

Board of Fire Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, November 8, 2023
7:00 pm via Zoom &
Clifford B. Green Memorial Center
Conference Room
Suite 24, 69 South Main Street, Brooklyn, CT

To join this meeting, follow the below instructions:

Join Zoom Meeting

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pwd=alh6K1NkellZL1lLcHJC�klqV3pWOT09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88417693055?pwd=alh6K1NkellZL1lLcHJC�klqV3pWOT09)

Meeting ID: 884 1769 3055

Passcode: 438618

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MINUTES

1. **Call to Order** – Michael Podzaline, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. (19:00 hours).
2. **Attendance:** Michael Podzaline, Chairman; Austin Tanner, First Selectman; Leo Berube; R. David Lee, Board of Finance Liaison; Matthew Alexander, East Brooklyn F.D. Representative; Aimee Genna, Citizen Representative (all present in person). James Soler arrived via Zoom at approximately 7:28 p.m.

Others Present (in person) – Steve Breen, Mortlake Fire Chief; William Skene, East Brooklyn Fire Chief (present via Zoom); J.S. Perreault, Recording Secretary. There were four additional people present in the audience.

Present via Zoom – Jana Aubin; John; Carrie Juhasz; Nemeth; G.I.; Sandy Brodeur; D. Griff; Tom Halley; JR; Glenn; TLC Yard Care; Nick; Mike Snyder.

3. **Approve Minutes**
 - a. **Regular Meeting of October 11, 2023**

Motion was made by A. Genna to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 11, 2023, as presented.

Second by M. Alexander. No discussion.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote (6-0-0). J. Soler was not present at the time of this vote.

4. **Public Comment** – None.

5. **Equipment Discussion**

- a. **Inventory**

Matthew Alexander reported for East Brooklyn:

- Everything is going smoothly.
- Pump certifications tentatively November 21st.
- Joint training with Mortlake.

b. Apparatus

Chief Breen reported:

- The ambulance went back into service on Friday, November 3rd. He had asked QV to create a report to show how many calls had been missed when the second ambulance was not in service. Sixty-two calls were missed from May 27th through November 2nd. He does not know how much was lost in revenues, but he feels that it was quite a bit.
- All of the trucks have been through their upscale service tests and passed. DOT inspections to start next week.

R.D. Lee asked if a release had been signed for a claim for the loss in revenue. He explained that a check would have been issued for repairs and they usually try to get a release signed at the same time. If a release was signed, we may be a challenge to make a claim in the future. Chief Breen does not recall if a release had been signed, but he knows that the check was received and the repairs have been made. He is not sure if they will need to try another route to cover the loss in revenues because he is not sure if it is covered under the policy.

Mr. Lee explained that a claim should be able to be made directly against the at-fault party. He offered to help with calculating the amount for the claim.

6. Department Discussion

a. Recruitment, Retention, Training

Chief Breen explained that, for recruitment, they will push like they did last year. Part of retention would be the tax abatement. Regarding training, they recently had three people pass the Firefighter I Class and two people got their Certificates in RIT training. One Member is enrolled in the EMT Class at this time. One Member is enrolled in Fire 2 at this time. There are a couple of smaller trainings coming up. There was discussion. Chief Breen explained about how there is training coming up (November 30th) involving the use of iPads to sign in on calls, responding on-scene, a good addition to our communications. The iPads will be mounted in both ambulances and ET-190, Rescue-490 and Ladder-190 are already outfitted for the iPads. Regarding two additional iPads, one will be for Service-190 and the other is to be determined.

Mr. Lee asked if anyone has been trained/certified (pump operator, etc.) or if anything has been set up to ensure that the new truck is being used appropriately.

Chief Breen explained nothing formal, but they have done in-house training. A training opportunity is coming up on November 18th to assist with live burns

b. Grant Requests

Mr. Lee stated that the Fire Fighters grant is coming up January 24th and he asked if there were any plans to submit a grant request.

Chief Breen stated that he would like to and he explained about the need for gear and to have extras on hand for new Members. There was discussion. Mr. Podzalne stated that there is new legislation coming that may assist with this.

c. Organizational Vision - See below, Item 6.e.

d. Standard Operating Guidelines – Progress - See below, Item 6.e.

e. Fire Department Self-Assessments – Progress

Mr. Podzalne referred to last month's tabled discussion regarding jurisdiction since he got an unexpected reaction. He wanted to revisit to be sure that everyone is on the same page. He clarified that the intent of the Authority having Jurisdiction is not that anyone other than the Fire Chiefs would dictate how the Organizations operate. He said that it is about funding, expectations and things like that. It is his opinion that it scales down from the Board of Selectmen, Board of Fire Commissioners, Board of Finance, Fire Chiefs.

There was discussion. Chief Breen spoke about varying levels of authority and he stated that he agrees regarding finances/budget, but when it comes to internal policy and procedure/operating on an emergency scene, those types of things, he stated that he disagrees. Mr. Podzalne stated that he agrees and explained that expectations are set by the taxpayers, giving power to the Board of Selectmen/Board of Finance/Board of Fire Commissions to dictate the expectations of the level of service. Chief Breen referred to a question in the Self-Assessment Survey. Mr. Podzalne explained that it is the Standard of NFPA 1720. Mr. Lee explained that we are trying to establish baseline expectations for a volunteer fire department to operate and part of this process is to define what standards we are going to comply with and then, the job of the Boards of Selectmen/Finance/Fire Commissioners is to provide the Fire Departments the resources to meet those standards. Mr. Podzalne read aloud from NFPA 1720, Appendix 131.

There was discussion regarding SOG's. Chief Breen explained that there is a Chiefs' meeting tomorrow night where they will review them.

Mr. Podzalne suggested homework: Going thru Priority Items 1-6 of the checklist.

Mr. Lee asked what the Departments have done about risk analysis and developing pre-fire plans for both major hazards and everyday hazards. Chief Breen explained that they have some, but not all. They can work on it as time goes on. Mr. Podzalne asked about command for dual-responding agencies. Chief Breen explained that we have to define our rules so everyone will know what the expectations are. Matthew Alexander explained that they respect each other's Districts and it's been working well.

J. Soler joined the meeting at 7:28 p.m. via Zoom.

Regarding Organizational Vision, A. Genna suggested that both Departments convey to all members (and outside parties) what they are supposed to be doing, such as a Mission Statement to teach, model and expect the membership to live up to. She encouraged leadership of both Departments to caution their members regarding how they conduct themselves on social media and how they interact with other individuals. Negative interactions are damaging. She said that the jurisdiction authority is about helping the Fire Departments to be the best that they can be. She feels this will help the Departments going forward. Mr. Podzalne voiced agreement and explained that it is not a personal attack on how the organizations are run.

Mr. Lee suggested Items 1-9 as homework for the Chiefs. He said that it is to help to identify what the needs are.

7. Financials

a. Accounts

Mr. Lee asked where the Departments are with the Chart of Accounts.

Chief Breen stated that Mortlake is good and that he knows that Chief Skene is working on it.

Chief Breen stated that he had the quarterly report.

There was discussion regarding when the draft of the budget would be due. To accelerate the process, the first draft to the BoFC will be due in January.

8. Old Business

a. Volunteer Tax Abatement

Fire Lanes is tabled as it did not make it on the Board of Selectmen's agenda.

Volunteer Tax Abatement was discussed by the Board of Finance. They are concerned about knowing whether the information is correct. Mr. Lee explained that, based on the report from Mortlake last month, people responding solely as an ambulance person are getting credit for R-1 calls. Chief Breen explained that he is aware of that on that spreadsheet and he is correcting it. Mr. Lee explained about the timeline and asked for a version of the data using the form from both Fire Departments for next month. Mr. Lee said that the stipend is one element to retention, but he explained that there is no benefit for R-1, so that is the next step to look at.

9. New Business

a. 2024 Meeting Schedule

There was discussion about alternate dates for the February meeting, which would be on Valentine's Day.

Motion was made by M. Podzaline to approve the 2024 Schedule of Regular Meetings for the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m., amending the February meeting from February 14th to January 31st at 7:30 p.m. (to follow the WPCA meeting which is scheduled for the same date at 6:30 p.m.).

Second by R. D. Lee. No discussion.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote (7-0-0).

Chief Breen commented that ISO (Insurance Services Organization) has requested to do a review of call volume/responses, etc. for both Fire Departments and they are working to complete it. He doesn't expect to have any change, up or down, in their rating. Mr. Lee explained about how the ISO rating and NFPA standards work together.

10. Public Comment

- **Mike Snyder** emphasized the importance of financial transparency and accountability of public organizations. He feels there should be yearly audits of revenues and expenditures for public awareness.
- **Carrie Juhasz** commented that background checks should go into the SOG's which she feels will hold everybody to the highest possible standards. She feels that it is a good idea to have a code of conduct and social media policy. She would like to see more financial transparency continue with the merging of the two Fire Departments. She urged that the Fire Lanes Ordinance be solidified and for Fire Marshal accountability.

M. Alexander commented that anyone with a medical license is vetted through the State.

11. Next Meeting – December 13, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

12. Adjournment

Motion was made by L. Berube to adjourn at 8:04 p.m.
Second by R. D. Lee. No discussion.
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote (7-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault
Recording Secretary