

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

Meeting Held: November 21, 2019
Meeting Place: Board Office
Meeting Called to Order: 7:03pm
Members of Board Present: **Chairman** – George Brown
Vice Chairman – Richard Annacone
Treasurer – Brian Robinson
Secretary – George Flinn
Commissioner – Steven Funkhouser
Administrative Clerk – Renee Evans
Solicitor – David Carlamere, excused

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:
All present.

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. Flinn, seconded by Comm. Robinson. Roll call vote, all yes.

Correspondence – Renee Evans
Adm.Cl.Evans: All has been distributed.

Treasurer’s Report – Rich Annacone

William Penn General Account	1,834,088.16
William Penn Payroll Account	25,130.00
Expenditures: 11/21/19	144,532.94
TOTAL AMOUNT FOR APPROVAL	144,532.94

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Budget Co-Commissioner – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Does anybody have any comments on the budget? Mine is done.

Comm. Funkhouser: Mine is turned in.

Comm. Annacone: I’m still waiting on some stuff from the State and then it will be done.

Comm. Robinson: Not yet.

Comm. Brown: OK. I checked with Jan yesterday and she seems to think that things are coming along. There are some issues, but we can’t do anything yet till we see where we are and decide what we’re going to do. It feels like we’re on schedule.

Computer Services – George Brown
No report.

Fire Prevention – George Brown

No report.

IAFF Contracts Co-Commissioner – George Brown

Comm. Brown: That's why I'm late. Apparently, we thought we had an agreement and an issue came up today questioning the schedule, so we'll have to go off line again, we're not going to approve that tonight. I had hoped that we would, but we're not going to be able to.

Legal Liaison – George Brown

No report.

Liaison to the District Volunteers – George Brown

Dep.Chief Brown: Nope. We presented everybody that we have into our pipeline. In addition, we have two recruits. One is here this evening, they're in the Fire 1 program at the Academy. The graduation date if all goes according to plan is Sunday, December 8th. All are welcome to attend.

Comm. Brown: Thank you.

Budget Co-Commissioner – Rich Annacone

No report.

IAFF Contracts Co-Commissioner – Rich Annacone

Comm. Annacone: We talked about the contract, and I'd like to go into Closed Session if we can to talk about that.

Personnel / Administration – Rich Annacone

No report.

Personnel / Operations – Rich Annacone

No report.

Apparatus – Brian Robinson

Comm. Robinson: The Chief had mentioned in his report to discuss maybe a new truck, but I think we need to discuss manpower. Somehow coming up with an answer on the Saturday crews before we even think about that, that's all I'm going to say on that one.

Fire Department Equipment – Brian Robinson

Comm. Robinson: We're going back and forth a little bit with some of the equipment requests, I'll call them. We'll see where it goes. I'm going to go out and look at some stuff tonight and see where we're at.

Fire Department Operations – Brian Robinson

Comm. Robinson: Up and running, all good.

Training – Brian Robinson

Comm. Robinson: We'll say moving forward.

Comm. Brown: So is it your intent to discuss the Saturday coverage tonight? Maybe do that as a New Business item or...

Comm. Robinson: I asked for a report and I pretty much got the honest truth that we are not able to cover every Saturday. It's not happening and continuing moving forward it will probably die out as we go as some of the other ones around us are, you could see it.

Dep.Chief Brown: I would disagree.

Comm. Robinson: The Chief pretty much called it a failure.

Dep.Chief Brown: I would vehemently disagree with that position.

Comm. Robinson: OK.

Dep.Chief Brown: The main reason for Saturdays not being covered is practically every volunteer that is eligible to participate in the crews often works on Saturdays. When it comes to their main line of employment vs. that, they obviously are going to choose their main employment. We've already taken action to get that MOU signed with the other Districts to

Training – continued

allow other personnel from Districts to participate, however, other Districts have dragged their feet on getting it signed and back to us. So that's kind of where we're at with that.

Comm. Annacone: The base schedule right now is just not working, so we hope the other Districts....

Dep.Chief Brown: I could provide all 12 months of the actual stats. Overall, the only time where there is an issue with some coverage is Saturday daytime. But there are plenty of avenues to explore, and there are other Districts doing things that perhaps we could become a part of, get our own secondary shared service agreement with...I'm speaking about Pine Hill. I think it's pretty silly that the other six days of the week we're essentially covering ourselves with one fire apparatus from the shared services agreement, then for some mysterious purpose, we're talking about a Saturday where when 85 is staffed, we're staffed and Pine Hill is staffed, on the same incidents we're getting three pieces of apparatus. I don't think it's a proper point of resources and finances. I think it's a more complex issue that we need to consider a couple different options and even partnering with other departments.

Comm. Brown: I'm at a loss for why this is a problem when it's been this way for 13 years. Can anybody explain that to me? We've had problems with coverage on Saturday for 13 years that I know.

Comm. Annacone: We started throwing money at it to fix it, and it's still not fixed.

Comm. Brown: My question is did we throw enough money at it. If we thought money was the solution and it didn't solve it, then my guess is, you didn't throw enough money at it.

Comm. Annacone: Well no, apparently if there is no availability of people...

Dep.Chief Brown: Like I said, we tried to alleviate the District who is in full cooperation with us as far as getting the MOU out there and trying to expand. There are interested parties from Blackwood and Chews Landing for instance who want to participate in the program.

Comm. Brown: As you've pointed out Chief, it seems silly to me and I've listened that we get some days in which we're getting responses from three Districts on a call that would take....so there is something wrong with that picture.

Dep.Chief Brown: Agreed.

Comm. Brown: I don't mean to say anything about the volunteers, I think they do a great job. But I'm saying I'm not seeing the problem.

Dep.Chief Brown: I think that there are improvements that could definitely be made, but like I was saying the District back in 2006 when they entered into the Shared Services Agreement, the resource deployment plan was basically for the incidental calls, they would be handled by one apparatus in the shared service agreement. Additional calls that require additional sophistication or manpower, we've done primarily through automatic aid which is the standard throughout the County. The problem is, these decisions made about Saturdays need to be made. We need to understand that as a District, we're going to essentially overpay and overstaff the one day of the week, when we are receiving some coverage from other Districts and departments, and why just add that. Statistically speaking, Saturday has not been the Department's busiest day. So to me, once again, the conversation is something that we're not going to solve just tonight. I think it's something that the District needs to look at...time of day, manpower, so on and so forth. There is not an easy immediate answer. There are about 3 or 4 options that should be considered. So if the District feels that they want that Saturday definitely covered coming out of here, then I'd have to have the counter of why is 4 of the other 6 days of the week not a truck coming out of here. If it's the District's intention to hire more personnel 8-12 more personnel and have 24-7 coverage coming out of here or stipend it out. Let's make that clear and work towards that goal.

Comm. Brown: If I may, we've met the enemy, and it's us. We are the District. Somehow in the last 3-4 months this has become an urgent problem, and it never was. Is it a problem, I guess. Is it as bad as a leaking roof? I don't think so. Is it as bad as not having apparatus running when we need it? I don't think so. So I'm at a total loss for how we got into this, what I'm going to call a "lather" over Saturdays. I don't get it, and I can be swayed, just tell me. But I don't think it's the District's intention...no one ever asked me if it was the District's intention to cover every single call every single Saturday.

Comm. Annacone: I certainly hope we would want to cover every call every day.

Comm. Brown: No we don't, we never have. And that's what mutual aid and shared service agreements are about.

Comm. Annacone: I agree, but we have a crew on 6 days on 24 hour shifts so we cover those 6 days a week.

Dep.Chief Brown: We have a crew on two days a week, 85 has

Comm. Annacone: We have a crew that runs the District 6 days a week?

Dep.Chief Brown: Yes.

Comm. Funkhouser: That's 3 guys.

Comm. Annacone: But there is somebody showing up, right?

Comm. Funkhouser: If somebody doesn't get killed in this town, I'll be surprised. And I hate to say that, but it's a manpower thing.

Training – continued

Comm. Brown: It is a manpower thing.

Comm. Funkhouser: And I'm not against what you're saying, I understand. We've been through this before. We were supposed to have rotating Saturdays with the volunteer crews. Lambs would have a volunteer crew working on a Saturday to cover the Saturdays because of the meetings with the Mayor and that's what he wanted. He wanted 24-7 coverage, and that's was the reason why we tried to do what we did and it's not working correctly, but it's working a lot better than what it was.

Dep.Chief Brown: Comm. Funkhouser, I agree with everything you just said. Part of what shared services is supposed to be is about sharing, and that's not always been happening in all facets of everything. And that begs a much more of a discussion on what the Chief and I have raised to multiple Commissioners multiple times, and what you bring up is 100% right is that mobility speaking within this Township there are serious issues. However, there doesn't seem to be the political will by most of the political entities meaning the elected officials to really push anything through to change that. Trust me, as an Operations person, the second in command of this organization, it does not make me sleep well at night knowing what conditions are globally in this town. I'm not just speaking of us, I'm very proud of our people. Our personnel for the Saturdays have given everything they can on the Saturdays they are available, they sign up, they are here. We have not to my knowledge, maybe at most missed two overnights. But from the time our personnel are here, they step up. When rescue assignments are dispatched, they generally come back. When structure fire is dispatched, both within our local and out of local, they generally come up and staff the apparatus, overwhelmingly more often than not. So I hope it's not anyone on the Board's intent to say our people are the problem, because that's the furthest from the truth.

Comm. Annacone: I don't think any of us think that.

Dep.Chief Brown: I just want to make sure that's clear though so it doesn't get misconstrued because we know how whisper down the lane works in the fire service.

Comm. Annacone: I don't necessarily say a truck has to come out of here on a Saturday, but there's got to be a way of getting one on a Saturday.

Dep.Chief Brown: I would agree. And there are other Departments in the region doing similar programs that have also been successful, that is might be worth considering sharing that cost burden with the response. The fact of the matter is that most of the incidents we run if you look at the Chief's report month after month, most of the assignments we run probably overwhelmingly over 80% to 90%. In communities like Cherry Hill where the community has elected to have six firehouses staffed 24-7, their sharing in their responses. I was actually having a conversation the other day about even Battalion Chief responses in Cherry Hill. How that Battalion goes on a 24 hour tour and maybe moves once or twice a day, because just the type of critical incidents is not there. For all the things we have to accomplish I'm not against coming up with a solution to get 24-7 staffing. Nobody in this department is as far as the Operations personnel from the Chief down to the newest probie. But at the same time I think we ought to be mindful of all the financial obligations that we have and that we don't overextend ourselves when there are possibly other solutions out there that we haven't really begun to explore yet.

Comm. Annacone: But there are other solutions worth exploring.

Dep.Chief Brown: We started with the MOU to try and expand for the interest of the personnel.

Comm. Annacone: As long as we're working in the right direction.

Dep.Chief Brown: But the Boards have not gotten back. Chief Brezee I believed called Adm. Robb either earlier this week or last week to check on the completion status of the document, and he was still waiting for one of not two Districts for the documents to be completed. I'll go on record as saying, I don't really care if it makes if in other Districts, but once again, Districts like us that in my opinion overall for the past 15 years have done a job of doing everything we can to come up with innovative solutions. We were the first District in town to have a Squad Co. And what's 88 now trying to become? A Squad Company. First they laughed, then they copied. We switched away from a from home response protocol and we rewarded our volunteers by being in-station for duty crews, because in-station matters. If you can cut response time by 4-6 minutes, that matters. That's what everybody else is doing. They're starting to emphasize that. We have the safer crews. We are not in a financial bind. There was a conversation earlier this evening in the Commission office about another District that has to get a special vote for apparatus. We're not in that position thankfully, because we get ahead of the curve in both equipment replenishment and apparatus replacement. Things break, they get old over time. I'd hate to see us go down the path to change things that have made us successful. I agree that we should make sure that the residents of this community that someone is coming 24-7, someone is coming. But to say we have to fund that ourselves and forgo other things in the future, my position is that that's not necessarily correct. I think there are other things that we can take the time to explore. We'll find a solution for this. This is not something that we can't work together to find a solution for.

Comm. Annacone: I think this got off the beaten track a little bit. All I'm saying is, we need to find a way to do it.

Training – continued

Comm. Flinn: Agreed. Creating a shared service agreement, the first department in the history to ever do it, I'm sure you can figure something out.

Comm. Brown: That's my comment...the way to do what?

Comm. Annacone: To cover 7 days a week, to get a truck to come here from another District that's on duty, not waiting for volunteers that may or may not show up. I'm not taking anything away from the volunteers, it's everywhere.

Comm. Brown: The way we were going to settle that is that the volunteers were going to handle Saturdays, and we were going to alternate between ourselves and District 5. Let's start off with the fact that that's not working.

Comm. Annacone: OK, we got no argument so far.

Comm. Brown: OK, well that's a starters spot.

Comm. Annacone: So the question is, what do we do now?

Comm. Funkhouser: According to the Chief, there are other options, and I agree with it, there are.

Comm. Annacone: As long as we explore other options, fine. It's not going to be handled tonight or in the next month, or in the next 3 months probably. As long as we're going in the right direction, I'm good with that.

Comm. Funkhouser: There is always a fire apparatus coming this way, but where it's coming from and who's on it is the question. You've got 88 now on 24-7, so there is always an Engine coming this way, but that's not what our history is not for someone like Chews Landing or Blackwood to be racing all the way over when we can't get a fire truck out for a dwelling call or a building call. And again, nothing against the volunteers.

Comm. Robinson: Talking about the dwellings and building, that's a little bit of a different animal because there is other stuff initially assigned. But for the incidentals on the Saturdays, we're just looking to make sure somebody, say Pine Hill is covering them and us this Saturday, for example. We're covering Pine Hill next Saturday. Alright boys, I need you to step up every second or third. It's a little easier of an apple to sell.

Comm. Flinn: And you have three departments staffing Saturdays here, if we can create the agreement.

Comm. Robinson: Two of them we can work with, but the third one is a little hard.

Comm. Brown: But have we every missed a dwelling call on a Saturday?

Dep.Chief Brown: Technically, kind of. The personnel were staffing the apparatus as the assignment was being recalled.

Comm. Brown: So can I have a 9 word answer to my question?

Dep.Chief Brown: The truck did not leave the building to go on the call, because they were waiting for a driver to come back. But there was staffing here in the building.

Comm. Brown: But there was eventually a driver, and it got recalled.

Dep.Chief Brown: Yes.

Comm. Brown: So if the driver would have been 10 seconds earlier, would we have missed the call?

Dep.Chief Brown: Probably not.

Comm. Brown: And in my recollection here, we never counted that as a scratch. If the crew was here, even if it ran a little late, that was not a scratch. So I don't know of a rescue or dwelling that we wouldn't eventually have a crew out.

Dep.Chief Brown: I think the District and Operations staff try to ensure that there is a staffed company coming from somewhere going to those calls.

Comm. Brown: I agree with that.

Dep.Chief Brown: And on that Saturday, active as any of the other six days of the week were. There was a staff company that was in-station in the District, which this District has a shared service agreement with, they responded. And that would have been the same response as Sunday through Friday.

Comm. Funkhouser: Was that with 1 or 2?

Comm. Flinn: They haven't had one down there in 8 months.

Comm. Robinson: What about EMS?

Comm. Brown: I don't want to get into it tonight, but one of the solutions to this problem is, let EMS assist EMS. Does the Fire Department go and assist the Police Dept.

Comm. Flinn: We just had this discussion.

Dep.Chief Brown: That's a discussion that gets had in Camden all the time.

Comm. Flinn: We just had it tonight.

Comm. Brown: I'm just saying, I think some of the other choices are that we're worried about getting out there for an EMS call of which we get recalled about 80% of the time, and that's an EMS problem.

Comm. Funkhouser: But it's EMS that's usually calling us out, so there must be a reason.

Comm. Brown: Well give them a quarter and let them call their own people.

Comm. Robinson: Or text somebody, right?

Training – continued

Dep.Chief Brown: If it goes out as a cardiac arrest, yes.

Comm. Flinn: Respiratory arrest, cardiac arrest, the police ended all that. Harry Earle ended most of that.

Dep.Chief Brown: That's correct, which got spoiled by the Fire Departments.

Comm. Brown: I don't want to belabor the problem. I can see that there is some problems, but it's more about I think about coordinating resources than getting more resources. That's my take on it.

Comm. Funkhouser: More resources would help.

Comm. Flinn: The resources are out there, you just got to coordinate them. I think we have the resources.

Comm. Funkhouser: Everybody's got a resource problem.

Dep.Chief Brown: And that comes from coordination. And it's an issue that gets discussed darn near every month at the County Chief's Association meetings, which is why they reinstated just last meeting they had the first progress report, they reconvened the resource deployment committee, and I'm not trivializing the fact we could better coordinate those things for some of the Saturday responses, not at all. But comparatively speaking to a lot of the other departments in the County, holy heck, they are in a bad spot which is what got these things going. And it's not just about the resources, about the O.G.'s and setting County wide standards, as well as repercussions that don't follow the standards. Everything from reduce speed policies to response O.G.'s on structure fires.

Comm. Annacone: We can't do it in Township, how's the County going to do it?

Dep.Chief Brown: I think there are some good methods the Association has come up with, that's going to really put some pressure on those who don't participate. There is a prime example, but I really can't say too much because there are specials that I'm privileged to as a coordinator, but I think that everybody in the County will see that people are serious about this soon, especially when it comes to a department in the County.

Comm. Brown: From your mouth to God's ears.

Comm. Robinson: The lid's coming off on some of this...I picked my buddies station to ride by that station to come to the call.

Dep.Chief Brown: A prime example of that, one of the plans is that even for coverage. There are departments in the County that have one 24 hour staffed piece of apparatus for their community. Then that apparatus goes to an incident of significance, and they get a cover of two or three apparatus. Often times those are other paid crews or volunteers coming to cover. And during the coverage period, they're getting better coverage than they would. And there is a movement primarily coming from the coordinator staff to put an end to that. That those types of things, the cover and move up plan that we're preparing to implement, it all will be depending the Chief's association, but those issues are being worked on, people recognize. Chief Callan from Cherry Hill is going to be the new Fire Coordinator for the County, and I'm excited to work with him, and I think we're going to see some real progress on those issues.

Comm. Brown: So Comm. Robinson, have we sufficiently beat that to death yet?

Comm. Robinson: There were a lot of points that I wasn't getting.

Comm. Brown: Alright. I just want to make sure that you felt you were heard, that's all. Comm. Annacone?

Comm. Annacone: As long as there is progress being made.

Insurance – George Flinn

No report.

Sign – George Flinn

No report.

Water – George Flinn

No report.

Building Maintenance & Grounds – Steve Funkhouser

Comm. Funkhouser: As stated in the Chief's Report, we had to replace the hot water heater that went in the building. The lights are being replaced around the building. Other than that, that's all I have to report at this time.

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

Dep.Chief Brown: It's been submitted. One thing that's not in there that I would like to bring up, maybe I'll circle back around to see if there are any questions on it. Earlier today, Detective Glen LaBove retired from Gloucester Township Police Department. In addition to his time with the Police Department, he served as an honorable member of Fire Departments in Gloucester Township as a volunteer, and his last stop was here at District 6 where he was an asset with Driver Training and mentoring some of the younger firefighters. We want to congratulate him on his retirement and promotion to Detective upon retirement, and state that for the record. We thank him also for his time at District 6, and his time as a Police Office of Gloucester Township.

Comm. Brown: OK, should we send him a letter somebody, on behalf of the District.

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Flinn to send a letter to Det. LaBove from the District, Volunteers and all personnel. Roll call vote, all yes.

Comm. Brown: Anything else on the Chief's Report?

Dep.Chief Brown: It's been submitted, unless there are any questions from the Commission.

Comm. Brown: There was a note in there that the Chief was approached by the Chief of District 4 saying we would really like to have a consolidation discussion with District 6. He mentioned that to me yesterday. We already have a resolution authorizing the District to talk to District 4, but we have no resolution authorizing the Chief to have that discussion. Operationally they should work out in a very rough cut the details, then come back to the Board's and say this is what we would like to do. I think consolidation is something that really should start, I always have, at the Chief's level and not at the Board's level. So I would like to give the Chief authorization from the Board to continue that discussion and report back in the next couple months and see whether or not there is any substance to it.

Comm. Flinn: Does District 4 give their volunteer Chief permission to speak to another District?

Comm. Brown: That's their problem. I'm just trying to protect our Chief so no one says "who authorized him to do this?" I think it's a great place to have the initial discussion at the Operations level and see if they can get something working. Individually they can sway their Districts about the appropriateness of that.

Comm. Annacone: I think that sounds good, but haven't we been down this road with them not too long ago?

Comm. Flinn: Not just 4. It was 2 & 4.

Comm. Annacone: 4 at one time was talking about they wanted to merger, then they went to District 2. If the Commissions can't get it forward, and it's great for the Chief's to talk, but without the Commission moving forward the Chiefs' can't do anything.

Comm. Brown: The Chief of 4, and I don't want to speak for the Chief of 6, but the Chief of 4 indicated that now that the 2 & 4 consolidation discussions were dead, there was a different hope for a 4 & 6 consolidation.

Comm. Annacone: So 2 & 4 is dead?

Comm. Brown: We concluded last week that 2 & 4 was a dead deal for now, and I got a call from the Chairman of 2 saying they're just not going to do it right now, there's no interest, and that's what killed it. So that was one alternative, but now we've got a possible alternative with 4. Do we want to explore it?

Comm. Annacone: I'm all for it...we've got to start somewhere.

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Annacone to authorize the Chief's from District 4 & District 6 to get together and discuss consolidation. Roll call vote, all yes.

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Flinn to accept the Chief's Report. Roll call vote, all yes.

Solicitor – David Carlamere

Comm. Brown: The Solicitor is not here, he's been excused.

Resolutions – Renee Evans

Comm. Brown: No Resolutions that I'm aware of.

Old Business – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Old Business? (hearing none)

New Business – George Brown

Comm. Brown: New Business? (hearing none)

Public Portion – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Public Portion?

Dep.Chief Brown: 11 Piney Point Place. It's my understanding that the checks for reimbursement for 2019 for the firefighters, does the Board need a Resolution to approve them and discuss them?

Comm. Brown: Yes the Board does. Do you have the total amount?

Dep.Chief Brown: I think it was \$17,000 total.

Motion made by Comm. Flinn, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser to approve \$17,000 for the District stipend checks for the firefighters. Roll call vote, all yes.

Closed Session – George Brown

Comm. Brown: The Board will go into Closed Session at 7:35pm. Comm. Flinn has left the meeting.

Closed Session

Comm. Brown: OK, let the record show that the Board has come out of Closed Session at 7:50pm.

Roll call Commissioners, all present.

Comm. Brown: During the Closed Session, CS-68, the Board discussed a late post-negotiation demand from the Union, and Comm. Annacone is going to meet with the Union the next time they're available and discuss the Board's position on two items, which is the 8th step here as well as a request for additional military time off for vacation time because of military time off. Those were the two outstanding issues.

Adjourn – George Brown

Motion made by Comm. Flinn, seconded by Comm. Robinson to adjourn the meeting at 7:57pm.

Roll call vote, all yes.