

**Board of Fire Commissioners**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Wednesday, March 9, 2022**  
**7:00 pm via Zoom &**  
**Clifford B. Green Meeting Center**  
**Suite 24, 69 South Main Street, Brooklyn, CT**

To join this meeting, follow the below instructions:

**Join Zoom Meeting**

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89641764304?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89641764304?pwd=NE05NUtQU0pHYlkwQ2hKaVlmM0o0dz09)

[pwd=NE05NUtQU0pHYlkwQ2hKaVlmM0o0dz09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89641764304?pwd=NE05NUtQU0pHYlkwQ2hKaVlmM0o0dz09)

**Meeting ID: 896 4176 4304**

**Passcode: 111070**

**One tap mobile**

**+16465588656,,89641764304# US (New York)**

**+13017158592,,89641764304# US (Washington DC)**

**Dial by your location**

**+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)**

**+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)**

**+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)**

**+1 720 707 2699 US (Denver)**

**+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)**

**+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)**

**Meeting ID: 896 4176 4304**

**Find your local number:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89641764304?pwd=NE05NUtQU0pHYlkwQ2hKaVlmM0o0dz09>

**MINUTES**

1. **Call to Order** – Michael Podzaline, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m. (19:12 hours). Late start due to technical difficulties.

**Attendance:** Michael Podzaline; Leo Berube; Patrick Gauthier; David Lee, Board of Finance Liaison; (all present in person). James Solar (present via Zoom).

A.Tanner and Felix Ramos were absent with notice.

**Others Present** – S. Breen, Mortlake Fire Chief; Brian Pepin, East Brooklyn Fire Chief; Lou Brodeur, Selectman; J.S. Perreault, Recording Secretary (all present in person).

There were four people present, in person, in the audience.

2. **Approve Minutes**
  - a. **Regular Meeting of February 9, 2022**

Motion was made by D. Lee to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 9, 2022, as presented. Second by P. Gauthier. No discussion.

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

3. **Public Comment** – None.

4. **Equipment Discussion**

Chief Breen – Nothing new to report.

Chief Pepin – Nothing new to report.

5. **Department Discussion**

- a. **Recruitment**

Chief Breen reported that he has had a lot of discussion with Officers, Directors and with Chief Pepin about recruitment activities revolving around Earth Day activities for the Town and getting trucks to help protect people working in high hazard areas cleaning-up the sides of the road on Earth Day. They also plan to position people at the dump to hand out pamphlets/applications and at other Town events. He said it is the implementation of doing what we talked about for so many years. Chief Pepin commented that Brooklyn has a lot happening due to being an agricultural town, so they are trying to use that to their advantage. There is still a lot to talk about, but they are on the right track.

**b. Retention** – No discussion.

**c. Paid Staff – Subcommittee Update**

Mr. Podzalne reported that a point-incentive program had been presented and there is also a tax abatement program being considered. He said it would be advantageous for the Board of Fire Commissioners to recommend one, if not both, of them. He feels that the tax abatement would be easier to recommend.

David Lee explained the draft ordinance (taken from the State website) for a tax abatement program that he had presented at the FD Paid Staff Sub-Committee earlier (he provided copies to those that were not present at that meeting and he stated that he had just e-mailed it to everyone also):

- The program authorizes an abatement of up to \$2,000 for property tax (vehicle or property). He will find out whether you would be able to choose one or the other.
- Each Department would certify who is eligible based on criteria established by the Board of Fire Commissioners. That certification would be provided to the Town in advance of the issuance of the next year's property tax bills. So, your bill would be reduced by up to the abatement amount. No other requirement from the Fire Departments other than to provide the certification of who is eligible. The Tax Assessor would do the work for those who are eligible.

Mr. Podzalne asked the Chiefs about baseline for membership.

- Chief Breen explained that, at Mortlake, active members have to attend one training every three months. Per their By-Laws, there is no set number of calls or level of dispatch. It is all based on training activity.
- Mr. Gauthier explained that, at East Brooklyn, they have to make four trainings, four meetings and 15 percent of the incidents dispatched by QV.

Mr. Podzalne explained that 15 or 20 percent for each Department is a significant difference in calls. Chief Breen suggested that it be considered that the qualifications criteria for either a tax abatement program or pay-per-call program can be a lot stricter.

Mr. Podzalne stated that this will be on next month's Sub-Committee agenda to take action on it. The tax abatement is not budgetary, so it would be recommended to the Selectmen for an ordinance.

Mr. Soler received the draft ordinance via e-mail (sent by Mr. Lee) since he was present via Zoom.

Mr. Podzalne explained that there is still more work to do on the pay-per-call program and that it will also be acted upon at next month's Sub-Committee meeting with either a go or no go recommendation.

Mr. Podzalne stated that there wasn't any discussion about long term planning/consolidation. He feels that everyone is on the same page that it is not something that needs to be implemented right away, but just to get all of the players on the same field and then we will be ready to go.

**6. Financial Reports Discussion**

**a. Budget Discussion**

**East Brooklyn** – Chief Pepin explained:

- Safety and Capital Equipment Plan - He called three different vendors and verified that they are all very true numbers. He said that it is actually a six-percent increase from last year's budget, not 16 percent as he thinks had been stated earlier. He explained that the point is so that they

never have to come back to the Commissioners for any additional money. He went back to 2006 and noticed that this format, and this specific Safety and Capital Equipment Plan, has pretty much been the same since 2006.

- Regarding the difference in prices, he explained that even though the decreased the amount of equipment, the prices have gone up.
- Nothing has actually changed other than the cost factors of the pricing of the equipment. He said that we are pretty much where we feel that we really need to be.

There was discussion. Mr. Gauthier explained that, this year, they physically took inventory because they had 2006 quantities. Mr. Lee stated that the request for an increase of \$5,000 is more than six percent. Mr. Gauthier explained that they will be buying equipment, but he can't tell what type of equipment will need to be purchased in a given year and he explained that the goal is to budget it out 10-15 years so that they will never have to come back to the Commissioners for any additional money. Discussion continued. Mr. Breen explained that both Departments tend to go a number of years without an increase. Mr. Berube stated that most departments take out of one line item to fill the other. The increase in pricing every year is making it harder and harder.

Motion was made by D. Lee to support East Brooklyn's proposed request of \$91,690 for their Operating Budget for FY 2022/2023 (2.18 percent increase).

Second by L. Berube. No discussion.

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

Motion was made by D. Lee to support East Brooklyn's proposed request of \$21,270 for Safety and Capital Budget for FY 2022/2023 (30 percent increase).

Second by L. Berube. No discussion.

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

Regarding Mortlake's proposed request for FY 2022/2023 Safety Budget, Chief Breen noted that they are not requesting an increase for "this" year.

Motion was made by D. Lee to approve Mortlake's proposed FY 2022/2023 Safety Budget of \$30,775.

Second by P. Gauthier. No discussion.

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

Regarding Mortlake's proposed request for FY 2022/2023 Operating Budget, Mr. Lee stated that he has a tough time understanding the 23.2 percent increase, a total increase of \$28,577.

Motion was made by D. Lee to support the Mortlake FY 2022/2023 Operating Budget in the amount of \$125,625 (2.18 percent increase).

Second by M. Podzalne.

Discussion:

- Mr. Gauthier commented that the inflation rate is about 7 or 8 percent in the fire department and he feels that you should start with a minimum 7-or-8 percent increase. He does not think that any department could survive going into next year with a 2-percent increase. It is way too much to ask.
- Chief Breen explained that short of the \$13,000 line item for a paid bookkeeper, large areas of increase are: Building Maintenance; Professional Fees; Software Licensing; and Cleaning. They have been paying for cleaning, but it had not separated into its own line item previously. It has been coming out of other areas of the budget.

The increase in Building Maintenance is to cover the cost of replacing the overhead door motors over the course of two years.

The increase in Software Licensing is due to an increase in software licensing.

The increase in Professional Fees includes Savage Systems (whose rates have increased significantly for the coming year)

The remaining \$137, 517 (after taking out the \$13,000 for the paid bookkeeper) is what is needed to operate.

Mr. Gauthier spoke about how he was shocked to learn of ESO's price to switch East Brooklyn's accounting system over to the same as Mortlake. He stated that they will have an increase to Software next year.

There was discussion regarding Cleaning.

Mr. Brodeur (Mortlake Board of Directors) commented that there had been discussion about putting the overhead door motors (7 at \$2,800 each) in a Capital Project, but had gotten negative feedback about a Capital Project for a building that the Town doesn't own even though they pay to maintain it. So, the Directors decided to spread it out over a few years. Mr. Brodeur said that, back in October or November of last year, Jeff Otto had recommended that the \$13,000 for the bookkeeper be put in the budget because they weren't putting in for a person that they had working. Discussion continued. Mr. Lee stated that the physical parts would be a Capital item and the service would be an Operating item. He suggested that a reasonable Capital Item would be for Mortlake to put a Capital Proposal together that includes some long-term maintenance of the building which also includes the overhead door components.

Discussion continued regarding Cleaning and Wages. A portion for the bookkeeper would be paid by the Ambulance because she does work for both the Fire Department and the Ambulance. The Fire Department also has a volunteer treasurer. Mr. Gauthier commented that he had spoken about this with Chief Breen and more and more reports are being required and somebody has to put all of this stuff together. Chief Breen commented that taking care of the finances for either department (Fire and Ambulance) is an arduous task and it is difficult to find a volunteer with the qualifications and the time to do it. Chief Breen stated that they don't know that they will be ready to hire someone on July 1<sup>st</sup>, but they need the financial tools to work with in order to move forward with it. Depending on the individual, this may lend itself to being some type of shared resource.

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

## **7. Other Business**

Mr. Lee stated that he had received East Brooklyn's Respiratory Program and asked about Mortlake's.

Chief Breen explained that he has a draft copy which has not been reviewed by the Officers yet. He will e-mail the draft to Mr. Lee on Monday.

Mr. Lee clarified that the request was for the version of the program viewable by OSHA if they were to walk in the door.

He will review them and provide feedback.

Chief Pepin commented that East Brooklyn had held their Election of Officers at their annual membership meeting last Sunday. They have a slate of five Officers for the coming year.

Chief Breen commented regarding ambulance operations and staffing the ambulances and that there is no proposal, at this time, for paid staff. He wants to make the Board aware that they may need to ask for additional emergency funding at some point during the year to pay for staffing the ambulance. He explained that they can sustain, more or less, what they have right now, but to bring a solid proposal prior to the budget, at this point, is just not realistic.

Mr. Lee stated that, if Mortlake will be expecting the Town to come up with money off budget cycle, it will be a very difficult challenge. Mr. Brodeur stated that it is not impossible. Mr. Lee agreed, but stated that

whatever Mortlake can do to get it in this budget cycle would be advantageous to Mortlake as well as the Town. Chief Breen stated that he, the Treasurer and the Chairman of the Board of Directors knew that they weren't going to have a realistic proposal for the budget presentation tonight.

#### **8. Public Comment**

Mr. Brodeur, since their proposed budget was cut \$25,000, asked for clarification of his understanding regarding the replacement of the motors for the overhead doors at Mortlake. That they are to come in with a Capital Project so that Mortlake can maintain and operate through the year.

Mr. Lee stated. "We are not telling you what you need to do, that is what was approved by this Board and if you want to make a Capital Request for those expenses, by all means, go right ahead."

#### **9. Next Meeting – April 13, 2022.**

#### **10. Adjourn**

Motion was made by D. Lee to adjourn at 7:58 p.m. (19:58 hours).

Second by P. Gauthier. No discussion.

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

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault  
Recording Secretary