

**Board of Fire Commissioners  
GLOUCESTER TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT 6  
Monthly Board Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Held:** August 22, 2019  
**Meeting Place:** Board Office  
**Meeting Called to Order:** 7:01pm  
**Members of Board Present:** **Chairman** – George Brown  
**Vice Chairman** – Richard Annacone, excused  
**Treasurer** – Brian Robinson  
**Secretary** – George Flinn, excused  
**Commissioner** – Steven Funkhouser  
**Administrative Clerk** – Renee Evans  
**Solicitor** – David Carlamere

**Salute the Flag**

**The Sunshine Law** – George Brown: In accordance with the NJ Sunshine Law this meeting is open to the public. The public portion will follow the regular business of the Board.

**Roll call Commissioners:**

Comms. Robinson, Funkhouser and Brown are present. Comms. Flinn and Annacone are excused this evening.

**Minutes of the previous meeting** - Motion to accept the previous month’s minutes as they are available to the public upon request.

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser. Roll call vote, all yes.

**Correspondence** – Renee Evans

**Adm.Cl.Evans:** It’s been distributed.

**Treasurer’s Report** – Rich Annacone

William Penn General Account	2,149,676.44
William Penn Payroll Account	27,671.09
Expenditures: 08/22/19	82,708.02
TOTAL AMOUNT FOR APPROVAL	82,708.02

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser to approve the Treasurer’s Report as read. Roll call vote, all yes.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Computer Services** – George Brown

**Comm. Brown:** We received a notice form our insurer, and I sent the sheet to the Commissioners so they have some understanding of what’s going on, but basically in order to renew our insurance policy on September 1<sup>st</sup>, there has been a significant of ransomware attacks on Local Government. There were 22 in Texas this past weekend. There is an article out today that there has been 40 so far this year all over, resulting in very high expenses to the Municipalities and the Local Divisions...in the millions. We have some cyber coverage, and in order to get it, we have to do certain things and we’ve been working on that. One of them is that we have to take our backups and get them offsite. In order to do that, rather than ask the Clerk or Chief or anyone to go offsite, we took a trial account this week for Carbonite and we’ll be backing up for their site every day. What was tricky about this new requirement was that it isn’t just our server because we have been backing up, they want all devices in the District. That means every PC has to be backed up etc. So we’re in the process of getting that up and running. That will cost us \$570 a year for that software. I don’t have that in the budget, and we’d like the approval of the Board to go ahead and proceed with that because we have no choice.

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser to approve the Carbonite one year backup to the cloud. Roll call vote, all yes.

### Computer Services – continued

**Comm. Brown:** Secondly since we'll now be using the internet to backup, we're going to need some more speed on Comcast. It's running very slowly, it will probably take about a week to backup what we have to backup on the current type. I was on the phone with Comcast yesterday, and they can't decide whether we're a residence or business so they couldn't give me the new price increase until tomorrow. We're going to have to spend some more money that I don't have a price for right now, so again another one of those things we don't have any choice to do. We won't buy anymore than we need, but we need to get this in place.

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser for authorization to increase the Comcast.  
Roll call vote, all yes.

**Comm. Brown:** Lastly, there is a cyber policy that has to be written yet. I'll work on that once I'm sure what we're doing. I couldn't write it until we figured out what software we were going to use and how we would do it, and I think we got that going. So I'll get that done, and the Board to authorize me to sign this minimum technology proficiency standards document. I'm sure we can get the lower deductible right now with the stuff we're doing. I'd hate to get the higher deductible...it's not much more but we'll take every penny we can get.

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Robinson for Comm. Brown to complete the minimum technology proficiency standards and the reports required by the insurance company. Roll call vote, all yes.

### Budget Co-Commissioner – George Brown

**Comm. Brown:** I received an email from Mr. Allen asking us to get Jan to come back on an as-needed basis starting in October to work on the budget. I've gotten verbal approval from Comm. Annacone. I sent Jan an email today asking her if she was available and how much she would want. I didn't hear back from her. I'm assuming she wants to do that and it's a reasonable cost and I would like to do that. Renee hasn't been here for that part of the circus, and I'd like to get Jan to lead her through that. So we need a motion to proceed.

**Comm. Funkhouser:** We don't know what salary?

**Comm. Brown:** We don't know the salary yet. If it's a lot more than what she left at then I'll come back to the Board.

**Comm. Funkhouser:** Has it been six months since she's been away from the department?

**Comm. Brown:** I don't know anything about that. Mr. Allen took care of all that he can, so I'm sure he wouldn't have asked if it wasn't appropriate.

Sol. Carlamere: He should probably disclose to you what that is so that you don't get caught up in making a mistake.

**Comm. Brown:** OK. I can ask him to send us a note, I'm good with that.

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Robinson to ask Jan to come back on an as-needed basis from October to the close of the end of the year, probably a couple days a week. if it's reasonable and all the requirements are met. Roll call vote, all yes.

### Fire Prevention – George Brown

n/a

### IAFF Contracts Co-Commissioner – George Brown

**Comm. Brown:** Normally Comm. Annacone reports on that, but I will because I was with him. We had our first meeting with the IAFF to try and resolve the contract that's not due till the end of December. Given all the things that we had going on, we felt it would be a good thing to get it resolved early. Our initial meeting was very positive and there is not much in what they ask for. I spoke to Howard Long today, our Labor Attorney, and went over what was being requested. I'm going to send that over to him in writing. There are some additional things that he said should be put in the agreement as a result of changes in the Chapter 2,949 or whatever it was regarding healthcare benefits. So I'll get that and we'll meet with him again and by next month's meeting I think we can tell everybody what it is and whether or not we're going to move in that direction. Nothing in there was unreasonable.

### Legal Liaison – George Brown

n/a

### Liaison to the District Volunteers – George Brown

n/a

**Budget Co-Commissioner – Rich Annacone**

No report.

**IAFF Contracts Co-Commissioner – Rich Annacone**

No report.

**Personnel / Administration – Rich Annacone**

No report.

**Personnel / Operations – Rich Annacone**

No report.

**Apparatus – Brian Robinson**

**Comm. Robinson:** I have nothing, I'll defer to the Chief's report.

**Fire Department Equipment – Brian Robinson**

No report.

**Fire Department Operations – Brian Robinson**

No report.

**Training – Brian Robinson**

No report.

**Insurance – George Flinn**

No report.

**Sign – George Flinn**

No report.

**Water – George Flinn**

No report.

**Building Maintenance & Grounds – Steve Funkhouser**

**Comm. Funkhouser:** Same thing, I'll refer to the Chief's report. Pretty much everything is in there.

**Communications – Steve Funkhouser**

No report.

**EMS / Supplies & Equipment – Steve Funkhouser**

No report.

**Turn-Out Gear – Steve Funkhouser**

No report.

**Uniforms – Steve Funkhouser**

No report.

**Chief – Michael Brezee**

**Chief Brezee:** My reports been submitted. I'm sure you all read the issue we're dealing with right now with the County and the parent company who owns Firehouse Software. In talking to people throughout the County, the switch has been made, it was successful what they say, the access is a little honky so they are working with the departments to get everybody their access back into the system. I know I spoke to at least 3 department Chiefs who said they're back in and up and running. But we're in that line I assume

**Comm. Brown:** Just for the record, did they review with you what this was going to look like after the conversion.

**Chief Brezee:** Not well enough.

**Chief – continued**

**Comm. Brown:** OK. So I think it should be noted that whatever problems we run into was a lack of good planning on the part of the County...

**Chief Brezee:** Which I'm pretty used to.

**Solicitor – David Carlamere**

**Sol.Carlamere:** Nothing to report.

**Resolutions – Renee Evans**

**Comm. Brown:** There was one Resolution in the Chief's Report asking for "Joint Duty Crews" Resolution and we'd like to approve that tonight.

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser to approve the Resolution. Roll call vote, all yes.

**Old Business – George Brown**

n/a

**New Business – George Brown**

**Comm. Brown:** I have a piece of New Business based on an email that I got from Comm. Robinson today, and we met last week with District 2 and 4 and some of the volunteers, and at the State of NJ there was a meeting held to discuss consolidation and what Comm. Robinson sent me today was the list of documents they would want in order to proceed. I looked at that and I sent the following email to Mr. Allen this afternoon and said we attended the meeting. Districts 1, 3 & 5, I want nothing to do with a merger. Our Board, with the exception of me wants to have Township wide consolidation. I'm not in favor of it because of the way District 2 & 4 were going about it. If it was done right, I'd be in favor of it. So I'm not hiding where I stand. If you look at the attached list of information they're requesting, it is sizable. I realize some could be done by the Chief, but most of it needs to be done by you. So here were my questions:

- 1) Do you have the time to work on this?
- 2) How long do you think this would take, understanding that you might only have a little time to work on this?
- 3) Do we have any money in the budget for you to work on this? If not, what should be anticipate it costing. Can we spend it now and do a Line Transfer in November.

Any thoughts you have would be appreciated.

So have you seen this list Chief?

**Chief Brezee:** Yes.

**Comm. Brown:** There is a month's worth of work here. We do not have an Administrator. We have one Clerk and Mr. Allen. I have two projects that need to get done this year. A phone system and perhaps an accounting system, so I'm not available. My recommendation is, until we hear back from Mr. Allen regarding his available that our official line is that we're looking at it. I'm not going to commit to it because we have no idea what it will cost to get it done. So it might be a situation where we say we'll budget for it for next year, and I don't think it's bad to be talking about it, but there is cost associated with all the information they want.

**Comm. Funkhouser:** They said at the meeting there was not cost.

**Comm. Robinson:** No cost, but the time to put it together. Once they get everybody's information there is no cost for them to compile it and come back with a recommendation.

**Sol.Carlamere:** But you have to gather the information and send it to them.

**Comm. Brown:** It's very expensive. It's not something we can go pull off the computer and put the answers down. And I would say with everything that everybody has going on here. Those are the things that have to be factored into our schedule to be able to do this. It's always about time, money and people. Naturally we have enough money, I don't think we have enough time and I don't think we have enough people.

**Chief Brezee:** I didn't see what Comm. Robinson received. Did you receive anything with it as far as we would take this much time to do that? I think you're looking at a year's time to get that all...

**Comm. Brown:** If you recall, and I have my notes here, and I have the power points log, that they said it would take 30 days for us to get them the information and 30 days for them to do the consolidation.

**Chief Brezee:** I don't think that's realistic.

**Comm. Brown:** So those are the kinds of things that I question. I don't have an opinion until I hear somebody say something that I think is false or stupid. And furthermore, if you look at the power point presentation, they said it would take six months if all the State holders met twice a month. It's there in writing, I'm not making that up. So I think the expectation that we're going to do this in 30 days is not fair.

**Chief Brezee:** Yeah, I find that unrealistic.

**New Business – continued**

**Comm. Brown:** OK.

**Dep.Chief Brown:** Are the State holders together once every six months now?

**Comm. Brown:** Once every six years. So I want to take the position that says we're going to look at it, it's our responsibility but we're not making a decision yet until we get Mr. Allen's response and figure out if he can't do this, where we're going to do this. You've got to have some sparks to do it right. And my fear is that it's so large, I can't imagine how some of the Districts are not going to do the quality job they need to do in order to get the right answer. So I just want to leave it at that for right now. We'll see where we are next month when we get Mr. Allen's response back. So we'll have a resolution to say we're looking at it and we'll move forward when we have the right information, is that fair with everybody?

**Comm. Robinson:** That's fair.

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Robinson to go on the record officially that we're looking at it, we have a lot of unanswered questions about cost and people and we'll report on it as we get answers back to them. Roll call vote, all yes.

**Sol.Carlamere:** Just a comment on that for your information, District 2 did not make a decision and pushed it to the next meeting, there were a couple members not present. District 4 did the same thing. They didn't have a full complement of the Board so they want a full complement to see how they're going to move forward and pushed it to the next meeting.

**Comm. Robinson:** One of District 4's Commissioners, Grady, reached out to me today and asked if we were interested in attending a meeting with the Mayor to see if the Mayor and Council will be on board to support this.

**Chief Brezee:** We do that quarterly.

**Comm. Robinson:** This is a small sit down.

**Sol.Carlamere:** You're right, he wants to do a private meeting...

**Comm. Robinson:** So as to not to put the Mayor on the podium in front of that whole room.

**Sol.Carlamere:** But the Board did not authorize that at that meeting because they didn't have a full complement, so they are going to have a special meeting as part of their work agenda to bring that question up to be advertised and voted on to get the authority to do that. It needs Commissioner authority to go initiate that meeting with the Mayor.

**Comm. Robinson:** OK.

**Sol.Carlamere:** I told him he can initiate the meeting but he can't attend with this issue as a Commissioner unless the Commissioners support him. So anybody can go and talk about, you can if you want without authorization, but you can't speak as a Commissioner for the Board unless the Board authorizes you to do it.

**Comm. Robinson:** I think that's what he said. In our legal opinion, he did not get their approval.

**Sol.Carlamere:** No. I told him and I told all the Commissioners that were there that he could make the appointment but if he goes, he goes as an individual unless the Board approves it. So the Board has a work agenda meeting before the labor meeting, so they're going to advertise that as a special meeting so they vote whether or not they want him to represent the Board saying they're interested in it.

**Comm. Brown:** That was one of the things that I thought was really done wrong that if Mayor and Council is not going to be behind us, why should we spend a lot of money collecting data.

**Comm. Robinson:** I think that's one of the points he's getting at is that Mayor and Council are completely not behind this, and we're just wasting time and a lot of money.

**Comm. Brown:** And money.

**Comm. Robinson:** I have no problem going with him. I've known him for a while, I don't know him that well, just to sit in the rooms for a simple yes or no. But obviously this won't take place until sometime in September.

**Sol.Carlamere:** It's probably going to take place towards the end of September now.

**Comm. Robinson:** Well I don't want to go without everybody in this room knowing about it obviously.

**Sol.Carlamere:** To say you're representing the Board as a Commissioner, you need Board approval.

**Comm. Robinson:** Absolutely.

**Comm. Brown:** I don't think till we hear from Mr. Allen whether or not we should do that. I sent him an email and as soon as I hear, I'll send you his reply. And if you're looking for a contingent approval, I'm OK with that.

Motion made by Comm. Brown, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser to conditionally approve Comm. Robinson as the Board's representative to a meeting with the Mayor and one Commissioner from District 2 & 4.

**Sol.Carlamere:** So just for clarification. If the Commissioner goes, is the authorization to say that the Board supports it or just to gather information.

**Comm. Robinson:** This is simple gathering of information, not going and saying we're going ahead with this, not at all.

**Sol.Carlamere:** You don't want to be a misunderstanding and if it gets out in the street...

**New Business – continued**

**Comm. Robinson:** No not at all. It's what we're going to have to weigh out in a month or so between Mr. Allen and that answer. Because if we get a full blown no from Mayor and Council, we're kind of beating our heads against the wall.

**Comm. Brown:** Do you want to restate the motion?

**Sol.Carlamere:** No I just brought it up for clarification so everybody knows what the purpose is.

Roll call vote, all yes.

**Public Portion – George Brown**

**Comm. Brown:** Public Portion?

**Mr. Chris Fegley:** 92 Annapolis Drive. For the consolidation, what is the ultimate goal right now? Is it to equalize the tax rates among the three Districts that are looking to pull resources, manpower, apparatus?

**Comm. Brown:** I'll take that question. I hope not. Let's take the tax rate question. If you look at the tax rate between the Districts, some Districts are almost twice the tax rate we have here. At the meeting they indicated what the budgets were and what the tax rates were etc., and it wasn't by accident, but we had the lowest tax rate of any of the six districts. We had the lowest budget, we had the lowest number of career firefighters, and we had the lowest Commissioner stipends except for District 1. So we've worked very, very hard here to control our cost, and I didn't make up these numbers. Now to answer your question, it's one that the State didn't know the answer to. I do remember and I have it in my notes and when they passed the last revision of Fire District laws, one of the things was they allowed a District to merge with a District that's not in their Township and I had that in the minutes that we sent out in the Local Government Finance Board Notice. But I believe in that same rule, that there was a thing called equalization, and that is that one of the big drawbacks to doing these is, why should I work really hard to keep my taxes low have to go pay for people who have not kept their taxes low. For example, our tax rate is .145, District 4's is .249. Not quite two times as high, but almost. So I hope I answered that question.

**Sol.Carlamere:** Can I answer?

**Comm. Brown:** Sure.

**Sol.Carlamere:** I think the way DCA and the State is heading for consolidations, they're not just talking about Fire Districts, and when you have a Town with multiple Fire Districts, the tax rates are always different. Your tax rate is lower and another tax rate is higher. So one of the things they say to go through this process and to move towards a consolidation, the final say has to go through DCA because they may want to see the finances how it works out, because one of the focuses is that Districts with a low tax rate, they can't absorb because it's not fair to the taxpayer, they're not going to absorb a higher rate at the end result because of another District, so they're going to try and equalize as part of the formula for consolidation so it does not adversely affect your tax rate in a sense. I don't know how they do that, but they leave that up to the Auditors and Accountants. That's how they're supposed to be looking at dividing up and it should be part of the whole process.

**Comm. Brown:** And the tax rate, if I may, only one of the financial considerations because the other thing is, is you're assuming other people's unpaid debt. So a number of these Districts have bonds that go out 10-15-20 years, so you're basically saying I'll pay for that when they come due, and I think we need a long discussion about that.

**Sol.Carlamere:** It's a long process. If anyone thinks it can get done in six months, it's a long process.

**Mr. Chris Fegley:** I've been through it with Cherry Hill. And I know one of their goals, was because of the Fire District that I lived in, they said why is my tax rate this and the person across the street who just so happens to be in the other District is paying twice the same amount for the same coverage, and they try to equalize the tax rate so everyone in the whole town is paying the same Fire District tax.

**Comm. Brown:** Right. Anything else? (hearing none)

**Closed Session – George Brown**

n/a

**Adjourn – George Brown**

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Robinson to adjourn the meeting at 7:27pm.

Roll call vote, all yes.