

PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE FIRE DISTRICT #1
144 Newton Street
South Hadley, MA 01075

Prudential Committee REGULAR Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: August 15, 2018

Location: Fire District Headquarters, 144 Newton Street

This session is being recorded

Call to Order: 6:30 p.m.

Prudential Committee Members Present: Michael Wozniak, Chairman (MIW)
 Kevin Taugher, Clerk
 Bruce Perron, Member

Other attendees: Monica Walton (MW) Kurt Schenker (for Chief Authier)

Call to order

- Signing of warrants authorizing payroll and expense payments
- Review and approval of minutes of meetings
 - Regular meetings of 6/6, 6/21, and 6/25: Moved: BP Second: KT Approved: 3-0
- Report and recommendation for adjustments of ambulance receipts
 - The ambulance receipts adjustment for the month of June 2018 was \$161,429.63. KT moved to adjust ambulance receipts by the amount of \$161,429.63. BP seconded. Motion approved 3-0.
 - The ambulance receipts adjustment for the month of July 2018 was \$95,550.14. KT moved to adjust ambulance receipts by the amount of \$95,550.14. BP seconded. Motion approved 3-0.
- Update on Opioid lawsuit
 - MW has sent an email from KP Law. She has emailed the individual regarding what information is required from the District to track expenses. The individual has not responded to MW's request.
 - KT said that it's no extra work for the PC, but it could be a lot of work for the people collecting the data. KT asked if we sign up, can we drop out if we determine there is too much effort involved to collect the data required to document a claim from the District.
 - MIW asked about how it affects our [health] insurance rates. MW said that she learned from the Hampshire Insurance Trust that HIT was not a good fit for the lawsuit.
 - KT suggested that MIW contact Mike Sullivan, SH Town Administrator, to get MS's perspective on what the Town will have to generate to make a claim.
 - MW will follow up and call for the information.
 - MIW will add to the agenda for the next meeting.

- Review of purchasing policies and procedures and paying bills
 - MW said that in-depth discussions with Chief Authier have been ongoing, and that once a mutually acceptable policy was set, it may require tweaking down the line to fit it in properly.
 - MIW said that he had given the Chief information regarding a program Rocky's Ace Hardware had for purchasing, as well as Staples.
 - MW said that Staples had already contacted the District, but that there was a fee associated with that program. MIW said that the District may save money in the long run. MW sent the email to the Chief and Jeff Cyr, but MW has not heard back from either of them.
 - MIW said that Staples program enables you to pick a number of items used on a regular basis. MW said there's a lot to it and has talked in depth with RA about the program. The Fire Station gets housekeeping supplies elsewhere, and Staples could bid on that. MW said that they would sign up for that.
 - KT said that in summary, MW is working on a purchasing policy and will report back to the PC when it is ready to go. MW said that the policy would include purchase orders as well.
 - KT asked if it was correct to say that RA was the chief procurement officer. MW confirmed that he was. MW said that one part of the policy would be for other individuals to be allowed to issue a P.O., but not approve it, so that P.O.'s are being issued before the items are purchased, and not afterwards. They would have to be approved by RA. MW says they are working on the policy to incorporate this type of process.
- OSHA training, creation of the position of Town wide Public Safety Officer
 - MIW spoke with Mike Sullivan regarding OSHA training and determined that the Fire District is no longer exempt from OSHA requirements. Mike Sullivan suggested that there be a town-wide position of safety officer to provide guidance on conforming with the OSHA requirements. MIW didn't know now this would work out.
 - KS said that each department should police themselves, and not to waste money on instituting a new position. KS said there may be exemptions for Fire, but OSHA and the MA fire academy are working on this now. KS said that the insurance carriers traditionally review activities for OSHA compliance and provide guidance on corrective actions.
 - KT said that in any event, the law has taken effect, compliance is required for both the fire and water departments, and part of this will be training. For compliance, we must ensure that we are actively developing a compliance plan. Compliance will require we have someone trained in OSHA requirements as they pertain to the District operations.
 - KT said that we should ask the Chief to come back to the PC with a compliance plan, and to report back to the PC at the next meeting. KT also asked that MIW contact the Water Commissioners to advise them of what the PC was doing, and to ask them for their plans.
 - MW said that she had forwarded information on a training seminar for municipalities on OSHA requirements to both RA and Jeff Cyr. MW said that she believes RA has signed up to attend this seminar.
 - MIW said he would follow up with RA, and then go from there.

- Policy change on collecting fees for ~~inspections~~ all fire permits
 - MW is working on a cash handling policy for the fire department. She has had the draft plan reviewed by district counsel, and by RA, and has sent it to the Water department for their comments. The main point of the new policy is that on January 1, 2019, the District will no longer take cash. MW said that there is no one in the fire department office in the position of taking cash and properly accounting for it. MW said that RA agrees, and that they have met with district counsel. There will be notifications about the new policy mailed out in water bills in October and January, and a notice published in the Town Reminder just before the beginning of burning season, notify real estate associations, and possibly even do a robo-call through the Town notification system.
 - The result of this policy change is that the Fire Department will only accept checks (of any kind) for the fire department fees. There will also be a fee of \$20 for bounced checks, consistent with the current water department policy.
- Voting machine issues – review of email from Michelle Tassinari
 - MIW said there has been a flurry of emails going back and forth on this regarding compliance with MA state voting regulations and how they will affect the concurrent voting for District and Town elections. MIW said that John Scibak will be meeting with the responsible state departments to have a plan in place this Fall, well before the elections next April.
 - MIW said that we have a draft policy from district counsel that looks good to him, but we'll have to wait on the State and John Scibak to get back to us.
- Possibility of putting binding and non-binding resolutions on District Election Ballot
 - MIW said that he thinks it makes sense for us to be able to do that. District Counsel has told MIW that it would require approval by the PC to place a resolution on the election ballot.
 - MW said that district counsel said that there are no provisions in District bylaws to place resolutions on the ballot. MW said that it should be a discussion by the PC, and a decision by the PC to move forward
 - KT said that his interpretation of correspondence from the district counsel was that it was up to a decision of the entire PC regarding whether or not to place resolutions on the ballot before we take any other steps.
 - BP concurred with KT's interpretation, but in addition we must get the election compliance in place first before pursuing decisions on ballot resolutions.
 - MIW said that he feels that if we have special legislation to get approved, why not do it in one fell swoop.
 - KT said that if the proposed resolutions were to deal with meeting the districts, we have a lot more legwork to accomplish before any resolutions should go on a ballot. If we can't advise the voters on the consequences of a merger without details on increases or decreases in costs and services, it would be premature to start the process with a resolution to vote on. Once we have a firm handle on the details of a merger, only then would it be appropriate to approve a resolution to vote on. Any merger decision would have to be decided in a district annual meeting.

- BP said that everyone assumes a merger will save money and would vote to merge based upon savings. If a merger were to cost more, then voters would not be in favor.
- MIW said that District 1 has developed a vision of the merger, and that District 2 has been working on a vision, but that MIW had not seen it yet.
- KT said that we should table this until the PC has a position on any resolution being considered, so that the PC can properly present the consequences of a resolution to the voters.
- MIW said we will table this for now.
- Discussion on procedure for developing a formal review process for the Fire Chief
 - MIW said that he developed the Chief review form after going through four or five different review forms. MIW asked if the PC members had been able to review the form that MIW generated.
 - KT said that it looks like a reasonable approach, and we would have to ensure that goals and objectives have been established. The PC set the goals and objectives back in March 2017.
 - MIW said that he has included that in the process.
 - KT said that it makes sense that we want a formal process, this is a step beyond what we've done in the past, so it's fine with him to proceed with this form. Nothing is going to be perfect. This process is structured in such a way that it can give coaching to the incumbent on what the expectations are.
 - KT moved that we put in force the original copy of the position of fire chief performance evaluation, as provided by Mike Wozniak.
 - MW asked if this process was the evaluation of any chief going forward. MIW confirmed that is the fact.
 - BP expressed a concern that the Chief may be adamantly opposed to portions of the evaluation form.
 - Motion was seconded by MIW. Motion passed, 2-0, one abstention by BP.
 - After the vote, MIW read some comments by the Chief regarding the forms and his responsibility for the Open Meeting Law
- Update on Merger Discussions
 - MIW spoke to a vision report based upon input from RA and his officers, and that the report had not been made public before this meeting.
 - KT noted that discussion of this document in an open meeting makes the report a public document. MIW said he understood that.
 - MIW said that Jeff Cyr asked that after the PC reviewed the report this evening, that MIW make a presentation to the Water Commissioners on this subject.
 - KT asked if this report ties back to the original documents that were initially reviewed by the Chairs of the Fire and Water departments of both districts. MIW said that his goal was to lay out some sort of an actual plan as a goal.
 - KT commented that the plan presented assumes staffing levels of the combined district to more than currently being utilized. Going back on the data already collected, claims have been made that up to 80% of the ambulance calls in District 2 were covered by District 1. If that were the case, then the overlap in coverage is so phenomenal, that the need to add extra staff may not be justified. There were also some indications that the ambulance calls for District 2 includes

those where the ambulance rolls to a fire, because that's how they respond, and that when the first ambulance responded to a call, they call out another crew and that call-out is counted as an ambulance call as well. This is just hearsay, but is why we need the facts.

- KET said another issue was that the breakout between fire and ambulance calls, a total of 800 per year, and estimated "half and half" by the District 2 Chief. Our operation is basically an ambulance service that also provides fire service. It is important to get these numbers accurately and then decide how to manage the needs by the merged department. If District 1 is really doing 80% of the ambulance calls in District 2, then why not take one of the District 1 personnel and move them to District 2 and have 4 personnel in District 1 and 2 personnel in District 2, instead of 5 and 2. KET said that he couldn't go ahead with any of these visions until he sees the details in the report.
- MIW said that in the report, there are 29 total full-time employees, 22 in District 1 and 7 in District 2. In order for the Districts to merge successfully, there must be cost savings primarily from District 2 in the amount of \$250,000 to \$300,000. In order to reach this target, staff must be reduced. Reducing staff by attrition will not produce the savings necessary to accomplish a successful merge. It should also be noted that dispatch costs for District 2 is approximately \$100,000. Options 3 and 4 in the report would have dispatch combined into District 1 operations, assuming the merger takes place, using District 1 radio traffic protocol.
- MIW reviewed other aspects of the report, which outlines four different options to manage both the fire and ambulance services for the entire Town of South Hadley.
- MIW observed that there was \$600,000 of debt remaining on the District 2 fire/water headquarters. There is also a large amount of outstanding debt for the District 2 Water.
- BP asked if District 2 had provided any information to us as requested. MIW confirmed that District 2 had provided information, and that it was forwarded to BP months ago.
- MIW said he spoke with Rick Constant [PC for District 2] and Rick said they were working on their vision.
- MIW said the plan is to share this report tonight, then present it to the District 1 Water Commissioners, then sit down with District 2 when their plan is ready for review.
- KET said that MIW should share this plan with District 2 right now, which may enable District 2 to say they agree with one of the District 1 scenarios or provide them these ideas on how to formulate their vision. Refinements will have to be made once more details are confirmed.
- KET said that the impact of mutual aid will also have to be taken into account.
- There was general discussion on merger efforts of the past, implications of merging the water operations, not having to merge water sources, etc.
- MIW asked how the PC wants to proceed.
- KET said to give this report to District 2 and present the report to the District 1 Water Commissioners.
- Chief's report
 - It was not sent to the PC 48 hours in advance do to issues that the Chair did not want to discuss.
 - KS presented the report covering inspections, fire and ambulance calls, return of the Ladder 5 after loan to Chicopee.

- Medical Control officer at Holyoke Medical Center has resigned but is remaining until a replacement is identified by HMC.
- District 1 had promotional booths at both the Falls Fest and the Safety Fair at E-Ink, paid for with SAFE grant funds.
- The floor reinforcement project is moving along, the reinforcing steel is in place, and the concrete is on hold until the steel is inspected.
- Fuel tanks are inspected in August, including those mounted on pickup trucks, which are inspected by the Fire Department in the town where the truck is garaged.
- New business unforeseen 48 hours or less before this meeting
 - KS said it is time to begin the process to procure a replacement ambulance.
 - KET said that this should be on the agenda for the September meeting.
 - KS said the decision on new vs. demo equipment will be based upon price savings offered for demo ambulances.
 - KS said he intends to trade-in the surplus ambulance as opposed to trying to sell it.
 - Grant applications
 - MIW wanted an update on grant applications
 - KS said that three department individuals were scheduled to attend a grant writing seminar
 - MIW said that his understanding was that the Chief was going to use an ambulance grant application as a template and then put in for some additional equipment.
 - KS said they decided not to pursue the ambulance grant because the District has funds set aside for the purchase, which would likely result in a denial for the grant application.
 - MIW identified marine rescue boat grants, power lift stretcher grant, scuba equipment, and other different grants like an exhaust system for the garage.
 - MIW will add the grant issue for the next meeting.
 - Financials for FY 2018
 - Monica will provide the FY 2018 budget vs. actual report via email.
 - The final numbers (projected free cash, balance in ambulance fund, etc) will be available for the September meeting and will be placed on the agenda.
 - MW will send out new information on OPEB
 - Response to memo from Bresnahan Insurance
 - Consensus not to respond to this memo
- Confirmation of agenda items for future meetings and next meeting date
 - Noted in the minutes above
 - Policy on writing off ambulance receipts
 - Follow up on mutual aid including mutual aid agreement
 - OPEB liability – need to scrub our budgets to free up funds to cover OPEB
 - The next meeting will be September 27, 2018 at 6:30 pm at the fire station.
- Motion to adjourn
 - KT moved and BP seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. Voted 3-0 in favor.
 - Meeting adjourned at 7:41 pm.

Voted and approved by the Prudential Committee on September 27, 2018.

A true copy, attest:



Kevin E. Taugher, Clerk