

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

Meeting Held: November 18, 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 – Kathleen Crockett
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, they're also on our website.
Motion made by Comm. Flinn, seconded by Comm. Grier. Roll call vote, all yes.

Correspondence – Kathleen Crockett
n/a

Treasurer's Report – Steven Funkhouser

William Penn General Account	2,305,642.79
William Penn Payroll Account	24,136.44
Expenditures November 18, 2021	40,456.47
TOTAL AMOUNT FOR APPROVAL	40,456.47

Motion made by Comm. Flinn, 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: How's everybody coming along with the budget?

Comm. Funkhouser: Slow but sure.

Comm. Brown: OK. If anybody needs any help, I'm around the next 10 days, including weekends. I think we can knock it out. There are some issues we'll discuss tonight, but don't hesitate to call me if you need some input. I'm not going to do your budget for you or tell you what to do but I can help you with some of the stipulations.

Computer Services – George Brown
No report.

Fire Prevention – George Brown
No report.

IAFF Contracts Co-Commissioner – George Brown

No report.

Legal Liaison – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Mr. Carlamere is not here tonight. We are going into Closed Session in a little bit and we can discuss those issues then.

Liaison to the District Volunteers – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Any new members?

Dep.Chief Brown: No, we're still waiting on one background check. We do have one back, I have not had a chance to interview the member yet so we'll hold off on approval till we get that chance. The other Officers have spoken to him and it seems like he'll be a good fit. The only other outstanding item is that it's reimbursement check time for the volunteers coming up soon. I don't know, I'm not going to assume that the Board needs to authorize a resolution to spend money since it is already a line item in the budget. It's a matter of percentage of participation, and the goal is have those to the Clerk sometime next week.

Comm. Brown: OK.

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

Comm. Brown: Just for the record, that one we've been waiting on still is not back as I came here today. I called them twice in the last week, they promised me it would be in by yesterday and it wasn't. So there is some sort of an issue they either have to straighten up or get out because we usually get those turned around in a couple days and that one has been since November 2nd. So I'll call them again tomorrow.

Cl.Crockett: You mean the background check?

Comm. Brown: Yes, that's the other one the Deputy Chief is looking for.

Budget Co-Commissioner – Brian Robinson

No report.

IAFF Contracts Co-Commissioner – Brian Robinson

No report.

Personnel / Administration – Brian Robinson

Comm. Robinson: I have nothing. I am going to request that we go into a Closed Session at some point for a couple proposed items for next years' budget.

Comm. Brown: OK, we'll do that at the end if there is no objection.

Comm. Robinson: OK.

Comm. Brown: With Renee, everybody knows what the Renee situation is, guys in the back? So Kathy tell the story please because you have more firsthand details.

Cl.Crockett: Renee's baby was due the end of December. In her testing, as she was going along, they found there was a problem with the baby's heart. They were monitoring very closely, going in for testing once a week, then twice a week and they felt the baby was getting weaker, so they decided to just take the baby and work on her. That was as of Friday, November 12th. They kept her at the hospital, and the baby was delivered at CHOP, 4lbs, 13oz little girl. Mommy is doing well and the baby is doing better.

Comm. Brown: And they put a pacemaker in the baby.

Cl.Crockett: Yes, the baby has a temporary pacemaker.

Comm. Brown: Amazing, thank you.

Cl.Crockett: You're welcome.

Personnel / Operations – Brian Robinson

No report.

Communications – Steve Funkhouser

No report.

Building Maintenance & Grounds – Steve Funkhouser

Comm. Funkhouser: I defer to the Chief's report in regards to the building and the other portions of my report because it's all spot-on. There is a problem with the sign, the Deputy Chief has been working on that to get it straightened out. The sprinkler system has been closed down and the building is still standing.

Comm. Brown: Anything else?

Comm. Funkhouser: In regards to the roof? No.

Comm. Brown: OK. Let's talk about that in public for a second so everybody out there knows what's going on. The roof estimate was originally given to us to repair in 2020...we got an estimate for \$200,000. As we got the Engineer's report back in 2020 or 2021 I forget when it was, he estimated the repair was going to cost \$400,000. So we didn't have the money in the 2021 budget to do that, we do have enough money going into the 2022 budget to add \$200,000 for a total of \$400,000 for the roof. In order to do that, we have to have a special election to approve the additional \$200,000. That election is planned for December 11, from 6pm to 9pm. So everyone can come in and vote for the roof or not. Is that everything Steve?

Comm. Funkhouser: Yes sir.

Comm. Brown: OK.

EMS / Supplies & Equipment – Steve Funkhouser

No report.

Turn-Out Gear – Steve Funkhouser

No report.

Uniforms – Steve Funkhouser

No report.

Insurance – George Flinn

No report.

Sign – George Flinn

No report.

Water – George Flinn

No report.

Apparatus – Derek Grier

Comm. Grier: I do refer to the Chief's report, but there are a couple things I would like to point out. The EGR valve on 862...he has two quotes on it and one quote is significantly lower than the other, it's \$1,300 lower. So I authorized to go ahead and make that repair.

Comm. Brown: And who was that that was the lower bid?

Comm. Grier: Budd's. We've used them in the past for other repairs for that truck. Campbell's was a little high, plus we'd have to go there and come back with it, and Budd's is nearby.

Comm. Brown: We don't happen to know if by chance if they fix light standards on engines, do we?

Comm. Grier: The other day they talked about the lights, I'm not sure that they fixed it though.

Comm. Brown: No, I'm talking about the one on the Squad.

Comm. Grier: The water damage?

Comm. Brown: No, the one we haven't used since November, the Boom.

Comm. Funkhouser: It was temporarily lifted the other night on a fire call, and it was leaking.

Comm. Brown: No, my question was, do we happen to know if Budd's does repairs on it?

Comm. Grier: I can find out for you.

Comm. Brown: OK. Because if their work is roughly around 50% cheaper, we could possibly get the boom repaired and get it back in service. But for right now at \$24,000 it's not getting repaired and we've had lingering issues as a result of not getting it repaired.

Comm. Grier: Yes.

Comm. Brown: And on that note, I just want to read into the record, that when we met in September we passed a resolution authorizing the Chief to get Campbell's to give us all the documentation on the maintenance that had

Apparatus, continued

been done on the boom for as long as we've owned the truck, and if they did not get back to us in 10 days, we were going to institute Mr. Carlamere's office to try and help get it. Today is November 18th, that's six weeks later, and we still don't have an answer.

Comm. Grier: We did receive the documentation and from my understanding he's reviewing it and we're waiting on the next step.

Comm. Brown: Well the next step is that we already have a resolution to seek the legal route from September. I have it here if you forgot about it. Mr. Carlamere is ready. I spoke to him this afternoon and he said as soon as the documentation is available and somebody can sit down with him and go through it, he wants to meet and see what the issues are.

Comm. Grier: I'll pass that on to the Chief.

Comm. Brown: OK. Anything else Mr. Grier?

Comm. Grier: Everything else is pretty standard and in the report.

Comm. Brown: OK, thank you.

Call Back Program – Brian Robinson

Comm. Robinson: One second, I'm sorry. There was a note at the end of the Chief's Report about the call back program...the call back discussion of career guys that we had on working fires. I'd like to inquire of any progress recently discussed about the call back policy for career firefighters, I'd be happy to discuss my report pertaining to this policy. I believe we discussed this two months ago?

Comm. Brown: I know it's been on the table for at least a year, or thereabouts. After the last contract was signed which was when, January of last year? It's been a while. We realize that was something we wanted to put in there, but we wanted language that was clear, easy to follow and wouldn't be confusing so that what was outstanding is the language and then to ask the Union if they want to sign the language or work on the language with us, we're not trying to impose it on them, and that's where it stalled.

Comm. Robinson: Unless I'm wrong, the Chief said he was going to get the language with the Union and bring it back to us, but he's not here. So that's why I was just confused on where are we at. We brought it up asking for it, we asked to institute it, we just want to know how the Chief and Union would like it instituted, am I wrong?

Comm. Funkhouser: They have to create a policy.

Comm. Brown: Ff. Craig, have you had any discussions about this issue with the Chief?

Ff. Craig: No, I have not. If you'd like I can reach out to Keith to see if he's had any conversations and get back to you, or have him reach out to you?

Comm. Brown: If you haven't, then there probably hasn't been because we include you in as far as I'm concerned, and as the person representing the Firefighter's contract negotiations for the District, we included you in on anything we wanted to do. So I'm not aware of it, let us circle back, talk to the Chief and see what we need to do. It shouldn't be that difficult. If you want to hear what my thoughts are, this was discussed three years ago, there was one stumbling block. If we can get by that, I think the language is already worked out and I don't think it will be a stumbling block because it was not just understood clearly. But I think the desire is, and Deputy Chief tell me if I'm wrong, but the desire is to get this approved and in affect so you that can come back on working fire boxes, is that correct?

Dep.Chief Brown: That is correct. I spoke to the Chief about this earlier in the week, actually the end of last week, just to find out why this changed, and the Chief and I both very strongly agree that it's necessary. Back in the past I believe the verbiage that's in the collective bargaining agreement states that Firefighters are up and back for all-hands fires.

Comm. Brown: All-hands fires for District 6.

Dep.Chief Brown: Yes, District 6. The collaboration between the County Fire Chief's and Fire Officer's Association and the Communication Center basically changed the way in which a response plan works. Most agencies do not have a working fire box. The initial dispatch known as a confirmed incident will then be upgraded to an all-hands incident. One of the problems that was being noticed to occur was that the incident, talking about here structure fires led to an all hands, that was a lot of resources and things that were being done all at one shot. There was additional resources being added as far as dispatch, whether it's an addition Engine or Ladder, additional two Engines and Ladders, that's based upon the Station's authority. There is also series of notifications that have to go out to the Department, to utilities, so on and so forth. It was noted that things were kind of getting missed. One of the proposals to what's enacted now is the availability of the working fire box, which kind of staggers those who work. The working fire box in the alarm room will automatically, as soon as they receive multiple phone calls

Call Back Program, continued

reporting that's it's a possible working structure fire, they will automatically pull the trigger and send those additional resources or at the request of any Officer from the fire SUV or riding the front seat. The thing that's been noted locally, we're not the only ones, is that now a lot of these instances that had to go all hands to get the extra resources under control, are now being held at that working fire box. So by having full time personnel from within and within striking distance of the District, being able to bring them back sooner to assist on scene is something that, as far as I'm concerned, is a no brainer for the Department and for the residents.

Comm. Brown: OK, so where that's left is that we're going to see what the Chief has to say about that and I think that's either a Personnel or Operations issue.

Comm. Robinson: We have the wording already. It would be a matter of tweaking it between the Union and the Chief and bringing it back.

Comm. Brown: I believe it could be a five minute discussion if we said let's get this done.

Comm. Robinson: I agree wholeheartedly. We're all on the ap, most of us if not all the Commissioners are on the ap, you see the ap, you know the ap, we've all learned the ap, so for a young firefighter to be able to pull up that ap and go "one of the guys is coming back, one of the career guys", that's a huge plus to get them moving instead of looking at it and going "I don't have a driver."

Comm. Brown: So the minutes can read that you're going to discuss with the Chief whatever you need to do to get this done?

Comm. Robinson: It's my opinion that the Chief and the Union need to discuss first and bring it back.

Comm. Brown: Not really. The way that it's worked until now is the two Commissioners responsible for the labor agreements have the conversation and the Chief sits in on this meeting so it's not that he's part of the negotiating committee, sits down with them, schedule a meeting, say this is what we want to do. Hopefully we can give them something in advance so it's not a surprise, and give them a little time to think about it. And we need to say what do you want to change, it's one or two words, change the one or two words, we agree on it and get it approved by the Board and it's in place. That's how it works.

Comm. Robinson: Agreed, that's fine.

Comm. Brown: And just for that, anything that affects the contracts has to be approved by the Board, and the Board can't do it with more than two members present so that's why we have the labor committee of sorts, which was Comm. Annacone and myself.

Comm. Funkhouser: Has the Chief given the Union members permission already to start coming back for fire calls?

Comm. Brown: Not that I'm aware of.

Comm. Funkhouser: I was just curious, I have seen a couple on the firegrounds...it's great, I'm glad to have them there but I don't know if this is a policy that's been set up already with the Chief of a verbal policy, or...

Comm. Brown: If it has, it has not been approved by the Board on one hand. And on the other hand, I know that if somebody came back to a working fire and worked, we would see that they got paid notwithstanding what's in the contract. I know that's happened that somebody was here, if that's what you're referring to. If you need somebody and they show up...

Comm. Robinson: We do have something in place already that they can come back, the career staff, on a confirmed work in our local.

Ff. Craig: For rescue assignments as well.

Comm. Robinson: Yes, a bona fide rescue. This program takes the difference that the Deputy Chief explained as...what's in place now has to be confirmed work, confirmed work, all hands, central alarm, blah blah blah all has to be in place. We're trying to tweak that to where they can come back on the working box, correct?

Comm. Funkhouser: The initial box.

Comm. Robinson: The initial box is what information they're getting outside of what we know right now. They're getting something on the alarm room side that we're all not aware of and we have to assume that they're getting multiple information, multiple something, somebody's on the phone, some of us don't have a radio, we're on a land line going "I'm so and so, I know what I'm talking about, this is what I got", they're getting that and they're upping the game ahead of time.

Comm. Funkhouser: It's called an all-hands box...

Dep. Chief Brown: It's essentially a three tier system. Your initial dispatch which is your first alarm on a working fire box, and then all-hands. All-hands is predominantly supposed to be reserved for adding something like a rehab unit and all your notifications.

Comm. Funkhouser: Other Townships are doing that when there is a working fire box that the paid staff is allowed to come back. There are other towns that do that.

Call Back Program, continued

Comm. Robinson: That's exactly what we're trying to mirror. I got the idea from Washington Township and it seems to be working. But what we're saying is, the way they're doing it, nobody has to be standing there watching this fire again. We're getting ahead of the game, and so be it if it sounded like it was the biggest fire in the world, and we've all been there and it's nothing. But I'd rather be ahead of the game than not.

Comm. Funkhouser: I was trying to clarify that a little better because I wasn't sure on that. OK.

Fire Department Equipment – Derek Grier

No report.

Fire Department Operations – Derek Grier

No report.

Training – Derek Grier

No report.

Chief – Michael Brezee

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser to accept the Chief's Report.

Solicitor – David Carlamere, excused

No report.

Resolutions – Kathleen Crockett

Cl.Crockett: Resolution R-23-21 Approving Employee Healthcare Benefit Waiver Reimbursement.

Be it resolved that payment is hereby authorized to be made to Adam Craig, career firefighter in the amount of \$4,227.81 as a Health Care benefit waiver for the year 2021.

Comm. Brown: Did we confirm that this has to be read every year or is it a one-time?

Cl.Crockett: I thought we would ask the Solicitor that tonight, but he's not here. We did a resolution last year on it, and we did the calculations this year and sent it to Sol.Carlamere to confirm everything was correct.

Comm. Brown: Adam, what is your suspect on this? Is this an annual thing so we know it doesn't fall through the cracks?

Cl.Crockett: It's every year. We did it this time last year, and now this year.

Comm. Brown: OK, so I'm just trying to set the expectation, so this time November 2022 will be the next reimbursement.

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

Old Business – George Brown

Comm. Brown: There was a piece of Old Business in the Clerk's folder, and she was going to bring it up two meetings in a row and we didn't get to it, and I don't seem to have it. It was regarding an old piece of business and an issue involving Comm. Robinson. Do you have that piece of paper?

Cl.Crockett: This one here?

Comm. Brown: Yes. The issue was that the Chief filed an internal affairs complaint against Comm. Robinson to the Police Department. And the Police Department did an investigation of the complaint, and we received a letter on June 10th back from Chief Harkins, that said "the professional standards unit of the Gloucester Township Police Department has completed its investigation of the internal affairs complaint that was made against you, meaning Comm. Robinson, by Michael Brezee on May 25, 2021. At this time this case will be closed. You have been exonerated in the complaint. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me." Just so everyone understands why this is being read into the minutes at this time, the original complaint was put into Closed Session minutes, and those are available to the public. And without closing it and coming back and saying no, it was resolved, it will always be open if a complaint was made against a Commissioner and nothing got done about it. So now if someone wants to look through the minutes, they can see where the complaint was done, how we handled it, how the Police Department handled it, and how the Commissioner was handled. Fair enough?

Comm. Robinson: Fair enough sir.

Old Business – George Brown

Comm. Brown: This is near and dear to my heart because there is one that's out on the bulletin board that I got the Board to post 16 years ago against myself and my children. You can't make up stuff about people or allege people have done something that's not factual. And I think that's in our DNA around here. You can't make up stuff that's not necessarily factual.

Comm. Robinson: I'd like to request that it be posted.

Comm. Brown: Alright, any objections doing that?

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Flinn to post the Chief of Police letter in the bulletin board in the main hall, right next to mine if you like.

Roll call vote, Comms. Funkhouser, Grier, Flinn and Brown yes. Comm. Robinson has abstained.

New Business – George Brown

Comm. Brown: New Business? (hearing none)

Public Portion – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Public Portion? Would anybody like to address the Board, or with us a Happy Thanksgiving? Mrs. Craig said Happy Thanksgiving.

Closed Session – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Comm. Robinson would like to go into Closed Session. We'll come out of Closed Session once we've resolved any issues. If something is resolved in Closed Session, you have to come out of Closed Session and get it into the minutes, otherwise they don't know and they think we're hiding.

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser to go into Closed Session at 7:01pm.

Roll call vote, all yes.

Motion made by Comm. Funkhouser, seconded by Comm. Robinson to come out of Closed Session at 7:47pm.

Roll call vote, all yes.

Comm. Brown: During the Closed Session we discussed personnel matters and we'll give you details on a couple of them and some are not resolved, but they've been brought up in prior Board meetings so there is nothing really new. Kathy has helped us out with Renee's absences. She has not had a change in her pay to be in the Clerk's position. We're going to give her an increase consistent with that role. It will not be retro-active. It will not be reduced when the job is fulfilled. So the increase we give you will be \$30 an hour straightforward now until we give you your raise whenever that is next year.

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

Comm. Brown: The second one is that the Commissioners have not had a pay increase in at least 16 years, and we are currently the lowest paid Commissioners in Gloucester Township. We're going to give ourselves a slight increase next year of roughly about \$50.00 a month. It should not be a secret, currently we get paid \$350 a month, so it will be somewhere around \$416 if Comm. Robinson has his numbers right.

Comm. Robinson: Correct.

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

Comm. Brown: The third item which we will not provide any details on right now has to do with some alternate planning should the Chief resign this year. We have to start thinking about how that's going to transition because we have to do a budget and the Commissioners have to all know and understand what are the various paths that that could take and we discussed that. So there is nothing to vote on that.

Adjourn – George Brown

Motion made by Comm. Flinn, seconded by Comm. Funkhouser at 7:51pm. Roll call vote, all yes.

Comm. Brown: Happy Thanksgiving to everyone.