

Board of Fire Commissioners

Greenfield Fire District
P.O. Box 103
Greenfield Center, NY 12833

A public hearing called by the Greenfield Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners regarding the purchase or lease of an aerial ladder truck was held at the Greenfield Center Co #1 firehouse on Wednesday, April 9, 2008 from 6:30 – 7:00 PM.

Present were:

Commissioners: B. Bishop, Kugler, Robarge, Spackmann, Waite; Secretary Petkus
Others in attendance: Various members of the Fire Department and a local resident.

The hearing was called to order at by Chairman Donald Kugler at 6:30 PM. The flag salute and a moment of silence were recognized for the departed.

Chairman Kugler then turned the hearing over the Commissioners B. Bishop and Waite. Commissioner B. Bishop explained that the reason for this informational meeting was the possible purchase of two aerial devices, one 100 foot aerial platform to be stationed at Maple Avenue and a 75 foot aluminum ladder truck to be stationed at Greenfield Center. The thought behind the purchase of these vehicles was to replace the current vehicle at Maple Avenue. When the original aerial was purchased some seven or eight years ago, the intent of buying a used vehicle to start with was to allow for the members to be trained on the use of an aerial device as it was a new type of apparatus in the District and give them some time to get acclimated to the device, and then in five to seven years a new device would be purchased at that time with money that would be saved. Unfortunately during that time no money was put aside and saved for that new apparatus. Now the District is trying to find a way to replace that vehicle in the most cost effective and responsible manner as possible, and to continue the process of purchasing vehicles outright, which has been a long standing tradition of the District as it is more fiscally responsible, as well as trying to find a way to acquire these specialty vehicles that has the least possible impact on the taxpayer.

Commissioner B. Bishop further explained that a District truck committee, rather than a company committee, was formed to look at the bigger picture of the overall replacement of all apparatus, and they will continue to be in operation after this current issue is resolved. This District truck committee will continue to look at the overall apparatus needs, in hopes of possibly reducing the fleet in the future.

It was the recommendation of that committee, which included some Officers and two Commissioners, to enter into a lease purchase for the two vehicles and only those two vehicles. It was explained that a lease/purchase is an agreement with a leasing company and at the end of that arrangement there is the opportunity to either purchase that vehicle at fair market value or lease another vehicle, which is different than the last proposal, which was essentially a loan with a \$1 buy out at the end. This lease would be for ten years, and in that time, this Board believes that it can be fiscally responsible enough to have that money to purchase or continue to lease these two specialty trucks. Still in preliminary stages yet, have to look at all the options and speak with legal counsel to discuss any legal ramifications. The Board itself has not yet made a determination on this issue.

Commissioner Waite added that there were many meetings and they figured this would be the best option for the taxpayers in the town of Greenfield. Commissioner B. Bishop noted that although it would cost more in the long haul, the yearly payments would be lower, thus allowing the Board to continue to build up the Equipment Reserve Fund in the meantime.

Commissioner B. Bishop continued to explain that part of the discussion with the truck committee was to actually reduce the number of trucks in the District; for example Middle Grove is looking to replace their tanker and ETA for one 2000 gallon ETA, thus eliminating one truck from the fleet. There is also talk of combining a rescue truck and ETA at Maple Avenue, further reducing the fleet.

Commissioner Waite also noted that if they did go with this, they would probably also go with a maintenance program on the ladders. This year he believes it is \$50,000.00 for the ladder at Maple Avenue to keep it repaired, and if they go with a maintenance agreement with the lease, it would all be included.

Resident George Habig asked if the lease was for a new piece of equipment, which Commissioner B. Bishop confirmed. Mr. Habig noted he liked the idea of what we are trying to do; his biggest thing that needs to be focused on is more on getting costs down. He felt there were a few more things down the pike that they should consider, like the Fire Chief's pick up truck, as stated several times on the internet and previous meetings that over the years there are less structural fires around. He also noted he did a little homework on his taxes and pointed out what's going on in the economy, and that Greenfield is at the top with taxes. He also noted he mentioned once before that he feels that it might be a good idea to close one of the fire houses, like Porter Corners. Costs are just going to keep going up and just like corporations, maybe we should think about downsizing. His fire tax the last ten years or so was steady at \$70-80, then all of a sudden it shot up and it's not going to get any lower. Mr. Habig also noted he had written a few nasty letters about the personnel, and why can't you reduce them, it all goes to the pension. His big thing is to keep cutting costs.

Chairman Kugler thanked Mr. Habig for his comments.

Firefighter Brian Gibbins noted that there was talk about losing the tankers from 3000 and 2000 and buy a new attack truck, but in the survey that they got from the guys in NYC on the ladder truck, they recommended that when the ladder truck went out it should be followed up by all the large tankers, and by going to 2000 gallons are you going to be able to maintain the flow of these ladder trucks? A/C Ellsworth explained that they are thinking ahead and the 2000 gallon tanker would have a CAFS on it, which would make it more than 3000 gallons capacity, and the new ladder truck would be compatible as it will have a CAFS on it as well. Chairman Kugler explained that the aerial would have 500 gallons of water, but with the CAFS system on it, it is equivalent to having 2500 gallons of water. There may be a decrease in the fleet but an increase in capacity.

Commissioner B. Bishop noted they have talked about cost cutting, tightening the belt, streamlining the District and spending money more efficiently and effectively. Commissioner Spackmann added that future projections of the District have been more of a focal point over the past four months or so than it has been in years. He also noted that we are much more in tune with taxes than many other fire districts.

Mr. Habig asked if the District is 100% sure that everyone is paying their fair share of the fire tax. Chairman Kugler noted it was up to the Towns. More discussion continued on this subject; Chairmen Kugler noted that when the Town checks come in, they go back and check

to make sure they actually got what they were supposed to, and to their knowledge they have never gotten a check for less than what they were supposed to.

Commissioner Kugler asked if there were any more questions; Mr. Habig asked how we go about getting fuel for the trucks. Chairmen Kugler explained that we buy our fuel from the Town of Greenfield under state contract, which is cheaper than the price paid at the pump. Maple Avenue buys their fuel at the Mobil on Maple Avenue, and when they bill the District for it, they first take out all the taxes.

Meeting adjourned at 6:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce A. Petkus
District Secretary