

Town of New Boston

Board of Fire Wards

January 8, 2024

Fire Wards in attendance at this meeting were Chief Plourde, Derek Danis, Wayne Blassberg, Brandon Merron, Dick Moody and Joe Segien. Steve Sears was unable to attend this meeting.

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

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:32 pm.

Public Comments

- Bruce McKim thanked the New Boston Fire Association for an invitation to the Oyster Dinner.
- Karen Scott, 110 Dane Road, had questions about the Ambulance Revolving Fund and the Per Diem program.
 - Karen Scott expressed concern that funds for too many items were being taken out of the Ambulance Revolving Fund, which she stated was originally designed as a fund to replace ambulances and major EMS equipment.
 - Chief Plourde stated that the Board has broad latitude to use the Ambulance Revolving Fund for any item related to EMS. EMS is the majority of our runs. There are also some possible changes to insurance billing that may have a negative impact on funding in the future.
 - Karen Scott noted that the Per Diem program appears to be working well, but previous minutes had implied that there was uncertainty about the continuation of the program. She was concerned that we would allow members who live outside of New Boston to sign up and be paid for Per Diem shifts while responding from their homes to fill shifts.
 - Chief Plourde indicated that the Board looked at that option, and is not going to do it. People from out of town working Per Diem shifts will need to be at the station or at the Nan's House Apartment during their shift.

There were no Appointments.

Old Business

Item 1. Review and acceptance of Public Minutes from the November 27 Board of Fire Wards Meeting. Brandon Merron made a motion to accept the Public Minutes from the November 27 Board of Fire Wards Meeting as written. The motion was seconded by Wayne Blassberg. All Fire Wards present were in favor. The motion passed.

Item 2. 2024 Budget and Warrant Articles

- Chief Plourde reported that he and Brian Dubreuil attended the Finance Committee meeting where they reviewed the budget and the Warrant Articles. All Fire Department Articles were supported. There was a lot of discussion about the overall budget.
- Frank Fraitzl added that the Budget Committee raised 4-6 questions following the first presentation.
 - Internet – Working with Comcast to reduce the cost for Hilltop Station internet connection.

- Cell Phones – Made some reductions in Cell Phone line. 1-cell phone removed from our budget and moved to Forest Fire.
- Equipment – provided a list of equipment including Thermal Imaging Camera to replace one that has been out of service and hose replacement that will be due following hose testing.
- Frank Fraitzl reported on changes to the budget since it was approved by the Board of Fire Wards:
 - COLA was removed from budget and placed in a Warrant Article.
 - Step increases had not been put into budget, so putting those into the budget cancelled out the removal of the COLA.
 - There is a step plan for all employees.
 - One cell phone was removed from our budget and moved to Forest Fire.
 - After discussion with Eric Dubowik, Fire Prevention line was reduced by changing to an individual NFPA subscription.
- Chief Plourde reported that there was a lot of discussion over whether the Per Diem program should go in the budget or in a Warrant Article.
 - There was concern about the size of the overall budget and decisions were made by several departments to put items into Warrant Articles to let the voters decide what level of service they want.
 - We worked with Finance and the Per Diem Warrant Article is written the way they want it; so that if it passes, it will be in the default and operating budgets for future years.
- Chief Plourde listed our Warrant Articles:
 - Per Diem
 - COLA (our COLA is a part of the Town Warrant Article for all Town Employees)
 - Command Vehicle
 - Dispatch Contract
 - \$200,000 for Apparatus CRF
 - New CRF for Equipment
- Chief Plourde noted that the Dispatch Contract was supported 6-1 by Finance, and all other articles had unanimous (7-0) support from Finance.
- Frank Fraitzl added that the Town Budget Presentation is this Sunday 1/14/24 from 2-4 pm at the Library and the Public Hearing on the Budget is on Tuesday 1/16/24 at 6:30 pm at the Library.
 - Some of the Fire Wards should attend in case there are questions.
 - Chief Plourde is not available on Sunday, Derek Danis will be there and Brandon Merron may be there.
- Derek Danis asked about the change of Agent from the Fire Wards to the Select Board for the Equipment CRF. He stated that it should mirror the Apparatus CRF.
 - Chief Plourde stated that we may need outside clarification on that Warrant Article.
 - Frank Fraitzl added that he has been researching the original Warrant Article that created the Apparatus CRF, but has not found it yet.
 - The Apparatus CRF requires a Warrant for withdrawal such that there is no Agent involved.

- The Equipment CRF is different in that items are less money and equipment may need to be purchased mid-year to replace equipment that fails. Governing body can be the Agent.
- We have adopted the Town Purchasing Policy in its entirety, and that will be used for any equipment purchases.
- Derek Danis expressed concern that the Select Board could deny our request for equipment from the fund.
- Chief Plourde added that it is not clear in 154:1.
- Frank Fraitzl added that the Warrant says that the Agent can authorize expenditures from fund, such that it does not have to go on a ballot.

Item 3. Per Diem Program

- There was additional discussion on the Per Diem program.
 - Wayne Blassberg asked about hiring additional Per Diem personnel.
 - Frank Fraitzl stated that there are a few people in the works, and Brandon Merron added that most shifts are filled at this point.

Item 4. Deliberative Session

- Frank Fraitzl stated that the numbers have been crunched on the budget to the extent that we can.
 - Finance review is done
 - Select Board review is pending.
 - We will need another meeting prior to the Deliberative Session.

Item 5. Fire Station Update

- Frank Fraitzl presented a draft plan of the most recent conceptual design based on feedback received from Fire Station Committee.
 - We are waiting on survey results.
 - The decon/contaminated gear area was moved out of the bay. The cost to move it later would be much greater than moving it now.
 - All of our apparatus can now fit in the bays.
 - The project will go to bid in February.
 - SMP does not think there will be a funding issue, but we won't know until we get bids back.
 - There is a fitness room in the middle top center of the drawing. This was suggested by a public member of the Fire Station Committee and the fitness equipment will be donated rather than purchased. This shifted the conference room down closer to the lobby.
 - There will be an area for the Constitution in the front of the building (bottom of the plan).
 - The Historical Society is in favor of us putting it there where it can be seen and taken out when needed.
 - The Training Room is intact with more storage
 - There is a gold area that will have a janitor's sink and a place to store cleaning equipment for vehicles. There is a bathroom in the decon area.
 - The darker gray area on the plan shows mechanical areas and bathrooms
 - 3-Single bathrooms with showers – not a locker room

- 2- ADA Compliant restrooms in Lobby for the Public to use
- Brian Dubreuil met Wednesday night with Kevin Leonard and the Select Board and received permission to use a sliver of land on the Library lot for storm water management.
 - If the surveying works, and we can do open retention ponds vs. chambers under the parking lot, it will save money and maintenance costs.
 - Kevin Leonard sent surveyor back out for full site survey.
 - We may be able to reduce or eliminate the chambers under the parking lot.
 - Met with Planning – only issue would be if the Town was to sell one of the lots.
- Frank Fraitzl reported on an option to raise the level of the lot.
 - Cost is offset by decrease in cost for retaining walls on South and West sides of lot.
 - Decreases grade coming in on 1-way in on North side of lot.
 - Allows for wet well for Fire Pump to be more in line with cisterns.
 - Minimizes ledge and large rock issues.
 - Aesthetically brings building up, so you see more of the building from Route 13 rather than the roof.
 - Cost neutral option.
- Brandon Merron asked about the guard rails and the entrance onto Library road.
 - Frank Fraitzl reported that we are looking at modifications to the driveway.
 - Meeting with abutters and they were not thrilled with the initial plan.
 - Kevin Leonard is working on another plan.
 - Goal is to get something closer to a 4-way intersection instead of a 5-way intersection.
 - Getting input from abutters – geometric appeal vs functional design.
 - We will only do something if we get buy-in from abutters.
 - No changes to road itself.
 - If we do not do anything to road, then we don't have to change guard rails.
 - Current Road Agent has said that the guard rails are acceptable.
- Brandon Merron asked about NEPA.
 - Frank Fraitzl reported on progress with NEPA.
 - Announcement of NEPA Study is out for comment.
 - Comments are going to Kimberly at Hoyle Tanner.
 - Communications are going back and forth between Hoyle Tanner and Michelle at OLDC.
 - Frank Fraitzl is copied on the communications, and there have been no red flag emails.
 - NEPA is going forward. Kimberly from Hoyle Tanner updated the schedule, and it puts us tight to have shovels in the ground on August 1.
 - We have reached out to DOD – we had a year and were awarded the grant in September. Have not gotten a definitive that we can push it out, but have not been told no either.
 - NEPA is driving where we are going, and when we break ground.
 - Nothing has raised any red or yellow flags; it is just a time-consuming process.
 - NEPA Study Announcement has been posted everywhere it is required to be posted by the feds.
 - Have not heard that there are any comments yet.
 - Once study is done. we will get a report with the comments, and there is another public comment period for people to review and comment.

- NEPA is a lot of steps and a lot of time. Kimberly at Hoyle Tanner is doing everything she can to move it along.
- Frank Fraitzl reported on Energy Charrette for New Station with Town's Energy Commission.
 - Looked at design of building as it relates to building efficiencies with heating, cooling and lighting – report is not done yet.
 - Looked at Insulated Concrete Forms (ICF) for foundation. SMP looking at it.
 - Long term cost for building should be the least it can be.
 - Consensus of meeting was to make building Net Neutral Ready – not enough surface area to put enough solar panels to make building Net Neutral.
 - Under grant, materials and equipment for project must be Build America, Buy America– plays a part in what we can and cannot use – limits efficiency – BABA (we do not have to follow BAA (Buy American Act)).
 - Not having 3-phase power on site rules out some of the most efficient heat pumps.
 - Talking with SMP about how we will navigate this.
- Frank Fraitzl added that we are having every 2-week's meetings, and starting to meet with vendors such as our Radio Vendor – recommendations for station alerting, communications in building, fire alarms, security systems.
- Wayne Blassberg asked about traffic management and Brandon Merron asked about a flashing light.
 - Frank Fraitzl replied that there is no light required. There will be signs.
- Derek Danis asked about gallon-age for cisterns.
 - Frank Fraitzl stated that the recommendation based on estimate from sprinkler contractor is that we need ~32,000 to 32,500 gallons. We are looking at concrete cisterns that are 7500 gals each so 30,000 or 37,500 gallons.
 - Looking at over-building to allow filling trucks.
 - 37,500 will give us about 4,000 gallons to fill trucks.
 - System will be designed to slow fill off the well, with safeguards in place so that you cannot draw it down below required level.
- Frank Fraitzl reported that we have received 2-proposals for Clerk of the Works.
 - 5-proposals were sent out and we received 2 back.
 - Will bring proposals to Board later this month.
- There is a design meeting this week.

New Business

Item 1. 2024 Ambulance Billing Rates

- Brian Dubreuil reported that Medicare rates will increase by 4.5% for 2024.
 - We participate in the Medicare program.
 - We accept what they give us, but payment is guaranteed.
- Brian Dubreuil added that for Comstar rates, in the past we have taken the average rates of the top 50% of Comstar clients and used that as our guidance to set rates.
 - There are 3-levels of charges based on services provided and a mileage rate.
 - The increases are minimal this year.
 - BLS - \$1619 to \$1694
 - ALS1 - \$2419 to 2464
 - ALS2 - \$3551 to \$3571

- Mileage - \$38.00/mile to \$39.00 per mile
- Chief Plourde made a motion to continue with the formula we have been using to set Comstar rates. Brandon Merron seconded the motion. All Fire Wards present were in favor. The motion passed.
- Brian Dubreuil will contact Comstar and make the required changes

Item 2. Bedford/New Boston Agreement

- Frank Fraitzl reported that sometime around 2013, an agreement was made with Bedford for New Boston automatic response to West Bedford between Joppa Hill Road and the New Boston Line.
 - Chief Hunter is looking to update the agreement.
 - Frank Fraitzl thinks they are doing their ISO review and will work with them on it.
 - This will be minor wording changes
 - Derek Danis asked if this applies to Fire only or EMS also. We do not get many EMS calls there.
 - Frank Fraitzl replied that this is written as Emergency Fire Apparatus Response for Fire and Public Protection.

Item 3. Drinking Water

- Chief Plourde reported that the grant we have received for drinking water for the past couple of years is not available this year.
 - There is no more water at the station.
 - We need to think about how to get water this year.
 - Prior to the grant, we got drinking water as a donation from Friendly Beaver Campground.
 - Brandon Merron suggested we could look for donations.

Item 4. Capital Reserve Fund

Operations Chief's Report

Item 1. Dispatch Contract

- Frank Fraitzl stated that our 3-year contract ends at the end of 2024.
- This is a heads up that we have to negotiate a new contract this year, and we should get it done as soon as possible.
- Our current contract expires on December 31, 2024.

Item 2. Ambulance Billing/Insurance Changes

- Brandon Merron asked if there are any updates on the Ambulance Billing/Insurance legislation.
 - Frank Fraitzl stated that nothing has popped up in last couple of weeks, but there are things going on behind the scenes.
 - The legislature has 900+ bills waiting for action.
 - Chief Hunter in Bedford is a key person on the Fire Chief's side, and maybe we could get him to come in and give an update at our next meeting.
 - This issue is not going away.
 - We have not heard any positive or negative

Item 3. ISO Review

- Frank Fraitzl reported that the Building Department was up for review last year, and the Fire Classification is up for review this year.
 - Frank Fraitzl reached out to our representative for our current rating.
 - We will look at past comments and what we can work on.
 - For some things, the cost is greater than the savings.
 - National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) is changing to National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) in the fall of this year.
 - Brian Dubreuil added that the change should be incorporated in our Image Trend software.

Item 4. Current Site Plans Under Review

- Frank Fraitzl reported that Eric Dubowik is reviewing 2-site plans that will be coming before the Planning Board this month and next month.
 - Small residential on Bunker Hill
 - Split 1-lot into 3-lots and build 2 new houses.
 - Commercial on Chestnut Hill across from Tracking Station
 - Right now, it is just a site that shows cisterns based on building size.
 - Freestanding building on Amherst side of what is there now.
 - Proposing new building on right side of driveway.
 - Building that had ceramic fire is still there.
 - “Clearview” building has a new owner.
 - This new building is planned for medical components.
 - There will be more input when building plans come in.

Round Table – No Comments

Public Comments 2

- Karen Scott asked about the new section for drainage, and whether it was just for run-off, and not for washing or other waste.
 - Frank Fraitzl replied that we have to manage all storm water on the site from the building roof and the parking lot.
 - The original plan was to install chambers underground
 - This system is only for what comes off the building or site itself.
 - Karen Scott stated that in the past people reported issues of water running off of the hill across the street, and she was wondering if the library will get flooded.
 - Frank Fraitzl replied that we have to manage the culverts that come across Route 13, which would include runoff from the hill.
 - Anything coming from the building itself is collected, and goes into a septic system.
 - We will have 3-separate septic systems
 - Septic
 - Decon
 - Waste with an Oil/Water separator
 - All water from the building will be contained and treated.

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

The Board entered Non-Public Session at 7:45 pm.

The Board reconvened the Public Session at 8:05 pm.

Wayne Blassberg made a motion to seal the minutes from the Non-Public Session for 10-years. The motion was seconded by Derek Danis. All Fire Wards present were in favor. The motion passed.

Brandon Merron made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 pm. The motion was seconded by Dick Moody. All Fire Wards present were in favor. The motion passed.

Minutes recorded by Laurel Flax.