

NEWTOWN BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

February 24, 2014

Newtown Hook and Ladder

Meeting called to order at 7 p.m.

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Commissioners Present: Burton, Cragin, Goosman, Descheneaux, Jossick, Manna and Nezvesky

Marshals Present: Halstead, Ober, and Frampton

Chiefs Present: Corbo, Ciaccia, Basso, Halstead and Murphy

No opening comments from the chairman.

Minutes:

*Motion: Cragin moved to accept the minutes of January 27, 2014 as presented.*

*Seconded: Nezvesky*

*Descheneaux abstained due to absence at last meeting*

*Motion passed unanimously*

Correspondence to the BOFC:

<u>Date</u>	<u>From/To</u>	<u>Subject</u>
2/12/14	Halstead/Manna	Fire Lanes at 6 Queen Street - Completed
2/20/14	Corbo/Manna	Delay in Purchase of Capital Items

Correspondence from the BOFC – none

Public Participation:

- Marshal Halstead asked why the Chiefs were not notified in advance of the 43% purchasing agent raise. He felt this information should have been communicated to the Chiefs prior to being made public on the website.
  - Halstead reiterated that this information should have been reported back to the Chiefs to keep all information transparent.
  - Halstead also questioned why the budget was \$31K less on the town website when at the November meeting \$ 1,249,939.00 was approved. Halstead’s concern was the board cut the Chief’s budget to fund the purchasing agent’s raise.
- Matthew Beres of Newtown Ambulance was present. He stated his purpose in attending the meeting was to establish a relationship between the town Fire Departments and the Ambulance Corp. He will join more meetings and invited the Fire departments to join the Ambulance meetings.
- Steve Murphy discussed an energy proposal from JK Energy Solutions which, overtime, would reduce the energy costs for Dodgingtown. This will be considered by the Budget Committee.

January Marshals report:

80 calls, 517 incidents and 402 hours worked. \$15 in fees collected.

- Complaint of fireworks on Huntingtown Road
  - Poster contest – Danbury
  - Newtown high school complaint
  - Manna to send letter to Carole Ross to implement the dollar an hour increase for Frampton and Clark.
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Combined Chief's report:

- McCarthy offered mutual training opportunities to the Ambulance Corp.
- District Lines issue – We have no IT person present. Notes were made for changes.

Reports:

Budget no report.

Burton asked Descheneaux to respond to Halstead's concerns raised during public participation.

- Chairman responded that the board determined to give an increase due to the increased workload of the purchasing agent. Incremental increases were not given over the last four years as agreed, so an increase was inserted into the proposed budget.
- Manna reported that the actual increase has not been funded yet.
- Burton stated that he would not take the increase and work additional hours if it is not what the BOFC wants.
- Manna also commented on the budget, that he and the budget chairman met with the First Selectman who requested a zero percent increase. A budget of \$1,215,363.00 was approved at the December meeting. The increase difference from the approved amount and what appears on the town website was inserted by the Finance Director for contractual obligations pertinent to the Fire Marshal's office.

Truck – Jossick reported:

- DOT/Pump Testing nearly complete. Sandy Hook should be finished this week. Botsford's trucks to follow.
- Dodgingtown Command truck fit up. *Strobes and More* have the lowest quote. We are currently in a vetting process with the company.
- Jossick researching a rust inhibitor application that would be applied in the fall to help protect the trucks from the chemicals applied to roadways.
- Waiting on Atlantic-Detroit to start transmission service.

Hydrant – no report

Policies and Procedures: Cragin reported the committee will meet in the future to discuss dated policies and procedures and address next steps.

Purchasing agent report attached.

Burton observations regarding purchasing agent role are attached.

Manna observations:

- The board needs to discuss the purchasing agent role. The role of the purchasing agent cannot be expected to put in more hours for the same stipend.
- The purchasing agent position is not a full time, nor a part time position. It is a stipend position for an individual to fit in their schedule. The current purchasing agent, or future purchasing agent, should not be at the beckon call via cell phone, text and email.

Old Business:

Capital Bid List

*Motion: Descheneaux made a motion to purchase the remaining capital items that were previously approved in the amount of approximately \$42,895 with an approximate surplus in the amount of \$2K.*

*Seconded: Nezvesky*

*Discussion: Burton raised the question of why we are buying titanium halogens when we have only ever bought steel which is standardized. He noted the titanium are more than 4 times as much as steel. Manna commented that even though the budget committee approved them we now know the cost difference and indicated that was not responsible spending of the taxpayer's money. Nezvesky commented they were lighter. When called on, Chief Corbo commented that Hartford Fire had them in service and was critical in saying they were too light.*

*Yay: Nezvesky*

*Nay: Burton, Cragin, Manna, Descheneaux, Jossick and Goosman*

*Motion fails*

*Motion: Descheneaux made a motion that instead of purchasing titanium halogen bars for Botsford Fire and Rescue in the amount of \$2400, that we purchase steel halogen bars in the amount of \$543.75, and allow Botsford to spend the difference on another capital item that is approved by the board, and to allow for Hawleyville's upgrade from the MT 1500 to the MT 2500 in the amount of approximately \$100 creating an approximate \$2K surplus.*

*Seconded: Goosman*

*Nay: Burton*

*Yays: Cragin, Descheneaux, Goosman, Manna and Jossick*

*Abstain: Nezvesky*

*Motion passed.*

Burton reiterated that we should be standardizing our equipment per the Selectman's request, and that making this motion could set a precedent that going forward when something doesn't get approved with the first budgeted amount for a fire department that the fire department will receive the leftover monies when purchasing the item at a lower cost. After some discussion the board agreed this was a special circumstance and would not set a precedence for future purchases.

New Business:

Training requests

*Motion: Nezvesky moved that the board approve training funds in the amount of \$2,827.08 for Botsford Fire and Rescue for three members to attend FF1 class along with text and workbooks.*

*Seconded: Descheneaux*

*Motion passed unanimously*

*Motion: Descheneaux moved that the board approve training funds in the amount of \$289.68 for Dodgingtown for FF1 and 2 textbooks and exam prep book.*

*Seconded: Goosman*

*Motion passed unanimously*

*There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

*Terry Hennessey*

Terry Hennessey  
Secretary

Attachments - 2

NEWTOWN BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

PURCHASING AGENT REPORT

February 2014

For month of January:

- 46 Hours worked
- 103 Emails were received
- 40 Emails were sent
- 21 Purchase Orders were issued
- 100 Phone calls/texts from departments & vendors

Mc Kenney Mechanical has again been working at Hook & Ladder's Firehouse on the heating system. A relief valve blew in one of the units over the ladder truck, causing sludge to spew out. The system was caked with mud so they flushed it out and replaced the valve. Another fan motor was also replaced.

McKenney performed services on all of the oil fired burners at Hook & Ladder, Sandy Hook Main Station, Sandy Hook Substation, Hawleyville, and Botsford.

Gear sizing for Sandy Hook & Hook and Ladder was performed and the gear was ordered. Boot sizing was done at the same time to expedite ordering the boots when the approval is given to order the.

The two gear washing machines and the gear dryer were ordered, as was the generator for Sandy Hook's Substation

Hawleyville is requesting the Board consider upgrading the radios that were approved to purchase at the last meeting. I asked Ernie to discuss this request.

Hook & Ladder is requesting to purchase bail out kits for all members on a deferred billing basis. Perhaps Ray can elaborate.

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## *Comments from Mike Burton*

When I first considered taking over the Purchasing Agent position 7 years ago, I did so because I knew my skill set could be a help to the Fire Departments. I had 2 very good friends on the Board who explained to me the many problems and issues that the board was facing, and we discussed ways that these problems could be fixed. It was immediately obvious that the compensation for the job was ridiculously low, and that the current spending practices could not continue. With a plan for changing these practices in place, I took the job.

When I started, the budget for the year was already spent with two months left in the fiscal year. I was told by Dodgingtown's Commissioner that they had not received their training reimbursements for the last 3 years. I was also told by Hawleyville that they had not received their Capital requests for the past or current year. Dodgingtown had also not received all of their Capital. I went to the Town and successfully made the case for both departments to get what they were due, and to get transfers to finish out the fiscal year.

The next year we instituted many budgeting practices that allowed the Board to stay under budget for the next several years to come. Last year, I spent many long hours convincing the Town Boards to allow us to keep \$100,000 of our unspent monies to fund a much needed project for each department. This is something that was never done before and has benefited everyone here.

While I take great satisfaction in these accomplishments that benefitted the fire departments and the tax payers alike, this job has become increasingly dissatisfying to me. The attitudes of members of some departments have become very demeaning, and it is getting to the point of me questioning why I want to work in an increasingly hostile atmosphere. I point to this recent monthly letter writing campaign as one example. If the effort put into writing these letters to criticize me was used to help the cause, we could all benefit. As to today's letter, NFPA 1851 has mandated gear retirement after 10 years since 2008. I do not write Hook & Ladder's budgets. Perhaps better planning would have avoided the situation they now find themselves in. Maybe they should have focused on a grant for gear rather than the best portables money can buy. NFPA has not mandated retirement for old portables yet.

I think this Board needs to decide what it wants from the Purchasing Agent position. I feel I have elevated the position in the past 7 years, but I feel major changes are again warranted if the Board wants me to stay in this position. When we weren't happy with our daytime response times, we didn't write letters criticizing the guys who were driving the trucks. The Chiefs and the Board worked together and came up with the daytime driver position. To me, that was being part of the solution, not part of the problem. Having me do reports to be read at meetings only exacerbates the situation of not having enough time to do what is required. I feel the Board needs to fund the position properly to do the work that it requires. I am not saying this to create a full time job for myself because I already have one. But the expectations that are there on a daily basis justify either a full time person, or a second person to share the work load. Either that or the expectations need to change.