

**Board of Fire Commissioners  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, February 12, 2020  
7:30 pm East Brooklyn Fire Department**

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

**Attendance:** Rick Ives; Jeff Otto; Lou Brodeur; Patrick Gauthier; Felix Ramos. James Soler was absent with notice.

**Others Present** – S. Breen, Mortlake Fire Chief; Jim Warren, East Brooklyn Fire Chief.

2. **Approve Minutes**
  - a. **Regular Meeting of November 13, 2019**

Motion was made by J. Otto to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 13, 2019, as presented. Second by P. Gauthier. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).

3. **Public Comment** – None.

4. **Equipment Discussion**

J. Warren stated that the new truck will be here Friday, February 14<sup>th</sup>. They will strip the other truck over the weekend and on Monday and it will be gone by Tuesday.

There was discussion regarding the 2005 service truck (Yukon PD vehicle which had been bought at auction). No rescue truck, so this vehicle took care of needs for medical calls in the area (First-Response Medical), it was able to go in driveways, and it was used to block-off roads for fire/police. It went out over 485 times this year. The vehicle is starting to stall and die, so they priced-out a new service vehicle (Ford Expedition) at Vachon where they received a government price of \$39,600 which was brought down to \$36,000 with the trade-in. The life span of the new vehicle would be considered to be approximately fifteen years (\$2,400 per year). Anyone could drive it.

There was discussion regarding whether this could be an item for Town Capital. The 2005 vehicle had been paid for by the East Brooklyn Fire Department. Would this lead to Mortlake asking the Town to pay for the pick-up truck that they bought? Mr. Gauthier explained that they had taken the advice of the Town to reduce the number and size of the trucks, as they have downsized significantly. He said that they used a lot of fund money to purchase the 2005 vehicle and that had not asked the Town to pay for it. Mr. Otto asked if they would consider buying a used vehicle this time as well. Mr. Warren stated that it would depend on what is available at the time, but he feels that is probably not the best way to do it.

There was discussion regarding washing the vehicles and whether the washing bay system at the Town Garage is used.

## **5. Department Discussion**

### **a. Recruitment**

Mr. Otto asked if anything had come of the KHS students that had expressed interest at the Fair. Mr. Breen stated that they do have two younger recruits and one is a KHS student. Mr. Gauthier stated that they just signed-up someone for Fire One and the cost is \$1,075.

Mr. Ramos mentioned that KHS has a job shadow requirement for seniors. He feels it is a good idea to expose students to the Fire Department and also to volunteering. Mr. Otto suggested shadowing ambulance technicians.

### **b. Retention** – See under Item 5.c. Paid Staff, below.

### **c. Paid Staff**

Mr. Otto commented that, at the November meeting, Members for a Sub-committee had been selected: S. Breen; J. Warren; Bill Skeene; Patrick Dragon; and Felix Ramos.

**Mr. Dragon** (seated in the audience) asked the following:

- Where did this idea come from?
- How are we looking to implement?

He said that this will require a lot of research regarding the following:

- Towns of comparable size
- What they have for manpower
- What they are paying
- Who is paying
- Are they a Town employee
- Union

Mr. Ives explained that this is what the Sub-committee is supposed to do. He said that there is no directive to come up with a solution, the idea is to come up with a plan. He explained that it had been discussed by the Board of Fire Commissioners and it was decided that it may be a better idea to have a Sub-committee that would meet and report back to the full Board. Mr. Ives offered to set up a meeting, noting that it needs to be conducted as other meetings with agendas and minutes. Mr. Ives stated that he will send an e-mail with dates. Mr. Warren asked about a recording secretary and Mr. Ives stated that he can do it through his office.

Mr. Otto asked about whether Mr. Breen had come up with a proposal for a rewards/incentive program to encourage new members or retention of existing members (as stated in the Minutes of the Meeting of November 13, 2019). Mr. Breen explained that he is working on a proposal and that, when it is ready, he would like to give it to the Officers of both Departments for review before presenting it at a meeting. Mr. Brodeur commented that the State had passed legislation regarding tax abatement. Mr. Breen explained that the State increased the amount that the Town can allow (up to \$2,000). Mr. Otto explained that if the incentive plan requires funding from the Town, time is running out for this Budget year. Therefore, it may need to be enacted another year.

**6. Financial Reports Discussion – No discussion.**

**a. Budget Discussion**

**The Proposed 2020-2021 Budget for East Brooklyn Fire Department Was Reviewed:**

P. Gauthier provided copies of the Proposed Budget for 2020-2021.

J. Warren explained that they are looking at a 7.5 percent increase with equipment, maintenance, building, trucks, medical and fire classes (some classes can be taken online). He said that they received \$7,000 in grants this year to try to off-set: Jewett City Savings Bank – 2 @ \$1,000 each; WalMart - \$5,000 (501c3).

Mr. Gauthier stated that they are breaking even because of the grants and that next year, they project to spend \$108,111. There was discussion regarding increases in the following line items: Education & In-Service Training (cost increase); Membership (Mr. Gauthier presented a list, Mr. Warren explained that the largest portion was for satellite tv); Equipment Maintenance & Supplies (Knox box let go on the service truck \$850 and \$1,200 for the software to tie it in, Knox box for the new truck, had to change the batteries in both vehicles).

There was discussion regarding the cost for low-band vs. high-band vs. dual-band radios. Mr. Otto stated that there will be a meeting on February 18<sup>th</sup> where they will describe the new simulcast network which will be put in place which will greatly extend the ability to use UHF radio. He said that those radios are still reasonably affordable (\$800 to \$1,200). They are also experimenting with cell phone interface to radio (transmitters in Lisbon and East Killingly). **Sandra Brodeur** (seated in the audience) stated that radios are Town Capital. Mr. Warren stated that it is for installation.

There was discussion regarding grants. Mr. Ives disagrees with adding it to the budget. He asked if the \$108,000 for next year includes grant money. Mr. Gauthier stated that it does not, he is hoping to get grant money. Mr. Ives asked if they receive grant money, will they spend \$115,000. Mr. Gauthier explained that one of the grants from Jewett City Savings Bank went specifically for a De-fib and they plan to get a De-fib for the new truck, and the WalMart grant is going to be applied to two sets of turn-out gear. Mr. Ives asked if they plan on spending \$115,000 next year and Mr. Gauthier stated probably more and he explained that they try to use the Town Funds (which is not 100%) strictly for operation of the Fire Department and that membership money pays for other things.

**Mr. Gauthier explained their Sheet entitled 5 Year Real Property Capital Plan:**

- Two new steel doors for the back of the building (they will not make a Capital Request for this item).
- Extend CT water line – will make a Capital Request for this Item.
- Re-pave the parking lot – will make a Capital Request for this Item.
- Remodel the Station

Mr. Ives asked that the requests be formatted to show exactly what is being asked for from the Town Capital Program and what year they would like to get them. Mr. Ramos suggested that East Brooklyn use the same format that Mortlake used.

**The Proposed 2020-2021 Budget for Mortlake Fire Department Was Reviewed:**

Mr. Brodeur provided copies of the Proposed Budget for 2020-2021.

S. Breen explained that their proposal is the same as last year - \$122,940. They made reasonable adjustments in various places throughout the budget to help balance it. He noted increases to the following: Physicals/Vaccinations; Education; Water; Sewer. They feel comfortable with decreasing the Vehicle Maintenance Item. There was discussion regarding the following: Heating; Education; Equipment; Internet Services, Software Licenses (annual cost is a significant increase – changed from Fire House to ESO), Cleaning Supplies (previously all under Office Supplies). Mr. Otto wonders if it would make sense to explore the possibility of the Town licensing the software. East Brooklyn uses Fire House software.

**Dave Lee**, Mortlake Fire Department (seated in the audience) explained that ESO bought Fire House and that Fire House, as a stand-alone server, is no longer supported by ESO, so, if you want to continue getting upgrades, you are forced to move to a new environment. He explained that Mortlake has made the decision that, in addition to bringing their electronic patient care reports in-house (as opposed to using a third-party vendor and supplier), they maintain quality control and they can report on that data themselves. He said that they are not directly tied into the dispatch data, the new software will be tied directly into dispatch status, so they will have near real-time access. Mr. Otto suggests investigating whether we can do an area license and sub-license the area fire departments.

F. Ramos asked the following:

- Are we on budget this year?  
S. Breen explained that we are very close, but a little heavy on trucks. He referred to the projections.
- Heating – why budget so little last year?  
S. Breen explained that they, traditionally, kept that line low to keep the numbers in line, but they do expect an increase in cost (which may fluctuate).

Mr. Breen explained their **Capital Funding Program**:

- Exhaust System 2020-2021 Budget Year – He explained that they tried to get a grant for this item, but they found out that they will not get a grant. He explained that this is needed for both floors.  
**Dave Lee** referred to FEMA presentation that he had attended: A volunteer fire department that is not manned 24/7 will not get a grant for a powered exhaust system.
- Replacement of ET-190 (1995 over 25 years old) - Budget Year 2021-2022 - \$650,000.

Motion was made by J. Otto that the Brooklyn Board of Fire Commissioners approve the 2020-2021 Budget Request of the Mortlake Fire Department for \$122,940, the same as they requested last year. Second by L. Brodeur. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).

Motion was made by J. Otto that the Brooklyn Board of Fire Commissioners approve a 2020-2021 Budget Request for the East Brooklyn Fire Department for \$106,000 (a six percent increase over what they obtained last year). There is confusion regarding the possibility of additional grants for the upcoming year. Second by R. Ives.

Discussion:

Mr. Ramos asked how they go about making the numbers work. Mr. Gauthier explained that tonight is the presentation night and that now they have a number that they can go back with.

Motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).

There was discussion regarding the Safety Budget. Mr. Gauthier suggested that the numbers are old and out of whack. Mr. Ives stated that, every year, he asks if it is enough money, but the numbers don't go up. Mr. Gauthier stated that they can work with it, but he suggested that it be part of the operation budget. Mr. Ives feels that it should be separate, but stated that if more money is needed, now is the time to say it. Mr. Brodeur suggested that it be addressed in the future because of the escalation in prices. Mr. Otto explained that it is structured as there are a number of items, not all of which need to be replaced at the same time, giving flexibility to the Fire Departments. Mr. Otto noted that each Department is buying fewer sets of turn-out gear, less hose and probably fewer radios each year (than they did ten years ago) leaving a little more money in that appropriation to buy what is needed. Mr. Otto feels that it may be a good to look at the number again after budget time and, if shown to be inadequate, raising it can be addressed.

Mr. Otto suggested that both Departments make an effort to prepare (for discussion next month) for the Town's Capital Committee, submissions that support their Capital Requests. The Departments will prepare for the March meeting. As a Member of the Capital Committee, Mr. Ramos suggested that the Fire Departments present their five-year plans every year so that it will be on everyone's mind. Mr. Otto suggested that both Departments look at their Apparatus Replacement Schedule and he suggested that it may be better to present those on a ten-year basis rather than a five-year basis.

**7. Other Business – None.**

**8. Public Comment**

Sandra Brodeur suggested that the Departments take a look at what their inventory is to see what needs to be replaced and how often to see if they have enough Capital money going forward. J. Warren said that his Capital money, for five years, was spent on waste and wear packs.

Dave Lee asked where the revenue from the East Brooklyn Fire Tax District factors in to this process. Mr. Ives stated that it is a lighting district and that they have contributed to the Fire Department (but that is not why it was established).

**9. Next Meeting – March 11, 2020, at Mortlake Fire Department.**

**10. Adjourn**

Motion was made by J. Otto to adjourn at 8:42 p.m. (20:42 hours). Second by L. Brodeur. Motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault  
Recording Secretary