

The April 8, 2023 Full Board meeting of the New Jersey Firemen's Home Board of Managers was called to order by Chairman Greci at 0935 hours followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Wilson provided the invocation.

Mr. Hull advised that public notice was provided in the official newspaper, the Star Ledger, and on the home's website.

Roll call was taken with all members of the Board present except Mr. Washer who was excused. Also in attendance were Superintendent Veras, Mr. Bell and Kevin Hagan from PPAG.

The minutes from the March 11, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting were approved.

Communications:

Mr. Hull read a letter from Chairman Greci regarding Manager absence and a letter from Helen Balala thanking the Home staff for the care of their family member.

Reports of Officers:

Secretary:

Mr. Hull advised that some managers requested a hard copy of the minutes as well as the e-mail version due to printing issues. If you would like hard copies mailed to you as well, please see Mr. Hull.

Treasurer:

Mr. Sutphen reported that budget is all in order.

Superintendent:

Mr. Veras reported the census has reached 71. We had 72 guest but one recently passed away. We continue to receive applications and a lot more have been downloaded recently. The letter from the Balala family was shared with the staff who were thankful as the guest was a "challenge".

Spring clean up of the grounds has begun and fertilizer is down. BBQs are set to begin on the 2nd or 3rd weekend in May starting with a Sussex County pig roast. BBQs have been moved to Saturdays so that Sunday could be a potential rain date.

Gym attendance continues to expand and the staff is now using the gym during off hours. The gym doors are being added to our access control system. *At this time Wells the dog pushed open the doors and entered the meeting to the group's amusement.

Legal Counsel:

Mr. Bell reported that they have been in contact with Enviro-Specs and will be going out to bid with a legal ad in the Star Ledger for the asbestos removal from the Vreeland Avenue house. At the suggestion of Manager Dutch, a title search was conducted due to property line issues with the neighboring property. Mr. Dutch will assist with meeting with the neighbor as he has relationship with him; so that we can keep him informed as we move forward and we "take the high road"

Our insurance was updated with an "active assailant" policy.

We are also monitoring the issues with our employee at the courthouse.

Contracts with Slippery Rock School in PA are being worked on for their students to come here. Clauses that were specific to Pennsylvania were removed and they would fall under New Jersey laws. Contract with K&G Career Academy also being worked on so their students can come here for training and assist with care of guests.

Chairman Greci inquired as how long to go out to bid? Mr. Bell responded that the sooner the better, as there are anticipated cost increases in June.

Chairman Greci then put forth a question to the Board that we had previously approved \$100,000 for the demolition project, if the bids come under that threshold can we just move forward at that time. Mr. Bell advised that you can move forward and if necessary make official action later under legal term "*Nunc Pro Tunc*" meaning "now for then" or retroactive.

Mr. Keyser asked about when the bids would be opened and Mr. Bell responded in May. Mr. Keyser stated we shouldn't wait until July to move on it.

Mr. Mitch followed up with that he had previously made a motion that was passed that if it was under the \$100,000 that the committee had approval to move forward and that motion passed and was not rescinded nor were any restrictions placed on it.

Chairman Greci concurred advising he wanted to keep everyone informed and not do anything behind the scenes.

Mr. Mitch asked what if the bids come in over \$100,000 to which Mr. Bell advised the bid would probably be rejected.

At this time upon a motion and second, a roll call vote was taken to approve the project moving forward if the bids received were under the \$100,000 threshold. Motion passed.

Mr. Matthews asked if the \$100,000 was for the entire demolition project and Mr. Greci responded yes.

Kevin Hagan, Lobbyist Princeton Affairs Group (PPAG):

At the request of Chairman Greci, Mr. Hagan was given the floor to provide a report to the managers to ascertain if we wished to continue his services.

Mr. Hagan introduced himself to the Board and provided a background on himself and his firm which was described as the #1 lobbying firm in New Jersey. Mr. Hagan advised that his group works not only with lobbying, but with regulations and the procurement of services. PPAG does work for a varying size of companies, some large big names down to small companies we may never heard of. Mr. Hagan advised that with regards to the Firemen's Home he has been working on the following strategy:

1. Introducing the Firemen's Home to legislative leadership and the Governor's Office
2. Monitoring and keeping the Home apprised of legislative matters that involved the fire service, nursing homes and long term care issues
3. Keeping open lines of communication with local Legislators such as Senator Bucco and his counterpart with the State Association, Matt McDermott.

Mr. Hagan continued that when he started, the relationship between the Home and the State Association was not the best and he worked hard to repair this. He added that there have been things going on that could effect the Home such as the recent lawsuit challenging the 2% funding. Mr. Hagan added his view from a political perspective of what's going on with this being an "off year" for elections with low voter turnout expected. Both house are up for re-election and the 2nd, 3rd, and 11th Districts are targets. This leads us to 2025 with a Governor's race that is shaping up to be a crowded field. Mr. Hagan and his firm have the opportunity to make the Firemen's Home known to candidates in the race.

Mr. Hagan then further described his firm as consisting of 10-12 lobbyist who work daily, so it is not just him. They are a diverse firm and are also party diverse. They have operated for 36 years and have a large staff.

Mr. Keyser commented that we are the best nursing home in New Jersey and we manage that on our own. There is currently no problems between the State and the Home. Mr. Keyser continued that we have not received any reports or correspondence from Mr. Hagan and that all the points he (Hagan) discussed, we have been doing on our own and cant' see the need for paying for a lobbyist.

Mr. Hull asked Mr. Hagan about a meeting with Home staff in Trenton that was mentioned in his report that was provided for the last full board meeting and who was at the meeting. Mr. Hagan believed this was during the budget conversations with the Governor's staff and not a meeting, but would need to refer to that report. Mr. Hull commented about past meetings in Trenton.

Chairman Greci pointed to issues that effect the State Association that also effect us such as Senator Gopal's cancer screening bill for volunteer firefighters that would have changed the 2% funding. Discussion followed about the educating of legislators staff in Trenton and that elected and political groups don't know about the Home.

Mr. Keyser followed up with that it is the job of each Manager to reach out to legislators. Mr. Hagan responded that he and his colleagues are available to those managers so dialogue can be enhanced,

Mr. Freeman commented that we belong to the Association of Nursing Homes in New Jersey and the State sends us legislative reports, so we are aware of what is going on.

Mr. Jeffer stated that when he was in college, he took a course on political pressure groups, commenting "that is us, the firefighters". Mr. Jeffer discussed that with the number of firefighters in New Jersey and their families we are too strong "to be screwed with" by the State. We have incredible power if we organized. We don't need this group (PPAG), we received no reports from them. It is time to organize our power.

Mr. Hagan responded that he has worked with firefighters and he does not disagree with Mr. Jeffer comment on the power and influence firefighters could have. He respects our decision to keep PPAG or not. Mr. Hagan continued that Associations such as the Nursing Home Association by nature are like parents and have to "love" all their children, PPAG works to strengthen your (Home) position by standing alone. We are represented to separate us from the group and make us stand out. We help you organize.

Mr. Hagan took responsibility for the lack of communication adding that he is available by cell, text or email. He is always available and added that he was here today while on vacation. Mr. Hagan apologized for the lack of communication.

Mr. Jeffer responded that it is not his job to look for info that you (Hagan) is supposed to send to me.

Mr. Hagan stated that he was not aware he supposed to do so (communicate to full board) as this was not what was asked of him when the contract was originally set up. He has been in communication with Mr. Veras.

Mr. Heflich stated his concern that no one has heard from PPAG and that our legislators know about the Firemen's Home and the fire service. The problem is we don't work together. Mr. Heflich discussed his past experiences with the legislators and nothing getting done because of firefighters not speaking up.

Mr. Mitch commented that he believed we have a need for this gentleman (Hagan) because he can get us through doors that we can't alone. Mr. Mitch added that most of us work and it is a big reach to be expected to have time to contact legislators. He asked maybe we can receive reports each meeting and to just keep us better informed.

Mr. Veras commented that two month ago he printed 10 copies of a report from Mr. Hagan and only 2 were taken.

Chairman Greci agreed with Mr. Mitch stating that we can't even get managers to get sponsors for our golf outing, how can we expect them to call up legislators. Chairman Greci added to the discussion that no decision needed to be made today, we can discuss it with the Employee and Finance committees and discuss in July what we want to do. In the past, PPAG communicated with our former Secretary (Mr. McDougal) and now Mr. Veras is the point of contact to bring info back and forth.

Mr. Apgar responded that if Mr. Veras gets reports, why can't we get copies. Mr. Apgar stated he has been here a year and this is his first time meeting or hearing from Mr. Hagan.

Mr. Veras replied that some of the information didn't seem relevant such as the bills involving smoke dampers, etc.

Mr. Matthews inquired if we had a monthly or yearly contract with PPAG.

Chairman Greci responded that it is a monthly contract that could be broken with 7 days notice. Chairman Greci added that if we decide to stay with PPAG or have no company it will be the boards decision, not his. Mr. Greci added that Kevin (Hagan) always calls him back.

Mr. Keyser stated that the managers need to speak with their legislators, ask them about bills and if they can get them through committee, will the Governor sign them? If you look at the list of bill you will see how long they have been sitting, they get reintroduced every year and go nowhere.

Mr. Mitch commented on the political make up in his area and that his representatives are in the minority and can't get stuff moved due to the party in control. He recommended having PPAG who can maybe work both sides of the aisle for us.

At this time Chairman Greci asked legal counsel for his views on the matter. Mr. Bell commented that it is good to have someone who can open doors on both side of the aisle and that we may need a firm to represent the Home and it is important to have someone devoted to our interests. Mr. Bell recommended waiting until July before making a decision. We gave Mr. Hagan our marching orders and he clearly felt the manager's displeasure.

Mr. Lugossy stated that his firm (PPAG) is the number one firm.

Mr. Heflich commented that he felt it was a poor choice of words for a gentleman looking to keep his \$5000 a month job, to comment about being here while on vacation.

Mr. Keyser commented that we are 60,000 strong and don't need a lobbyist.

Mr. Sutphen responded that there are millions of people in New Jersey.

Mr. Hull commented on the history of how we got to the point of obtaining a lobbyist. This was a result of secret meetings with an Assemblyman, bills being created that the field wasn't happy with and they ultimately voted to restructure the board of managers bringing them under the control of the State Association. Hiring the lobbyist was to defend ourselves. All of that is in the rear view mirror. We are working together now and moving forward. We received assurance that there is no bill to get rid of us. So what threats are out there, why do we need a lobbyist?

Mr. Veras responded by speaking on the recent lawsuit challenging the 2% funding by insurance companies. This raised constitutional issues and could effect us. It is good to have representation and protection for when it hits the fan.

Mr. Matthews added that we could always rehire the firm if we needed them. A comment from the floor was made "at a new price".

Mr. Wilson then spoke on the matter stating that during the time we have had the firm we received only 2 reports. We get more information from Mr. Hull and he is doing more than Mr. Hagan has done.

At this time Chairman Greci wished to move the meeting along advising that the matter will be brought back up in July.

Buildings and Grounds:

Mr. Signorello advised that he provided a written report (see attached) and that Mr. Bell gave big portion of his report addressing the asbestos removal project at the Vreeland house. Mr. Signorello advised that they are aware of the window in the museum. Mr. Signorello added that Mr. Keyser will have info on a solar project under new business.

Mr. Apgar asked about the window in the museum and can we get it done.

Mr. Greci then stated "get it done".

Mr. Apgar inquired about the televisions that were upstairs in the storage.

Mr. Veras responded that the Home buys TVs and most came from donations. They try to buy non-smart television, as smart TVs are confusing to our guests. We buy them when we can find them and have them in house to replace ones as needed.

Applications:

Mr. Freeman provided a written report from the application committee meeting held on April 4, 2023 which is attached. The report indicated 64 guest in Long Term Care and 8 in Residential Care for a total of 72 guests. Since the last meeting there have been 3 new admissions and 2 guests answered their final alarm. The next meeting for the Applications Committee is 0900 hours on Wednesday May 10, 2023 at the Home. The date was changed due to our golf outing on May 9th.

Employee Committee:

Mr. Dutch reported that nothing has come before them and there is no report today.

Finance and Budget Committee:

Mr. Hull provided a written report on the April 4, 2023 meeting of the Audit and Finance Committee which is attached. Bills for the month were reported in the amount of \$406,087.48. All revenue and expense vouchers were reviewed and found to be in order. The committee discussed working on long term planning with the Ad Hock committee as well as supporting the Ad Hock's recommendation for a joint actuarial study of the Home and the State Association finances. The next meeting for the finance committee will be at 0800 hours on Wednesday May 10, 2023 at the Home. This meeting was also moved due to the golf outing.

Insurance:

Mr. Strube reported that there have been no new claims and that he will have quotes in July for policies.

Legislative Committee:

Mr. Lugossy reported on bill S3405 which is the cancer screening bill for volunteers and the State Association worked out the funding issue. He deferred to President Ordway who commented that it has passed one committee in the Assembly.

Mr. Lugossy continued, discussing bill S3090 (the Burn-out Bill) where police and fire pension members can retire early after 20 years of service and receive half pay option. The impact on the pension system is being reviewed.

The Governor also signed an executive order that drops COVID testing for congregate care sites. Bill S304 discussed that 1/3 of nurses have quit due inadequate staffing and burnout issues. This bill addresses the nurse to patient ratios in various settings.

Mr. Lugossy thanked Mr. Hull on good job getting info and providing copies of legislative matters to board. Mr. Lugossy has kept in contact with President Ordway about legislative matters and currently everyone in Trenton is currently working on the State's Budget. The Legislature will move slow until Budget is passed. Additionally, all State legislators are up for re-election this year which may impact how they vote on matters.

Mr. Apgar had questions about the Cancer Screening bill and the wording about the firefighter being on the State Health Benefits Plan. President Ordway responded that they are attempting to take the same "baby" steps that they did with getting the career firefighter cancer bills passed.

Mr. Heflich commented that the burnout bill was created as a result of all the decisions the State (legislature) made.

Mr. Veras added that the nursing requirements Mr. Lugossy mentioned may cause some of our staff to move due to salaries.

By-laws:

Mr. Jeffer reported that the committee had a well attended meeting. He then read Article 4 Section 2 of our current By-laws which states the powers vested in the Executive Committee. Mr. Jeffer stated that this sent shivers up and down his spine. The Executive Committee making decisions over the Full Board is wrong. The committee voted to remove that entire section. This brought up the issue of the payment of bills and the time limits in doing so (Mr. Bell commented stated it is known as the Prompt Payment Act). So the discussion was as to how many Full Board meeting should there be, possibly increasing it to 6 meetings. On the months that the Full Board doesn't meet, the Executive Committee will only pay the bills. The power of the Executive Committee would be limited to budget items approved by the managers. There would be NO new business brought before the Executive Committee. This is what the By-law is proposing and Mr. Jeffer advised he will be writing it up and submit it.

Chairman Greci asked the committee to make the changes and send them to legal counsel for review so that we could have them by July.

Mr. Mitch asked if the Executive Committee had voted on matters outside of the Full Board. Debate ensued and Mr. Greci advised that yes they have.

Mr. Lugossy stated that we have a budget, we approve it and the finance committee reviews everything and operates within the budget. This is a safeguard. If there are emergencies we could be handle them by phone calls or ZOOM.

Mr. Matthews commented on the voting on budget items and that the Executive Committee hasn't voted on budget items outside of Full Board.

Mr. Keyser commented that just because it is in the budget, it still has to come to Full Board to be approved. It is not an open check book.

Mr. Dutch stated that this has always been a contention. Every Manager should be able to vote on matters so they can report to their County.

Mr. Freeman stated his history with the Executive Committee and doesn't believe they voted on anything that should have come before full board.

Mr. Hull commented that everyone should expect an Easter blizzard because he actually agrees with Mr. Dutch. Every Manager wants their voice to be heard so they can represent their county properly. Mr. Hull added about managers being "guests" at Executive Committee meetings and how he was asked to leave once and had to stand outside.

Chairman Greci advised that the committee is off to a good start.

Museum:

Mr. Hull advised that he received a box of various fire department patches from a guest in the Home and that Mr. Heflich has put together a list of items that need to be done in the museum. It was recommended that when the warmer weather arrives, we do a work detail involving managers and maybe members from each of our fire departments to clean and polish everything. Mr. Heflich elaborated that he gave everyone copy of the list and went over items that needed to be address such as the flat tires on the trucks. A copy of Mr. Heflich's report is attached.

Public Relations:

Mr. Wilson reported the committee will be meeting after today's Full Board meeting.

Ethics and Code of Conduct:

Mr. Sutphen advised some managers still need to complete their ethic disclosure forms and get them back to him.

Pension:

Chairman Greci had no report.

Inventory:

Mr. Wilson advised no report.

Golf Committee:

Chairman Greci advised that we need to be at the course by 10 AM and that if you plan on attending to notify Secretary Hull. The more managers the merrier, it is a long day. In July we will discuss if we plan on continuing the event as foursomes and hole sponsorships are down.

Mr. Apgar asked about the funds in the golf account and what is the end goal with the money.

Chairman Greci advised that Mr. Veras meets with the residents and asks them what they need. In the past we have bought furniture for downstairs in the old smoking room.

Mr. Wilson commented that we also put much needed air conditioning in the museum to preserve our artifacts that were deteriorating due to the conditions.

Mr. Veras reported that there is approximately \$70,000 currently in the account.

Mr. Apgar stated that we should do something it, it is a lot of money.

Liaison to the State Association:

Mr. Lugossy reported that he continues to speak to President Ordway by phone and they have had discussions about the cancer screening bill for volunteer firefighters. They also discussed the amount of teachers and nurses leaving their jobs resulting in some employers offering signing bonuses of \$10,000. Mr. Lugossy then joked that the rest of the conversation was a secret.

Inspections:

Mr. Signorelli advised that it will be completed before end of month and will follow up.

State Firemen's Association:

President Ordway assured that there were no secret discussion between him and Mr. Lugossy, the comment was in jest. The State is still receiving required reports. One Association will not be seated this year.

AD Hock Committee:

Mr. Wilson reported that there was a meeting on April 3rd between the committees where several main items were discussed. They are:

1. The Home having a 5-10 year plan
2. An actuarial study of both group's finances
3. The application process and denial of applications- this was addressed by Mr. Veras and staff.
4. Budget review- the State Execs wished to have it in advance with more time to review before it is voted on by us.
5. The 1 year criteria for eligibility for the Home
6. Executive Committee-persons looking to make their terms two years instead of one. It was suggested possibly same for managers and Mr. Wilson stated no way this was being brought up.
7. The possibility of travel assistance for those families who have to come great distances to visit family member in the Home. Possibly funded through local relief associations.

Mr. Wilson commented that the group is getting along good and working towards resolutions and this is a positive for both organizations.

Mr. Apgar commented on the progress and that both groups are working to help each other, which is what we should be doing.

Unfinished Business:

Mr. Keyser thanked Mr. Veras for allowing the staff to use the gym.

New Business:

Mr. Heflich commented on the lobbyist stating that for \$5000 a month if he is re-hired he must attend the four full board meetings and make arrangements for the heads of both parties (republican and democrat) to attend as well.

Mr. Keyser made a presentation about the possibility of having solar panels on the property. He reported that in 2018-19 there had been previous discussions that he was asked to look back into. He has been talking to different people and there is no committee set as of yet. We have 77 acres of a potential solar farm. This could generate revenue that will offset our budget. We would have no electric bill which totaled over \$100,000 last year. Mr. Keyser added that we could possibly get the town of Boonton involved as well. He will continue to research and have a report in July. If we need to form a committee, one can be formed then.

Chairman Greci commented that is is currently just a fact finding mission.

Payment of Bills:

Mr. Hull reported the total bills in the amount of \$406,087.48. Upon motion, a roll call vote was taken and the bills payment was approved.

Resolutions:

None.

Executive Session:

None had.

Public Participation:

None.

Good and Welfare:

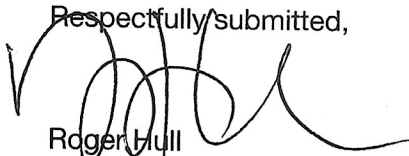
Chairman Greci wished everyone a Happy Easter.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 1113 AM

APPROVED AT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING MAY 13, 2023

Respectfully submitted,



Roger Hull
Secretary