

# **Board of Fire Commissioners**

Greenfield Fire District  
P.O. Box 103  
Greenfield Center, NY 12833  
(518) 893-0723  
Fax: (518)893-7006

A Special Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Greenfield Fire District was called to order at Company #1 by Chairman Richard Spackmann at 7:03 PM on December 4, 2013. Flag salute/moment of silence recognized for departed members and our troops overseas.

## **Present were:**

Commissioners: Atwell, Barss, Chandler, Spackmann; Secretary Petkus, D/P Chouinard, Treasurer Perkins, D/T Thurman. Please see sign in sheet for other in attendance.

Bid opening for snow removal services for the 2013-14 season: Commissioner Spackmann noted one bid was received on time (King Enterprises), two were submitted late (J&K Trucking, Chandler Trucking) and one vendor declined (Cleveland Brothers).

Bid received from King Enterprises:

- Co #4 only: \$3600.00
- Co #1, 3, 4, district office: \$28,000.00

D/P Chouinard noted the proposal was broken down into payments, and runs from December 2013 to May 2014. Commissioner Spackmann noted Nate King had a question about salt; it was noted the Town of Greenfield will be taking care of that, although Nate would prefer to do it.

Discussion continued regarding the bids received late, possible rebidding. Commissioner Spackmann questioned how much year end money was left; Treasurer Perkins noted approximately \$250,000 in the General Fund, about \$40,000 of which will be needed for January/February operations. Money will also be needed for the Installation banquet, 273 repairs of about \$10-12,000.00. Decision made to make slight changes to specs and re-bid for per storm price as well as seasonal price with bids to be opened at the December 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Treasurer Perkins noted she has budget to actual so far, but in order to move funds around budget wise, will sort of need to know what is coming in December. Discussion continued, and the following was noted:

- Repairs to 273: \$10-12,000.00
- Co #3 generator repair: \$2,000.00
- Snow removal: \$28,000.00
- Co #3 siren repair/replacement: \$3-5,000.00

Commissioner Spackmann noted that all this will be discussed at year end meeting. Treasurer Perkins also noted that she and Chris will be doing the Treasurer switch earlier than originally thought; Chris will switch to Treasurer right after this pay period on Friday. She will be here to help him until Christmas, but will not be here for year end. Brief discussion continued regarding year end procedure.

D/P Chouinard also noted the new building is going to need a projector system; approximate cost will be between \$8-12,000.00. She is working on trying to get a screen donated, which will

decrease the bill by about \$3,000.00. Secretary Petkus also noted tables and chairs will be needed for the meeting room. Have already started getting quotes on tables and chairs.

Commissioner Atwell noted the Toys for Tots train is looking for the district to provide an EMT to ride the train this weekend; Matt Reynolds has volunteered.

## RESOLUTION #263 SPONSORING CAPTAIN MATT REYNOLDS FOR THE PARTICIPATION IN THE TOYS FOR TOTS TRAIN ON DECEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup> AND 8<sup>TH</sup>, 2013.

MOTION: Spackmann

SECOND: Chandler

RESOLVED to sponsor Captain Matt Reynolds for the participation in the Toys for Tots train on December 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

VOTE: All in favor, motion carried.

Commissioner Spackmann noted that 284 is not selling at the current asking price. Brief discussion; price to be lowered to \$75,000.00. D/P Chouinard to notify the broker and resend out to the County.

George Habig, resident, noted the following:

- On the morning of October 21<sup>st</sup>, he mailed a letter to the Board of Fire Commissioners from the Greenfield post office;
- On October 22<sup>nd</sup> he had a minor incident at his house and called the fire department, they responded quickly. That afternoon he wrote a thank you letter and mailed it at the post office.
- Did not have the opportunity to attend the October 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting;
- When he attended the November 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, there was no mention under Secretary correspondence about any of the letters he sent, so he assumed they were read on October 23<sup>rd</sup>;
- When the October 23<sup>rd</sup> minutes were posted, there was nothing about the letters, so he called the Secretary and asked her what happened and they got lost or something like that.

Secretary Petkus noted they did not get lost; there was one letter and the thank you letter with the donation that was given to Greenfield Center. The letter was not read as she does not do correspondence at workshops, and the November meeting was a little busy, so it will be brought up at the December meeting, as she had explained on the phone. Lengthy discussion continued regarding the letter sent by Mr. Habig. Commissioner Spackmann noted that generally letters are not read; if he wishes to have the letter read, he can be put on the agenda to read it. Mr. Habig noted he was just voicing his opinion about what happened. Commissioner Spackmann noted that although he does not believe that the Commissioners believe in transparency, Commissioner Spackmann noted he does in fact believe transparency, the people's right to speak to elected officials, open government, etc., but as a Commissioner he finds Mr. Habig's reiteration of things has become pretty tiring. We talk about the same things over and over again, and they are going to have to agree to disagree. Commissioner Spackmann used transparency as an example; they are more transparent than the town, school and library governments, and also cost less than all three. He noted he is frustrated because he feels no matter what he or the rest of the Board do, which is volunteer, it is not enough for him. Mr. Habig noted he has a right to express his thoughts about the Board's decisions, and the intent of the letter is to disagree with them that it is not in the best interest of the taxpaying people. He wishes the Board would read it. Mr. Habig noted he is here for transparency, he does not know

the ins and out of the fire company, but they have to agree that seven and eight years ago they were spending money recklessly, and they have come a long way. Mr. Habig noted his intent is not to be a pain; his intent is to let everybody know he disagrees with the Board. Commissioner Spackmann noted that he may not be conveying this properly, but the fire district does more than local governments in the same community we are located, we do more work, and are more diligent than other governmental entities. Town taxes have gone up 50+% in the last four or five years, and this Board spends four or five meetings discussing only 2%. He has nothing against the town council, but they get paid, this Board is all volunteer. Mr. Habig noted the Board gets LOSAP. Commissioner Spackmann noted the expenditures in the new golf course, the implementation of a water hydrant system, the new ambulance, all of which increases taxes, but there is no concern over all this. The Board decides not to do a newsletter, and they get ridiculed for it. Where is the outcry for all the stuff he just talked about? Commissioner Spackmann noted he is glad Mr. Habig is involved, but he should be more involved in decreasing his 50% tax increase and that no matter what they do, the Board cannot please him. Mr. Habig noted that as long as he comes to the meetings his agenda is #1 transparency for the taxpayer, and he would like the Board to read his letter. It was noted by several Board members that they got and read his letter. Regarding the newsletter, Commissioner Spackmann noted he is not against the newsletter, in fact he was the one who started the newsletter, but his point is, the Town doesn't do newsletters; the fire district does more force-feeding as volunteers than the elected officials do. Commissioner Chandler explained the issues regarding sending the newsletter, including the cost to mail the newsletters as well as leaving them in public places, where no one really took them. Mr. Habig noted he felt one newsletter a year is good, and he would like it mailed. He also had brought up putting the budget breakdown in the newsletter and the Board said no, and that the letter he sent lets the Board know that he is not satisfied with that decision, which he has right to do. Commissioner Spackmann noted that he appreciates Mr. Habig expressing himself to the Board; but he does not have right to speak at public meetings, nobody does. The Board affords that because again, they believe in transparency, and he will be placed on next month's agenda to speak.

Commissioner Spackmann then asked if Mr. Habig happens to know who stuffed the mailboxes with the minutes of the budget hearing and flyer and that is why several other residents came to the November meeting; Mr. Habig noted he did not know. Commissioner Spackmann also noted that he spoke to them after the meeting and he got the impression that they were not upset with the budget. What he thinks is happening is that people do not know all the facts and then when they find out the details generally they are pleased. The reason he is saying this is there are about 11,000 residents in the fire district and that Mr. Habig is the only regular attendee, and the only thing he can conclude is that the majority of the people in the district are somewhat content and happy with the service provided. Mr. Habig noted if the budget breakdown was in the newsletter they would read it and say it is okay or they have a disagreement with it, but then they are aware. He also noted that people are lazy and you need to give them a \$50 bill to get them on the internet to check out the meetings and stuff. Commissioner Spackmann agrees that it should be mailed, but it can't be mailed with the money they have. Mr. Habig noted two or three editions with the money budgeted for the newsletter now would put them in the hole. It was clarified that the Town board does not send their budget in a newsletter. Mr. Habig noted he has been to several town board meetings, including the last one on solar panels, it seems like people are more tuned in to town meetings than in the fire department. Commissioner Chandler noted that is probably because they don't want to know about us unless they have an issue and then we show up. Mr. Habig noted he would love to see a lot more taxpayers at the meetings; Commissioner Spackmann explained that is exactly why he did what he did at the last meeting, when he cut the meeting short to give the residents present the opportunity to address the Board because he does believe in transparency. Mr. Habig noted he wrote the thank you letter because the fire department responded so quickly.

Treasurer Perkins requested to speak as a citizen; noting regarding the newsletter issue, Mr. Habig may not be getting the answer he wants, but the Board is addressing it, and they are transparent, and the Board is making a benefit/cost decision. As a citizen she does not like that answer either, but it is costing them too much money to do the newsletter when they don't think they are going to get the feedback. Commissioner Spackmann noted it is not as simple as you might think to create a newsletter, and he hand delivers newsletters to Preswick Chase. Mr. Habig questioned that more people would read the newsletter if it is mailed, and Commissioner Spackmann agreed that realistically more people would read it, but that doesn't mean it is a good return on investment, and the flip side to that is the district has also received feedback in the past not to waste taxpayer money on the newsletters. Despite that, Commissioner Spackmann still felt that it was a good idea to send out a yearly newsletter.

Mr. Habig did agree that the board is doing a much better job in getting equipment than they were five years ago. He wants the people to know how much is being spent on what, and let them make their own decisions, it is their tax dollars.

Commissioner Atwell noted that before he was a Commissioner, he, Mr. Habig and another firefighter were the only ones to regularly attend meetings other than some officers, whether a newsletter was sent or not. Having more people attend the meetings would help because then they would know what the district is doing, but they just don't want to come.

Commissioner Spackmann noted at the budget hearing the only people to attend were a Commissioner wannabe, a supervisor wannabe and Mr. Habig, and it wasn't because it was not advertised. Mr. Habig noted he does appreciate this conversation. Commissioner Chandler explained that they do not take this lightly. Commissioner Spackmann added that the reason he is so frustrated is because they do this because they want to serve the community, but it seems like no matter they do they cannot win.

Motion was made by Commissioner Atwell with a second from Commissioner Chandler to dispense with the reading of the minutes. All in favor, motion passed.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barss with a second from Commissioner Spackmann to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM. All in favor, meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

*Joyce A. Petkus*

Joyce A. Petkus  
District Secretary