

Town of Brooklyn
Board of Fire Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
Held at the East Brooklyn Fire Department
January 8, 2013

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- 1) Meeting Called to order at 19:32 hours by Chairman Lee
 - a. In attendance: R. David Lee, Patrick Gauthier, Austin Tanner, Felix Ramos, James Soler, Jeffery Otto.
 - b. Absent: Donald Church.
 - c. Also in attendance: Steve Breen – Chief, Mortlake Fire Company, Jim Warren-Chief, East Brooklyn Fire Department and several other citizens.
 - d. Chairman Lee welcomed Jeffery Otto as the newly appointed representative to the Board of Fire Commissioners from the Board of Finance. David Fuss was thanked for his service.
- 2) Reading of the Previous Meeting's Minutes
 - a. Motion made by Mr. Tanner and seconded by Mr. Soler to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.
 - i. Discussion
 1. Mr. Gauthier made a motion to change the average response time from 3.9 minutes to 3.65 minutes. Motion was seconded by Mr. Lee. Approved.
 2. Mr. Gauthier made a motion to strike the sentence referencing the 20-25 minute historical response time during the later 1980's as stated by Mr. Lee. There was no second of the motion.
 - b. Motion to approve minutes as modified – 5 in favor, 1 Opposed (Mr. Gauthier).
- 3) Election of Chair
 - c. Motion made by Mr. Otto to nominate Mr. Lee as Chairman for 2013. Motion seconded by Mr. Tanner.
 - d. Motion made by Mr. Otto to cast 1 Ballot in favor of Mr. Lee as Chairman for 2013. Seconded by Mr. Tanner. Motion passed unanimously.
- 4) Election of Vice Chair
 - e. Motion made by Mr. Tannner and seconded by J. Otto to nominate Mr. Soler as Vice-Chair for 2013.

- f. Motion made by Mr. Otto to cast one ballot in favor of Mr. Soler as Vice Chairman for 2013. Seconded by Mr. Tanner. Motion passed unanimously.

5) Secretary

- g. Motion made by Mr. Otto directing the Chair to request of the Board of Selectmen secretarial service for the Board of Fire Commissioners for 2013. Seconded by Mr. Soler. 5 in favor, 1 Abstention (Mr. Tanner).

6) Presentation by Mortlake in response to KB's presentation.

- h. Mr. Breen presented information regarding the history of the ambulance service in Brooklyn as well as current response data.
 - i. Per Mr. Breen, KB had provided ambulance service to the Town of Brooklyn until, in the judgment of the leaders of the town at the time, the response times became "excessive" in the late 1980's.
 - ii. In the interest of patient care and in the town's best interest, Mortlake Fire Company started providing ambulance service. The first call was 10 July 1990.
 - iii. On the issue of Mutual Aid, Mutual Aid is provided to Brooklyn by various providers as well as Mortlake provides mutual aid to surrounding towns.
 - iv. Until 2007, the ambulance service was 100% volunteer, 24/7. Mortlake's call volume was in the top 2 volunteer ambulance providers in the region. The response area included, for time, both the towns of Brooklyn and Pomfret.
 - v. In 2007, Mortlake began contracting with a vendor to provide paid ambulance crews from the hours of 6am to 6 pm, 7 days a week.
 - vi. Chief Breen indicated that it is the belief of Mortlake that 24/7 paid staffing is an eventuality facing the town.
 - vii. In 2007, Mortlake first asked the Town to subsidize the funding of the paid staff. The intent being to provide monies to ensure the vendor is paid early in the fiscal year while ambulance revenues were low.
 - viii. In 2008, the total combined Mortlake funding request made to the town (Ambulance, Fire and Safety) was approximately \$262,000. In 2012, that request was approximately \$212,000.
 - ix. Each year, the Mortlake Ambulance has returned to the town a sum of money which represents excess funding.
 - x. The amount returned each year has decreased which is consistent with the intent of reducing the subsidy request from the town over time.
 - xi. On the issue of Response Times – The main issue is timeliness of response. Chief Breen indicated that Mortlake's average response time

would be consistently less than what KB could provide from Westcott Road in Danielson.

- xii. Chief Breen expressed his opinion that the 2nd and 3rd Crew calls to Brooklyn, should KB be the sole ambulance provider, would have less priority than the 2nd and 3rd Crew calls to Killingly, thereby affecting response time to Brooklyn.
- xiii. This issue is more than a “Dollar and Cents” issues.
- i. Mr. Gauthier stated:
 - i. Everyone appreciates the efforts of the Mortlake Fire Company.
 - ii. Mr. Gauthier then accused Chairman Lee that he “Started This!” “This” being the discussion ambulance service in the Town of Brooklyn.
 - iii. When asked by Chairman Lee what it was the Mr. Gauthier was stating, Mr. Gauthier indicated that apparently Chairman Lee made an off the cuff comment that had “gotten back to KB” and that Mr. Gauthier “was called on the carpet” to respond. When asked by Chairman Lee what the remark was, Mr. Gauthier was either unable or unwilling to recall the alleged comment.
 - iv. Mr. Gauthier stated that the quality of care provided by Mortlake was not being questioned.
 - v. Mr. Gauthier inquired of Chief Breen as to what was going to happen in the future.
 - vi. Chief Breen stated that he foresaw the potential for paid ambulance staff 24/7 within the next 2 years or so. However, the goal was to sustain a viable volunteer service as long as possible.
 - vii. Mr. Gauthier thanked Chief Breen for his time.
- j. Mr. Tanner inquired as to where do we go from here?
- k. Mr. Gauthier inquired as to whether there was a contract between Mortlake and the Town of Brooklyn to provide ambulance service.
 - i. Mr. Otto advised there is no contract.
- l. A general discussion as to whether the Board of Fire Commissioner’s has authority to review the issue.
 - i. Chairman Lee read the town ordinance outlining the duties of the Board of fire Commissioners.
 - ii. Mr. Otto:
 - 1. Mortlake has the authority to provide ambulance services as granted by the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, known as the Primary Service Area Responder (PSAR). The state statute clearly defines a process for making a change to the PSAR.

2. It is feasible that issue of Ambulance Service comes under the purview of the Board of Fire Commissioner
 3. We should not simply be focused on money.
 4. We should not do anything that has the effect of reducing the number of responders in town.
 5. We should look to keep the resource in town and keep volunteers as viable as long as possible.
- iii. Mr. Ramos:
1. Concerned with the quality of care, not the money involved.
 2. In agreement with Mr. Otto.
- iv. Mr. Soler:
1. It would appear to be an uphill battle to prove to the state that another service is capable of providing the same quality of service as is currently being provided.
- v. Mr. Gauthier:
1. As a First Responder, he has experienced times where he has had to wait for an ambulance.
 2. He believes the question of the Board's authority remains at issue.
- vi. Mr. Otto:
1. The future budget presentations should include a discussion as to the cost and quality of EMS service to the town.
 2. Mortlake should put together a general timeframe for its vision of the future of the ambulance service as it relates to staffing.
 3. KB should be provided a letter thanking them for their presentation and the information provided will be taken under advisement.
- m. Motion made by Mr. Otto authorizing the Chairman to send a letter to KB Ambulance thanking them for the presentation and the information provided will be taken under advisement. Motion seconded by Mr. Ramos. Motion passed unanimously.

7) Budget Preparation (Funding Requests)

a. Discussion of the Timeline

- i. Generally expected that the 3rd Wednesday in March will be the budget presentation to the Board of Finance.
- ii. Request of the Fire Departments to make their presentations to the Board of Fire Commissioners on 12 February 2013.
- iii. Mr. Gauthier:

1. Can each department simply request a flat 3% increase over last year's request?

iv. Mr. Otto:

1. It is no feasible to make such a request given the current fiscal environment.
- b. Chairman Lee suggested that some consistency be adhered to in the presentations and requested specific information be included such as some demographic information as well as an accounting of all public monies spent in the last 2 years.

Note: at 20:30 hours, Mr. Soler departed the meeting.

- c. Mr. Otto made a motion authorizing the Chairman to put together a budget presentation format to be reviewed by the First Selectman, for use by each Fire Department. Mr. Tanner seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

8) Capital Plan

- a. Chairman Lee suggested that the Fire Chiefs review the Capital Plan to ensure that it is current.

9) Other Business

- a. Mr. Otto made a motion to add Public comment to the meeting agendas at both the beginning and at the end of the meeting. Seconded by Mr. Lee.

i. Discussion

1. Mr. Gauthier recommended only having it at the beginning of the meeting.
2. Mr. Ramos approved of having it at both the beginning and end of the meeting.
3. Mr. Tanner advised that most commission meeting only have one Public comment section at the beginning of the meeting.

ii. Motion Passed, 3 in Favor, 2 Opposed (Mr. Tanner and Mr. Gauthier)

- b. Chairman Lee raised the issue of the Fire Marshall and whether the Board should include some type of reporting from the Fire Marshall as an agenda item.

- i. Mr. Ramos made a motion that the First Selectman provide the Board with a report of the Fire Marshall's activities on a monthly basis. Motion was seconded by Mr. Gauthier. Motioned passed unanimously.

10) Motion to Adjourn made by Mr. Otto, seconded by Mr. Tanner. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 21:00 hours.

Respectfully Submitted,

s/s R. David Lee

R. David Lee

Chair