

Town of New Boston

Board of Fire Wards

March 19, 2024

Fire Wards in attendance at this meeting were Cliff Plourde, Brandon Merron, Derek Danis, Dick Moody, Joe Segien, Wayne Blassberg and Bruce McKim.

Also present were Nbfd Operations Chief/Chief Frank Fraitzl, Nbfd Administrator Brian Dubreuil, Nbfd Assistant Administrator Laurel Flax and Nbfd Fire Inspector Eric Dubowik.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:31 pm.

Cliff Plourde welcomed Bruce McKim as a Fire Ward.

Cliff Plourde announced that there will be an initial Non-Public Session, and then the Public meeting will resume the normal schedule.

Cliff Plourde made a motion for Non-Public per RSA 91-A: 3.II (c). The motion was seconded by Brandon Merron. All Fire Wards were in favor by Roll Call vote. The motion passed.

The Board entered Non-Public session at 6:33 pm.

The Board reconvened the Public session at 7:17 pm.

Cliff Plourde made a motion to seal the Non-Public minutes for 10-years. The motion was seconded by Derek Danis. All Fire Wards were in favor. The motion passed.

Eric Dubowik left the meeting at 7:18 pm.

There were no Public comments.

There were no Appointments.

New Business

Item 1. Fire Ward Elections

- Brandon Merron nominated Cliff Plourde to be the Chairperson of the Board of Fire Wards. The motion was seconded by Derek Danis. All Fire Wards were in favor. The motion passed.
- Cliff Plourde made a suggestion to add a Vice Chairperson for the Board of Fire Wards.
 - The Vice Chair could run meetings when the Chair is not available.
 - There was discussion and agreement that there should be a Vice Chairperson.
- Cliff Plourde made a motion to create a Vice Chairperson position for the Board of Fire Wards. The motion was seconded by Derek Danis. All Fire Wards were in favor. The motion passed.
- Bruce McKim nominated Brandon Merron to be the Vice Chairperson for the Board of Fire Wards. Wayne Blassberg seconded the motion. All Fire Wards were in favor. The motion passed

Item 2. Appointment of Fire Chief

- Cliff Plourde provided a history and description of the change in the way the New Boston Fire Department Chief will be appointed this year, and, in the future,
 - A year ago, there was a Warrant on the Town Ballot to change the wording of our organization to allow the appointment of a Fire Chief who is not also a Fire Ward. Prior

- to last year, the Fire Chief had to be a member of the Board of Fire Wards, and therefore had to live in New Boston in order to be elected to the Board of Fire Wards.
- The wording was changed such that the Fire Department would be able to go outside the Department and the Town to hire a Fire Chief.
 - The Fire Chief is still appointed by the Board of Fire Wards.
 - After the Warrant Article passed, it could not be implemented until the following year.
 - Brandon Merron read the Warrant Article from last year.
 - The Board of Fire Wards hired Frank Fraitzl with the intention that he would become the Fire Chief.
 - At this point, the Board of Fire Wards has to formally appoint Frank Fraitzl as the Fire Chief.
 - Cliff Plourde made a motion to appoint Frank Fraitzl as the New Boston Fire Department Fire Chief. The motion was seconded by Brandon Merron. All Fire Wards were in favor. The motion passed.
 - Congratulations to Chief Fraitzl from the Board of Fire Wards.

Old Business

Item 1. Review and acceptance of Public minutes from the February 19, 2024 Board of Fire Wards meeting. Derek Danis made a motion to accept the Public minutes from the February 19 2024 Board of Fire Wards meeting as written. The motion was seconded by Wayne Blassberg. 5-Fire Wards were in favor and 2-Fire Wards abstained. The motion passed.

Item 2. Budget Update

- Cliff Plourde stated that the 2024 Town Budget passed, and that the Fire Wards would like to thank everyone who voted for it.
- Chief Fraitzl provided a handout on the budget, and stated that from January through March, we do not make any large expenditures since we are deficit spending until the budget is approved by the Town.
- Chief Fraitzl has shared access with the Fire Wards to the monthly reports from Finance. He suggests that the Board look at the reports and then bring up specific issues or challenges, rather than going through the entire budget at each meeting.
- Chief Fraitzl added that all of the Fire Department Warrant Articles were supported, especially the Per Diem article.
 - Chief Fraitzl thanked Brian Dubreuil for all the behind the scenes work he had done to provide data to show that the Per Diem Program works. Lots of people expressed that Brian Dubreuil's presentation at the Deliberative Session changed their minds about the program. The visuals of the data were terrific, showing the decreased response times, and the increased skill levels of service with the program.
 - The Per Diem Program is now in the Operating Budget, and will be in any future Default Budgets.
 - Wayne Blassberg asked about increases to the Per Diem Program.
 - Chief Fraitzl explained that any increase in the number of hours covered would need to be added to the budget, but the number of people in the program is a balance.
 - Each person is limited to 29 hours per week.
 - We still need to fill some gaps to have all shifts covered.

- We have waited to add more people to the program until the program Warrant Article passed.
 - We have some people “in waiting”.
 - Brandon Merron clarified that we are not adding positions or hours to the program. The program is 2-people, 24 x 7. We are only adding people to fill gaps in the schedule.
- Chief Fraitzl outlined the status of the Ambulance Revolving Fund (ARF) budget.
 - The ARF Budget was created with 2023 actual numbers and history from Dan MacDonald’s spreadsheet.
 - The handout from Chief Fraitzl is the current ARF Budget.
 - There is one line with no number yet.
 - Ambulance 1 was purchased last year, so this year, there is a \$1 placeholder on that line (which is normal accounting practice).
 - Red is good in this document, as it shows a reduction in this year’s spending.
 - Last year we did not pay for any Paramedic Intercepts.
 - We did provide Mutual Aid with a Paramedic, but we did not transport, and we can only bill if we transport.
 - Per Diem Housing
 - There is a line for Utilities (electric and oil) – we paid for this last year, but there was not a line for it.
 - Rent is encumbered funds from last year
 - Per Diem Housing expenses will continue until we move into the new station.
 - \$200,000 allocated to Soft Costs for the New Station.
 - We have not started using this money yet.
 - We are approximately 2/3 of the way through the Beaudreau funds.
 - We are billed monthly by SMP and Northpoint. Turnstone has not started billing us yet.
 - Clerk of the Works has started, and is being paid.
 - Brandon Merron asked about NEPA.
 - Chief Fraitzl replied that NEPA is Soft Costs - \$48,000 to \$50,000.
 - ARF Income
 - Comstar billing is estimated to be \$210,000.
 - Space Force EMS coverage contract is \$47,319.
 - There is a slight deficit in the ARF this year. The \$52,846 in red fits in with the 10-year projection that Derek Danis has been maintaining, and is not a problem.

Item 3. Per Diem Program

- Chief Fraitzl stated that we need to hire 4-6 additional people for the Per Diem Program now that the Warrant Article passed.
 - The number needed will depend on the availability of the people we hire.
 - 3-shifts per month is the minimum to stay active in the program, but some people need reminders of this periodically.
 - There is one person who has already been approved by the Board of Fire Wards and is waiting for a background check and physical before starting.

- We are starting the process with 2-3 other people. 2 of the 3 are Paramedics and most are also Fire Fighters.
- Chief Fraitzl reported that we have received the 4-sets of gear that the Select Board approved and an additional 3-sets are due in early to mid-April.
- All Per Diem personnel who are certified Fire Fighters should be in gear.
- Dick Moody stated that we need more Per Diem personnel to fill the shifts.
 - Chief Fraitzl concurred that some shifts are not filled, and he and Brian Dubreuil are working to solve the problem.

Item 4. Fire Station Update

- Chief Fraitzl reported that he and Brian Dubreuil met with Marc Jobin (our Clerk of the Works (COW)). Chief Fraitzl can ask Marc Jobin to attend the next Board of Fire Wards meeting so that the Board can put a name with a face. Marc Jobin will be at the Fire Station Advisory Committee meeting tomorrow night.
- Last week Marc Jobin, Chief Fraitzl and Brian Dubreuil went over the Design Document set page by page for a couple of hours.
 - Marc Jobin provided a lot of insight from previous Fire Station projects he has worked on.
 - Starting a list of Owner items such as stove and refrigerator.
 - Items to be moved such as the compressor and cascade system.
 - Specifications for items such as extractors and gear dryers that will need to be included in the electrical and plumbing designs.
 - Working with vendors to get generic specifications for power, water and drainage for the plan
 - Turnstone is sending out the Design Doc for pricing (not bids).
- Chief Fraitzl has an in-person meeting tomorrow with the construction team and should have a guaranteed maximum price by the end of the week. The preliminary numbers look good.
 - There are some numbers we will share tomorrow on security systems, card access systems, camera systems and alerting that are specific to us. We met for 3-hours last Thursday with security company, camera company, radio company, card access and station alerting.
- Chief Fraitzl reported that we submitted NEPA as a draft to DOD 2-weeks ago Friday.
 - The Tracking Station reviewed it, and found a few little things, but nothing major.
 - The DOD Environmental Unit (Michelle & staff) will review it.
 - Final Draft will go out for a minimum 30-day Public Comment period, then there will be a Public Hearing
 - After the Public Hearing, Kimberly at Hoyle Tanner will put the package together, and submit to DOD for final review and approval.
 - We are on-track, but pushing the envelope for a July 31 groundbreaking. We are not worried that we will need to ask for a time extension.
- Marc Jobin will be starting to provide weekly updates to Chief Fraitzl, and Chief Fraitzl will share them by email with the Board of Fire Wards.
 - Requirement in the contract for the COW to provide updates by Friday at noon.
 - What was done in the current week.
 - What will be done the following week.

- Wayne Blassberg asked who is managing the budget for the Fire Station.
 - Chief Fraitzl stated that the budget is being maintained by Turnstone, and the Team is managing the budget with Brian Dubreuil and Chief Fraitzl.
 - Chief Fraitzl added that when the budget is done, it will be presented to the Board of Fire Wards for approval.
 - Chief Fraitzl maintains a separate spreadsheet for the project, and submits it to Finance to be paid.
 - Every 2-months Jennifer Allocca submits a request to Chief Fraitzl to approve a transfer by the Treasurer from the Beaudreau funds to the general fund.
 - Brandon Merron asked Chief Fraitzl if the only item we are paying for outside the grant is the soft costs, and Chief Fraitzl confirmed that.

New Business (2)

Item 1. Goal Setting

- Cliff Plourde indicated that since we are changing how we operate, where the Chief is not a member of the Board of Fire Wards, we should implement a couple of things.
- The first is to establish some goals that the Board of Fire Wards wants to accomplish this year.
 - Things that the Board of Fire Wards wants.
 - Things that the Board of Fire Wards wants to work on with the Operations Group
 - For example, this year there is the Dispatch Contract and some Truck things
- The second is that the Board of Fire Wards has never set a Mission Statement
 - Cliff Plourde suggested that the Board should draft a Mission Statement.
 - The Board will consider a Mission Statement and revisit the subject in April.

Item 2. 2024 COLA

- Chief Fraitzl stated that the 2024 COLA Warrant Article passed for all Town employees.
 - The department heads have a meeting tomorrow, and the 2024 COLA is on the agenda.
 - The Select Board will make a determination on the 2024 COLA on Monday night.
 - We assume that the 2024 COLA of 3% will be set to start on April 1.
 - Chief Fraitzl suggested that the Board of Fire Wards could grant conditional approval for the 2024 COLA for Fire Department employees, so that the paperwork can be prepared when the Select Board formalizes the increase, and prior to April 1.
- Cliff Plourde made a motion for the 2024 COLA: Subject to the final determination by the Select Board, the Board of Fire Wards recommends the acceptance of the 2024 COLA and will allow all Fire Department employees to receive the 2024 COLA. The motion was seconded by Dick Moody. All Fire Wards were in favor. The motion passed.

Other Business None

Operations Report

- Chief Fraitzl provided the Operations Report
 - Fire Gear/PPE
 - 4-Sets were received for Fire Fighters who were able to fit into stock gear.
 - 3-Sets that were ordered in October are coming in April.
 - PFAS in Gear
 - PFAS has been in gear forever.

- There is a big push to remove PFAS from gear
- 48% of Fire Fighters get some form of cancer due to occupational exposure and gear
- Bills in the legislature in NH that will prohibit PFAS in gear and station wear (fire retardant station wear). Bills will probably pass.
- Globe is making PFAS-free turnout gear.
 - Chief Fraitzl recommends that we move forward to buy that new gear for all future purchases, but it may take a while to get it.
 - Concord purchased new gear for every member for \$310,000 – Concord City Council approved emergency funding for the purchase.
 - Pricing is about \$400 more a set – Bergeron will update our standard specifications to reflect the change.
 - Cliff Plourde added that there will be a bottleneck, as everyone will be trying to get the new gear.
 - Chief Fraitzl plans to get our order in as soon as we can to be near the middle of the line.
 - Cliff Plourde stated that there are currently 2-companies that have PFAS-free gear.
- Minimize use of PPE – don't wear turnout gear unless going into hazardous environment. Minimize time body is in contact with it.
 - Get EMS people out of turnout gear.
 - Cliff Plourde suggested an all-weather biohazard jacket.
 - Dick Moody added that historically we have 3-Structure Fires a year, and 4-5 Car Fires. It is not like Boston or even Manchester.
 - Chief Fraitzl suggested that we take what preventative measures we can to avoid unnecessary exposures.
 - There is more occupational cancer in NH than we know about since some is not reported.
- Command Vehicle
 - Chief Fraitzl has done some research on a replacement Command Vehicle and there is not much available.
 - Going between Tahoe and Pickup
 - Tahoe – available by end of April
 - Pickup – Chevy is not even in production yet, and will be Fish & Game Specs, which are more than we need.
 - Standard in the industry is to shift away from SUVs to pickups with caps.
 - Goal is to get gear and equipment away from passenger(s).
 - Cliff Plourde added that they do make isolation cabinets for Tahoe's and Suburban's but the retrofit is difficult, and you lose a lot of space – HEPA unit with filtration.

Round Table No Comments

There were no Public Comments

Cliff Plourde made a motion for Non-Public per RSA 91-A:3.II (a),(b). The motion was seconded by Joe Segien. All Fire Wards were in favor by Roll Call vote. The motion passed.

The Board entered Non-Public Session at 8:03 pm.

The Board reconvened the Public Session at 8:52 pm.

Brandon Merron made a motion to seal the minutes from the second Non-Public session for 10-years. Bruce McKim seconded the motion. All Fire Wards were in favor. The motion passed.

Brandon Merron made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 pm. Wayne Blassberg seconded the motion. All Fire Wards were in favor. The motion passed.

Minutes recorded by Laurel Flax.