

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

Meeting Held: August 26, 2021
Meeting Place: Board Office
Meeting Called to Order: 6:36pm
Members of Board Present: **Chairman** – George Brown
Vice Chairman – Brian Robinson
Treasurer – Steven Funkhouser
Secretary – George Flinn, excused
Commissioner – Derek Grier
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, Grier and Brown present. Comm. Flinn is excused.

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

Correspondence – Renee Evans

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

Treasurer’s Report – Steven Funkhouser

William Penn General Account	2,534,473.42
William Penn Payroll Account	36,368.00
Expenditures 08/26/21	94,609.34
TOTAL AMOUNT FOR APPROVAL	94,609.34

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Budget Co-Commissioner – George Brown

No report.

Computer Services – George Brown

No report.

Fire Prevention – George Brown

No report.

IAFF Contracts Co-Commissioner – George Brown

No report.

Legal Liaison – George Brown

No report.

Liaison to the District Volunteers – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Any new members to report?

Dep.Chief Brown: Not ready for Board approval. There are a couple in the pipeline.

Budget Co-Commissioner – Brian Robinson

No report.

IAFF Contracts Co-Commissioner – Brian Robinson

No report.

Personnel / Administration – Brian Robinson

No report.

Personnel / Operations – Brian Robinson

Comm. Robinson: Nothing except for the hiring process. I would like to go into Closed Session if we can for a couple minutes to review the progress that we made.

Comm. Brown: OK, do you want to do that now?

Comm. Robinson: Now is fine.

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Grier to go into Closed Session to review the hiring process at 6:39pm. Roll call vote, all yes.

Comm. Brown: Let the record show the Board has come out of Closed Session at 6:53pm.

Roll call Commissioners, all present.

Comm. Brown: During the Closed Session, the Board discussed the progress regarding the hiring of a Firefighter. Comm. Robinson would you like to make your recommendation?

Comm. Robinson: I am recommending to the Board that we do a conditional hire pending the medical and touch base with the electronic background and stuff. The individual will be contacted this evening, both individuals that were on the list will be contacted by myself shortly after the meeting. They will remain nameless for a little bit.

Comm. Brown: And just to be perfectly clear, the condition will include a waiver of the physical test as is provided at this time by Trenton. So we're not going to go back in the future and tell him that he has to take a physical test. So it's conditional with the waiver of the physical test and his successful completion of the medical and security exams.

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Grier to proceed in that manner.

Roll call vote, all yes.

Sol.Carlamere: So the Commissioner will make the contact with the individual.

Comm. Brown: Yes, Comm. Robinson will make the contact both candidates. Anything else?

Comm. Robinson: No sir.

Turn-Out Gear – Steve Funkhouser

Comm. Funkhouser: I'm going to refer to the Chief's report in regards to the Uniforms. Chief, I have a question on that. How are we sitting, I haven't been down in the uniform area in quite a while, how are we doing with gear and stuff now, because if we do a test on the gear, the gear could possibly fail because of the amount of years on them?

Chief Brezee: There is a 10 year cycle now. Every time we ordered a set of gear over the past couple years, it's taking longer and longer to get. That's why I'm looking at a 24 month window, so if someone's gear right now is going to hit the 10 year mark in two years, I want to order their gear now. That's also based on the funds we have available on turn out gear. We have gear downstairs which is over 10 years, but we use that for the new members until they are certified to do interior firefighting. That 10 year mark on that gear is for interior firefighting. So I'm not sure what you want to know about the gear downstairs. A lot of it is outdated and is kept for those new members and probationary members who come in.

Comm. Funkhouser: Right, I know we used that new gear down there.

Chief Brezee: There's a couple sets of new gear and that's unfortunately due to people joining and not working out.

Turn-Out Gear – continued

Comm. Funkhouser: OK, we have a couple new sets. I was just concerned with the figure and when we were going to order new gear this year if we did have a lot of failure.

Chief Brezee: I did an audit update, and I know of two sets of gear that are just about to hit the two year mark.

Dep.Chief Brown: We also have new members coming in.

Chief Brezee: All the gear we ordered last year, with the exception of one because he was already one of our Firefighters was paid for out of the Safer Grant, so we saved that money last year too.

Dep.Chief Brown: So even if somebody came to us who was already certified, we have the funds not just from that line, but thru that Safer Fund.

Comm. Funkhouser: And we're still getting that Safer Fund?

Chief Brezee: One more year.

Comm. Funkhouser: So this could be a good year for that then to get new gear.

Chief Brezee: We only get the gear on new members.

Comm. Funkhouser: Only on new members.

Chief Brezee: The Safer only pays on new members, which is great because it kind of means they've been here quite a while.

Comm. Funkhouser: OK, that was the only question I had on gear and how much we'd spend on that.

EMS / Supplies & Equipment – Steve Funkhouser

Comm. Funkhouser: All good.

Uniforms – Steve Funkhouser

Comm. Funkhouser: They are OK. I just ordered shirts for the new Commissioner.

Building Maintenance & Grounds – Steve Funkhouser

Comm. Funkhouser: I'm going to pass this on to Mr. Carlamere right now in regards to the roof situation.

Sol.Carlamere: I spoke briefly with the Commissioner just before the meeting got started. I've had as you know from prior meetings that I had several conversations with Catherine Hess at Bowman. She went through the budget and the process on trying to declare an emergency and what have you, to come up with some additional dollars, and as I reported last meeting, the statute pretty much limits you to the 3% of your appropriations which is not going to give you the dollars that you need. And the issue as to whether or not you are able to tap into your restricted or are you also then limited if some exception is made to your unrestricted fund balance. So I had several conversations and messages left with Melissa Ford. She's at the Local Finance Board, Department of Community Affairs and is basically the lead person on Fire Districts. And I had some messages from her, but I spoke to her personally this morning, and we went through the factual background so she had a complete understanding as to how the Board got into this situation. I emphasized that because of Covid and price escalations that the Board anticipated on good effort that it was going to cost about in the area of \$200,000 but all the numbers are coming in doubled and now you're \$200,000 short. I indicated to her that the Board's concern was looking for an exception. She said you're limited to the statute that we talked about, you're limited to a 3%, you have to declare an emergency by resolution, then you're limited to 3% of your appropriation item, then that emergency resolution has to go to the Governing body, then the Governing body or Municipality, it also has to then consent to your emergency and borrowing. The end result is you're limited and you're not going to get enough money out of that 3% number. She indicated to me that unfortunately she can't direct you in any direction other than what the statute says. She can't, even though there are circumstances, that she can't tell you to disregard the statute. So she was pretty exact on limiting you to that. And I indicated again that where our concern is if we go through December, January, February waiting for our next election and we have a severe snow storm with ice that we could have a major problem. She said unfortunately that's the process that you're in. You could either consider going to your Municipality for a loan. I don't think you're going to get there, just from my knowledge of what's happening with the Township, their capital funds are pretty tight. I don't know if they're going to be able to say we'll loan you \$200,000 because then they'll be in a bind on their projects. She said maybe the other process is to go out with a special election to try and get voter approval, but if you look at today's world with special elections and mail in ballots and that process, you're going to be January or if not February. So it doesn't make sense to do that. She said unfortunately her hands are tied, that's the process you have to go through. We talked about maybe some temporary fix, the Board will have to decide if that's something that might be appropriate and then try to budget the extra dollars next year. But unfortunately with the State, I guess the

Building Maintenance & Grounds – continued

bottom line in my report is that they would not give a bend on what your regulations are. So without that, you would have trouble with your budgets. When they see your budgets come through, they would know you went forward and did something against the statute, so that's where you are unfortunately.

Comm. Brown: So we have to put it in the 2022 budget?

Sol.Carlamere: Correct.

Comm. Funkhouser: That's what it sounds like and hopefully we make it through the winter. And again, the taxpayers approved the \$200,000 because that is what the quotes that I was getting back then from these companies, it was around the \$200,000 mark. That's why we went with the \$200,000 to get approved from the Township from the beginning. So I understand the statute and all, but it's not fair to our department at all. If the money is there then we should be able to use it.

Comm. Brown: There is no provisions for fairness in any of these laws.

Comm. Funkhouser: OK, so I will budget another \$200,000 and hopefully it doesn't go up to \$800,000 the following year.

Comm. Brown: Why don't you budget \$800,000 and then we'll only use \$400,000.

Sol.Carlamere: You can start the process now of going out for bids in anticipation. You're just not going to enter a contract subject to your budget approval, so at least you'll try and get something locked in, that's a thought. It's always better to know the jobs are there when you go out. That's probably the cleanest and most appropriate business way to do it. Naturally you're \$200,000 now gets set aside and then shows as revenue and the new \$200,000 so you have \$400,000 in the budget for that purpose.

Comm. Brown: You know the definition of a crisis is when you're out of air speed, altitude and ideas. The Chief had a comment and it was reported that the JIF would like to get involved in our process, and before we slam the door on that, I think we should have a conversation with them and explain where we're at, and see if they have any intuition, ideas or anything else that we can do. And if they say no, then it's a done deal. But I keep asking people and making a broader sense of what goes on I think around the State than probably anybody, so let's not just capitulate just yet is my suggestion. The JIF seems to know their way around the State.

Chief Brezee: When we had the review and kind of just spit balled things that I may think need to be covered or are they covered enough, and I said we're looking at a roof renovation soon, is there anything? She said oh yes, part of the service is we'll review any of your bids...

Comm. Brown: They'll do some if not all the contract management based on what I read from your comments.

Chief Brezee: I'm not sure if they're doing the management or they want to review what we go with.

Comm. Brown: OK.

Chief Brezee: Now my question would be too, if the Solicitor said we could start the bid process now and if we have to pay that up front, are we allowed to use the \$200,000 that currently sits there?

Sol.Carlamere: I think you can, but then you've got to realize maybe that will give you a good handle of how much you'll have to budget when that \$200,000 gets used.

Chief Brezee: That's what I'm thinking.

Comm. Brown: So Chief, can you have a conversation with them about what services they'll provide us. Maybe Steve and you and then report back to us next month and if there's nothing they can offer then we'll close the door on this until next budget year, agreed? Steve, are you OK with that?

Comm. Funkhouser: Um hum.

Comm. Brown: Anything else?

Comm. Funkhouser: That's all I have to report.

Communications – Steve Funkhouser

No report.

Insurance – George Flinn

Comm. Brown: Comm. Flinn is not here.

Sign – George Flinn

No report.

Water – George Flinn

No report.

Apparatus – Derek Grier

Comm. Grier: I rely on the Chief's Report. There was one question in there I asked him about, the boom that's leaking. That's under review right now, because I know a month or two ago we prepared for a similar issue, it's still yet to be determined.

Fire Department Equipment – Derek Grier

No report.

Fire Department Operations – Derek Grier

No report.

Training – Derek Grier

No report.

Comm. Brown: Before we move into other topics, I'd like to welcome back Firefighter Adam. Good luck to you, and hope that's the end of anything in three careers and we're happy to have you back.

Ff. Craig: Happy to be back.

Chief – Michael Brezee

Chief Brezee: My report has been submitted, nothing to add other than a notice will go out tonight that I'll be leaving town, leaving the State for the next 4 days and Chris will take over the day-to-day until I return.

Comm. Robinson: One question, the Lowes. Do you know yet?

Chief Brezee: Ff. Kenny had recently taken a job there as a part timer. Where we're at is, Keith has left the company. They do not plan to, apparently it could be up to a six month process to name a new store manager. So what they do with duties is they break them up upon the Assistant Managers, and the initial conversation was they all kind of went "I ain't doing it", so Tom's kind of prodded around down there for me and got a Manager who's willing to meet with me, so I'll be meeting with him hopefully in the next week and make sure we can get this back.

Comm. Brown: I have the name somewhere of the guy that contacts us about using the hall. He's not down there, do you know what I'm talking about?

Chief Brezee: Yes, I have him in my cell phone. I think if we have a problem here I think we can take that route. The Manager that Tom has gotten a meeting with or got me the information to get a meeting with loves us, great working relationship.

Comm. Brown: Is he the Assistant Manager?

Chief Brezee: Yeah, there's 4 of them. It's Willie, really a great guy. So I'm hoping for the best with that. I'll keep you posted since you've been since day one you've been through this with me, so next week we'll have a meeting and I'll let you know where we're at.

Comm. Brown: OK great, thank you.

Solicitor – David Carlamere

Sol.Carlamere: Nothing else to report.

Resolutions – Renee Evans

Adm.Cl.Evans: None.

Old Business – George Brown

Comm. Brown: The CPA issues have been resolved, so they can come off the minutes.

The Computer room project, we need to still look at that Steve. The furniture's been ordered.

Comm. Funkhouser: The furniture hasn't been ordered yet, it's just been put on the Chief's desk.

Chief Brezee: I have the final list that DC's approval list that the guy's put together. All looks great and Tuesday I'll place the order.

Comm. Brown: OK, well the project kind of was going to get kicked off when we knew what furniture was going in there so that was impacted there.

Comm. Brown: What to do with Engine 869, is that resolved?

Old Business – continued

Chief Brezee: The Staff Car 869...since our first conversation I've heard nothing further officially.

Comm. Brown: OK, so I think that needs to be passed to Comm. Grier for a resolution or recommendation maybe next month since we'll be going into Budget season right after next month. So what to do with 869, it says Engine here that's why I read it, but we mean Support 86.

Chief Brezee: I'll meet with Comm. Grier on that.

Comm. Brown: Chairs for the Radio Room?

Comm. Funkhouser: They're in.

Comm. Brown: OK, so we can take that off. The Battery for the generator out back?

Comm. Funkhouser: Done.

Comm. Brown: OK, take that off. Ongoing roof discussion, we just discussed, and hiring fireman has been handled. So we're down to a couple old items.

- 1) Computer Room project.
- 2) What to do with Support Vehicle 869
- 3) Roof discussion – going out for bids
- 4) Apparatus boom leaking
- 5) Lowe's for Fire Prevention

New Business – George Brown

Comm. Brown: New Business? (hearing none)

Closed Session – George Brown

(see Closed Session under Personnel/Operations)

Public Portion – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Public Portion? If you'd like to address the Board, please stand, state your name and address, any questions you have? (hearing none)

Adjourn – George Brown

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Grier to adjourn the meeting at 7:12pm.

Roll call vote, all yes.