

Board of Fire Commissioners

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September 15, 2010 Commissioners Budget Meeting

Budget meeting began at 8:00 pm.

Present were: Commissioners B. Chouinard, Kugler, Robarge, Spackmann, Secretary Petkus, Treasurer J. Bishop. Please see sign in sheet for others in attendance.

Meeting called to order with a flag salute and a moment of silence for departed members.

RESOLUTION #247 TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 26, 2010 BUDGET MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN.

MOTION: Spackmann

SECOND: B. Chouinard

RESOLVED to approve the August 26, 2010 Budget Meeting Minutes as written.

VOTE: All in favor, motion carried.

The Board then began by reviewing various changes made to the budget from last session to make sure all Board members had the same figures. Commissioner Kugler then asked if there were any comments regarding the A400 and A200 Accounts.

Commissioner Spackmann noted that regarding the SCBA account, at the last budget meeting the officers had talked about how to change the SCBA inventory management. Their suggestion was, especially in light of the other issues regarding the SCBA bottles, in general it would be nice to have just one extra bottle per pack. He would assume our inventory is currently close to that point. Chief Lant agreed on both counts. Commissioner Spackmann noted that it seems we do not need to put \$30,000.00 into that account. Commissioner Kugler noted that the air packs also come off that account as well, just not bottles. Discussion continued, including possibly setting up an SCBA Reserve Account; Commissioner Kugler reminded the Board that they would need to go to a public vote to set up a reserve account. It was decided to keep the account as is until a reserve is set up. Commissioner Spackmann noted he would put it on an agenda for the Future Plan committee.

Discussion turned to Personal Services (.100 Account). Treasurer J. Bishop noted that the figure immediately to the right of the title is the current salary; the figure to the right of that is what was

appropriated. Lengthy discussion continued regarding staffing. Commissioner Robarge noted that he felt they should just go with a 3% increase. Commissioner Kugler commented that his idea is to bring the secretary on full time to 40 hours and increase her salary to \$40,000.00; Secretary Petkus has already agreed. Commissioner Kugler also noted that he would like to set up a 2nd person in the office to handle purchasing, inventory and any other duties that would be helpful to the Secretary. He would like to bring them in 25-30 hours per week with a salary of \$25,000.00. Chief Lant noted that he has realized in the last year how important Joyce is to the District and felt Joyce should be put into our pension plan; Commissioner Spackmann noted that it could not be done. Commissioner Kugler noted the only thing they could do is to get her into the NYS pension plan. Joyce thanked the Chief.

Commissioner Spackmann commented that as the Secretary, she is the focal point of the District, and the current agreement is that she works 30 hours per week and she blows way past that; he would like to see her go to \$44,000.00. If you do the math that's another 10 hours per week and that would bring her up to 40 hours per week, and it is reflective of the hours that she does. Regarding the part time 2nd position, he thinks it is absolutely time that we had another person help out. Things have become so crazy in the district and we are in the middle of growing pains; there has been a lot of discussion regarding the business etiquette of the district, the future, where are we going, how we are growing, and if we are going to make this a better place and continue for it to become more efficient, we are going to need more people to make sure that happens, and we discovered this when Jes Bullard came in over the summer to help Joyce. But as soon as she left, more stuff was back on the plate. In addition we now have a Chief who is coming in and learning how busy the Chief's position is and how much he needs help to do his job, it is safe to say a 2nd person in the office is absolutely necessary. How many hours that is needs to be discussed. Commissioner Kugler asked the Treasurer to work out the social security and unemployment insurance. It was clarified that the Purchasing Agent position was being eliminated and a new position is being created. Commissioner Kugler noted they are trying to get an inventory and Jill did not have the time, and the new person working day time could very well get this moving, along with purchasing, and the talk of going to a requisition system; and still give this person time to help Joyce if possible. Commissioner B. Chouinard noted he thought he was wrong about Jill not having the time; she did not have the equipment to do the job. Commissioner Spackmann noted he would like to hear the other Commissioners opinions on this; Commissioner B. Chouinard noted he did not have a problem with this as long as the taxes don't go up and the budget stays down, and they need to figure out how to do it. He is not in favor of raising the budget, the economy stinks and he does not think raising the budget now is a good thing to do until the economy starts coming back up. Commissioner Spackmann noted that when they got working on the budget at the last meeting, before the talk of personnel, they were already increasing the budget 4%. Commissioner Kugler explained assessed valuation and how that is affected by new construction. Treasurer J. Bishop noted the figures for social security, \$6,100.00 and unemployment, \$1,800.00. Commissioner Spackmann noted that last year the tax rate was .97 and it wasn't when it came out and this year we are looking at .98/1000. Commissioner Robarge noted he felt they definitely need someone, not just for purchasing but for other things as well. Commissioner Robarge asked Joyce how many hours per work would she'd like this person to help in the office; Joyce noted it was difficult to say, but if the Board keeps going at five meetings a month she will get killed with minutes. FF B. Bishop commented that if the agreement is going to be 30 hours per week, then there needs to be some flexibility built in if that person has a meeting that week. Brief discussion continued regarding the new position; FF B. Bishop noted this person could work on records, including OSHA, ISO, training, EMS, etc, as the Board has been

talking about bringing on Paul Felts to handle EMS. Commissioner B. Chouinard makes a very good point that Jill couldn't do an inventory because there are no tools to help with inventory, implement a bar code system that works with Firetracker as that system is already in place. Commissioner Spackmann noted it is on his list, they have just not gotten to it yet. Commissioner Kugler asked how the Board felt about the personnel. Commissioner Spackmann noted he likes the idea of having a 2nd full time person. Commissioner B. Chouinard asked where they are getting the money from, as of the last meeting they are \$70,000.00 over from last year, which raised taxes and now they are adding more positions and more money, you just raised it another \$100,000.00. Commissioner Spackmann noted that is not necessarily true, and that what he may be getting it is that you either need to be comfortable with raising taxes, or not doing all this stuff. He also noted that last year they calculated at .97, and it was .96. Commissioner Spackmann also commented it is their responsibility as leaders to grow this District, and he does not know how growth and efficiency can happen and drive this District out of 1947 without throwing money at that problem. Unless somebody else has a solution that does not require money, it is not going to happen. Discussion also continued regarding the District Secretary's current and future salary, and her workload. Brief discussion also regarding the Chief delegating responsibility to other district officers rather than it coming to the district office, and the current culture of the district. Commissioner Spackmann commented that he agreed with a lot that has been talked about this evening, and a lot of those responsibilities could fall on to the officers, but at the end of the day it is not a realistic expectation. D/C Ellsworth noted that the District this year is fortunate because Chief Lant has a more flexible work schedule and has been trying to get things done that hasn't been done over the years; unfortunately there is a ton of stuff that still needs to be done and this new person can help him as well. Discussion regarding tax increase, possibly being able to cut somewhere in the budget to avoid a tax increase; Chief Lant suggested cutting \$20,000.00 from the gear account. George Habig, resident, thanked the clerical staff for what they do, he has no problem with the Board adjusting their compensation as they do a good job, and adding an extra person on may cost a little more up front, but down the road he feels things will level off. Tomorrow night is the Future Plan Committee meeting, and discussion will be about trucks, maybe they can eliminate some trucks to help balance the budget down. Chief Lant noted that in a few years they could save us money. FF Jack Atwell noted that if there were an inventory in the district, it could save the district a ton of money. Chief Lant commented that one thing he has seen this year is that people have good attitudes; they want this fire district to get ahead, everybody is working together and it is a good feeling. Commissioner B. Chouinard noted that he agrees with the Chief to try cutting the budget in places, agreed with cutting the gear, the uniforms as well.

Chief Lant asked if there was money allotted for the rehab bus; Commissioner Spackmann noted that he has spoken to a few people on that committee, and asked them to get a list together of what it is going to cost for the bus; Chief Lant noted he has been asking for it as well, as late as this morning and was told it was going to be given to him this afternoon, and he has not received it. After some discussion \$8,000.00 was allotted to the rehab bus. Commissioner Spackmann noted he is not in favor of spending any money until a plan is in place. D/C King commented that they are trying to get donations for it as well. Commissioner Kugler asked the Chief what they were planning on doing with the rehab trailer, last year the Board sunk \$4,000.00 into it. Chief Lant noted it was given to Maple Avenue and he does not know what they are planning to do with it. D/C King noted that they were planning on setting it up as a fire prevention trailer.

Tables for Co #4 were taken out of the budget for the upcoming year. Commissioner Spackmann noted if there is year end money, maybe they will buy tables and if not we can buy them next year. Commissioner Spackmann also suggested adding \$5000.00 for inventory equipment. Brief discussion regarding what equipment will be needed, including a reader and labels; \$4,000.00 was agreed to for the equipment.

Commissioner Spackmann noted that based on the figures agreed to last Wednesday, including the reserve accounts, there was an increase in the budget of 5%. Discussion continued regarding the reserve accounts; it was agreed to increase the building reserve account \$100,000.00 due to more staff, increased records management and inventory overhaul. The other reserve accounts were left the same as last year. The Service Award Program was decreased by \$25,000.00.

Based on previous and above discussions, the budget for 2011 is \$1,384,600.00, an increase of \$77,914.00. Commissioner Spackmann noted that the budgetary increase could mean a 0% tax increase; last year the budget increased \$50,000.00 and the tax rate stayed the same. Commissioner Robarge suggested going back and try to make cuts to some of the accounts. Discussion returned to cutting the gear, uniform and SCBA accounts. It was noted that there seems to be enough bottles at the moment and there was a questions regarding NFPA guidelines and gear lasting approximately 5 or 10 years; one full set of gear costs approximately \$2700.00. After more discussion, it was decided to keep the accounts as they are, as the difference is only 1¢/thousand. The budgetary increase from 2010 is about 5.5%; calculating that out equals 98¢/thousand. Last year's budget was calculated at 97¢/thousand; but when assessments were finalized, it was actually down to 92¢. Commissioner Spackmann commented that you can have more gear and money for SCBA, and you are only raising things 1¢/thousand, which is safer than cutting the budget.

Secretary Petkus noted that the proposed budget must be approved on or before September 28th. Commissioner Spackmann noted that nothing needs to be changed, but it is important that we note this. A lot of things have changed in this budget; fire prevention is increased which means we are investing more in education and in the community, there is the rehab trailer, inventory, addition of office personnel. One thing that had been talked about was the annual banquet but there is no line item in there for that. In speaking with FF B. Bishop and A/C E. Petkus, we may not need to for the first round, but we are going to have to address this next year for 2012; it is absolutely necessary from an organizational standpoint that we do that once a year. FF B. Bishop noted that they may not need money for next year, but the caveat would be that the officers are going to have to use some of the money being saved for the 70th, and the rest of the foreign insurance money could be distributed back to the companies.

Question arose as to the creation of the ladder reserve account; it was again noted that it needs to go to a public vote and they could use year end money or wait until next year to establish.

RESOLUTION #248 TO ADOPT THE 2011 PROPOSED BUDGET.

MOTION: Kugler

SECOND: Spackmann

RESOLVED to adopt the 2011 Proposed Budget.

VOTE: All in favor, motion carried.

Commissioner Spackmann asked if Commissioner Waite had anything to say about the budget; Commissioner Kugler noted when he called all he said was he could not make it as he had to work.

Commissioner B. Chouinard noted he received donated office furniture from State Farm; we just have to buy better fabric that goes on the panels.

Chief Lant noted that NYS says you can have the blue lights on the back of the fire trucks; OSHA apparently says it is not legal. Requested that we get clarification from Bill Young. Joyce to call.

Motion made by Commissioner Kugler with a second from Commissioner B. Chouinard to dispense with the reading of the minutes. All in favor.

Motion made by Commissioner Robarge with a second from Commissioner Spackmann to adjourn the meeting. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce A. Petkus
District Secretary