

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

Meeting Held: March 11, 2020
Meeting Place: Board Office
Meeting Called to Order: 6:30pm
Members of Board Present: **Chairman** – George Brown
Vice Chairman – Richard Annacone
Treasurer – Brian Robinson
Secretary – George Flinn, excused
Commissioner – Steven Funkhouser
Clerk – Jeanette Cottone
Solicitor – David Carlamere, excused

Salute the Flag

Comm. Brown: Notice is hereby given that the Board of Fire Commissioners, District No. 6, Township of Gloucester, Camden County, New Jersey will hold a special meeting on Wednesday, March 11, 2020, at 6:30pm. This meeting will take place at the Board office located at 1946 Williamstown Road, Erial, NJ. Re-organization of the Board positions will be decided along with the schedule of meeting dates and time for the upcoming year. A Closed Session regarding personnel issues will take place, which may result in a decision on the open session of the meeting.

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. Annacone, Robinson, Funkhouser & Brown are present. Comm. Flinn is excused.

Closed Session – Comm. Brown

Comm. Annacone: Let's go into Closed Session.

Comm. Brown: OK.

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Annacone to go into Closed Session at 6:32pm.
Roll call vote, all yes.

Comm. Brown: Let the record show we have come out of Closed Session at 6:35pm.
Roll call Commissioners, all present.

Comm. Brown: CS – 70 While we were in Closed Session, the Board discussed the continuation of the Clerk's healthcare benefits while she is on leave of absence.

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser to continue the Clerk's health benefits.
Roll call vote, all yes.

Re-Organization – Comm. Brown

Comm. Brown: I think some of the easy things for example meeting dates for this year. We'll go back to 6:30pm on the fourth Thursday of the month. Can everybody do that? Mr. Robinson, 6:30pm?

Comm. Robinson: OK.

Comm. Brown: So we'll just vote on all these things at one time or vote on them individually?

Cl.Cottone: We do two together, then we can do the rest of the appoints. And you're going to have 6:30pm for meetings, except December and January because of the budget and statutory dates?

Comm. Brown: Yes. Should we do Commissioner's Responsibilities or the Resolutions?

Cl.Cottone: We can do either.

Resolutions – Jeanette Cottone

Resolution R-04-20 To set the schedule of Board Meeting Dates and time for 2020 and initial 2021 year.
Resolution R-05-20 To adopt the Cash Management Plan for GTFD 6

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

Resolution of Appoints for 2020

Resolution R-06-20 Attorney, David F. Carlamere
Resolution R-07-20 Accountant, Joseph W. Bowley & Company
Resolution R-08-20 Auditor, Bowman & Company LLC
Resolution R-09-20 Deposit of Funds, William Penn Bank, Legal Notices, Central Record, Courier Post and Philadelphia Inquirer
Resolution R-10-20 Dental Care Provider, Delta Dental of NJ
Resolution R-11-20 Medical Provider, US Healthworks
Resolution R-12-20 Award of State Contracts per N.J.S.A.40A11-12

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser to accept the Resolutions as read.
Roll call vote, all yes.

Open Session – Comm. Brown

Comm. Brown: Commissioner Assignments, which is really the last thing. Is anybody going to change anything from what we have? (hearing none) To one point, I passed out the Chief's contract, and the definition of the Fire Chief's duties, and it's interesting on page 4 of the Fire Chief's duties, the last paragraph states, and this is the requirements to be a Chief: "Persons with mental or physical disabilities are eligible as long as they can perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodations." Any questions?

Comm. Annacone: I thought that was needed for the job.

Comm. Brown: So if we're going to hold what we have, I'd just like to clarify and pass these out, because I think there have been some...I don't think everybody read the responsibilities of the Chief, and I think there has been a misunderstanding of what his authority is, and I'd like to get that clarified once and for all and if we all nod our heads that's the way it's going to go. So if you will get the definition, it says in there, I'll skip down a few "Authorizes training courses for the Department staff." Chief any issues with that?

Chief Brezee: No.

Comm. Brown: Provides equipment replacement schedule for budget considerations. Do you all know what that means? I don't think we all know what that means. So why don't you explain what that means to you.

Chief Brezee: The approved budget, I make recommendations on purchases.

Comm. Brown: Let's talk about that, because you cannot identify everything that's going to fail this year. So as long as we all know that the strategy around here...when you look later on in the year and see things starting to wear and you know it's not going to make it into the next year, there's money in the budget. You don't have to name shovels, hammers etc., and then I think that should be the Chief's responsibility to do that, and not to overspend. We've done pretty well financially because we've had that strategy. "Approves expenditures for both budgeted and non-budgeted items." That's really what we're talking about here. The budgeted items as far as what the requirements are for the Chief, if it's in the budget it can be spent without further approval unless it must meet the requirements for getting vendors quotes and that kind of stuff. But if it's there, if it's replaced tires on the Squad, it's in the budget, just go do it when it's needed. Two down is "Reviews Bids with potential vendors for compliance with specifications and makes recommendations." That means if you have to go out and get bids, the Chief reviews the bids when they come back and the Chief says I've got five bids and I think we should go with #3 because of blah blah blah. Then the Board at that point can approve the bid. So the Board's got a line in the sand, because when there's a bid, then the Board has to approve that.

Comm. Annacone: I just want to back up a little bit. "Approves expenditures for budgeted and non-budgeted items?"

Comm. Brown: Yes, that's what we just talked about, that you'll have some kind of a breakdown, a piece of equipment that you didn't budget for.

Chief Brezee: The best example being several years ago when we had the pump failure and we didn't have any budgeted money to handle that pump failure repair.

Comm. Brown: It wasn't in the budget, but we needed it.

Comm. Annacone: Isn't it up to us then to budget the money for it?

Comm. Funkhouser: Where to find the money for it.

Open Session – continued

Chief Brezee: That's exactly what we did.

Comm. Brown: The strategy again if I can back up is, the fact that we had a budget and we don't spend it unless we need to. There are certain budget items that you can't avoid spending like oil, gas, but there's always a pot there that we say this will be my plan if everything is perfect. As you go through the year, you find out it's not perfect. So then you hold back on things that you wanted to get that weren't absolutely necessary, something new that you think would provide better service. Something happens, we've got to get it replaced or repaired. It's not in the budget, but there's dollars in the budget, so that's what that means.

Comm. Annacone: OK, so it's stuff that wasn't in the budget, just moved from one to another.

Comm. Brown: You have to have cash leftover in the budget to do anything. As you notice, we don't spend it early in the year. We usually buy around August, and we start to see what's left. And we always have something left, because it didn't go the way we thought it would, or we didn't replace it at the rate that we did. But my point is, is that if it does not require a bid and it's not in the budget and it's needed for operations, it's a non-budgeted item and the Chief has the authority to go get it. I wouldn't have to have a special meeting or wait for a meeting or whatever. Are you all in agreement with that?

Comm. Annacone: I agree it's urgent.

Comm. Brown: Well that's what I think we're talking about.

Chief Brezee: I think the point here is, and you can make it any way you want, but if you believe that you what's better needed for the fire department, I don't have the reputation of just going out and buying things because I want them. I don't hold these things in my hands, my firefighters do. Most of those equipment purchases are for our firefighters. And yes we have bought things that are, maybe they look the same of what we had, but it's newer technology. Maybe it's lighter and it's all around makes an easier job for our firefighters. And I do get a little annoyed when I'm questioned on those things.

Comm. Annacone: But it's stuff that's already budgeted for?

Chief Brezee: Not always. Some new technology comes out...

Comm. Annacone: But that doesn't make it emergent though, right?

Chief Brezee: No, it wouldn't.

Comm. Annacone: So it probably should go into the next years' budget.

Chief Brezee: If the funds are there, I don't see why not. If we come to the end of the year and I've done better than I thought I would do, which a lot of times we can get better pricing and if you do that five, six, seven, eight times, you might save enough money to buy another piece of equipment. But that wasn't budgeted...why do we need that?

Comm. Brown: Stop right there because I think the most important point is, is that we cannot budget for everything that we would buy in the subsequent year, for a couple reasons. We don't know what we're going to need, and secondly the budgeting process has got to be complete by November, so by the time you get to August or September, you're already a year over what you planned for. So you're in that anything can happen space. There are a lot of things that are not foreseen, whether it's new technology or something that breaks, or somebody leaves a thermal imaging camera on a rear bumper and out on the road it goes. Those are things that have happened here. I'm not encouraging that...

Comm. Robinson: That's emergent like the pump going is emergent. We usually deal with that on a phone call or two.

This happened, and we just give the heads up. New technology is non-emergent. Leaving a piece of equipment somewhere out could be considered emergent...we need to replace it. I think we should discuss upgrades in the equipment.

Chief Brezee: The biggest word there is discuss. And I'm not picking on anybody and I'm not starting anything, but if the idea is to walk in here once a month and read a report and give an opinion and walk out, see you next month, that doesn't work for emergency services.

Comm. Brown: So what I'm hearing you say is our discussion process needs improvement.

Chief Brezee: Communication needs improvement. Whether we do it through email or face to face is fine, but if one, two or three Commissioners want to have that conversation I'm all for it, as long as all three or four of us are talking together.

Comm. Annacone: I guess what I'm saying is, I know there's always new equipment coming out, but the equipment we have might still be good. We don't necessarily need the best and brightest and newest equipment as soon as it comes out.

Chief Brezee: Well I didn't see you repairing a revolver your last couple years of working either.

Comm. Annacone: That wasn't my choice, I wasn't the Chief.

Chief Brezee: Exactly.

Comm. Annacone: But when we got new weapons they were put in the budget for the following year.

Chief Brezee: There's nothing in this building that was bought on a whim, everything comes with a discussion. All of my Officers are in the discussion. I have not bought a piece of equipment that my Officer's did not know I was going to get.

Comm. Annacone: I'm sure that's true, but...

Open Session – continued

Chief Brezee: But I kind of felt at times I was being treated like “I just gave you one of those things.”

Comm. Annacone: Well sometimes I think you spend money that don’t need to be spent. Just because it’s in your budget doesn’t mean you have to spend it at the end of the year. We budget for what we need. If we don’t need something, we shouldn’t spend the money anyway.

Comm. Brown: We agree, and I think that’s at least in my perspective, it’s always been that way. That’s how we ended up having the reserve that we do. It’s because we didn’t spend our budget every year. But I can only speak for myself. If you went back 5 years, I’ve had a new server in the budget every year for 5 years and I haven’t replaced it yet, because I don’t think it’s going to go this year. And I don’t really know that until December, but if I see that it’s not sounding right and I have the money in there this year, I’ll go replace it. I’m not going to wait for Board to approve it.

Comm. Annacone: Right, it’s already been budgeted for.

Comm. Brown: Right.

Comm. Annacone: And there’s no problem with that. It’s the stuff that we didn’t budget for, and just because we have it there doesn’t mean it has to be spent.

Comm. Brown: I totally agree. That’s how we ended up in the outstanding financial condition that we are. I think what happens is, at the end of the year there’s not enough communication about what the strategy is to do with the money that’s left, that’s my observation. And if we can agree on that

Comm. Funkhouser: So that’s where that workshop meeting I was talking about a couple months ago that will come in handy where we can sit down and discuss as a group of things that are needed. I’ve noticed we don’t have any workshop meetings. We come in here once a month and say yes, yes, no and then that’s it.

Comm. Brown: And as I said to you when you brought it up, I’m not against that, but I don’t want to have them just because you all want to sit around and b.s.

Comm. Funkhouser: That’s what I’m saying about at the end of the year, like you said. At the end of the year we should have a meeting prior to our meetings to discuss things that will be bought or not bought.

Comm. Brown: I’m OK with that. Actually, the Committee Reports is the place to do that. When we go around and say what’s your report, sometimes I’ve heard you say hey, I’m starting to see another problem with the roof, and I still think we ought to build a new building, and we all look around and say no. But we’ve had the discussion. And I don’t mean that as a serious thing, but I say it starts with Committee Reports. And we can have some workshops. If that will close the problem, then that will fix them up.

Comm. Funkhouser: It’s communication that we’re talking about here.

Comm. Brown: Yeah, it’s not really dollars and cents, it’s communication.

Comm. Annacone: If we were to have Workshop meetings, don’t you have to put that out there now?

Comm. Funkhouser: Yeah, it still has to be posted.

Comm. Brown: This is somewhat of a Workshop meeting if you really want to think about it. So we’ll see how March goes and what’s going on and we can schedule one for April or May. We want to do it so there’s not another crisis to get it advertised etc. I think we should know a couple months out that we need a Workshop for certain things.

Comm. Funkhouser: Do you agree with that?

Comm. Robinson: I do.

Comm. Annacone: I have no problem with that.

Comm. Funkhouser: And you guys are alright with that?

Chief Brezee: Absolutely.

Comm. Brown: So now I have a question that I don’t know the answer to, and I’m asking it. Let’s say you’re out for a couple weeks Chief, for whatever reason, what’s the Deputy Chief’s authority?

Chief Brezee: Usually, depending on how I’m out, I will, and I’ve done it before, and I’ve put notices out that he is taking over the day-to-day operations.

Comm. Funkhouser: He being who?

Chief Brezee: The Deputy Chief.

Comm. Brown: The Chief’s duties. How much of the Chief’s duties does he have authority for when you’re out? I think we need to clarify. It’s not that there’s been a problem there, but...

Chief Brezee: Probably 90% of it.

Comm. Brown: OK. So I think when you put your out and the Dep. Chief is in, he has all the duties responsible in Civil Service, and we know to look there should there be a problem. This is crazy times right now...we’re into heavy, crazy times. And I think if we have a game plan here, hopefully nothing happens, but we’ll do something. So why don’t we say for right now, we’ll try to make Committee Reports provide more information, and then we’ll have a Workshop in May. So we’ll go a couple months with that and have one in May.

Open Session – continued

Comm. Robinson: Are you looking to adopt the wording as is in those documents?

Comm. Annacone: We don't have to adopt, that's Civil Service's recommendations.

Comm. Funkhouser: Guidelines.

Comm. Brown: If you read the Chief's contract, and this is where I'm coming from, we say in his contract that this is what his responsibilities are and with those attachments.

Comm. Annacone: Right, that's what I'm saying. That's what Civil Service says it is. It's not something we approve. Civil Service says that's what it is.

Comm. Brown: Right. Contractually we said, once again, this is what it is. So I say the way to avoid communication problems is to have rules that we will follow if we don't understand we should change them we should change them or ask questions about them. I had a thought but I lost it.

Comm. Annacone: Because he's Civil Service, I don't know that he would have the same...

Chief Brezee: That's why I said it's 90%, everything is covered under Civil Service Law. But giving him the authority of the day-to-day operation...

Comm. Annacone: Day-to-day operation is unquestionable, that parts easy.

Chief Brezee: On fire scenes, it doesn't matter if they're paid or volunteer.

Comm. Annacone: That's the outcome of budget stuff. I don't know if he has the authority.

Dep. Chief Brown: Statutorily that will be issued by the Board by Resolution.

Comm. Robinson: If we had to do, we wouldn't do ahead of time that God forbid we had to do it for six weeks or whatever.

Dep. Chief Brown: By Statute, Title 40A defines responsibility...that's why some of the other Districts in town have some of the problems they have because the Board of Fire Commissioners are not very supportive of their Chief Officer's.

Comm. Robinson: Mike does equipment. I say it all the time. I don't know if you guys follow it.

Chief Brezee: Even when I'm out, I would have to be in a coma for us to not still talk.

Comm. Brown: I think at the heart of this conversation is the fact that the Commission position is called Operations, right, for the Commissioners position?

Cl. Cottone: Yes.

Comm. Brown: And I think that's a little confusing in my opinion. Because Operations to me means fire scene and the things that you need to do to get there. I think the one thing that might help for better communications, qualifications and responsibilities is to come up with a better term that defines what you really do, and so that everybody else knows it.

Comm. Funkhouser: Guidelines of the Board.

Comm. Brown: Why don't we turn it into Equipment and Apparatus. Those are the things that he has budget with. It should actually be Equipment, Apparatus and Training. But the Chief's got to the authority to spend the training money if it's in the budget.

Comm. Annacone: Right, but we have put it together.

Comm. Brown: Well the budget is together. During the year if there is some training that comes up that isn't known to us and we do the budget, then that should have to come to the Commissioner responsible for training.

Chief Brezee: Everything is forwarded but yes, I get guys from the Dep. Chief down including myself, we need to sign up for something in 3 days, I can't put a communication out and wait three days for a Commissioner to come back and say yes, he can go to that \$100 class.

Comm. Annacone: I've heard that, but it's already in the budget for training.

Chief Brezee: If the training class is not listed, it comes down to whether I feel that that money is well spent on that member attending that training.

Comm. Annacone: When we put the budget for training, we don't sit there and say it's vehicle extrication, it's here's the budget for training. Do what you want within the budget, I have no problem with that.

Chief Brezee: Like when the Dep. Chief comes to me and goes look, I have this training idea, we need to build this prop, it's going to be \$100 in lumber, I should be able to go yes, let's go get the lumber.

Comm. Brown: And I agree to that.

Comm. Annacone: But it's already stuff we budgeted for.

Comm. Robinson: I agree with it's got to be submitted.

Chief Brezee: I will let you guys know every step I make and every dime I spend. I have 30 years now in service in this fire house. When I want to purchase something, and I haven't purchased anything because I want it, I can give an explanation as to why. Whether it's a change of standards, a national trend, an NFPA recommendation, just something we researched that this is the best way. I don't have a problem explaining that to any Commissioner on the Board, but

Open Session – continued

I do question at times when a Commissioner goes “you don’t need that”, and I don’t get an explanation as to why I don’t need it, other than sometimes “why you got to spend.”

Comm. Brown: That’s what I would like to try and fix. The nature of the business is, as I said, we cannot foresee everything we’re going to need to do. But that’s why you’re the Chief. You use that judgement, and if somebody doesn’t understand why you need a blue pen vs. a red pen and they want to question you on that, I think that’s OK. But to say you don’t need a pen is not appropriate. And it leads to hard feelings.

Chief Brezee: If I receive an answer without an explanation that frustrates me.

Comm. Brown: Let’s try with the Committee Reports, and what I mean by that is most of this is equipment related more than anything else. When we get to the Committee Reports and you have something that you’re kind of throwing around to make a decision on it, I think it’s fair to say I’ve been thinking about replacing the nozzle with another nozzle and I want to do that...does anybody have any thoughts? As far as I’m concerned if you put that on the table and it’s not emergent, there’s money in the budget but it should be within your authority to offer to people if they have any comments and if they don’t you should be able to go ahead to do that without a resolution and without approval.

Chief Brezee: We’ll see, just like you said financially we’re sitting well. Equipment wise we’re doing well because we’ve done a good job and we’re now at the point of finding better more efficient and safer ways for our crews to operate and that’s where we’re spending our money. We have an amazing amount of in-house repairs and maintenance being done here that has saved us thousands, and that may be something the Board never even realized. What we used to pay for 10 years ago...we paid for everything. When we started finding schools and training seminars where they will teach us to do our own maintenance in the Station, that’s what we’ve done, and we’ve saved thousands. That’s why we’ve had some years with some big numbers to carry over because we didn’t have to pay out. And that’s a credit to all of us who’ve done that, but I don’t know if that’s being realized. As far as apparatus, when an apparatus mechanic comes in here and says “you need brakes and need them right now”, it’s regular maintenance, it’s not emergent, but I can’t wait three days with a mechanic we hire from outside comes in and I get him for a couple days a month. So if I tell him no, I’ve got to get back to you on this, I don’t know when I’ll see him.

Comm. Brown: Those are the commissions in my mind that may not be emergent today, but they will be emergent tomorrow and you should have the authority to do that.

Chief Brezee: A headlight out on your car might not be something you want done right away, but it’s something I want...

Comm. Annacone: Isn’t that already in the maintenance?

Chief Brezee: Some things I’ve needed approval for...if somebody sees a large number they go “what’s this?”

Comm. Annacone: Well that’s our job to ask questions.

Comm. Brown: We’re talking two different things.

Comm. Robinson: I get an text or email whatever, I found this today and the truck inspection, truck tires have chips in them...yes, please order, it’s going to take a couple days, and it was moved on immediately. That’s emergent. That to me it’s emergent. We cannot wait 2-3-6 weeks to have a meeting.

Comm. Annacone: That should be budgeted so that he can just...

Chief Brezee: That was going to be a big number, that’s why...

Comm. Robinson: We made the decision immediately just do them all.

Comm. Brown: I think what I find, and a little bit of this could be, if you think about your past experience, everybody at this table except for me has been either a policeman or fireman, so you bring your experience to this arena. And what I don’t like here is, we don’t need that.

Chief Brezee: And that frustrates me to hear that because none of that is a, me looking for a magazine right before a meeting and go yeah, we’re buying this. This was discussed. If not with all the officers, the firemen included, every purchase I made is discussed with my Deputy Chief. I don’t make these decisions myself even though I may think it’s the greatest thing in the world, I go to my Deputy Chief to make sure we agree on something like that.

Comm. Brown: But I think it’s fair game to say, could we postpone that? And your answer could be no we can’t, and that’s the end of the discussion. But I’ve heard at this table and in the Commission Office by various people, not questions but criticisms. And I don’t think that’s constructive. And I don’t think you mean to be destructive, but that’s the way it comes about. And I think we’re probably the best District in the Township. I heard a very interesting story of what made Jeff Bezos so financially independent, is that he approaches everything as if it’s day one. You got a launch date, it’s day one, everything. You can’t sit back and say we’re doing OK and not worry about these things.

Dep.Chief Brown: The notion that sometime, I think we all agree that we’ve been in a good financial position recently. I’m also a glass half empty type person especially if the District maintains the position of very small increases, no increases or budget reductions. That’s once again how this other agency got themselves in the bind that they’re in...it’s a known fact that if salaries increase, chances are the cost of healthcare and insurance increase which the cost is outside of our control.

Open Session – continued

I think it's been a great strategy on all parts involved to replace this stuff ahead. The fact of the matter is, not very much in regards to the operational consideration, what was the right and safe efficient thing to do was better out there. That's not the Board's fault, because frankly I wouldn't expect the Commission to understand those things. But prior to us breaking away from the Lambs Terrace Fire Co., and breaking away from some of the leaders or people put in a position with a duty to lead, they didn't go to training. Things were done because that's how they were done out of tradition. That's how it always is. And quite frankly that's a very dangerous way to run an operation where people's lives are on the line. Some of the changes we had to make here come from the fact that there was a cultural belief here in the importance of training. And just like anything else in life whether it's in law enforcement or business, whether it's the fire service that you go out and get education to learn about not just what you're doing right, but what you're doing wrong. Sometimes that means you have to come back to things that were done around here that were not right. The Chief and I as an example just had a discussion yesterday about our standpipe operations, and once again thanks to good budgeting we made an investment in upgrading our standpipe kits. We don't have many of them, but it's a labor intensive operation that requires some training. And the hose packs we have on the apparatus right now were designed prior to me being here in 2003, but they're set up with a standpipe style connection but they're an 1 ¾" hose, not appropriate for standpipe operations. So there's a prime example of at some point, we didn't budget for it last year because we didn't have all the information on it specifically, but that's an example of probably 900' of 2 ½" hose and appliance and adapters that I have to....and when you commit as a culture to having good training, sometimes we find those things that oops, through our own ignorance or lack of training it broke and we need a new one. So it's a natural thing but that's going to happen. I would rather see us in a position of getting things a little before we need them then wait till it brakes and there's a crisis. And on top of it to wrap up is, one of the things I think is unseen and it goes back to the Chief's comment is, I don't think every Commissioner on this Board knows every member of the Department. And I know for a fact that not every member of the Department knows every Commissioner. The only time that, unfortunately just like everything else in life and people hear about things is when they get told about it. These purchases, all these things...the members are very appreciative of it. But in today's day and age, the struggle is not only of recruitment but to retain volunteers. Those purchases...I understand there are dollar figures, but at the end of the year for all of the personnel in this department, I could tell you for an absolute fact, it's a shot in the arm for morale. The guys have been told year after year the District's position from the collaboration between the Officer's staff and them is to be a little bit thrifty throughout the year. And if that's how things are done, and we don't have any unnecessary damage in equipment, building so and so forth, we're going to find some things we can improve on. Maybe it's not an absolute need, but something we're going to need and we should have to make the operation better. When that stuff comes in, the morale gets lifted by 10 fold. I think that's one of the unseen things is we can sit here looking at the budget spreadsheets, but without those volunteers here, without that type of morale booster, without the guys feeling supported like that...I understand there's a fiscal responsibility. But there is another impact here, it's very important...approving, denying or even discussing purchases.

Comm. Brown: My response to that is that is what should come up in the Committee report. Suddenly you realize that your standpipe stuff is outdated, we don't use it that often, we missed it in the budget which just closed two months ago, do you think we're going to be OK? I think the Chief should be able to go get that with comments in the Committee reports.

Comm. Robinson: That's the discussion?

Comm. Brown: That's the discussion. The primary discussion vehicle has to happen monthly. We can have a quarterly workshop for other things. And don't forget the fact is that the big elephant in the room is that we've got a building problem here. OK, so that's got to be worked some way or the other pretty soon. I think we pushed that as far down the road as we can. We're at the beginning of the year...maybe that's the first workshop topic to come in May.

Comm. Funkhouser: I think we may have a termite problem too, so we're working on that.

Comm. Brown: OK so, I'd like to summarize that we're going to try and...I think sometimes you know, in the past, the Committee Reports have been wrong and unnecessary. They're not exchanging information, they're not something that you need to know or that's new to you. So I don't want them to be long, and I have been the person and I'll take full responsibility for them, that urge them to be short. That doesn't mean that I don't want them to be thorough and to communicate effectively, so I'll take the lead on that. Do you want to try that?

Comm. Funkhouser: The Chief usually handles most of the Committee reports in his Chief's Report. So that's where you're seeing a lot of that. I refer to the Chief's report in regards to my portion of my budget because he writes it all down. Why should I repeat what he has.

Comm. Brown: Well I think there's no ability in the report to ask a question, unless you ask the question. So that's what I'm saying, you can see something, and I've seen stuff in his report that that I didn't personally understand what it was, and I've said something about well can you explain what that is. I think we all get the same answer. And how you may

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have done it someplace else, or in a past life may not be the way we're going to do it here, and I think that's what they need to know. So my last comment is should we change the Operations Chairman's title to Apparatus, Equipment & Training?

Comm. Annacone: Run that by me again...

Comm. Brown: Should we change the title of the Commissioner of Operations to the Commissioner of Apparatus, Equipment & Training? It reflects more of what the budget is about too.

Comm. Annacone: You're Operations, right?

Comm. Robinson: Yeah.

Comm. Annacone: What is your opinion on it?

Comm. Robinson: I honestly don't think we get involved in Operations. The Operations budget covers everything.

Chief Brezee: The apparatus training is already in there, equipment.

Comm. Brown: I think the title is misleading.

Comm. Funkhouser: Can I say something about the Operations part? Coming from Cherry Hill, Operations to me is when you have a working fire and a Commissioner is needed on that fire ground, that is the Operations position. If there is something needed on that fire ground that the Chief could request, that's what they will do. The Commissioner would show up at the fire ground to either spend money for something on the fire ground.

Chief Brezee: I know exactly what you're saying, and a lot of times now, and correct me if I'm wrong, it kind of gets pushed off to the OEM's. We go after the OEM's here. I think the Commissioner title or the Operations Commissioner title has no definition here. If we don't have a definition for it you should move it or write a definition.

Comm. Brown: Apparatus, Fire Equipment and Training. I think that's what the budget is, and I think it better spells out what his full responsibilities are, and people can go to him once they say this is an apparatus problem, or...I think it just clarifies the position. It gets muddled because Operations is really trucks going out the door. Alright, do we agree to change that?

Comm. Robinson: I'd like to do a little homework on it. See if there's a better way of fine tuning it.

Comm. Annacone: I don't necessarily agree with that.

Comm. Brown: I'm OK with that. I just think, just like you want to fine tune it, I think the current title is confusing and we can clean it up.

Comm. Annacone: I guess I don't find it confusing because I don't know everything there is to be in charge of Operations. It's actually fire ground operations...I never even looked at it that way before.

Chief Brezee: I think that's what I'm asking right now is, what is it?

Comm. Annacone: It's the budget part of like everything else we do. It's Administrative.

Comm. Funkhouser: But everybody does that, so why have the word Operations. It's confusing.

Comm. Annacone: No more than anything else we do.

Comm. Funkhouser: Well we're trying to correct that. There was a problem and we're trying to correct it.

Comm. Annacone: I'm all for that.

Comm. Robinson: I'll do a little homework.

Comm. Brown: Do a little homework, we'll think it over for, not this month's meeting we probably won't have it resolved by then, for next month?

Chief Brezee: So the Fire Department Operations on the fire ground falls on me? I'd be happy to share that liability with someone else.

Comm. Annacone: It all falls back on us whatever happens.

Comm. Robinson: I don't think the Commission ever was involved with the fire ground Operations at all.

Comm. Funkhouser: I love it, I can't stop myself.

Chief Brezee: But that's confusing in the one document of my contract. I believe my job description says I write policy and the other one says the Board is responsible for policies. And I don't know if you want to look at that.

Comm. Brown: The sentence is, it's recognized that the Chief is the highest ranking Officer in the department and servicing both Administrative and Operational capacity with all the protections afforded by Federal State Laws, Rules & Regulations. So all the Operations as it's defined in your contract are your responsibility. And the contract is up this year if you want to fine tune that. I just want to have the contract rules and regulations and our understanding align. It doesn't have to be my way, I'm not saying that. But they're misaligned right now. So we'll follow up at the April meeting, alright?

Comm. Annacone: OK.

Comm. Robinson: And not delete the O2 spot. I think we're all in agreement, that if Mike's away or out, short term or whatever you want to call it, Chris is definitely in charge and has full authority. We just have to write some kind of...

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Chief Brezee: Over the entire Department. This is an issue throughout our Township that when the Chief steps away if there are career personnel, the O2 has no authority over them. We make it very clear to our career personnel, our volunteers and all of our Officers that that is not the case here. If I am not here, he's in charge for the day-to-day Operations, that's top to bottom.

Comm. Annacone: I think we would all back you up on that.

Chief Brezee: I'm just putting it out there that we're all on that same page, because that's how they get away with it in the other Departments in town is, well the Chief may feel that way, but the Board overrides the Chief on that. So I want to put it out there that we're all on that same page. When I say he gets 90% of that list...he couldn't hire, couldn't fire, couldn't do disciplinary action...

Comm. Robinson: That's the gray area that we would have to step in.

Chief Brezee: If there's an issue in this firehouse...

Comm. Robinson: We would have to re-adjust.

Dep.Chief Brown: The last thing I want to do is to ever be in that spot. That's fine but, legally speaking God forbid this Chief or the next Chief or any Chief were out and God forbid for an extended period, the way it is under the statute is, the Board would issue a Resolution granting the authority to whoever the Deputy is. Even if we had a volunteer Chief here, the District could delegate that responsibility of the career personnel if they saw fit. However, unfortunately, not everyone around believes that the Chief should actually be in charge of all Operations. It's unfortunate because it shows a stunt in the growth.

Chief Brezee: Just to clear one thing, if I'm out of the Country or I'm away for whatever. He comes in here to a career shift and I've got to go, my wife's giving birth, he does have the ability to fill those shifts and do what's necessary. He knows how operations works.

Comm. Annacone: I guess we're talking about a full time hire, that kind of thing.

Chief Brezee: He could and will do whatever he has to do to fill those shifts and make sure we meet our requirements.

Comm. Brown: OK, last item as far as I'm concerned and then we'll go around, is we didn't discuss the labor Attorney appointment. Now we don't have...

Comm. Annacone: I would like to put that off again till the April meeting. I wanted to research it and find some other names. I unfortunately did not get a chance to do that, and I don't know if anybody else has any names, but I'm not real happy with who we have now.

Comm. Brown: Well we didn't reappoint him, so that's now open. I'm just saying we need to have some thoughts about how we're going to fill that if you want to think about it. I asked around and I couldn't get any names. The one name that always comes up is the old Cherry Hill guy. I don't think he's doing it anymore.

Comm. Funkhouser: Yeah, I don't think he is.

Chief Brezee: If I could just make a suggestion, maybe contacting Winslow Township Fire Dept. The meetings I do with their Chief's and all. I've never had with the labor attorney here since I've been Chief, I never had that relationship that I felt I could send this person an email or phone call to ask a labor question, which I think I should have the right if I'm dealing with employees. And the Chief of Winslow Township has really a great relationship with their labor attorney. But apparently she is very helpful to him as far as those little things that pop up like hey, I'm getting this, what do you think? I would like a labor attorney that I could talk to.

Comm. Brown: And not only can you, but it's spelled out in your responsibilities that you would maintain the labor relationship, but we need to have somebody that in case something unforeseen comes up, so you're going to take the lead on that, and we're not going to reappoint Mr. Long.

Comm. Funkhouser: Is this something that we're going to need 3 people to...

Comm. Annacone: No, just bring some names in.

Comm. Brown: And discuss it. I think it should be discussed but I don't think we need to involve 3 people. So the labor attorney issue goes into Mr. Annacone's court, and the turn of Operations Commissioner vs. what we proposed this evening is in Mr. Robinson's court. Anyone else have anything?

Chief Brezee: I just wanted to put it out there as we all know in 7 months and 20 days, I am eligible to retire. I have no intentions of retiring just so you know.

Comm. Brown: OK, but we're going to need a contract done by the end of this year.

Chief Brezee: And whenever you guys would like to sit down...

Comm. Brown: OK. Anything else?

Chief Brezee: No, I have nothing else. I appreciate the conversation.

Comm. Brown: Dep. Chief, anything?

Dep.Chief Brown: No.

Adjourn – George Brown

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Robinson to adjourn the meeting at 7:30pm.
Roll call vote, all yes.

Comm. Brown: Thank you, I hope you thought this was worth our time.