

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

Meeting Held: December 20, 2021
Meeting Place: Board Office
Meeting Called to Order: 6:30pm
Members of Board Present: **Chairman** – George Brown
Vice Chairman – Brian Robinson
Treasurer – Steven Funkhouser
Secretary – George Flinn
Commissioner – Derek Grier
Administrative Clerk – Renee Evans, excused
Clerk – Jeanette Cottone
Clerk – Kathleen Crockett
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. This is a Special Meeting to introduce and approve the 2022 Fire District Budget.

Roll call Commissioners: All present.

Open Session – George Brown

Comm. Brown: A question I've been asked over the years is what happens with the tax rate. The easiest thing to do is to compare the last two numbers on the page. The 2022 rate will be 14.9cents. That's a 4.7% increase. Typically we've been flat, maybe 1 or 2%. It's higher than it's been the whole time I've been here as a Commissioner. The question is why is that? We just got the completed budget at 6:02pm. It took me 20 minutes to print. If you look at these numbers on the appropriation detail page, that's really where the big changes are in addition to salaries which is a result of the uncertainty of what the Chief is going to do. Comm. Robinson, you decided to put the Administrator in for the full year and the Chief for the full year, so hopefully we won't have that. And a question came up the other day by Comm. Grier, what was the cost to buy the Chief out, and I don't have the 2021 hours yet because it's not over, but his carryover thus far, as of today the number the Clerk gave me...

Cl.Cottone: 380 hours.

Comm. Brown: OK, 308 at his rate of \$35.36, that's \$11,000 roughly. I'm just giving that to you now because the status on that is, I asked the Solicitor of what to do and he said send it to Mr. Long. I sent it to Mr. Long that afternoon, I haven't heard back from him. I expect he's probably busy this time of the year, I'll ping him again tomorrow, but I had to get this done first. So the budget's back from a salary standpoint because we don't know what the Chief's going to do.

Comm. Grier: That 308, is what kind of time, sick?

Comm. Flinn: All his time.

Comm. Brown: No, that's not all his time.

Cl.Crockett: That's vacation time.

Comm. Brown: It's vacation carry over. His other time is...there's a sheet in the budget that says what he's owed, about \$15,000.

Cl.Cottone: No, his will all be calculated according to what he has left. He's Police & Fire, not PERS.

Comm. Brown: But there's another one in there for his sick time...

Cl.Cottone: \$2,500 max for his sick time.

Comm. Brown: OK, so it's \$2,500 plus another \$11,000 so about \$13,500 roughly. So we agreed the other night we got a sense of what the Board wants, we'll wait to see what Mr. Long says then I'll get back to you because we had to get this budget done today. So in looking at the second page I handed out, there are a couple things that jump out and that is the Safer Supplement, I believe Comm. Robinson you wanted that for Chris which is more money in the Safer Supplement program. Recruitment and Retention is really a carryover. That \$5,000 is \$5,000 that they

Open Session – continued

could not spend this year, so they asked me if they could carry it over, I said yes, there are other ways to do that but if the voters turn down the budget then they're going to lose it, so I just threw it in there. There were a couple others, Furniture and Equipment, I don't understand why that went up by about \$16,000.

Cl.Cottone: \$6,000 of that is for the new phone system, and the other was the computer room, the equipment to hold the computers. That became part of that Furniture line.

Comm. Brown: But didn't Steve have lockers upstairs?

Cl.Cottone: A couple lockers.

Comm. Brown: That was almost half of the increase. And I don't know why the supplies went that high unless you were just trying to increase the cost of things. But everything else is zero. So that's where we are. We used \$423,000 of fund balance in order to do this and we would need not quite that much to start the year off. So we'll leave the first quarter requirement rule and that's all it is. Questions?

Comm. Funkhouser: Under Uniforms, I swore I took money out of it.

Comm. Brown: You did.

Comm. Funkhouser: So this is saying I'm minus \$500 from before?

Comm. Brown: I'm sorry, you added \$500.

Comm. Funkhouser: No, I took a lot of money out of it because I didn't need Class A Uniforms.

Cl.Cottone: Steve, the problem is, you took \$10,000 out which took it down to \$22,000 but the real 2021 budget is what you should have worked from.

Comm. Funkhouser: That's what I was given. I didn't have the proper numbers.

Cl.Cottone: George, this was part of the problem, he was given 2020 sheets to work on.

Comm. Funkhouser: I took \$10,000 out of Uniforms. I don't know how it adds up to \$500.

Comm. Brown: It's the new math.

Comm. Funkhouser: It must be.

Comm. Brown: If you go through this thing, there are probably about 12 things that are wrong with the budget that are not what they should be. But time is of the essence.

Comm. Funkhouser: Well that wasn't what I put in there, so I wasted my time.

Comm. Brown: You can do one of two things. When you all have had time to look at it, we can revise the budget on the second reading if we want to go that route. We passed the deadline the other night. There's just not enough time. This was all too late, too little. I don't think our Accountant helped us out at all on a bunch of these things.

Cl.Cottone: It takes a little time to get it all filled in then he has to...

Comm. Brown: There were things today on that phone call that he...he missed the payroll taxes for the Administrative area, how much was that?

Cl.Cottone: I sent an email about it, you're right.

Comm. Brown: It is what it is right now, if we want to, when everybody has time to look at it, we get one more shot at this on the second reading, and we did revise our second reading last year, so I know we can do that. There was also confusion on the \$400,000 for the roof.

Cl.Cottone: We got that straightened out.

Comm. Brown: Those are things that were a surprise. We had to budget last year for the doors \$200,000, are we going to forget about that, no. Ok, so we can't do anything about water behind you.

Sol.Carlamere: Just keep in mind if you're going to amend your budget, this is your introduction and your information was probably more than what the statute requires you to do at this time. Once you introduce it tonight you have to advertise it and have your public hearing. When you do your public hearing, if you're doing amendments, to increase or decrease any item of operating appropriations by more than 10% that means you have to have a special advertisement and notice of those changes. It talks about other changes, 1%, 5%, but you have to be sensitive and let me know how you're changing it, if you're hitting those percentages, you have to advertise those changes before the public hearing.

Comm. Brown: OK, the thing is this, we're not over the Cap, we've used Cap reserve that we had, and the fund balance, so those are usually the big things.

Sol.Carlamere: You should be alright, you have plenty of time. We were talking earlier today, Kathy, Jan and I, as far as the time for your public hearing, you're well within that to meet statutory requirements not to interfere with your election period.

Open Session – continued

Comm. Brown: As far as I'm concerned Dave, I'm out of time on this project. I had other things to do today too and I didn't start yet. So I don't want to go down that route and say just go with it but don't spend the money, because if I hear somebody say it's in the budget and that's why they're going to spend it, I'm going to freak out. The big thing in terms of the numbers is the uncertainty of the Chief. It wasn't like we didn't try to resolve that back in August or September. So say what we will about everybody else's fault, that's where it was. Questions?

Comm. Grier: Repairs and Maintenance on here, is that Apparatus?

Comm. Brown: Yes.

Comm. Funkhouser: What are we Promoting for \$12,000?

Comm. Brown: That is generally where the Chief gets his money for Fire Prevention night, all the give-a-ways, the school programs.

Comm. Grier: We already have that 2021 that we did not utilize, right?

Comm. Brown: The answer to that question is, and this is I'm trying to be a teacher, not a smartass is, when we say we take money out of fund balance, that's what we can spend, that's the \$423,000.00. It's not like you take it on an account-by-account basis. You throw it all in a bucket and then whatever you need to balance the budget, you take out of the bucket. You don't carry over by account or line item. It's hard to understand, because this is not normal accounting, this is government accounting which is not normal.

Comm. Grier: My question is, should we save money in 2022 because we didn't use it in 2021?

Comm. Brown: We don't have it. When January 1st comes around, we don't have that money.

Comm. Flinn: It goes into a bucket, then you're budget is one thing and whatever you're raising by taxation, after you've used that fund balance, that's why your number is lower than your actual budget. All that money goes into a bucket, then you utilize that first, then you ask the taxpayers for the rest.

Sol.Carlamere: So at the end of your year in the last two months, you can move your line items around where you overspend and underspend. You do a Resolution to transfer between line items. At the end of the year, anything left over goes into a fund balance. And that fund balance can get appropriated against future years, but it doesn't move into the next year's budget. When you start your 2023 for example and you're going to utilize some of your fund balance, that money has been accumulated from where you didn't spend in previous years.

Comm. Brown: Almost all of my budget is that way where I didn't do anything for the last year and it went into fund balance and I took it out again because of various reasons.

Comm. Funkhouser: What do we have rental charges on here for?

Cl.Cottone: Fire hydrant rentals.

Comm. Funkhouser: It should say Fire Hydrant Rentals. I'm thinking Hall Rentals.

Comm. Flinn: That would be income.

Cl.Cottone: There used to be a couple rental things. That's why I think when they used it in the budget like this, it's classified under rentals. Our main and only one at this point is the Fire Hydrant Rental.

Comm. Brown: Anything else? (hearing none)

Resolutions – Kathleen Crockett

Cl.Crockett: The Budget Introduction Resolution is **R-26-01**.

Cl.Cottone: This is the 2022 Fire District 6 budget for the fiscal year January 1-December 31, where the annual budget as introduced reflects total revenues of \$2,315,447.99, which includes an amount to be raised by taxation of \$1,648,645.04, total appropriations of \$2,315,447.99. The Board of Commissioners will consider the annual budget for Adoption on January 20, 2022.

Sol.Carlamere: So part of your motion is the amount the Clerk just read, that's what's reflected in that motion. Your motion is approving the first reading.

Motion made by Comm. Flinn, seconded by Comm. Robinson to introduce and approve the 2022 Fire District Budget as read. Roll call vote, all yes.

Comm. Brown: There was one other Resolution we had to do tonight.

Cl.Cottone: We'll do the one in January about the procedures for adopting the budget.

Comm. Brown: No, the one about the fund balance that we talked to Jeff about.

Cl.Cottone: I went over that with Steve today, the resolution we discussed two ways, Dave do you want to explain?

Sol.Carlamere: What is the exact question?

Cl.Cottone: Jeff had mentioned doing the resolution, then you and I discussed which way he was going to work it...

Resolutions – continued

Sol.Carlamere: You're talking about the \$200,000, the one you appropriated last year?

Cl.Cottone: Yes, and at which time we would do the Resolution.

Sol.Carlamere: Correct. So you're going to do, from our conversation with Jeff, when it comes time to expend those dollars, you're going to do a Resolution to move out of your fund balance that \$200,000. You have \$200,000 in this year's budget and you're going to move \$200,000 from last year's fund balance. You'll move it out as Capital Expenditures. You'll do that when it comes time to use those dollars.

Comm. Brown: OK, that's not what he told us today, and I don't really care so we'll let it go that way. It's the chicken or the egg argument, how can you get it in the budget if you haven't approved it, but leave it off.

Cl.Cottone: What do you mean we haven't approved it?

Comm. Brown: It's in your reserve. The 2020 thing is over here. You want to get it into the budget, just as a resolution. We've got the numbers down, and that was the question. If somebody were to come in when we post the budget and say "where is this \$400,000...I don't see a tax in for \$400,000, you're going to go through a big long explanation where it's in last year's budget..."

Cl.Cottone: It'll be this years, they'll move it in the end of 2021. It won't be moved...see that's part of it too until we physically close 2021. He's going to put it in reserve. If we expend it in 2022...

Comm. Brown: I'm not arguing...that's not what he said. He wanted a second resolution tonight, but that's ok, let's move along.

Cl.Crockett: We do have the year-end meeting if you need to do another resolution before year-end.

Comm. Brown: No, no, he wanted it in tonight.

Cl.Crockett: Alright.

Cl.Cottone: I believe he thought we had to do it, and that's why I reached out to the Solicitor between the two of them to make sure they're doing it.

Comm. Brown: That's OK. As long as the Solicitor is OK without doing it, I'm OK without doing it.

Public Portion – George Brown

n/a

Adjourn – George Brown

Motion made by Comm. Flinn, seconded by Comm. Grier to adjourn the meeting at 6:52pm.

Roll call vote, all yes.