

Board of Fire Commissioners

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

The 2013 proposed budget public hearing of the Greenfield Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners was called to order at Greenfield Center Company #1 by Chairman Spackmann at 7:11 PM on October 16, 2012. The flag salute and a moment of silence were recognized for departed members and troops fighting overseas.

Present were:

Commissioners: Atwell, Barss, Chandler, Spackmann, Waite; Secretary Petkus, D/P Chouinard, D/T Perkins.

George Habig, resident, also present.

Chairman Spackmann announced that in accordance with NYS Town Law §105, all Fire Districts must, prior to the adoption of their budget, hold a public hearing on their budget. He then also noted the following:

- Tonight's meeting is about the budget;
- This is the opportunity for the public to talk and ask questions about the budget; the Board is not obligated to respond, but generally speaking the Board always tries to answer all questions;
- As specified in NYS Law, the budget has been posted on the website, firehouse and Town billboards, etc.

The Treasurer then read the through the 2013 proposed budget (see attached). The total budget presented: \$1,462,339.00.

Chairman Spackmann then opened the floor to questions/comments from the public, and as Mr. Habig was the only one present, asked Mr. Habig if he had any questions/comments on the proposed budget.

Mr. Habig, resident, Route 9N, Greenfield Center, asked for the tax rate; Commissioner Spackmann noted that the tax rate for Greenfield is 1.04 and for Wilton 1.06, but he does not believe they are correct although they will be in that neighborhood.

Mr. Habig then read a prepared statement that included the following:

- Thanked the firefighters, Board and clerical staff for their service for the year.
- Has a few comments about the budget:
 - Has a problem with the Installation/Inspection again, going from \$15,000 to \$18,000; too much spent on alcohol regardless of who pays for it. Can any Board member state that not one person left the banquet and drove under the influence of alcohol. The Board should set the open bar at ½ an hour. Also referenced the September 12, 2012 Commissioner meeting minutes and alcohol liability concerns being raised regarding the Melissa Diggins fundraiser. Felt this could be a potential insurance issue, and cited the recent Malta Oktoberfest where over 2000 people came to an outgrown venue.

- Thanked the Board for the reinstated newsletter, believes that no one on the Board is against taxpayer transparency; that being said he feels there should be no reason why the Board would object to having the full budget in the newsletter each year as not everyone checks out the GFD website.
- Phone bill is down from \$18,000 to \$14,000; thank you.
- Personnel gear is starting to creep back up again from \$50,000 to \$75,000 next year.
- 3% increase for personnel services in his opinion is out of whack with others in the area. His next social security increase is only 1.5 - 1.7% and Saratoga Springs School teachers are on the low side. Would have no problem if the Board cut the installation/inspection and used that to cover the 3% increase.
- Suggested the Board should set the tone at the beginning of the meeting to make members aware to limit unnecessary spending, not including safety items.
- Red flags should be raised when there is too much shifting of funds to other accounts in an ongoing trend.
- Highest tax rate in the last 12 years and highest since 2007. 1½% higher than last year.
- Keep spending down.

Chairman Spackmann asked if there were any other comments/questions; Commissioner Barss questioned the Hazmat account. It was noted that the pillows, speedy dry, gas meters, drager tubes, etc are taken out of that account. Commissioner Atwell questioned the \$500 allotted to each company for maintenance supplies; it was noted that it is combined in the Office and Maintenance Supplies line item at \$2000. Also noted the \$10,500 fit test machine allotted for next year; maybe we could try to buy it out of year end money if we needed to modify the budget. There were no other questions or comments from the Board.

Chairman Spackmann noted at this point that the Commissioners or Treasurer would answer any questions, if able to do so, discussed during the public comment period.

Commissioner Atwell commented on the following:

- Gear is only good for 10 years, their hands are tied. Even if after 10 years it looks new, the State mandates that it be taken out of service, and next year approximately 14 sets of gear must be taken out of service and destroyed. Gear is approximately \$3300 each.
- Newsletter: he has no problem either way, but Mr. Habig is the only one who shows up and pays attention to the budget, thanked him for that.
- Regarding the tax rate, the way he has it figured it will be a ½ cent increase per 1000 of assessed value as close as he can tell but he does not have the final figures from the Town.

Mr. Habig noted that last year Greenfield was 1.0219 and Wilton was 1.0275 and this year they are 1.0352 and 1.0550, respectively. Commissioner Spackmann noted that mathematically it equates to \$1.50 on a \$100,000.00 home. Commissioner Spackmann noted he is very proud of the budget, and he does not know of any other form of government that debates a budget like this Board does. Commissioner Atwell added he has spent a lot of time on this budget, and would have liked to have no increase, but some of the stuff is mandated and the Board has no choice.

Commissioner Spackmann noted as a general thought that if you look at the tax rates for fire departments across the county, the Greenfield Fire District is right in the middle and yet Greenfield Fire District is one of the largest in the State with four firehouses, 21 pieces of apparatus, 200 firefighters and the most active volunteer agency in the County, so to be in the

middle of pack as it relates to tax rates says something about the Board trying to be as responsible to the taxpayers as possible. Commissioner Atwell also noted that they are one of the few fire districts that are not bonded and carry no debt.

Mr. Habig noted the point he is trying to drive home is that for example he appreciates when Co #4 purchased their new truck they came in \$8000 under budget, yet they then wanted to buy something else, and now there is the year end money and they are going to have their hands out again. The message that he would like the Board to convey to all the Chiefs is that it is still a bad economy and safety things are necessary but back off on other things. During the year unexpected things pop up. Commissioner Spackmann noted that just because he may not see the Board saying no all the time, there are plenty of times that other projects or proposals have been brought up and they have been told no, it just happens behind the scenes and never gets to the public meeting.

Chairman Spackmann then asked if there were any more comments from the Board or Treasurer, and as there were none, asked for a motion to close the hearing.

Motion to declare the public hearing regarding the 2013 proposed budget closed was made by Commissioner Spackmann with a second from Commissioner Barss. All in favor, motion carried.

Chairman Spackmann then made a motion to set the 2013 budget adoption date.

Motion made by Commissioner Spackmann with a second from Commissioner Barss to set the date for the adoption of the 2013 budget for the Commissioners Workshop beginning at 7:00 PM on October 24, 2012 at Greenfield Center Co #1, 13 South Greenfield Road, Greenfield Center. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Spackmann with a second from Commissioner Atwell. All in favor, motion carried.

Chairman Spackmann adjourned the meeting at 7:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joyce A. Petkus".

Joyce A. Petkus
District Secretary