget. He explained that they had just completed a project for an electronic lock system at the Station and they also want to do a security system.
- Cleaning  
Mr. Breen explained that, in the past, it had been paid from Utilities/Office Expense/Cleaning Supplies. He explained that, in January, there had been a change in Treasurers and there may be a difference in opinion as to where certain things are allocated in the budget. It was separated out for clarification.

- Internet Services/Cable  
Mr. Breen stated that cable is separate.
- Payroll Expense  
Mr. Breen stated that Payroll Expense is defined as paying the payroll service to allocate the check for the proposed bookkeeper. It is related to Wages.
- Physicals/Vaccinations  
Mr. Breen agreed when Mr. Lee asked if the plan is to get that up-to-speed.
- Software Licenses – Can the software tools be made available to other Department and share the cost?  
Mr. Breen stated that they have not had those conversations yet as the atmosphere has not been there, up until this point.
- Wages  
Mr. Breen explained that the estimated cost was based on what seemed to be a reasonable wage multiplied by a number of hours, multiplied by a number of weeks. He did not have that information with him. They do not know, at this time, what the actual cost will be. They want to be able to move forward on it in this next fiscal year. He explained that if the cost is more than budgeted, they could go to the Town and ask for the additional funds, or they could possibly absorb the cost themselves based on things like fundraising monies.

Mr. Gauthier commented that he has spent a significant time doing common work for the Department and he stated that the Board needs to be more equal to the Departments. If you allow for one, you need to allow for the other one. He agreed that there is a need. Mr. Lee agreed that there is a need and he suggested hiring one person for both Departments.

- Professional Fees  
Mr. Lee spoke about creating shared services to cut down on extra overhead.  
Mr. Breen stated agreement, but he doesn't think there is enough time before the budget process this year. He said it needs to be looked at seriously for the next fiscal year. Mr. Gauthier agreed. Mr. Lee stated that the conversation needs to be happening now for next year. Mr. Tanner stated agreement. Discussion continued.

Mr. Lee commented that the Mortlake 23.2 percent increase and the East Brooklyn increase of approximately 16 percent are big amounts to absorb in one year. Mr. Lee suggested that Mortlake examine a better way to fund the need for the wages for the cleaning person.

There was discussion regarding Mortlake's *Capital Funding Program* (estimates based on today's market). Some grants will be available:

- Mr. Breen explained about the Edraulic Extrication Tools (cutter/spreader/ram) and Hurst Tool Replacement. He explained about Edraulic (battery powered) vs. Hydraulic (needing pump/hoses). There advantages to each type.
- Mr. Breen explained that their Breathing Air Compressor is at least 30 years old and continues to be serviced, but parts are becoming less and less available to make repairs.
- Mr. Breen explained about the need to replace Ladder 190 in FY 2025-2026 (estimated cost of \$1.2 million which he expects to go up).

Mr. Gauthier stated that East Brooklyn's next vehicle replacement would be in approximately fourteen years.

Mr. Lee asked, "What is Mortlake's concept, with respect to their facilities, in the future (5 or 10 years)?"

Mr. Breen explained that a lot of it is going to depend on the Town and where the Subcommittee goes. He said it is hard to say. They have started to study their facilities and there was a limited amount of progress made during the last year, but the base it there. The question of whether they will be able to do something within the footprint that they have has not been answered. He said that it would be either very expensive or very unlikely.

## **7. Other Business**

Mr. Lee commented that Mr. Otto had requested the Respiratory Protection Plan from each of the Departments. Mr. Lee stated that he had received East Brooklyn's and stated that he had found some issues. He asked that they review it. Mr. Lee said that he has not seen Mortlake's, so he asked that they submit it next month so he can close that out.

### **a. Election of Chair**

There was discussion and M. Podzalne volunteered for the position.

Motion was made by D. Lee to nominate Michael Podzalne for the position of Chair of the Board of Fire Commissioners. Mr. Podzalne accepted the nomination.

Second by A. Tanner.

There were no other nominations. No discussion.

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

This item, **a. Election of Chair**, was added to the Agenda (see above).

## **8. Public Comment – None.**

## **9. Next Meeting – March 9, 2022.**

## **10. Adjourn**

Motion was made by M. Podzalne to adjourn at 8:24 p.m. (20:24 hours).

Second by D. Lee. No discussion.

Motion carried unanimously (6-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault

Recording Secretary