

Town of New Boston

Board of Fire Wards

November 27, 2023

Fire Wards in attendance at this meeting were Chief Plourde, Wayne Blassberg, Brandon Merron, Joe Segien and Dick Moody. Steve Sears joined by phone at 6:35 pm. Derek Danis was unable to attend the meeting.

Also in attendance were NBFDF Operations Chief Frank Fraitzl, NBFDF Administrator Brian Dubreuil and NBFDF Assistant Administrator Laurel Flax.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:33 pm.

There were no Public Comments.

There were no Appointments.

Old Business

Item 1. Review and acceptance of Public Minutes from the November 13 Board of Fire Wards Meeting. Brandon Merron made a motion to accept the Public Minutes from the November 13 Board of Fire Wards meeting as written. The motion was seconded by Wayne Blassberg. All Fire Wards in attendance were in favor. The motion passed.

Steve Sears joined the meeting by phone at 6:35 pm.

Item 2. Review of Warrant Article Drafts

- Frank Fraitzl presented the Warrant Article Drafts:
 - CIP – Apparatus CRF
 - Frank Fraitzl reported that the CIP Warrant Article was changed from \$175,000 to \$200,000 per the recommendation of the CIP Committee.
 - The tax impact of the change will need to be updated.
 - Finance will adjust the numbers.
 - Brandon Merron questioned whether the increase is enough to cover purchase of the next new engine.
 - Frank Fraitzl indicated that this is the number provided by CIP that should be ok.
 - All Fire Wards attending were OK with the CIP Warrant Article.
 - Command Vehicle
 - Chief Plourde reported that the number for the Command Vehicle is the same as last year.
 - There will be more discussion on the Command Vehicle later in this meeting.
 - The vendor who has the State vehicle contracts has confirmed that the amount is sufficient to purchase a command vehicle.
 - All Fire Wards in attendance were OK with the Command Vehicle Warrant Article.
 - Dispatch
 - Chief Plourde reported that the Dispatch Warrant Article will be shared with the Police Department.

- Dispatch is a critical component.
- Warrant Article is required due to fluctuating and default budgets.
- Frank Fraitzl added that the actual number may change.
 - The number in the default budget for this year did not get added, so this year's Warrant Article may need to be for both the 2022 and 2023 increases.
 - The default is the 2021 amount, and needs to be updated to the 2023 actual amount.
- Dick Moody and Brandon Merron stated that the alternative for dispatch would be to look at another option, which would have a higher price.
- Frank Fraitzl added that the dispatch contract runs through the end of 2024, and we can look at other options when the contract is renegotiated.
- The tax impact of the required increase is \$0.004 and double that would be \$0.008.
 - All Fire Wards in attendance were OK with the Dispatch Warrant Article.
- Per Diem Staffing
 - Frank Fraitzl reported that the number in the draft is wrong. The amount should be \$489,212.
 - The article is written to include the amount in future default and operational budgets.
 - The 1-person for 5-days a week for 6-months that was in the default budget was moved out of the budget for clarity.
 - Frank Fraitzl added that there was a lot of discussion with department heads about the big-ticket items that are needed.
 - Highway Road funds, Per Diem and COLA are in Warrant Articles that are not in the budget.
 - The concept was to let the big-ticket items stand on their own, and let the Town decide what they want for services.
 - Department heads felt that this was the best chance for the budget to pass.
 - Finance was at the meeting where this was decided.
 - It would be tough to lose the Per Diem program and go back to just call people, but we'll do the best we can if we have to.
 - All Fire Wards in attendance were OK with the Per Diem Warrant Article.
- New CRF
 - Frank Fraitzl reported that this is for bigger items other than vehicles with a longer lifespan such as Jaws and Air Packs.
 - We did not present this one, but it was Fred Hayes' recommendation.
 - We dropped it last year, and put it in this year for a lower amount just to get it started.
 - Frank Fraitzl read the Warrant Article.

- Chief Plourde added that the Board of Fire Wards should stay out of this discussion.

Item 6. Ambulance fuel funded from Revolving Account

- Chief Plourde indicated that we have been asked to look at taking ambulance fuel costs out of the Ambulance Revolving Fund.
- Frank Fraitzl reported on the existing and projected fuel usage by the ambulances.
 - From March 1 to October 31, the new A1 has used 950.6 gals of gasoline. This would work out to 1900 gals/year of gasoline
 - A2 is projected to use 300 gals/year of diesel fuel as 2nd due ambulance.
- Frank Fraitzl indicated that there has been some discussion of rotating ambulances for weekends, or some period, to help with the use of medications before expiration and vehicle usage.
 - Gasoline is budgeted at \$4.00 per gallon.
 - Diesel Fuel is budgeted at \$4.75 per gallon.
 - The projected cost of fuel for the ambulances for the year is \$10,600.
- Chief Plourde suggested that we add a line on the Ambulance Revolving Fund spreadsheet and plug in the number to look at the effect.
- Frank Fraitzl stated that he has not had time to look at this with Derek Danis and see how the 10-year plan for the fund would be affected.
- Chief Plourde asked about any updates from the Chiefs' Association on the Insurance issue.
 - Frank Fraitzl reported that the issue is in committee and the Chiefs' Association and the Private Ambulance Companies are making an effort to work with the Insurance Department and keep the issue out of legislation. At the same time, lobbyists are pushing the issue forward and it could pop up as a bill at any time.
 - The plan would set rates and not allow for balance billing (like current Medicare billing). The Insurance Companies would have negotiated rates with Public and Private Ambulance Companies.
 - Frank Fraitzl is not sure if the plan is to use the same matrix as Medicare or a different billing plan, but billing for skill sets would go away.
 - Colleagues and lobbyists have reported that this is no win, just how badly we will get hit.
 - Some people argue that this plan guarantees payment, but if the check goes to the patient, we may not see anything.
 - All EMS will be negatively affected.
 - Chief Plourde asked what the cut would be to revenue.
 - Brian Dubreuil stated that if it follows Medicare, the cut would be 50%.
 - Frank Fraitzl added that this will have a radical impact on all ambulance services and the Ambulance Revolving Fund.
 - Wayne Blassberg added that taxes will go up.
 - Frank Fraitzl agreed that the Taxpayer will pay, since the Insurance Companies will no longer be covering what they used to cover.
 - Frank Fraitzl suggested that Derek should review the scenario of taking the ambulance fuel (10,000+) out of the Ambulance Revolving Fund with the possibility of decreased revenue due to insurance changes.
 - Chief Plourde suggested waiting to see what the legislature does.

- Frank Fraitzl stated that it would be hard to put it back into the budget once it is taken out of the Ambulance Revolving Fund
- Joe Segien agreed that it is hard to change back once it is done.
- Brandon Merron asked who is pushing this and Frank Fraitzl replied that it was a question from the Finance Committee.
- Chief Plourde suggested tabling the issue until next year and then looking at it in depth.
 - Frank Fraitzl added that we will have a much better idea next year on what the Ambulance billing situation is, and how we will be affected.

Item 7. Member Gifts

- Chief Plourde asked where the Board wants to go with Annual Gifts.
 - Brandon Merron presented some options.
 - Window Punch/Seat Belt Cutters are a minimum of 100, and would cost \$1000.
 - Another cheaper option that is not quite as fancy is available for \$325.
 - Another option is ~ \$500 with wording but not logo
 - Another option is little flashlights that are not Fire Fighter proof – many colors available ~ \$250 for 100.
 - Another option is Kuzi's - \$400 to \$500 for 100 of them.
 - Following a discussion of the options, flashlight was chosen by the Board.
 - Brandon stated we should be able to get them in 1-2 weeks.
 - Brandon will get a final price and email it to the Board.
 - Steve Sears asked where the funds come from for the gift.
 - Chief Plourde replied that it comes out of equipment, which is why we try to get something practical. Board of Fire Wards does not have a budget.
 - Brandon Merron added that this is ½ of what we paid for the gifts last year.
 - Brandon Merron will pay for them and get reimbursed.
 - Dick Moody asked if we should vote on it and Brandon Merron replied that we do not, since it is equipment.

New Business

Item 1. Per Diem

- Brandon Merron asked whether the Department could use the existing Per Diem funding for this year that was approved last year to add a second person during the day.
 - Frank Fraitzl and Brian Dubreuil are having to go on calls during the week, and that takes them away from town for 2 ½ to 3 hours per call.
 - Frank Fraitzl stated that we will need to look into it and see how the Warrant Article was written.
 - Brandon Merron added that this proposal is just to finish off this year, from now until March 31.
 - Frank Fraitzl added that the proposed Warrant Article for 2024 adds a 2nd person Monday thru Friday for the full year, conceivably starting January 1. The balance of this year would be 4-weeks.
 - Frank Fraitzl will look into the wording of the 2023 Warrant Article tomorrow

- Chief Plourde stated that we are looking at \$6,000 to \$7,200. Frank Fraitzl clarified that it would be 300 hours @ \$25/hour.
- Brian Dubreuil read the 2023 Warrant Article and stated that it was for the purpose of funding Per Diem staffing with no specifics. We broke it down in the budget, but how we use the funds is up to us.
- Brandon Merron stated that the money is there in the Warrant Article and Frank Fraitzl concurred that there is enough there to add this shift.
- Wayne Blassberg added that if we do not use it, the money goes away and Frank Fraitzl concurred.
- Brian Dubreuil stated that he is able to add a shift in Aladtec and then people will be able to sign up for the shift. The limiting factor would be people to sign up.
- Brandon Merron added that we should be able to get at least 50% more coverage.
- Steve Sears asked whether we could vote on it tonight so that there is no delay on enacting it once Frank Fraitzl has looked into it.
- Joe Segien stated that we are just adding a shift.
- Chief Plourde added that as long as the funding is there, we can just add the shift.
- Frank Fraitzl will check with Finance and possibly DRA to make sure adding the shift is in the scope of the Warrant Article and if there needs to be a vote, the Board should vote.
- There was consensus that there does not need to be a vote since the money will be used for Per Diem staffing as described in the Warrant Article.

Round Table There were no comments for the Round Table.

Operations Chief's Report

- Frank Fraitzl reported that Engine 2 went to Bulldog, the manufacturer's rep. in MA, today.
 - Windows will be fixed so that they go up and down.
 - They will also run down an electrical short in the compartment warning system. (The system has been overridden but that is a risk).
 - We should get a call about the truck in a couple of days, but we have no idea how long it will be away
 - Dick Moody stated that we had previously tried to find a new regulator up North and could not get it.
 - Frank Fraitzl stated that Bulldog is the KME Rep and should be able to fix it.
 - There was agreement that it is hard to find parts for a 32-year-old truck (1991).
 - Joe Segien asked if Bulldog had done the refurb on Engine 2, and stated that the fuel gauge never worked after the refurb.
- Frank Fraitzl reported that we have an estimate for studded tires and rims for the new Ambulance 1 of about \$225 per wheel.
 - Brian Dubreuil stated that the estimate is ~ \$3400.
 - Chief Plourde made a motion to move forward with the acquisition of studded tires and rims for the new A1. Dick Moody seconded the motion. All Fire Wards in attendance were in favor of the motion. The motion passed.
 - Frank Fraitzl will generate a purchase order, and go through the Town purchasing process to get the tires and rims.
- Frank Fraitzl reported that there was an issue with Ambulance 1 over Thanksgiving. The battery was drained.

- Brian Dubreuil added that the issue was operator error. The shoreline was not plugged in all the way. Daily check showed the issue. The truck was jump started, and all the dashboard lights came on (which is common on newer vehicles because of the computer).
- Ambulance 1 was moved to Hilltop in case there were further issues, and Ambulance 2 was moved to Bunting Station.
- Ambulance 2 had an issue with the back doors, which was fixed by Captain Catalano.
- Ambulance 1 is fine, no issues with the dashboard warning lights. It is still at Hilltop.
- Ambulance 2 is at Bunting Station and will stay for a week or two.
- Ambulances will be rotated periodically to balance their usage and update the drug supplies.
- Frank Fraitzl thanked Brian Dubreuil for dealing with the Ambulance issues on Thanksgiving.
- Frank Fraitzl reported that the Department accepted a donation of 5-desks with file cabinets from a business in Manchester that is clearing out some office space.
 - Desks will be stored in the Connex until we are ready for them.
 - Brian Dubreuil, Frank Fraitzl, Chief Brace and Sgt. Loveless went to get desks for the Town, the Police Department and the Fire Department.
 - We got 4, Town Hall got 2 and the one for the Town Admin had the wrong return on it, so we kept that one as well.
 - Maralyn Segien and Highway got another one for the Town Administrator later.
 - Frank Fraitzl will send a thank you letter to the company – ITR Economics.
- Frank Fraitzl reported on the New Fire Station project.
 - Had the first virtual meeting with SMP, Turnstone and Northpoint – they are scheduled every 2-weeks.
 - Met with SMP and Northpoint individually last Tuesday.
 - Jason made changes to building for Washer/Dryer oversight.
 - Jason asked if we had any antique equipment we would like to feature, such as the Constitution. We should let him know if we do.
 - Dick Moody added that we would have to be able to take it in and out if we put it there.
 - Frank Fraitzl added that is the same as Amherst and Peterborough has a whole museum.
 - Brandon Merron asked about the Pinball and Dick Moody was not sure if it was ours.
 - Chief Plourde approved of the idea as long as there was no financial impact.
 - Frank Fraitzl added that Jason said it could be possible if we decide now.
 - Wayne Blassberg added that the cupola and siren also need to be included in the project.
 - Frank Fraitzl and George St. John are going to take a look at the cupola and the siren. Wayne Blassberg added that the cupola needs repairs.
 - Brian Dubreuil stated that he met Kevin onsite and the archeologist was there doing his review. They also looked at the guard rails.
 - Frank Fraitzl stated that there is a sliver of land between the Fire Station property and the library that belongs to the Town, which was proposed to be used for a retention pond for storm water runoff.

- Frank Fraitzl spoke with Bill McFadden about using the sliver of land for storm water mitigation, which would be less costly than drainage dispersal under the asphalt.
- Bill McFadden will talk about this with the Select Board.
- Brian Dubreuil added that this is not wetlands, and does not channel through the property.
- Frank Fraitzl emphasized that we are looking at the options to make the best decisions as early as possible, and save some money.
- Frank Fraitzl added that there is potential to realign the driveway to bring it more in-line with the library exit and entrance so that it is less staggered and closer to a 4-way intersection. This would give a better turn path and elevation.
- Frank Fraitzl added that he met with the DOT rep and got verbal approval of the one way in entrance. That entrance will need new guard rails. The existing wooden guardrails at the main entrance do not have to be changed, but we might want to change them.
 - Brian Dubreuil added that the Road Agent is the one to enforce or require changes to the guard rails. One or two Road Agents ago, we were going to be required to change the guard rails. Northpoint will talk to Benji at Highway about the guard rails.
 - Chief Plourde added that it is probably better and more cost effective to change the guard rails now.
- Brian Dubreuil stated that the library only has control over their building and the Town Select Board would need to authorize any changes to the road.
- Brian Dubreuil added that Northpoint made the suggestion to add fill to bring the entire site up 3'.
 - Frank Fraitzl added that there are lots of factors related to bringing the site up.
 - Fire pump and tank could work by gravity with a centrifugal pump.
 - Helps with grading.
 - Conceptual drawing coming for review and discussion.
 - This is not set in stone at this point and we are trying to get the best bang for our buck.
 - Wayne Blassberg stated that we should listen to all the recommendations.
 - Frank Fraitzl added that any recommendations need to fit into the scope of work. We would need to go back to DOD if there are any significant changes.
- Brian Dubreuil reported that we sent an update to DOD.
- Brian Dubreuil will attend a training on the Procurement Management System on December 7.
 - Initially the class was full, but we petitioned the group and got into the class.
- Brian Dubreuil added that the Project Manager told us we are doing the right things.
- The Wheels Are Rolling!!!

Brandon Merron made a motion for Non-Public per RSA 91-A: 3.II (a),(b),(c) Personnel and Legal. The motion was seconded by Wayne Blassberg. All Fire Wards in attendance were in favor by Roll Call Vote. The motion passed.

Steve Sears, who had joined the meeting by phone, verified that he was alone.

The Board entered Non-Public session at 7:48 pm.

The Board reconvened the Public session at 8:14 pm.

Wayne Blassberg made a motion to seal the minutes for 10-years. The motion was seconded by Dick Moody. All Fire Wards in attendance were in favor. The motion passed.

Brandon Merron made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 pm. The motion was seconded by Wayne Blassberg. All Fire Wards in attendance were in favor. The motion passed.

Minutes recorded by Laurel Flax