

FIRE DISTRICT #1 PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, December 19, 2019 – 6:30 PM

Meeting Minutes

Prudential Committee Meeting Room

144 Newton Street

South Hadley, MA 01075

In Attendance: PC Chair Bruce Perron, PC Clerk Kevin Taugher, Interim Clerk/Treasurer Ira Brezinsky, Chief Robert Authier, Captain Kurt Schenker, Assistant Treasurer Kari Scytkowski

CALL TO ORDER

Perron called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Taugher moved and Perron seconded to approve the minutes of November 21. Motion carried 2-0

Motion: Taugher moved and Perron seconded to approve the minutes of December 3. Motion carried 2-0.

Taugher questioned the action taken at the meeting of December 12, which he did not attend, regarding plowing of the Chief's driveway during a weather emergency. He stated that the item was not listed on that agenda and, therefore would need to be re-voted at a meeting where the item is placed on the agenda. A resident asked what constituted a weather emergency. Perron answered, "Common sense". Perron agreed that the issue would be placed on a future agenda.

CLERK/TREASURER'S REPORT (Complete report on file)

2019 Audit and Management Letter: The FY19 Audit and Management Letter have been received. Included in the ML are comments and recommendations regarding segregation of duties, tax accounts receivable, and weekly versus biweekly payroll. Segregation of duties is an ongoing issue that affects most, if not all, districts similar to District 1.

While MGL requires segregation of duties for cities and towns (i.e. separate accounting and treasury departments), this is not a requirement in districts. The procedures that have been established by the District over a long period of time do a reasonable job of simulating the separation required of other municipalities. Generally, the Clerk/Treasurer receives and deposits funds and the Assistant Treasurer records those transactions in the accounting system and reconciles bank and investment statements on a monthly and/or quarterly basis. Additionally, the District now engages in an annual audit as opposed to a bi-annual audit. Auditor Tom Scanlon has been most helpful in providing periodic guidance with accounting tasks that might more typically fall to the Accountant in a city or town.

Regarding account receivable reconciliation, Brezinsky has been in touch with the auditor, Tom Scanlon, and will be addressing this issue.

The management letter makes a recommendation to consider moving to biweekly payroll. Brezinsky agrees with that recommendation. Over the years, biweekly payroll has become more the norm than the exception, both in the public and private sector. There is a significant cost to processing payroll each week, both in terms of the time required by District staff and the fees charged by the District's payroll service. In addition, Brezinsky recommends that the District review all aspects of payroll delivery

including direct deposit, and paper versus online pay stubs and tax documents. The District spent \$13,262 for the payroll service in FY19 and \$4416 so far in FY20. In the coming weeks, Brezinsky plans to investigate opportunities for efficiency and savings and will report back.

The PC agreed to wait until Wojciechowski was able to attend before discussing the auditor's report.

- **Purchase of Chief's Vehicle:** As stated at the special PC meeting of December 12, while use of the Reserve Fund to pay for the shortfall in the New Vehicle account is allowed, it is not the optimal method for payment. Ideally, approval of the additional amount would go back to the District voters in a Special Meeting. Because there was no other business required for a Special Meeting, Auditor Tom Scanlon agreed that use of the Reserve Fund was appropriate. In the future, when appropriating funds for a capital purchase, it would be best to appropriate a reasonable buffer in order to avoid this situation.
- **Clothing Allowance:** Brezinsky updated the PC on the issue of a taxable (versus) non-taxable clothing allowance. In order for a clothing (uniform) allowance to be considered an accountable plan and nontaxable income, the allowance may only be used for clothing and other items that can only be used in the work environment and must be accompanied by receipts presented by employees. The District's practice has been to not require such receipts and, according to IRS regulations, is not considered an accountable plan. In consultation with Chair Perron, Brezinsky contacted Labor Counsel in late August or early September in order to find a resolution to this issue. As of late November, Counsel informed him that he believed he had agreement with the Union. We are waiting for confirmation.
- **Mass DOT Newton Street Resurfacing Project:** When the paperwork for the Newton Street project Mass DOT was picked up by a Mass DOT representative a few weeks ago, he informed Brezinsky that the project is scheduled for Spring 2021, not 2020 as was previously communicated.
- **Preliminary FY21 Budget:** Certain changes have been made to the budget form for FY21. The FY18 and FY19 columns have been changed to reflect actual expenditures as opposed to budgets. FY20 now includes Carry Forward and YTD Expended column. The total Carry Forward and Budgeted amounts added together are what is available for expenditure in FY20. The Additional Appropriation section has been reorganized to separate Stabilization and OPEB Funds, Carry Forward accounts, and Indirect Expenses (retirement and health insurance). The Source of Funds section is being completed for your January meeting.
- **Bylaw Advisory Committee Update:** Most of the bylaws have been redrafted with the exception of any items related to the Chief's role and responsibilities, Chapter 48, Section 42 and 42a.

Motion: Taugher moved and Perron seconded to direct Chair to sign the engagement letter with Scanlon & Associates for the annual audit. Motion carried 2-0.

CHIEF'S REPORT (Complete report on file)

- **Inspections:** Chief Authier reported that there were 50 fire calls and 172 EMS calls from November 1 to December 17. Year to date, there are 526 fire calls and 2171 EMS calls. In addition, he reported 21 November business inspections, 10 smoke/CO inspections, 1 food truck inspection, and no Oil Burner inspections. There were no Certificates of Occupancy issued and there have been 5 lockboxes installed (165 year to date). In December, through the 17th, there were an additional 21 business inspections, 14 smoke/CO inspections, and 5 lockboxes.
- **Community Interactions:** On December 10, 2019, Group C responded to a medical emergency within the District. On arrival, medics were rendering care, when the Departments Carbon Monoxide meters activated. The meters are attached to the medics

1st in bag, which alerted them to a carbon monoxide emergency. Subsequently, 3 patients were transported to the hospital for carbon monoxide illness. There were no CO detectors in the home.

- On December 5, Lt Houle and I, at the request of the Fire House museum staff, toured the facility. We observed “fire grenades”, which after consultation with authorities, were deemed to be a hazard. Members of the State Police Bomb Squad removed the items from the building. SHPD and the DPW assisted us with transport to an offsite area where they could be disposed of.
- On December 6, 2019, Captain Schenker, Lt Houle and I opened 6 bids for the 1999 Ford F 250 with a 8” Fisher plow. The bids ranged from 1,000.00 to 3,800.00. I would ask the board to accept the high bid and award the vehicle and plow to the bidder.

Motion: Taugher moved and Perron seconded to accept the high bid for sale of the 1999 Ford F 250 with an 8” Fisher plow. Motion carried 2-0.

AMBULANCE REPORT AND ADJUSTMENT OF RECEIPTS

Motion: Taugher moved and Perron seconded to approve adjustment of ambulance receipts in the amount of \$186,084.03 for the month of November. Motion carried 2-0.

DISTRICT PRIORITIES

Perron stated that the Fire and Water departments each have their own mission statement and priorities, but there is not an overriding statement of priorities for the District as a whole. He would like to see one adopted, focused on the primary mission, “protect of the Town”. Taugher and Perron agree that development of a District mission statement will guide decisions regarding policies and priorities for each department.

There was an extended discussion regarding shoveling of hydrants. The Chief and Water Superintendent Cyr will revisit plans to clear hydrants in an efficient and cost-effective manner, including discussion with the Town DPW and possibly Town Administrator, relative to robocalls and other communication. Perron floated the idea of purchasing a dedicated piece of equipment to assist with hydrants. The question of whether additional Town or District bylaws are needed was raised. Consensus is that new bylaws are not needed.

PRELIMINARY FY21 BUDGET DISCUSSION

The preliminary budget presentation will wait until the next meeting when all PC members will be present. Taugher asked that the Chief present a report justifying the requested staff increase. He would like to see a financial analysis showing total cost for each new employee, including stipends, benefits, pension, training, as well as any impact on overtime.

NEXT MEETING

The next meetings are planned for January 16 and 30 and February 13, all at 6:30 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

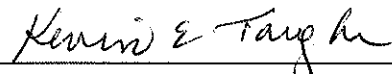
Motion: Taugher moved and Perron seconded to adjourn at 7:35 PM. Motion carried 2-0.

FIRE DISTRICT #1 PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING

Respectfully submitted,

A true copy, attest:

Ira Brezinsky
District #1, Interim Clerk Treasurer


Kevin Taugher, Prudential Committee Clerk

BRUCE PERRON, Chair
KEVIN TAUGHER, Clerk
JOHN WOJCIECHOWSKI, Member

IRA BREZINSKY, INTERIM CLERK TREASURER

Date: December 18, 2019

From: Ira Brezinsky

To: Prudential Committee

RE: Clerk/Treasurer's Report

Dear Prudential Committee Members,

The following is an update on some of my activities in the last month.

Year End Reporting: The District Tax Rate documents were prepared in late November and the tax rate of \$2.36 was set at your meeting of December 3. Following that meeting, all documents were approved by DOR.

2019 Audit and Management Letter: Included on this month's agenda is the FY19 Audit and Management Letter. Included in the ML are comments and recommendations regarding segregation of duties, tax accounts receivable, and weekly versus biweekly payroll. Segregation of duties is an ongoing issue that affects most, if not all, districts similar to District 1.

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District voters in a Special Meeting. Because there was no other business required for a Special Meeting, Auditor Tom Scanlon agreed that use of the Reserve Fund was appropriate. In the future, when appropriating funds for a capital purchase, it would be best to appropriate a reasonable buffer in order to avoid this situation.

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As always, please feel free to call any time with any questions or if you need any further information.

Best,
Ira