

PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE
FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1
144 NEWTON STREET
South Hadley, Ma 01075

Minutes January 02, 2024

Location: South Hadley Library - 2 Canal Street, South Hadley, MA 01075

Call to order: 4:30 pm by Bruce Perron

Attendance: Bruce Perron, Ken Beliveau, John Wojciechowski, Kari Scytkowski

Bruce notes there will be a gentleman calling in remotely from PSC Consultants that are doing the chief search.

Chief's Report

December 2023:

34 fire calls

212 EMS calls

End of year totals:

624 fire calls

2430 EMS calls

3054 total

November 2023 inspections:

14 businesses

21 smoke/CO

3 lockbox

Events

Conducted through Fire Prevention. They worked with TRIAD and Council on Aging to deliver holiday stockings, and they delivered over 100 boxes of sand for Sand for Seniors program.

Public Safety Consultants Presentation

Presentation by Wayne Sampson from Public Safety Consultants. He has been hired to assist in the process of finding a fire chief. They looked at the by-laws of the Prudential Committee, took standard job announcements they have used in other communities, and tried to combine those two things. He notes they have made sure to honor the by-laws' requirements. Requirements were kept more general to meet the by-laws' requirements that internal candidates be reviewed. Each candidate will be looked at individually, including their training and experience. They have until January 15th to submit a resume to him. They will review the resumes and then contact the candidate. The by-laws stipulate that more than one candidate must apply, otherwise the committee has the option to go outside of the internal candidates. Candidates are asked to notify Wayne via email. Afterwards, they will do an interview of the candidates. Then, they will do an

assessment center, where they are put through an entire day of scenario-based exercises so they can demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities to handle situations specific to the position of fire chief. They design the exercises to be as community-specific as possible.

Bruce asks if 12 days will be enough time to get the applications in. Wayne notes that for internal candidates, that is fine. He explains that candidates can let him know via email if they need more time.

Discussion about internal vs. external candidates.

Bruce says he would like a 2-week window for publication. Wayne says that is fine.

They will amend the date on the letter to the 24th. Wayne will send an updated copy.

John motions to accept the letter posed by Wayne for an application deadline of January 24, 2024. Ken seconds. Unanimous.

Bruce asks if Wayne is posting or if they are posting. Wayne explains they must post it in town and in the station. He recommends that the chief personally hands a copy to each eligible candidate.

Wayne also notes that he will need a point of contact (for information only, not decisions) other than the interim chief, given that he may be an internal candidate.

John wants to clarify whether the posting will go out somewhere that it will reach a larger scale of applicants. Wayne typically recommends reaching out to the Fire Chiefs Association. The current chief can contact their secretary. It could be state-wide or only Western MA chiefs.

John notes that he would like to do the broader posting.

Questions

Member of the public notes that in the previous meeting, Wayne talked about having input from the community in interviews, and she did not hear that tonight. Bruce notes that is for the assessment part, which is after this part of the process. Wayne notes he can set up a Zoom meeting for next week for the public to express any concerns they have.

Member of the public asks if strong chief/weak chief and what the bylaw says has been discussed. Wayne notes that whether a chief is a strong chief or a weak chief makes no difference in the assessment center.

Member of the public asks if she is understanding that the Board and/or community residents are responsible for publishing the job application or job announcement for fire chief. Wayne explains it is the town's responsibility to post the announcement, and where it is posted is up to the Board.

Wayne notes that he can schedule a public Zoom conference. He suggests Wednesday, January 10th from 5pm-6pm. He also notes that if someone cannot make that meeting, they can send him an email. Wayne will send the Zoom information and his email address to the Board in an email.

Review and Approve Minutes

John motions to accept the minutes for the meetings of 3/22/23, 7/12/23, 12/15/22, 05/26/23.
Ken seconds. Unanimous.

Ambulance Adjustment

John motions to make an ambulance adjustment for November 2023 for the sum of \$236,970.62.
Ken seconds. Unanimous.

Member of public asks the Board to explain what that is for. Captain Stark explains that is money they are making every month that they are not able to collect.

Clerk / Treasurers Report

Kari notes that free cash was certified at \$871,338.00. She also notes that she passed out a paper about MetLife Vision. She is asking them to offer it to the district, starting with open enrollment. It is a completely optional plan. Currently, vision is embedded in the medical coverage, and it only allows for 1 eye exam every 2 years. MetLife is offered through the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust, is 100% paid by employees, and they will be able to get eye exams every year and eyeglasses coverage. The cost for employee only is \$6.57/month, employee + 1 is \$13.17/month, employee + child(ren) is \$11.14/month, and employee + family is \$18.37/month.

Bruce would like an investigation to be done and the union to be consulted.

Kari would like to know about the schedule for the assistant clerk/treasurer. Bruce asks if Kari has developed a schedule. Kari notes that yes, the assistant comes in 3 days/week, but Kari does not have 20 hours/week of work for her. Kari is looking for 1 day per week at around 5 hours on average, depending on the workload in a given week. Bruce asks if she has created a projected schedule. He notes that if they brought the assistant in at 20 hours/week, is there anything else going on in the district that they might need clerical work for. He notes they could go to other department heads and ask if there is anything they feel they are lacking in or need help with, because it looks like they might be able to pick up a couple hours with the assistant. Kari notes then it would no longer be an assistant clerk/treasurer. Bruce says it could be under the clerk part of the job. Bruce also notes the Board would need to know what Kari is recommending. Kari explains that she went through the payroll files all the way back through 2005. She notes that at that time, that assistant worked about 3-8 hours/week. In 2008, the next assistant worked about 20-25 hours/week. The next assistant started at about 12 hours/week in 2012. The same assistant + treasurer duo went to 5 hours/week from 2016-2022. Bruce asks if that was Kari, and she says yes. He asks about her schedule at the time. Kari explains that she worked Monday and Tuesday or Monday and Wednesday. She said she would go in at 3:30 when she got out of her other job, she worked about 5 hours/week, and if she got everything done on Monday then that is the only

day she would work. Bruce asks if she checked the payroll records for that. Kari said that 5 hours was the average and her schedule.

Bruce confirms that Kari's need for an assistant is down to 5 hours/week. Kari says on average, yes. She notes the 20 hours/week requirement is not necessary or fiscally responsible. She says they should not have to find work for someone to do.

Bruce asks if she wants to adjust it from 20 to 5 hours, in house, for her. Kari says yes. Bruce asks if she wants a variance (for example, 5-8 or 5-10). Kari says 5-8 is fine, but if they can do it in 4 hours, then they are done in 4.

John notes he just wants to come to a conclusion and give Kari the ability to regulate the assistant's hours as needed, within her office. John notes that if extra work needs to be done by other people when we get a new fire chief, if he feels he needs to come to the Board for an assistant to do some work for ambulance, then they correct it then.

Bruce asks what Kari gets for vacation time/sick time. Kari notes that because her position is elected, she does not get vacation or sick time tracked like a traditional employee.

Bruce says he would like to check with the current chief and next chief if there is any need coming up. John motions to let Kari adjust the clerk/treasurer assistant's hours as needed by her and let her have judgement over what the hours are as she needs them. Ken seconds. John and Ken vote in favor, and Bruce votes no. Motion passed 2-1.

Kari asks when it will be effective, and Bruce notes it would have to be effective at the end of the current pay period.

Interim Chief Salary Discussion

Bruce asks Kari what the current chief's salary is. She says it is around \$117,000.00 with holidays and vacation. Captain Stark notes that he is still technically under the union, and that the benefits he has under the contract still apply. He says the only difference they would be discussing is in hourly rate and notes that currently, Chief Authier's rate is \$52.56. John says that he would lose the capability of overtime.

Bruce suggests continuing the existing chief rate for the interim chief. John motions to make the interim chief's position salary be equivalent to the outgoing chief at \$52.56 until a new chief is hired. Ken seconds. Unanimous.

Discussion about the ambulance stipend Captain Stark is receiving. Captain Stark explains that he has been working on training Captain Walsh in the ambulance coordinator position.

Preliminary Budget Discussion

Bruce notes that John mentioned wanting to make a small change in doing the budget. John explains that people wanted a breakdown of line items, and he would like to have a better explanation. Kari gave the Board a sheet with the previous year's expenditures, what was

appropriated for 24, what the current expenditures are, what the budget request is, and the percent difference from what was appropriated last year and what is being asked for this year.

Bruce would like to dedicate a meeting for each budget page, including discussion and finalizations. John notes that they will be losing Ken in the election process, and he would like to have Ken involved in the entire budget process. Ken notes that it might be better getting the new person in rather than trying to fit him into all of the budget discussion meetings.

Bruce says that they could take Kari's and Stark's projections and do a full comprehensive budget review for the next meeting.

Brief discussion about insurance rates.

Brief discussion about legal line item.

Bruce asks Captain Stark to give the Board his numbers so that they can do a comprehensive overview of the budget for the next meeting.

Discussion about the format of the budget sheets. Bruce notes he would like the line item to be labeled by number.

Bruce notes that for line items like health and life insurance and Medicare, they don't know what those numbers will be. Bruce asks if Kari projects they will be a little higher or lower than 24. Kari guesses they will be the same or lower since there will be some retirements happening.

Discussion about salary line items.

Kari asks the Board for their numbers for the town employees' salaries. Bruce suggests if there is a question about any projected numbers, keep them the same for the preliminary discussion.

Discussion about free cash and budget increases.

John motions to accept the extension of a half hour for tonight's meeting. Ken second. Unanimous.

New Business

No new business

Status of Ambulance

Captain Stark notes that it is likely going to be May.

John motions to adjourn. Ken seconds. Unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 6:59pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Shauna Condon, Assistant Clerk/Treasurer