

**Board of Fire Commissioners
Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 13, 2019
7:30 pm Mortlake Fire Department**

1. Call to Order - Chair, Rick Ives called the meeting to order at 7:30p.m. (19:30 hours).

Attendance: Jeff Otto; Lou Brodeur; Patrick Gauthier; Rick Ives. Felix Ramos arrived at approximately 7:35 p.m. James Soler was absent.

Others Present – Sandra Brodeur; Jim Warren, East Brooklyn Fire Chief; S. Breen, Mortlake Fire Chief; Dave Lee, Daren Rondeau and Tom Gugliotti from Mortlake Fire Department.

2. Approve Minutes

a. Regular Meeting of January 9, 2019

Motion was made by J.Otto to accept the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 9, 2019, as presented. Second by L. Brodeur. Motion carried unanimously (4-0-0).

3. Public Comment – None.

4. Equipment Discussion – None.

5. Department Discussion

a. Recruitment – None.

b. Retention – None.

c. Paid Staff

1. Discussion with Dan Syme, First Selectman of Scotland

Mr. Ives reported that Mr. Syme is unable to come to a Regular Meeting of the Fire Commissioners as his Selectmen's meeting is on the same night.

Possible dates that may work: Tuesday, April 23, 2018 or Thursday, April 25, 2019 at 7:30 p.m. place to be determined (Mr. Ives will check for availability). Some people from Promfret may attend.

6. Financial Reports Discussion

a. Budget Discussion

East Brooklyn's Draft Budget was reviewed (copies were provided to Commission Members):

- Zero-percent increase.

- P. Gauthier commented that submitting quarterly reports is working out well. Mr. Otto will ask the Board of Finance if they want to continue to receive them.

Motion was made by J. Otto that the Board of Fire Commissioners accept the East Brooklyn Fire Department's Operating and Equipment Budget Request for 2019-2020 as presented. Second by L. Brodeur.

Discussion: Mr. Otto noted that he had not reviewed the Truck Replacement Schedule since the replacement times had been moved out to 25 years. Motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).

Mortlake Fire Department's Draft Budget was reviewed (copies were provided to Commission Members):

- S. Breen explained that over the course of the last few years, they continue to be overspent on their budget. He explained that he expects to be able to operate on \$122,930 because they anticipate some savings on some line items. Approximately a ten percent increase.

There was discussion regarding the following:

- Decrease in insurance due to switching companies.
- Vehicle maintenance - Mr. Breen does not consider a \$2,000 (10 percent) increase to be unreasonable.
- Equipment - increase from \$1,500 to \$7,000. S. Breen explained that they have continued to underestimate and then over spend.
- There was discussion regarding the budget history.
- Increase in education expenses.
- Snow plowing - P. Gauthier stated that they will be asking the Selectmen if the Town would consider plowing snow/spreading sand next year. Mr. Ives stated that it can be discussed, but it will still be in the budget.
- Increase in professional and legal fees.
- Increase in recruitment.
- There was discussion regarding how receptive the Board of Finance would be. Mr. Otto commented that a zero percent increase for East Brooklyn and a 9.6 percent increase for Mortlake rolled together would appear as approximately a four percent increase as a whole and they may have some questions.
- There was discussion regarding whether there would be an attempt to recoup some of the money that had been overspent last year. Mr. Breen stated that (in his own opinion) this would be in lieu of going back and asking for that additional \$10,000. Mr. Otto stated that if that is the way it is presented, it reminds the Board of Finance that there had been a request for \$10,000 which is no longer on the table, but there is an increase in the operating budget. They may find it acceptable.
- Capital Page - Removed the \$50,000 to refurbish ET-190; they are working to cover installing a Plymo Vent exhaust system with a grant.
- There was discussion regarding the replacement plan.

J. Otto commented that he wish that it could be increased over a couple of years instead of one, but the offsetting elimination of the special request for repairs to the ET and the fact that this is not the whole Board of Fire Commissioners' budget being increased by this percentage would mitigate against any large complaints. There was discussion regarding the drain project at Mortlake.

Motion was made by J. Otto that the Mortlake Operating and Equipment Budget for 2019-2020 be approved as presented. Second by L. Brodeur.

Discussion: R. Ives feels that some items are more of an increase than really needed, but he understands why. J. Otto commented about how long both organizations have gone at this same level of appropriation without changing it and this may be the year that some change has to be made. The Board of Finance meeting where the Fire Departments' budgets will be reviewed is April 9, 2019. Motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).

7. Other Business

F. Ramos stated his concern about the need for becoming informed/educated regarding paid staff. He is concerned about having discussion regarding the need and also how it would affect the morale of volunteers. He is not opposed to doing something different as long as there is a need for it.

R. Ives explained that the Departments have been talking about recruitment for the last couple of years with only little pockets of success. The need for guaranteed response time is important. Mutual aid is being used a lot and has helped, but he feels that it's time to have people in the houses on the Fire side. P. Gauthier feels it is too early and there are other things that can be done first and that there are a lot of questions that need to be answered beforehand. J. Otto commented that the supervision and management will need to be addressed and whether the Town will need to be involved as another entity (Federal Fair Labor Standards). There was discussion regarding whether qualified people would apply. Updates to the facilities/showers will be needed.

There was discussion regarding mutual aid and time of day when coverage would be most needed. Mr. Breen explained automatic, dual-Department response (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.). NECCOG

There was discussion regarding how volunteers may react. S. Breen asked: What are we doing to hold the volunteers that we have? What is the benefit/privilege of being a member? He mentioned tax abatement and paper call programs that could be considered.

J. Otto explained he is interested because he feels that this is an opportunity to begin to add part-time paid people at reasonably low rates of compensation sooner rather than later. At some point, there will be a need to staff some number of people 24-hours a day, maybe at a higher rate and maybe with benefits.

8. Public Comment

Sandra Brodeur commented that there are still grants available to help pay full salaries for enough people for the required coverage in Town for the first two years to have the opportunity to see if it

is really needed and what the costs are. Mr. Otto stated that the Safer Grant is not applicable to part-time employees and two or more may create a bargaining agreement.

Daren Rondeau commented about a stipend program and about tax abatement. He offered to provide the guidelines.

Dave Lee suggested defining the problem first - Get the call volume/population density and the opinion of the Community (survey). Then come up with a solution.

9. Next Meeting – April 10, 2019, at East Brooklyn Fire Department.

10. Adjourn

Motion was made by J. Otto to adjourn at 8:41 p.m. Second by L. Brodeur. Motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault
Recording Secretary