

August 8, 2022

FLORENCE TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING AUGUST 8, 2022

Meeting ID: 832 0171 1724

Passcode: 900920

Board Chairman Robert Schoen called the regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners of Florence Township Fire District No. 1 to order at 7:00 pm. After saluting the flag, the following statement of compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was read by the chairman:

“This meeting is being held in accordance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act. Notice of this meeting has been placed on the department’s website, Facebook account, the Township calendar and the Township website. Furthermore, it has been published in the Burlington County Times and the Trenton Times.”

ROLL CALL: Present – John Fratinardo, Jason Ryan, Robert Schoen, and Steven Taylor
Absent: Andrew Popso (arrived at 7:05pm)

Also in attendance: Administrator Robert Tharp, Jr., Battalion Chief Miller, and Firefighters T. Estelow, D. Motta, W. Blackwell, S. Moran, and several members of the public.

MINUTES:

Minutes of the previous meeting July 25th, 2022, workshop meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Fratinardo to approve the minutes of the previous meeting July 25th, 2022, workshop meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

TREASURER REPORT:

A motion was made by Commissioner Fratinardo and seconded by Commissioner Ryan to approve the treasurer’s report. The motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION OF BILLS:

A motion was made by Commissioner Fratinardo and seconded by Commissioner Ryan to pay all the bills as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION:

1. Applicant for EMS employment JD Taylor is in the background phase.
2. Applicant for Fire Division Bianca Cheverez is in the background phase.

FIRE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR REPORT – Robert Tharp

1. The Fire Department participated in the National Night Out which was well received in the community. There was great interagency cooperation between the Police Department and the Fire Department. We received a lot of great reviews and compliments. Battalion Chief Miller was there along with a staffed engine and our arial truck, so we had good performance from the Fire Division.

2. We had to do a repair on the HVAC unit that was replaced. The compressor actually blew up. It controlled the area of the administrative side and the hallway. It has been taken care of.
3. We had our annual arial NFPA testing. They discovered some sagging in the cables. We have followed up and scheduled a repair for the cables with Fire Safety Services.
4. Ambulance 4081 is in for a repair on the front ball joints.
5. We have scheduled apparatus preventive maintenance on 4012.
6. The department has responded to 31 assignments since the last Commissioner's meeting.
7. We are still in the process of being trained and putting together the Aladtec software platform.
8. We are working with Power Supply Systems for the generator proposal they submitted. The project is going to roll over into 2023 because the parts will be ordered and will not be available until 2024; we are probably looking at that project sometime in April 2023.
9. We had an issue with the election. We reached out to the Burlington County Clerks Office in reference to the November election and spoke with Heather Cheeseman. The initial work was done with a referendum with regards to switching to the November election. The District's and the Board of Fire Commissioner's items were all in order which went to the County Board of Elections. The first conversation with Ms. Cheeseman, she indicated that we were not on the November election, we were a February election. The following day, she got back to us and stated that the County Board of Electives member notified the Deputy Clerk or the Clerk's office that we were a November election. In turn, she sent a form to us that was required to be filled out by June 7th, 2022, for the November election. The form was completed and returned as a request to extend the petition deadline for candidates, and they refused. At that point, we did not meet our statutory requirement to publicize the Commissioner vacancies for the November election which in turn disenfranchise all the residents of Florence Township that would want to run for Fire Commissioner. We contacted our labor attorney about the issues and to try to come up with the best solution that met the needs of the residents and taxpayers. We filed a request to the judge in Superior Court to let us extend to September 6th for people to submit a petition. The judge opted not to because the requirements for elections are very difficult to change and extend because of the state constitution. Then she ordered us to have the election for Commissioners in February which will require us to meet our statutory requirement to publicize the vacancies in January. The petitions will be available here for that process. That's where we stand with the election.

We spoke to the DCA for follow-up and DCA feels we should be able to follow the November requirements for submitting a budget.

Tonight's resolutions are necessary for us to continue to the February election so that we can have the November 2023 election for Commissioners. It was admitted in court that the Board of Elections for Burlington County did not submit the certification of our referendum, basically they flatlined it. There was a lot of back and forth and they stated they made a phone call here, but nothing could be proved. Our representation as we spoke through the week was to make sure that we have a fair, transparent election, and that we didn't have any issues after the November election.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Closed Session from July 25, 2022 – Personnel report on applicants.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Adopt **RESOLUTION 2022-32 TO CHANGE THE EMT PER-DIEM HOURLY RATE AND ELIMATE ALL CURRENT PAY SCALE STIPULATIONS AND SHIFT DIFFERENTIALS**

A motion was made by Commissioner Fratinardo and seconded by Commissioner Popso to adopt **RESOLUTION 2022-32 TO CHANGE THE EMT PER-DIEM HOURLY RATE AND ELIMATE ALL CURRENT PAY SCALE STIPULATIONS AND SHIFT DIFFERENTIALS**. Roll call vote: Commissioner Fratinardo – Yes; Commissioner Popso – Yes; Commissioner Ryan – Yes; Commissioner Schoen – Yes; Commissioner Taylor – Yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

2. Adopt **RESOLUTION 2022-33 EXTENDING COMMISSIONERS FRATINARDO AND TAYLOR’S TERMS UNTIL FEBRUARY 2023 ELECTION**

A motion was made by Commissioner Popso and seconded by Commissioner Ryan to adopt **RESOLUTION 2022-33 EXTENDING COMMISSIONERS FRATINARDO AND TAYLOR’S TERMS UNTIL FEBRUARY 2023 ELECTION**. Roll call vote: Commissioner Fratinardo – Yes; Commissioner Popso – Yes; Commissioner Ryan – Yes; Commissioner Schoen – Yes; Commissioner Taylor – Yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

3. Adopt **RESOLUTION 2022-34 SCHEDULING THE ELECTION FOR FIRE COMMISSIONER OF THE FLORENCE TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1 FOR THE THIRD SATURDAY IN FEBRUARY OF 2023 AS PER COURT ORDER OF THE SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY BURLINGTON COUNTY**

A motion was made by Commissioner Popso and seconded by Commissioner Taylor to adopt **RESOLUTION 2022-34 SCHEDULING THE ELECTION FOR FIRE COMMISSIONER OF THE FLORENCE TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1 FOR THE THIRD SATURDAY IN FEBRUARY OF 2023 AS PER COURT ORDER OF THE SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY BURLINGTON COUNTY**. Roll call vote: Commissioner Fratinardo – Yes; Commissioner Popso – Yes; Commissioner Ryan – Yes; Commissioner Schoen – Yes; Commissioner Taylor – Yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

4. Adopt **RESOLUTION 2022-36 AUTHORIZING MOVING THE FEBRUARY ANNUAL ELECTION TO THE NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION**

A motion was made by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Popso to adopt **RESOLUTION 2022-36 AUTHORIZING MOVING THE FEBRUARY ANNUAL ELECTION TO THE NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION**. Roll call vote: Commissioner Fratinardo – Yes; Commissioner Popso – Yes; Commissioner Ryan – Yes; Commissioner Schoen – Yes; Commissioner Taylor – Yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

5. Approve payment to the First Responder Joint Insurance Fund for the insurance plan Final Installment in the amount of \$41,376.00.

A motion was made by Commissioner Fratinardo and seconded by Commissioner Popso to approve the payment to the First Responder Joint Insurance Fund for the insurance plan Final Installment in the amount of \$41,376.00. Roll call vote: Commissioner Fratinardo – Yes; Commissioner Popso – Yes; Commissioner Ryan – Yes; Commissioner Schoen – Yes; Commissioner Taylor – Yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

6. Approve payment to US Bancorp in the amount of \$50,546.90 for the contract payment of Engine 4011.

7. A motion was made by Commissioner Ryan and seconded by Commissioner Taylor to approve payment to US Bancorp in the amount of \$50,546.90 for the contract payment of Engine 4011. Roll call vote: Commissioner Fratinardo – Yes; Commissioner Popso – Yes; Commissioner Ryan – Yes; Commissioner Schoen – Yes; Commissioner Taylor – Yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

GOOD OF THE BOARD:

1. We received a letter from Chief Ekelburg of the Endeavor Emergency Squad thanking the District’s EMS Division for our assistance during the County Farm Fair.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

A motion was made by Commissioner Fratinardo and seconded by Commissioner Taylor to open the meeting to the public. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Schoen: “The meeting is open to the public.”

Mr. Scott Arnold: “Scott Arnold, XXX Bennett Street, Roebing. Um, I agree with the Administrator on some of the things that happened at the hearing. Ah, the judge also commented on the delinquency for the lack of, ah, what’s the word I’m looking for, of follow-up by the Board. The June 7th date came and went; I don’t understand why a phone call wasn’t made on June 8th to find out what was going on. She asked me how I knew to have my ah, my petition in by July 25th. I explained to her the March 24th email that was sent out by the, by Brian that had all the instructions and the dates that had to be followed. So how you guys missed it, I have no idea. I just know that standing in that hearing, or being in that hearing, was one of the most embarrassing times that I’ve ever had as a member of this department. I cannot believe that you guys did this. I understand the judge’s decision; I follow her decision. But, the fact that it came to this is an embarrassment. And I think you owe myself, Mr. Peters, the members of this department, and the residents of this Township an apology. Because it’s embarrassing. Because I don’t think anybody knows what’s going on. And those are the things that we’re running against, is all this. This should have been followed up on. Commissioner Taylor, you were not here, my comments are not directed at you. It’s at the rest of the Board. This ????, your, your resolution was approved by the County Board of Elections in December, but nobody ever checked with them to make sure it passed before you even moved the February election. So my next question is, the term that is going to be up, is that a three-year or a two-year term now? A full term.”

Mr. Robert Tharp, District Administrator: “There’s ah, the three-year term, and then the ah, it still will be the 1-year unexpired, and then that unexpired term becomes a full term for the November 2023 election.”

Mr. Arnold: “Right, but the position that Commissioner Fratinardo has right now is, he’s already served, by, by February, he would have served a full extra year. So that should take one year off of that term. It should only be for a two-year term.”

Mr. Tharp: “He, his term wasn’t up until this election, it would have been this November election.”

Mr. Arnold: “If they, but if they didn’t move the election, his term would have been back in February. His term was extended. So, in, in essence, we are extending his, his, we are extending him a full year without an election.”

Mr. Tharp: “Ah I” (Interrupted by Mr. Arnold”)

Mr. Arnold: “I just want to make sure that the next, the next round, so that it stays two, two, one.”

35 **Mr. Tharp:** “Everyone will still remain the same.”

Mr. Arnold: “Then that will be a two-year term, in essence. Or a two-and-a-half-year term.”

Mr. Tharp: “Yeah, it’s still considered a three-year...” (interrupted by Mr. Arnold)

Mr. Arnold: “It’s still a three-year term.”

Mr. Tharp: “...term. We’re still, you gotta remember, we’re still behind.”

40 **Mr. Arnold:** “Yes.”

Mr. Tharp: “So no matter what, whose ever term it was, ...”

Mr. Arnold: “And so...”

Mr. Tharp: “...we will have to catch up every election till we’re finally through the cycle again on the November.”

45 **Mr. Arnold:** “Alright. I just wanted to make sure that’s...”

Mr. Tharp: “You’re always losing time; you know, you get what I’m saying? So, you are gaining time when we switch to the November.”

Mr. Arnold: “I believe that should have been in the resolution, that’s noted. That’s why I wanted to say something to make sure it’s in the minutes.”

50 **Mr. Tharp:** “In, in the written resolution, if you see it? ...”

Mr. Arnold: “Yeah.”

Mr. Tharp: “...it does explain the three-year and a one-year unexpired.”

Mr. Arnold: “Alright.”

Mr. Tharp: “It is in the resolution.”

55 **Mr. Arnold:** “Alright. I thank you.”

Commissioner Schoen: “Anyone else?”

A motion was made by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Fratinardo to close the meeting to the public. Motion carried unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION:

1. Adopt **RESOLUTION 2022-35 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM MEETING**

A motion was made by Commissioner Fratinardo and seconded by Commissioner Taylor to adopt **RESOLUTION 2022-35 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM MEETING** to discuss Personnel and Contracts. Roll call vote: Commissioner Fratinardo – Absent; Commissioner Popso – Yes; Commissioner Ryan – Yes; Commissioner Schoen – Yes; Commissioner Taylor – Yes. The motion carried 4-0-0.

Note: Action may be taken after closed session.

7:17 pm Closed session began.

9:02 pm Closed session ended.

2. A motion was made by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Fratinardo to come out of closed session. The motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Commissioner Popso and seconded by Commissioner Fratinardo to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Taylor

