

TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
Board of Fire Commissioners
Fire District No. 2
Minutes of the Agenda and Regular Meetings
Wednesday, January 11, 2012

The Monroe Township Board of Fire Commissioners of District No. 2 met at the Monroe Township Fire District #2 & EMS building, 10 Halsey Reed Road, Monroe Township, New Jersey for an Agenda and Regular Meeting.

Chairman Mahler called the meeting to order with a Salute to the Flag at 7:05 pm. Chairman Mahler asked for a moment of silence for all firefighters and military who have died in the performance of their duties.

UPON ROLL CALL made by Commissioner Martin Berkowitz, the following members of the Monroe Township Board of Fire Commissioners of District No. 2 were present: Martin Berkowitz, Glenn Borsuk, Maurice Mahler, Edward Mitnowsky and Lawrence Reisch. **ALSO PRESENT:** Board Attorney Richard J. Shaklee, Esquire, and Val Cier, Recording Secretary. There were no career firefighters present. There was one volunteer/support firefighter present: Ben Vivona. There were three members of the public present: Mike Konowitz, Harold Dower, John Kuehns

Chairman Mahler announced that the meeting was being held in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act, having been published in the April 1, 2011, January 5 and 6, 2012 editions of the newspapers, posted on the bulletin board of the Office of the Township Clerk, and ten public location within the district and notices sent to those requesting such.

AGENDA MEETING

Attorney Shaklee stated the board will have to adopt a resolution that the budget will be read by title only, since it was posted in public places, which alleviates reading the budget in full. After it is adopted, then the board can have a public hearing.

Commissioner Reisch picked up the new ratables for tonight's meeting.

Chairman Mahler asked if there were any corrections to last month's minutes. Commissioners Borsuk and Reisch had corrections to various pages of the minutes.

Chairman Mahler asked the board to review the claims against the board. Commissioner Borsuk questioned bond interest payment. Commissioner Berkowitz stated it's for the building.

Commissioner Reisch questioned the electric bill at Applegarth Station of \$976; Halsey Reed Station is \$875 - less electricity being used at new firehouse. Is it an estimated bill? Commissioner Borsuk will check with the Chief and look at the bill.

7:10pm Jeff Levy arrived.

Chairman Mahler reported a \$600 reimbursement for solar. Regarding the building - there is a leak in the sleeping quarters. Santorini has been sending different roofers and the parts have come in for repair. Still need to do a walk through with Santorini.

7:12pm Charlie Dipeirro arrived

Commissioner Reisch questioned what the board owes Santorini. Chairman Mahler asked Attorney Shaklee to send a note to Santorini on what is owed. Attorney Shaklee stated the board should not owe anything if you have the maintenance bond. Commissioner Borsuk stated the board should have walkthrough soon since warranty ends 2/1/12. The Chief had reported the leak to them and he didn't get a response. Chairman Mahler stated that a note from Attorney Shaklee will spark a response.

Chairman Mahler reported there will be no closed session tonight. On January 23rd is township consolidation meeting. Chairman Mahler would like to have a meeting on January 24th at 5pm. Concerned that those attending are not getting information, only a one sheet of paper when going to the Mayor's office. Attorney Shaklee stated the board will need 96 hours to advertise the meeting. Plan for 5pm on 1/24, a special meeting to discuss ongoing matters regarding township consolidation committee. Action may be taken. Board may go into executive session. Publish at least 96 hours prior to date.

Commissioner Reisch had conversation with manager of Wells Fargo, but the board would lose 15 basis points if we moved our account. Commissioner Reisch is looking at other banks.

UPON MOTION MADE by Glenn Borsuk and seconded by Martin Berkowitz, the agenda meeting was adjourned at 7:23pm.

ROLL CALL: Aye Berkowitz
Aye Borsuk
Aye Mahler
Aye Mitnowsky
Aye Reisch

REGULAR MEETING

Chairman Mahler called the regular meeting to order with a Salute to the Flag at 7:31 pm.

Chairman Mahler asked for a moment of silence for all firefighters and military who have died in the performance of their duties.

UPON ROLL CALL made by Commissioner Martin Berkowitz, the following members of the Monroe Township Board of Fire Commissioners of District No. 2 were present: Martin Berkowitz, Glenn Borsuk, Maurice Mahler, Edward Mitnowsky and Lawrence Reisch. **ALSO PRESENT:** Board Attorney Richard J. Shaklee, Esquire, and Val Cier, Recording Secretary. There were no career firefighters present. There were two volunteer/support firefighters present: Ben Vivona and Jeff Levy. There were five members of the public present: Mike Konowitz, Harold Dower, John Kuehns, Charlie DiPierro, John O'Brien.

Chairman Mahler announced that the meeting was being held in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act, having been published in the April 1, 2011, January 5 and 6, 2012 editions of newspapers, posted on the bulletin board of the Office of the Township Clerk, ten public locations with the district and notices sent to those requesting such.

ADOPTION OF 2012 BUDGET

Attorney Shaklee stated the board will adopt a motion that it will adopt the budget by title only, and the conditions have been met, posted in public places within the district.

UPON MOTION MADE by Lawrence Reisch and seconded by Ed Mitnowsky, a motion was made to adopt the 2012 budget by title only.

Chairman Mahler asked if the public had any questions on the budget. Mr. Cronin asked if there was a change in the volunteer budget from the year prior. Board stated there was no change.

Mr. Dower - What is the % increase in the tax rate from last year? Commissioner Reisch stated last year they paid 20.972 (21) cents -this year 25.628 (25.7) cents, therefore an increase of 4.7 Tenths of a cent (% increase is 22%).

Mr. Konowitz - How does the budget work with the cap? Commissioner Reisch stated the budget is well below 2% cap. With the rate going up 22% will any reserve be going in? Commissioner Reisch said they will use reserve, but much less than last year. We would have been under cap without using reserve. The reserve is used to lower the tax rate.

Mr. Konowitz - How much surplus is being used? Commissioner Reisch stated \$200,000.00 is being used toward budget. How much is left? Commissioner Reisch estimated they should have reserve...about ½ million. Last year district 2 lost \$102 million in ratables.

There are new ratables today. Lost some on utilities and ratable, about \$1.9 million lost.

Commissioner Reisch calculated district 1 lost 6 million based on old ratable figures. (10.9 to 11.1 - 2% increase) District 3 lost 16 ½ million on original figures.

Commissioner Reisch stated when they made the original budget in October, district 2 picked up 24 million in ratables from previous year. With the secondary figures, district 2 lost 60

million from previous figure, so net lost of 35 million from last year's previous ratables. A penny is worth 128,000.00.

John Kumens - What is the cap? Attorney Shaklee stated the most recent cap said the tax levy can only go up 2% from last year's tax levy. Certain things are excluded from (pensions, health benefits, etc). Whatever is left can only go up by 2%

Commissioner Reisch stated last year district 2 lost the most with \$102 million in ratables. In order to offset that amount, the board amended the budget and added fund balances to offset loss of ratables. When you do that you get a cap bank - we saved money and got money toward the cap from last year, therefore board had no problem meeting the cap this year. The \$200k that was put into this year's budget was to save the public an extra a penny and a ½.

Someone in audience mentioned they feel District 3 is taking advantages of taxpayers and they want to move to district 2.

Mr. Dower- How will you handle appeals for tax assessments? Commissioner Reisch doesn't think district 2 will be hurt at all. Chairman Mahler stated each commissioner is a taxpayer; public is present because you are taxpayer. Homes outside PRC will have harder time finding comparables.

Mr. DiPierro-tax is going up due to tax appeals; if you live in communities, a tax increase won't be felt. People outside the communities will feel the tax increase. There is also a 7% increase from board of education.

Commissioner Reisch stated his home in 2006 was worth \$320k; at the time of the assessment it was \$200k. What is township going to do on reassessment? When doing the comparative sale it was \$200k. Today the home is selling at \$150k. Don't feel the gated communities will be hurt. Mr. DiPierro-supply is high; driving price down.

Mr. DiPierro asked if the board puts another \$200k in, the tax rate will go down to 24 cents. Commissioner Reisch stated those are restricted funds and the board needs working capital and has funds to cover cost.

Mr. Vivona-Who pays for the hydrants in the adult communities? Chairman Mahler stated the district pays for those.

Mr. Kuens stated the fire district shouldn't have to pay for hydrants. Can it be deducted on income tax? Chairman Mahler stated a better question to ask, when mayor and township took over hydrants, where did the \$45 million go.

Mr. DiPierro-District 2 has a lot of non-sewer and no hydrants and still paying in district 2. Dist 2 has \$210k in the budget for hydrants.
Chairman Mahler closed the public portion of the meeting.

UPON MOTION MADE by Lawrence Reisch and seconded by Ed Mitnowsky, a motion was made to adopt the 2012 Budget.

ROLL CALL: Aye Berkowitz
Aye Borsuk
Aye Mahler
Aye Mitnowsky
Aye Reisch

MINUTES

Chairman Mahler asked for a motion on the Minutes.

UPON MOTION MADE by Glenn Borsuk and seconded by Martin Berkowitz, a motion was adopted to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2011 agenda and regular meetings, as amended.

ROLL CALL: Aye Berkowitz
Aye Borsuk
Aye Mahler
Aye Mitnowsky
Aye Reisch

CLAIMS AGAINST THE BOARD

Chairman Mahler asked the board to review the claims against the board.

Commissioner Reisch read the report:

General Operating Claims Total	\$193,433.71
Capital Project Claims Total	\$0.00
Net Payroll Claims Total	\$69,709.19
Total Claims Against the Board	\$263,142.09

December 15, 2011 - January 11, 2012

UPON MOTION MADE by Lawrence Reisch and seconded by Glenn Borsuk, claims against the Monroe Township Board of Fire Commissioners of District No. 2 were approved in the amount of \$263,142.09.

ROLL CALL: Aye Berkowitz
Aye Borsuk
Aye Mahler
Aye Mitnowsky
Aye Reisch

TREASURER'S REPORT

Chairman Mahler asked for the treasurer's report.

Commissioner Reisch reported the following as of January 11, 2012

Hudson City Savings Bank:

Unrestricted Funds	\$740,347.67
Restricted Funds	\$245,989.83
Capital Projects	\$58,054.41
Cash on Hand	\$170.00
Total Balance	\$1,044,561.91

Commissioner Reisch reported that the quarterly check was deposited.

BUILDING REPORT

Chairman Mahler asked Attorney Shaklee to have letter sent to Santorini for the leak, and will have a walk through by the end of the month. Received a \$650 solar rebate and deposited it.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman Mahler asked for the correspondence to be read. Commissioner Berkowitz had no correspondence.

Letter sent to Jason Martin from the board thanking him for taking pictures of board for identification cards.

Letters were sent out to the communities regarding the upcoming elections and request to place 2 election posters in the clubhouse. Posters and postcards were put in the clubhouse.

Chairman Mahler reported on the consolidation committee. Township website has the approved progress update posted. It was also published in the Sentinel and the writer added remarks that were incorrect. Press release had incorrect statements. Township gave press release to the public and the article wasn't true. Chairman Mahler called township administrator.

8:12 pm Gary Fernicola arrived

Mr. Cronin had asked the board about writing a letter to thank those that evacuated old firehouse during Hurricane Irene some time ago, but those firefighters did not receive a letter of thanks.

Commissioner Berkowitz thought Chief Carbin was writing a letter of thanks to those that helped during Hurricane Irene. Commissioner Borsuk will check with Chief Carbin.

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU REPORT

Chairman Mahler asked for the Fire Prevention Report.

Commissioner Borsuk reported on behalf of Chief Carbin the following:

- Training on recertification
- New inspections haven't started
- 53 calls for December
- Insurance meeting being held on the 18th
- Met with FEMA to get reimbursement for hurricane related expenses

Chairman Mahler stated that the Mayor and Wayne Hamilton are some officials asking FEMA for reimbursement. Police put in ½ million and MUA was 1.3 million FEMA reimbursement for time worked - very disappointing taking from the government when it's their job.

Mr. Konowitz reported District 3 got \$27,000 from FEMA.

Mr. Konowitz asked how many total calls district 2. Commissioner Borsuk reported 828 last year. Audience stated district 3 had close to 2000 last month.

Chief Carbin provided a 5 and 10 year plan. Commissioner Borsuk will review with Chief Carbin on it next week, and the 5 year plan was met (from 2005).

APPLEGARTH VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

President Dennis Cronin reported:

- New firefighter from South Jersey - fully qualified
- Volunteers in process of redoing the building. Want to fix insulation in building to cut down on the heating. The lighting in building is old - the fixtures are old. They are considering the items that cost rather than luxury items.
- Firehouse gets free cable from Comcast. Would like to get basic cable so they can get the weather channel. It's \$35/month.

Commissioner Mahler stated they can get weather on computer. Commissioner Reisch stated this is a petty item of \$420 per year which the volunteers can pay. Mr. Cronin said the agreement was board to pay all bills. Commissioner Reisch stated there is no agreement to pay all bills and that goes back to Tom Byrne. Commissioner Reisch stated the volunteers can afford to pay. Chairman Mahler asked Commissioner Borsuk to make a motion. Commissioner Borsuk doesn't want to make the motion; Commissioner Berkowitz would like to think about it; Commissioner Reisch won't make a motion.

Mr. Cronin states the board pays for internet/phone. Commissioner Mitnowsky is in favor of it, Chairman Mahler is in favor of it.

Mr. Konowitz-does career have internet and cable? Chairman Mahler stated the career does have it.

Mr. Cronin stated the younger guys would like to stay at firehouse.

UPON MOTION MADE by Ed Mitnowsky and seconded by Maurice Mahler, for the board to pay for Comcast Cable at Applegarth Station.

ROLL CALL: Aye Berkowitz
Recues Borsuk
Aye Mahler
Aye Mitnowsky
Nay Reisch

Commissioner Reisch requested checking statement for volunteers. Mr. Cronin will give audit for 2011 for finances when the CPA is done.

Commissioner Reisch stated an agreement was made between Tom Byrne and Commissioner Reisch as a verbal agreement on behalf of the board. Many years ago the board was paying for everything - \$42k/year and it was too much. The board made an agreement to pay a stipend of \$1750/month. Since the building needed repairs, the board paid for that expense. The agreement was the board would make sure there was \$5000 in their checking account. The board gives the volunteers \$21k per year. Commissioner Reisch is voting no on principle. The volunteers can afford it and they should have cable. The board made sure the volunteers were never short on their account. The volunteers own the building and gain from it. What would happen if board doesn't want the building anymore and the volunteer home is in the new firehouse?

Commissioner Reisch stated that the volunteers get \$21k, and the board makes sure volunteers are not short of money. The board just paid \$26k on the new apron at firehouse. What if you decide you want to sell the building or the township doesn't want it. Big numbers, the board doesn't vote against it, small numbers are petty and the volunteers can pay for it.

Mr. Cronin stated the concrete pad was completed in 2009 for \$26k. Who did walkthrough of project? Commissioner Borsuk and Mark Davis did the walkthrough.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mr. Dower-Thanked commissioners for approving the cable for volunteers. Suggestion, since no working document, it may be beneficial to do that. The ground rules change and parameters are unknown. Chairman Mahler stated there was a committee of Commissioner Reisch and Commissioner Berkowitz to meet with volunteer Mark Davis. It didn't take place because of the consolidation. Mr. Dower - will board pick up meeting after consolidation. Chairman Mahler stated they will reschedule that meeting/

Commissioner Reisch stated there is an average of 5 firefighters meeting quota every month. Mr. Cronin stated they have top notch volunteers. Board agrees and wants more volunteers to meet quota.

Mr. Cronin-verbal agreement between the board and Tom Byrne (representing volunteers) The information Tom had as president did not get passed down through the ranks, to make board aware.

Mr. Dower-mentioned his OPRA request-he doesn't want signature of voters, but wants to know those who voted in last year's election. Attorney Shaklee stated there is no problem with that. Chairman Mahler asked if Chief Carbin provided. Chief Carbin gave a list of all voters and every signature line was blacked out, so Mr. Dower doesn't know which voters actually voted. Mr. Dower wants the list of all the voters that voted. He would like to see who voted in case he runs again.

Chairman Mahler stated that in Concordia, 48% don't vote, 28% in Clearbrook and approximately 30% in Encore don't vote. Even with list of names, the folks may not be available. Chairman Mahler will have Attorney Shaklee call Chief Carbin to provide voters from 2011.

Mr. Kuehns recommended getting bundle services for phone/TV/Internet from fios/Comcast. Mr. Cronin will look into what is available. The volunteers wanted to save the money to wait until the TV was up and working. They are taxpayers and are looking to save the district money so they don't mind waiting until TV is ready.

Mr. DiPierro asked if district 2 charges for mutual aid or turnpike. Chairman Mahler advised the district doesn't charge. Mr. DiPierro stated district 3 charges the turnpike for calls. Commissioner Borsuk clarified that if you were a contract fire department for the turnpike, you charge.

Commissioner Reisch asked why the board can't charge the turnpike. Commissioner Borsuk advised that it used to work that if you were a contract fire department you got \$25/apparatus; not sure if they are charging or getting money entitled through a contract. Mr. DiPierro stated that Chief in district 3 submits a bill for fuel/labor/etc and mutual aid.

Mr. Konowitz stated that turnpike has different fees: one for car/fire; extractions are another fee; hazmat another fee. Tanker going out to mutual aid they were refunded when they went to Woodbridge.

Commissioner Borsuk stated there is no way fire departments should be charging for mutual aid and Chief Carbin would agree. It goes against the nature of the fire service. The turnpike is worth collecting if they still have the fee schedule. District 2 is not primary fire department for turnpike.

Mr. Vivona mentioned that 5 years ago, state trooper signed cards for fire apparatus responding to turnpike for payment to be received. Mr. Cronin questioned if District 3 goes out to turnpike and requires district 2 assistance, would they submit a bill for both districts responding and keep the funds for both.

Mr. Kuehns mentioned that district 3 sent a tanker as mutual aid twice (Woodbridge) and was paid. Commissioner Borsuk stated in Woodbridge, it was a truck flipped over. Insurance coverage from that carrier is paying vs. turnpike scenario. District 2 would pursue loss of equipment, but not for manpower. Our insurance would pay for loss, and go after their insurance company.

Commissioner Reisch brought up Mr. Cronin's point -if district 3 goes to turnpike and district 2 assists, does district 3 submit the bill for district 2 trucks and keep funds? District 2 should get the funds. Chairman Mahler suggested to OPRA district 3's runs to turnpike calls when dist 2 is called. Commissioner Borsuk will talk to Chief Carbin.

Mr. DiPierro stated the tanker was purchased through a county grant. When they go to turnpike, district 2 is backup and district 3 is collecting, district 2 gets nothing. Commissioner Reisch stated the board doesn't expect to be paid as backup, but if district 2 responds to turnpike, the district should be paid. Mr. DiPierro stated district 3 will probably deny OPRA.

Mr. Cronin asked if we can submit a request to district 3 for payment when district 2 goes to call on turnpike. Chairman Mahler stated the board can and it's a good idea.

ADJOURN

Chairman Mahler asked for a motion to adjourn.

UPON MOTION MADE by Glenn Borsuk and seconded by Lawrence Reisch, the meeting was adjourned.

ROLL CALL: Aye Berkowitz
Aye Borsuk
Aye Mahler
Aye Mitnowsky
Aye Reisch

MARTIN BERKOWITZ
Board Secretary
MAURICE MAHLER
Chairman

NOTE: Appendixes can be obtained upon request from the Board Secretary.

PREPARED BY: Val Cier