

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

Meeting Held: September 23, 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
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:
All present.

Comm. Brown: I'd like to suspend the agenda now so we can proceed with the swearing-in of the new Firefighter.
Comm. Robinson: We are conducting a swearing-in tonight of probation Ff. Carl Lemmerman, please step up front.
Comm. Brown: And his wife and the Chief.
Sol.Carlamere swore-in probationary Ff. Carl Lemmerman to Fire District 6. (applause)
Comm. Brown: OK family and friends if you want to leave you could do that now because the rest of the night is boring.
Comm. Funkhouser: Thank you all for coming.
Comm. Brown: Let the record show the swearing-in was completed at 6:33pm, off the regular agenda.

Minutes of the previous meeting - Motion to accept the previous month's minutes as they are available to the public upon request.
Motion made by Comm. Flinn, seconded by Comm. Robinson. Roll call vote, all yes.

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

Treasurer's Report – Steven Funkhouser

William Penn General Account	2,465,547.54
William Penn Payroll Account	39,605.00
Expenditures 09/23/21	67,419.69
TOTAL AMOUNT FOR APPROVAL	67,419.69

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comm. Brown: I'd like to defer my section to last because I do want to talk about the budget plans and some issues that we've got to resolve before we can even get into that.

Budget Co-Commissioner – Brian Robinson
No report.

IAFF Contracts Co-Commissioner – Brian Robinson

No report.

Personnel / Operations – Brian Robinson

Comm. Robinson: I don't have too much other than the swearing-in. That process went well, we haven't heard anything back from Civil Service.

Personnel / Administration – Brian Robinson

Comm. Robinson: As far as the Clerk position, I've spoken to Jan and Kathy and they're going to combine their schedules together as far as filling in when Renee goes out on maternity leave. That's all I have.

Building Maintenance & Grounds – Steve Funkhouser

Comm. Funkhouser: I'll refer to the Chief's report. That's all I have to report right now.

Communications – Steve Funkhouser

No report.

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 too refer to the Chief's Report, but we need to talk about an item on the last page.

Comm. Brown: Yeah, the item that was on the last page of the report, can we get into that right now so we all understand what's going on?

Comm. Grier: So essentially...

Chief Brezee: Do you want me to do it?

Comm. Brown: Chief, if you want, go ahead.

Chief Brezee: The issue we're having is the swivel of the boom on the Squad, as a seal has broken and we're getting a hydraulic leak. I wrote an email requesting how this happened. They state that possibly the boom had loosened up and when it was swiveling and at one point it bound up. This is not a defect as far as they're concerned. The vibration of the truck loosens bolts all the time, that's why we have once or twice a year they come through, they check all the bolts. At the time they checked them they were not loose. Generally what they're telling me is the swivel has to be replaced at a price of \$24,000. Of course I argued, argued and argued, but we're kind of at the point where we're out of warranty with that part of the truck, there's nothing we can do about it. If we want the boom to stop leaking, we have to make the repair. We don't have enough money to cover our mobile repairs plus that in this years' budget through that line item.

Comm. Brown: OK, I have a few questions...when was the last time the boom was inspected by them.

Chief Brezee: I requested that report as well, I haven't received it yet.

Comm. Brown: OK, so I'm wondering if there isn't some warranty on their warranty work, so to speak.

Apparatus – continued

Chief Brezee: I understand what you're saying, and that's what I asked, when was the last aerial inspection done because I don't have any paperwork on it. They tell me it was done, they'll get me that, I'm waiting for that.

Comm. Brown: I would suggest that we don't do the repair till we get that, and if we don't get that, and this is just a suggestion, that we ask Mr. Carlamere to write them a letter documenting when that was done last. That's an awful lot of money to just go ahead and spend it.

Chief Brezee: I agree.

Comm. Funkhouser: For a three year old vehicle, that's an awful lot of money.

Chief Brezee: A little over three, we're coming up on five.

Comm. Brown: OK, so until we hear from them...

Chief Brezee: Right now the truck is up there having the air bag replaced, the suspension airbag that sprung a leak. That is not something that surprises me, those things go all the time. We're going to get it back and it'll be in service. As I know it right now, we just keep checking the fluid on the boom, clean up the little bit of the leak and we can still operate it, so we have time to make those inquiries.

Comm. Brown: Can we ask them for a date when they're going to give us that documentation so we know how to plan?

Chief Brezee: I was expecting a phone call today to at least give me an update on the current repair and I didn't receive that phone call.

Sol.Carlamere: Do they provide annual inspection reports?

Chief Brezee: They do inspections, what we call PM's, and they do two a year on each truck. One is called enhanced, they do a little more, and one is a little less where they go over the entire truck. Once a year there is a big list done.

Sol.Carlamere: Do you have all those reports?

Chief Brezee: I have documentation.

Sol.Carlamere: Then you should pull those out so that you can start preparing as to what is the history over the 5 years through the warranty period.

Chief Brezee: I'll put it all together and we'll go forward from there.

Comm. Brown: Yep.

Chief Brezee: Sounds like a plan to me.

Comm. Grier: When it's back in service, to be careful with some of the liabilities. You can hang a light from that boom, and you may not want to do that for safety measures.

Comm. Brown: Can you put the boom out of service mechanically?

Chief Brezee: It's our light tower. I don't see any reason to put it out of service as a light tower. We're not putting any life on that. And if necessary, and again I'll ask them more questions, but if necessary, if the call called for it, I'd rather see the boom go up and start throwing water, if necessary. The conditions have to be right for us to even put a light on that boom.

Comm. Brown: OK, so how much time do we want to give them to get back to you, ten days?

Chief Brezee: I'll start on it Monday morning. I'm going to call tomorrow for an update.

Comm. Brown: And do we want to pass a motion to give them 10 days, or we can say the Board is giving you ten days to get back to us with an answer to our question?

Sol.Carlamere: I would do that through your minutes.

Motion made by Comm. Robinson, seconded by Comm. Grier to notify Campbell's that they've got 10 days to supply the history of maintenance on that truck. And if we don't get that we're going to seek other avenues.

Roll call vote, all yes.

Comm. Brown: Anything else Comm. Grier?

Comm. Grier: That was it.

Fire Department Equipment – Derek Grier

No report.

Fire Department Operations – Derek Grier

No report.

Training – Derek Grier

No report.

Chief – Michael Brezee

Chief Brezee: My report's been submitted, nothing to add.

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

Solicitor – David Carlamere

Sol.Carlamere: I have nothing to report, but do you have a Closed Session for tonight?

Comm. Brown: I don't know if we're going to Closed or not.

Sol.Carlamere: So maybe on an issue, you can take a 5 minute Closed Session if you get a chance.

Comm. Brown: On an issue you have?

Sol.Carlamere: Yes.

Comm. Brown: OK. Mr. Solicitor I have a question for you. A couple of the Commissioners have asked me about the possibility of having a Workshop to try to expedite the budget for this year. What's the difference between a Workshop and a regular meeting in terms of authorities and what you can and cannot do?

Sol.Carlamere: Your work agendas still have to be advertised and it's still open to the public. As a public body you still have to have one public portion even though it's only a work agenda. When you advertise it as a work agenda meeting, you list what your discussing, so if it's preparing a budget or whatever, then that's the only item you can list. Anything you want to discuss during that work session has to be noted to the public. There are no decisions made at a work agenda, it just kind of in a sense prepares you for your meeting, then that's when you make your decisions.

Comm. Brown: OK. I just wanted that to come out. I checked as far back as I have records, all the way back to 2006. We had one workshop in that whole time period, and believe it or not it was buying the new Squad. So I'm not sure that workshops make for better decision making number one. Number two is, when you have them separated from the regular meeting, people that aren't at the regular meeting who wasn't at the workshop they don't understand what are all the details. I think we've done pretty well by saying let's keep what we're doing in the minutes of the monthly meetings, come in and see if we can't get something to a state in which we pass a resolution or we'll leave it open for a next meeting. I understand why they happen, I think bigger organizations may need them. We just don't have a large organization to make workshops any better vehicle for getting things done.

Sol.Carlamere: That's a Board decision if you think there's a need for it. Some Districts start their meetings on certain dates a half hour earlier when it's budget time to discuss that so you're not out too many evenings. Most Districts don't do work agendas, some do.

Comm. Brown: Again, and this will lead into the budget comments, the way we've done it is, rather than people come in and each ask what they want and then wait to go through the workshop process, we say go put your budget together and we'll see where we are, then we'll make cuts if necessary based on where we think the scenario is to make cuts, and it works pretty well. I think it works much faster than having a workshop meeting every month from now until the end of the year. So if somebody wants to change it, now's the time to make your case, otherwise I don't see them as being helpful to our decision making and the amount of time we all have to spend here. Note, this is not meant as disrespect to you Chief, but I listened to the one workshop that we had where we discussed why we were buying the Squad, and I think sometimes things just don't work out the way the salesman tells us it's going to work out. Those workshops, you put a lot of time into it and the committee did, but I think that truck is already building a history of bad financial performance.

Chief Brezee: I would agree.

Comm. Brown: OK, I'm making my case against workshops saying they didn't further us along in one case where we spent a lot of time in that workshop, asked an awful lot of questions of you and the committee, and it wasn't that we didn't do our due diligence, it was just that there were certain unforeseen things that you can't figure out in a workshop. So as I get into the budget process I'm going to say no workshops...lets continue the way we've been doing it unless somebody wants to argue for it.

Resolutions – Renee Evans

Adm.Cl.Evans: None.

New Business – George Brown

No report.

Old Business – George Brown

- 1) Computer Room project.
- 2) What to do with Support Vehicle 869
- 3) Apparatus boom leaking - update
- 4) Roof update
- 5) Budget update

Budget Co-Commissioner – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Our time table, I'm a little confused, is our Election in April 2022?

Sol. Carlamere: I don't think there's been a change in your Election from statute. I have not seen that. Until they notify you of that, you have to work towards your February Election.

Comm. Brown: OK, because I did find a document from 2021 from Trenton saying this is now the timeline for budgets for Fire Districts, but it didn't say anything about 2022.

Sol. Carlamere: I'll check it for you and maybe give the Clerk a call, maybe Monday. But I'll check that, but as of right now, my opinion would be nothing I've seen change in the statute that pushes you off from your February date.

Comm. Brown: Because it said in the document that they wanted to align the school board elections with the fire district elections starting in 2021.

Sol. Carlamere: I haven't seen that so I can follow up on that.

Comm. Brown: We begin with the end in mind, and that is, when does the budget have to be completed by, because that effects the time table and a bunch of our decision making.

Second question is, Chief, we'd like to know as soon as you know if you're going to retire in 2022 so we can plan accordingly. There are a number of decisions that have to be made, contractually I think you have until November 1st if I read that right, but as soon as you know if you could work with us on that it would be greatly appreciated, because there have been various discussions on what we're going to do next, and we can't do that until we know what day you're going and what things need to be in place in order to make that happen. So if you could do that, that would be great.

Renee, you've got sheets out to everybody already?

Adm. Cl. Evans: Yes.

Comm. Brown: I think it should run a little smoother this year, because last year was Renee's first rodeo with the budgets. We seem to have gotten most of the Accountant issues talked about, the new Accountant that we had last year out of the way by and large he's doing his job. So the next thing relative to the budget is, we cannot replace the roof in 2021, that was the final decision by the Solicitor, so we're going to have to have the money that we're going to spend in 2021 plus the \$200,000 additional in order to get a roof. So that's going to constrain us somewhat. Most of the other issues hinge around one of the personnel decisions for next year so I don't know when we need to make those until we know, the Chief's liable to stay for the whole year, I don't want to waste people's time if that's a possibility, but there are a series of discussions had in Closed Session and in prior meetings, and if we can know when the Chief is going to retire approximately and make those decisions. There is no money in the budget for 2021 for anything we might want to do, the Fire Official, or an Officer's position or an Administrator. Those are the three things I've heard. No decisions have been made. We can't make any decisions till we figure out financially what we can do and we can't do that until we know how all the chess pieces are going to get moved around. For the nine personnel lines, certainly we can start those, such as health benefits. We know what they know generally in October what they're going to be. That usually holds us up every year while we wait for them, maybe we can get that a little earlier. I don't think there is any other intention to do anything else big. We have money in the truck reserve to still proceed with the truck purchase next year if we want to, but there are no other big ticket items other than perhaps a boom. But it looks like you have enough money in your other budget lines.

Comm. Grier: To do line item transfers?

Comm. Brown: Well there's a question on that because it says, and I have the regulation here, I didn't want to take the Solicitor's time up, you can do those in the last two months of your current fiscal year. So our current fiscal year was January, even though the budget wasn't approved till April. So I just want to make sure that we're still talking about the November and December to make those line transfers.

Chief Brezee: That's exactly what my suggestion of bringing you into the conversation was for...you would know the line item transfers.

Comm. Brown: I only know them because I looked them up this afternoon. I won't know them tomorrow if you ask me. Now we can do that which is what I thought was the question you were asking me to weigh in on, so that's it.

Budget Co-Commissioner – continued

You can get the work done sooner, but you pay the bill November, December. Actually I think you can pay the bill before then and then just do the transfer.

Sol.Carlamere: As long as you know there's a bill you can do the transfer.

Comm. Brown: You can do it anytime I guess. We've already decided what we're going to do to try and abate that.

Comm. Grier: Will we need another meeting to authorize that?

Comm. Brown: No. The dating item right now is what documentation they're going to provide showing what inspection they did of the vehicle. If it was inspected 3 months ago and it was good and broke the next day, I've got to wonder about their inspection capabilities. So that's where we're going with them. Does anybody have any other questions about the budget for right now? Start working on the items that you can that are not geared towards personnel changes. We know we're going to do the roof next year, and we'll hear what happens with the truck if we can do that this year.

Computer Services – George Brown

No report.

Fire Prevention – George Brown

Comm. Brown: I've polled all the Commissioners on what to do with Fire Prevention. That's one event around here that's near to my heart, but we decided not to do it this year. And somebody said to me one of the gems about fire prevention is kids getting up and down on the trucks, but now we have contact surfaces that we have to deal with. And the last thing I want to be contributory to is any other Covid cases in this community. So the sense of everybody was to go ahead and cancel that, so we'll try again next year.

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?

Dep.Chief Brown: No.

Comm. Brown: OK.

Public Portion – George Brown

Comm. Brown: Public Portion, any questions for the Board, state your name and address? (hearing none)

Closed Session – George Brown

Sol.Carlamere: My closed session is a legal issue, and I think the Chief should stay. It will only take about 5 minutes at 6:56pm.

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

Motion made by Comm. Flinn, seconded by Comm. Grier to come out of Closed Session at 7:03pm.

Roll call vote, all yes.

Comm. Brown: There is nothing to advise.

Sol.Carlamere: The closed session was a legal question and remains closed session.

Adjourn – George Brown

Motion made by Comm. Flinn, seconded by Comm. Grier to adjourn the meeting at 7:04pm.

Roll call vote, all yes.