

**Board of Fire Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, April 13, 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

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MINUTES

1. Call to Order – Michael Podzalne, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. (19:05 hours).

2. Attendance:

Michael Podzalne; Austin Tanner; First Selectman; Leo Berube; Patrick Gauthier; David Lee, Board of Finance Liaison; (all present in person). Felix and James Solar 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.

Via Zoom: None.

3. Approve Minutes

a. Regular Meeting of March 9, 2022

Motion was made by D. Lee to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 9, 2022.

Second by P. Gauthier.

There was discussion regarding Item 8, Public Comment, but there were no changes or corrections made.

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

4. Public Comment – None.

5. Equipment Discussion

Chief Breen reported that the new truck will, hopefully, be on the production floor in June. He explained that there is a problem getting the parts so they have had to make some substitutions.

Chief Pepin stated that East Brooklyn has had to make some small, odds & ends purchases.

6. Department Discussion

a. Recruitment

Chief Breen reported that over the past month, they have been working on a pamphlet for both Departments to use as a handout at the Transfer Station. They are also working on how to streamline the application process, but it may not be ready by April 23rd. They plan to do a Town-wide mailing to make people aware of the need for volunteers. Of the new Members from a month ago, they have two Members in Fire 1 and one Member taking the EMT class in Plainfield. They have taken in three new applications.

Chief Pepin added that they have also been working on putting a schedule together for quarterly Chiefs' meetings and Officers' meetings. They have a schedule for dual training for a year (once per month). He has one person signed up to rapid intervention. He will be having a CPR initial refresher class at the firehouse (eight people). He has one person finishing-up their EMT testing and two for EMR final testing.

b. Retention – No discussion.

c. Paid Staff – Subcommittee Update – No discussion.

d. Respiratory Protection Plan(s)

Mr. Lee stated that he has East Brooklyn's and he has started to review it.

Chief Breen distributed copies of Mortlake's plan and he stated that it has not been reviewed by their Board of Directors, but would be reviewed by the end of this month.

7. Financial Reports Discussion

a. Budget Discussion

Mr. Lee asked what the Departments are doing regarding grants.

- Mr. Gauthier explained that East Brooklyn applied to Walmart, Jewett City Savings Bank and another one. They have received two so far this year and they expect to get two more. He explained that they mostly use the money to offset Capital. They are classified as 501C3.
- Chief Breen explained that Mortlake applied for FM Global and Jewett City Savings Bank. They are currently classified as 501C4 which has more limitations, but they are trying to get classified under 501C3.

There was discussion regarding grant writing and more grants/funding opportunities that could be applied for.

There was discussion regarding how to show insurance in the budget in the future. Mr. Lee noted that the Fire Departments don't actually have budgets, it is grant requests.

8. Other Business

Mr. Podzalne explained that tiers of qualification and compensation to equal that had been discussed at the FD Paid Staff Sub-Committee. Interior Firefighter may be entitled to more than a supplemental Fire/Police

Officer. This is not to devalue, but rather to incentivize to get qualified. However, there are Fire/Police Members who do a lot of very valuable work. This will be discussed further by the Sub-Committee.

Mr. Lee commented that it is important to define a qualified, eligible member and to come up with criteria that meets both Departments and to account for those people who do the different levels of jobs.

9. Public Comment

Gill Maiato (in the audience) expressed concern about losing members due to the criteria for qualification. Mr. Tanner explained that the idea is to encourage people to move up. Mr. Podzalne explained about the graduated abatement levels. There was discussion. Mr. Lee explained that you would want EMS-trained people to respond to EMS calls.

10. Next Meeting – May 11, 2022.

There was discussion regarding when the meetings could start taking place at the fire houses again. It was decided to continue meeting at the Clifford B. Green Meeting Center.

11. Adjourn

Motion was made by D. Lee to adjourn at 7:33 p.m. (19:33 hours).
Second by L. Berube. No discussion.
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote (5-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault
Recording Secretary

Proposed Ordinance Town of Brooklyn
Tax Abatement Program for Certain Emergency Services Volunteers

(a) **PREAMBLE:** The provisions of Public Act 99-272 Section 6, as amended by Public Act 19-36 are hereby adopted, and are set forth in subsections (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f).

(b) **DEFINITIONS:**

(1) "Active" shall mean certified by the Chief of the Mortlake Fire Company, Inc., the Chief of East Brooklyn Fire Department, or their successors, either individually or collectively, as to members of their respective organizations, or on or before the certification date, as eligible for tax abatement under this ordinance.

(2) "Certification Date" shall mean March 15 of the assessment year commencing October 1, 2022 and each assessment year thereafter.

(3) "Eligible Resident" shall mean each resident of the Town of Brooklyn who volunteers his or her services:

(A) as an active firefighter or emergency medical responder for the Mortlake Fire Company, Inc.,

(B) as an active firefighter or emergency medical responder for the East Brooklyn Fire Department, or

(C) as an active firefighter or emergency medical responder of their successors, individually or collectively.

(4) "Benefit" shall mean the reduction in property taxes described in subsection (c) below.

(c) **BENEFIT:** Each eligible resident shall be entitled to a \$2,000.00 reduction in property taxes otherwise due from that resident for the fiscal year next following the certification date.

(d) **LIMITATIONS:** The benefit shall be subject to the following limitations:

(1) Residents who are eligible residents under two or more among (b)(3)(A-C) shall be entitled to one benefit only.

(e) **MECHANISM:** The respective Chiefs of the Mortlake Fire Company, Inc., the East Brooklyn Fire Department, or their successors, individually or collectively, shall, on or before the certification date:

(1) submit their original notarized certifications to the Tax Collector for the Town of Brooklyn and

(2) forward a copy of their certifications to:

(a) the Board of Finance,

(b) the Office of the First Selectman

(c) the Office of the Tax Assessor,

(e) the Boards of Directors of the Mortlake Fire Company, Inc., and the East Brooklyn Fire

Department, and
(f) the Board of Fire Commissioners.

(f) **ELIGIBILITY:** The Board of Fire Commissioners shall determine the criteria for certification of eligibility for members of the Mortlake Fire Company, Inc, and East Brooklyn Fire Department, or their successors, individually or collectively, which criteria shall not be less stringent than the criteria for attendance at emergency responses, training and drills for yearly eligibility for the Tax Abatement program.

Commentary

(a) **PREAMBLE:** This subsection connects the ordinance to the enabling legislation, whose purpose is to attract new volunteers and retain existing volunteers.

(b) **DEFINITIONS:** This subsection defines terms in a way that tracks the enabling legislation.

(c) **BENEFIT:** This subsection defines the benefit in a way that tracks the enabling legislation. It limits the benefit to a reduction in property taxes, so volunteers who do not owe property taxes realize no benefit, and volunteers who owe less than \$2,000 in property taxes realize a smaller benefit.

(d) **LIMITATIONS:** This subsection prevents residents who belong to more than one of the volunteer fire department or who belong to both a volunteer fire department and volunteer ambulance from getting a double benefit. This limitation reflects the memberships' desire to avoid artificial cross-pollination for the mere purpose of obtaining a greater tax abatement rather than dual or triple membership based on genuine interest and the perception that the time volunteered by most individuals tends to be approximately the same regardless of whether the volunteers spend their time exclusively for one fire department or in combined participation in more than one organization.

An additional limitation restricting the benefit to one per married couple was considered and abandoned because of fairness concerns.

(e) **MECHANISM:** This subsection sets forth a mechanism for providing adequate notice to the Tax Collector so that he or she can make the necessary adjustments to tax bills in a timely way. It also provides a mechanism for providing similar notice to the entities like a Board of Finance, Office of the First Selectman and Office of the Tax Assessor so that these entities can adequately plan in anticipation of abatements. It ensures the validity of the notice by requiring a notarized certification of the notice provided by the respective Chiefs. Finally, it provides similar notice to entities like the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Board of Directors of the service organizations so that these entities can stay in the information loop.

(f) **ELIGIBILITY:** This subsection sets forth, as a minimum, compliance with the requirements already in place for pension plan credit, while allowing the Board of Fire Commissioners to create more stringent qualifications for the abatement should they wish to do so either now or in the future.