

Board of Fire Commissioners

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

An informational meeting was held by the Greenfield Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners regarding the aerial ladder truck initiative. The informational session was called to order at Greenfield Center Company #1 by Chairman Kugler at 7:05 PM on September 19, 2007. The flag salute and a moment of silence were recognized for the departed.

Present were:

Commissioners: Kugler, Robarge, Spackmann; Secretary Petkus

Others in attendance: Various members of the Fire Department and local residents.

Chairman Kugler introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the informational meeting, noted that there would be a PowerPoint presentation and to please hold any questions until after the presentation was finished. He also asked that anyone asking a question please stand up and give their name for the secretary to record. He then introduced the Board members present and the District Secretary. He also explained that they would not be getting into finances this evening as there would be a public budget hearing on October 16th per the law recently passed by New York State. He explained that he and the Treasurer would answer questions pertaining to the 2008 budget at that meeting, which everyone was invited to attend.

He then turned over the meeting to Captain Gary Bullard, to began his presentation. FF Coffey first asked if there would be minutes taken for this meeting. Commissioner Kugler noted that the secretary would be taking minutes, and she noted that the meeting was being recorded for informational purposes as well.

Captain Bullard then introduced himself and explained that he is a Captain from the Maple Avenue Fire Company. He noted that the committee that was formed consisted of himself, Fire Commissioners, A/C John Lant, A/C John King, Captain Duane Bogardus and firefighter Mike Smith and they all have a lot of years in the fire service and come with a wealth of experience. Captain Bullard said that the presentation was put together to hopefully try and answer questions that had come up at the last informational meeting about a year ago, as well as other questions that have come up since then.

He then proceeded to explain that the current aerial truck is an aerial platform, which means there is a 100 foot aerial ladder and a platform, or basket, at the end that firefighters can stand in and work out of to access the roof or any other obstacle they may encounter.

He noted there are three main reasons why the existing truck should be replaced:

1. Safety and reliability:

- To be able to safely and easily access roofs; the longest ladder that is currently carried is a 35 foot extension ladder which will not reach most roofs of residential and commercial structures. Captain Bullard then showed pictures of various structures located within District boundaries, including residential homes and apartments, like Mansford apartments and Prestwick Chase, and commercial buildings, such as the Stewart's plant and JC Penney at Wilton Mall, and briefly

explained potential hazards associated with them, such as locations of chimneys, varied roof pitches and tin roofs.

- Residential and commercial structures are being built with either steel trusses, work plate trusses or land beams and when the plates get too hot they buckle. Showed some examples of the trusses and explained that buildings are being constructed to go up quickly and inexpensively, but can fail and come down just as quickly under a fire load.
 - Commercial structures have steel trusses, gave examples of Stewart's plant and Exit 15 commercial area. Noted that all the weight of commercial buildings is on the roof with air conditioning, ventilation and stone roofing materials, and if firefighters are not up on a ladder above the roof or are on the roof with no support and the roof collapse the firefighter goes with it. Usually there is very little warning if it is going to happen.
 - A platform allows access to the roof with a minimum of man power. It takes 3-4 men to put up a 35 foot ladder, with someone committed to watch that ladder, but it only takes 2 people to do the work on an aerial device.
 - New ladder truck has rear mount, 100 foot ladder, which allows more reach and keeps firefighters out of the collapse zone. The collapse zone is 1.5 times the height of the building; a 100 foot ladder allows you to be able to reach out, not just up. If a building were to collapse, it does not take firefighters or the truck with it.
 - Current ladder truck does not comply with many of the new safety rules. New apparatus must comply with NFPA 1901, including:
 - Warning lights
 - System overload minders
 - Anti cab crush
 - Short jacking
 - Protection for air system
2. Existing apparatus is getting old and the technology outdated. The current truck is a 1989 model and the technology on the truck was at least five years old when it was built. Noted that school buses in the District are replaced every 10 years.
 3. Repair costs are beginning to escalate. Pending bill this year of \$20,000.00 just in labor alone. All repairs done on the truck have been done only to keep the truck in operating safe condition, and not all repairs, like repairing the gas gauge, have been done.

Captain Bullard then spoke about the question that has come up as to why doesn't the District just purchase a newer used truck? He, as well as the Commissioners have done an extensive search online and were only able to find one truck out in California, a 2003 model that cost \$500,000.00 and still needs to have a water pump and a tank put on it. Another issue is the repair cost; they do not know what they are getting into when buying a used piece of apparatus. Another significant factor is warranty. Most used apparatus come only with a 30 day warranty, and the aerial has a 1 year warranty. The new apparatus comes with a 5 year warranty as well as a service maintenance contract. He has also been asked: the current apparatus looks so good, why don't we just refurbish it? He explained that there has been extensive conversation with Garrison Fire Equipment, who services the existing truck, and they have talked with the factory and the price to rebuild that truck and bring it up to current standards would approach the cost of a new truck. He reiterated that most of the problems with

the current apparatus cannot be seen, they are in the electrical system of the truck, which is the heart of the truck.

Captain Bullard also addressed concerns why the District used specifications for American LaFrance. He explained that the specifications released for the bidding process were open specifications and did not specify for one particular apparatus, including steel aerial ladder, stainless steel body and cab. Two bids were received back:

- E-One with a bid of \$890,000.00
- American LaFrance with a bid of \$845,962.00

Typically the District over the years has always purchased low bid and so we have many different brands of apparatus in the District, but it increases maintenance costs. The District standardized with American LaFrance, who also owns LTI, the manufacturer of American LaFrance aerials, to help decrease the cost of maintenance and servicing and increase parts interchangeability. The dealership is in Palenville NY and they have a shop as well as a road crew to work on the truck and are certified in American LaFrance and LTI. The firefighters are currently trained in operating the LTI aerial ladder, and training on the new apparatus would be relatively easy and therefore the truck should be able to be put into service fairly quickly.

Some other points Captain Bullard noted:

- The commercial section of the Fire District pumps in about \$3.5 million dollars in the county tax system to help reduce the taxes across the District;
- There has been tremendous growth in this area over the last few years;
- This initiative will not change the budget for 2008; the tax rates will remain the same except for adjustments because of re-evaluations done;
- Just to compare taxes the average resident is paying on a \$200,000.00 house, he noted that monthly we pay:
 - School taxes: \$230.00
 - County taxes: 25.00
 - Fire taxes: 22.00
 - Library tax: 17.00
- In 2005, volunteers of the Greenfield Fire District did about 1189 calls with about 11,522 volunteer man hours. In 2006 there were 1271 calls with a little over 14,000 volunteer man hours.

Captain Bullard then noted that before he turned the meeting over to Commissioner Kugler he wanted to leave everyone with one final note: The District, with regard to this initiative, is trying to put forth the best deal along with the most safe and best equipment for the firefighters and for the people of this District. He then thanked everyone and turned over the meeting to Commissioner Kugler.

Commissioner Kugler then explained that if it is replaced, the current aerial ladder will be sold and the money from that sale will be put back into the Equipment Reserve Fund for future purchases of equipment.

He then went on to explain the three different ways to possibly purchase this new piece of equipment:

1. Direct purchase: requires saving enough money to pay for the truck when it is delivered. Currently there is \$504,000.00 in the Equipment Reserve account. Typically \$230,000.00 is put away each year into this account and so this would mean waiting an additional 2 years to purchase the truck on a cash basis. The approximate cost of the truck at that time would be about \$970,000.00, which he

- felt was a little on the conservative side as the price increases are anywhere from 5-9%. Fire apparatus is generally very expensive to begin with.
2. Straight out lease: the truck is ordered, there would be zero money down, 4% on a 10 year lease, making the payment about \$142,440.00 per year for a total lease of \$1,424,400.00. At the end of the 10 years the truck goes back to the dealer and the District has to start all over looking for another truck.
 3. Lease/purchase: This is the option the District is looking at, as at the end of the lease or bond, the District owns the apparatus. Currently the lease payment at 4%, with a \$444,130 down payment, the payment would be \$49,645.00 per year for 10 years. By choosing this option the District would be saving about \$40,000.00 because of a pre-pay discount and still allow money to be saved into the reserve account, therefore accumulating approximating another \$600,000.00 in the Equipment Reserve Fund by the end of 2010 towards the purchase of the next piece of apparatus as deemed necessary.

Commissioner Kugler then explained that taxes will not go up and money will still be going into the Capital Reserve Fund and in fact the 2008 budget had a decrease of about \$6,000.00. The proposed budget can be viewed on the district website. He then asked for questions off the floor.

Bob Hyndman of Denton Road explained that he has asked before and has never gotten an answer as to how many alarms the ladder truck goes out on. Captain Bullard explained that he went back and looked at Maple Avenue calls only and noted that in 2005 there were 938 calls, of which 553 were EMS calls and 385 were fire calls. Of those fire calls the ladder truck had the potential to go on 176 calls and the ladder truck went on 25 calls. In 2006 Maple Avenue had 349 fire calls and the ladder truck went out 33 times and in 2007 as of August 1st, there was 236 fire calls and the truck went out 32 times. Mr. Hyndman thanked him for the information and then explained that he has been, over the course of a year to more than several meetings and the issue has come up about commercial aspect and application of the truck and that the ladder basically responds to all commercial alarms and anything with a fire hydrant, that is what he understands, supposed to be a first line truck or whatever the correct terminology for that, which would put it into the Wilton business district as a primary use. He has actually listened to the firemen from the District stand up and say that the commercial district pumps in about \$3.5 million into the county economy, which is sales tax. He explained that those businesses don't pay sales tax, they collect sale tax, and we pay sales tax. They are just a vehicle to take it from us and pass it to the county and it's still just another burden one way or another that we are paying as a taxpayer and the residents of Greenfield, and he is wondering why there isn't some way for something to be done, where if the primary burden for that vehicle is that commercial district of Wilton that they don't carry more of the burden for paying into the purchase and the maintenance of that truck. He has also seen firefighters get up and say, and this is almost a direct quote, we feel they're taxed enough and they pay enough. He then explained that he would really like to see someone from the Fire District get up and say the taxpayers pay enough. He also further noted that they are a commercial venture, they are there to make money, the residents of Greenfield and the Wilton portion of the fire district, we aren't a business, the residents don't generate cash. He felt that something that is so specific in its requirement that more of the burden should be placed on the commercial section and he would really like to see that with this type of vehicle. He then noted that it was his understating, but someone could correct him if he was wrong, but it's been asked before and he stated that the truck has never answered an alarm in the town of Greenfield. He stated it had gone to Corinth, he also thought it had been up to Edinburgh or Day, but he didn't think it's ever answered an alarm in Greenfield. Captain Bullard noted that it has gone to Middle Grove and one of their own fires on Maple Avenue, and to Wilton once.

Mr. Hyndman responded that it was not Greenfield. It was noted that the truck had gone to Middle Grove once and to Corinth twice under mutual aid. Mr. Hyndman stated that it has been to one alarm in the Town of Greenfield. Mr. Hyndman explained that the burden is out by Exit 15 and now also 9 North in Wilton with all the apartments going up and that it is being spread to the residents and that a way should be created where they bear more of the cost of the truck than it being spread out amongst the residents of Greenfield. Commissioner Kugler responded that half the budget of the Greenfield Fire District comes from the Wilton area, and that area is comprised of Exit 15 and there is not much else in the Town of Wilton that the Greenfield Fire District covers. From the Middle School down to Sarge's Diner is the Town of Greenfield on both sides of the street, but a lot of the money is already coming from the commercial property in the Town of Wilton. Mr. Hyndman then noted that last year he went out and got the mailing list of registered voters of the Fire District and he felt it was pretty evenly split between Greenfield and the Wilton portion of the Fire District. He also felt that any of the big box stores going up, like Walgreen's or JC Penney, he felt that they should also pay maybe ½ or 1% or even a flat fee towards the purchase of the equipment. He also noted it goes directly to the welfare of the community, if they are a new member of the community and they are supporting us, then so be it, that it is just good citizenship. He again reiterated that for something that is for such a specific need out there and by and large we are a rural community for the most part, that apparatus is not a Greenfield piece of equipment. He noted it was nice to know it was there, but at almost 1 million dollars it is maybe too nice and if there is any more use out of the other truck based upon the numbers of usage, we should use that until it can't be used any more.

Andrea Mann, North Creek Road: she felt there are a couple of different issues going on, but what Mr. Hyndman was talking about sounded more like a Board of Supervisors kind of thing, a political thing, not anything having to do with the safety of the firefighters and respecting the firefighters in the entire district and get them the tools they need to do their job safely. She also noted that when you talk about it not being a Greenfield thing, he wasn't watching the presentation with the 3 story houses and multiple angles on the roofs, the metal roofs, you had to listen to the presentation, it was all right there. She felt that we need to keep the guys and gals safe and the tax stuff he was talking about, maybe he has a point, but that is not what this is about. She felt it was a different kind of issue than what this is about. We need to get a safe truck for when these guys are up in the air are trying to take care of you and me.

Assistant Chief of Maple Avenue John Lant then stood up and spoke; he added that he didn't think that people realized all the jobs they are protecting at Exit 15, like Target, and did anyone have any idea how much school tax they pay? He also noted that he is in business too and he is tired of paying taxes but they pay their fair share.

Bill Coffey, a member of the Greenfield Fire District Co #1 and also a taxpayer in the Town of Greenfield spoke. He explained that he agreed with Bob and it was mentioned before the safety of the firemen is of the utmost importance but again it is a big burden and personally he felt that the holding companies or the owners of the companies don't care if that building is standing or open for business, because it is probably worth more on the ground than it is standing. He again agreed with Bob and asked if anybody has approached them about adding to the fund to help offset the cost of the truck. Commissioner Kugler he was not aware that anybody had, nor has the Town of Wilton been approached.

Dorothy Barney asked if this was a 50 foot ladder versus a 100 foot ladder to replace a 50 foot ladder? Commissioner Kugler explained that they were looking at a 100 foot to replace the existing 100 foot ladder.

George Habig, Greenfield Center: His question pertained to voting day. Last fall particularly at this fire house when they had the vote for the ladder thing, it was a cold evening and people were sitting outside and the door was locked, we pay for this building, after some doing they finally had an open heart and let the people in. His second point was that minutes before the vote there was about 30-35 people in line with a second line getting ready to vote and he felt it would have been a good credibility gesture if somebody from the fire department would have showed that the voting box had nothing in it. He clarified that he was not accusing anybody, but the box was in the back room and it was locked, and he didn't know what was in there. His third point was that when they had the vote in the paper last year, in the paper they said it was turned down and to this day he doesn't even know what the vote is, but when the pension was passed the vote was in the paper. But when you get defeated you don't have the vote in the paper. Commissioner Kugler said he would address that.

Jack Atwell, Greenfield: he asked how long if the bond issue passes, how long will it take for this new truck to be delivered? Commissioner Kugler noted it takes about a year to build it. Mr. Atwell then noted that you said this year there would be no tax increase, and that Greenfield just got re-evaluated and everybody got hit hard. He asked if there isn't going to be any tax increase; does that mean our assessment per thousand goes down? Commissioner Kugler explained that it would stay the same. Mr. Atwell then noted that his taxes are then going to go up. Commissioner Kugler clarified that it is based on your re-eval and it might have a bearing on it. Commissioner Kugler noted that he has no control over the re-eval and the equalization rate. Mr. Atwell said that you say there's no tax increase but evidently there is. He also noted that according to the figures, the total cost of the truck is \$944,130.00. Commissioner Kugler clarified that that figure was based on 10 year payments. Mr. Atwell felt that if you stop to save the money it would take 2 years and the truck would be about \$940,000.00, and it is going to take a year to get the truck anyway, so he felt it was just about a wash. Commissioner Kugler noted that it is in that respect, but then the next truck would be pushed off that many more years in order to save the cash again, which would be at least 6-7 years down the road at least before the next truck would be purchased.

Commissioner Kugler then asked if there were any more questions and pointed to Brian. He went back to Jack's question and said you were looking at 6-7 years if they don't bond it and save money and pay cash for the whole program. Asked what is the projected replacement schedule for the rest of the district? Commissioner Kugler asked him if he meant after the 7 years? Brian noted that 2 years ago it was a 2 year replacement rotation throughout the district. He noted to this date the Board hasn't come up with a definitive answer as to what is going to be the replacement schedule for the rest of district now. Commissioner Kugler noted that if this initiative passed, then 3 years after this, we should be able to buy a new truck, and will probably, because of the increased cost of the trucks, have to go from a 2 to a 4 year rotation on truck replacement. Brian noted in part of the presentation you were saying as needed and he didn't know if they were going to start selecting which station would get the replacement truck and let everything else go, because at a 2 year program the maintenance schedule right now, why you can't not budget, because if you are putting the previous lump sum into the apparatus repair and go to a 4 year program and there's no tax increase, with that 4 year program you are going to be looking at doubling maintenance program for the district. Commissioner Kugler disagreed with him on that; that is why they standardized with American LaFrance to start lowering repair costs now. Brian noted about extending the life of the vehicles, and Commissioner Kugler noted that the life of the vehicles should be extended anyway as they are not having the fire calls they have had over the years. Brian noted that the trucks we have are all mismatched; Commissioner Kugler agreed and that is why they want to get rid of them. Brian noted that right now a vehicle is being replaced at 16 years, and if you go to a 4 year program you double it so the second line trucks are going to be 30 years old

when they get rid of them. Commissioner Kugler noted that you can't say that right now because we don't know exactly what we are going to be doing as there are a lot of factors to take into consideration, and maybe we will have to cut back on equipment, that no one knows until they approach this and see what happens.

Jack Atwell asked what the approximate value of the old truck is right now. Commissioner Kugler noted they had gotten some prices and may be able to get \$100,000.00, based on the sale of Porters old truck, which was a 1990 and cost approximately \$135,000.00 brand new. They contacted a broker who was able to sell that truck for \$60,000.00, which was a good deal. Mr. Atwell agreed. Commissioner Kugler noted that they would probably deal with the same broker again, as he is interested in it, but we are not exactly sure what we are going to get, could get more or could get less.

Bill Coffey noted that Greenfield was up for a truck last year and pushed out because of the ladder issue, put up for 2 trucks last year and got voted down. If this gets passed and a new ladder is purchased we are looking at 6-7 years before Greenfield gets another truck. Commissioner Kugler stated that he did not say that; he said if this goes through we are looking at the next new truck in about 3 – 3½ years. If it doesn't go through, now we are looking at 6-7 years down the road, based on the amount of money being put away into the equipment reserve fund.

Commissioner Kugler asked if there were any more questions; there were none so he thanked everybody for coming and hoped they got some useful information out of this. He then noted that there were newsletters if any one was interested if they hadn't already received one in the mail.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce A. Petkus
District Secretary