

The January 13, 2024 Full Board meeting of the New Jersey Firemen's Home Board of Managers was called to order by Chairman Washer at 0930 hours and was followed by the pledge of allegiance. An invocation was provided by Manager Dutch.

Mr. Hull advised public notice was provided in the official newspaper, the Star Ledger.

Roll call was taken with all managers present with the exception of Mr. Jeffer and President Ordway who were excused.

The minutes from the December 9, 2023 Executive Committee meeting approved.

**Communications:**

Secretary Hull reported no communications.

**Reports of Officers:**

**Secretary:**

Mr. Hull advised that the proposed license agreement with the Rockaway Valley Regional Sewerage Authority (RVRSA) were distributed by e-mail, hard copies are available.

**Treasurer:**

Mr. Sutphen reported that the mileage reimbursement will be increasing from 65 1/2 cents to 67 cents per mile. These are set by the IRS. This increase will have a minimal impact on our budget.

**Superintendent:**

Mr. Veras reported that the Home had a COVID "outbreak" which consisted of 4 guests and 1 staff member. The outbreak was in one dorm and they got to it quickly.

The Home faired well through the recent rainstorms with no leaks or flooding. They are ready for the snow that is predicted to hit the area.

Mr. Veras spoke on a donation that was received from a West New York firefighter and presented the Managers with a sample of a custom New Jersey Firemen's Home Blanket. Mr. Veras wished to use the donation to purchase 150 of the blankets to replace the various blankets throughout the Home so they are all uniform and represent the Home. The estimated cost to the Home was \$2400. This was motioned on and was passed by the Board.

Mr. Veras then requested a meeting with our attorney, Mr Bell, Mr. Dutch and Ms Devirgilio after the full board meeting to discuss a matter involving an Employee and and resident that came to light.

**Legal Counsel:**

Mr. Bell reported that he was made aware of the incident with the staff member and guest and will be working on it with the Superintendent.

Mr. Bell reported on the license agreement that he prepared with the RVRSA that has been distributed. He advised that he learned that there may be some questions now. Mr. Bell stated the agreement is fair, reasonable and just.

Mr. Bell advised the elevator contract will be ready soon and the roof contract will be going out for bid in the next few weeks.

Mr. Wilson thanked Mr. Bell for his work on the license with the RVRSA, however he felt that the \$17,000 was too low of compensation from the RVRSA for their 50 years of being on our property.

Mr. Bell responded that the RVRSA would have a strong claim of “adverse possession” if this was brought to court. Frankly speaking, we would get “hammered” in court. This sewer serves 10 municipalities as well as the federal government. Mr. Bell felt the \$17,000 was fair based on the appraisals we received. He added that he got the RVRSA to agree to restoring the site which he described as worthless piece of property to us.

Mr Wilson expressed his personal feelings that we are getting taken advantage of and maybe we could get a minimal annual fee from the RVRSA. Mr. Wilson added that if the RVRSA took us to court, we should sue our former attorney for not doing his job all the previous years with this matter.

Mr. Apgar inquired as to the negotiations with the RVRSA as to thier initial offer to us.

Mr. Bell responded that they initially offered \$4,000 and he got them to bring it to \$17,000.

Mr. Dutch commented that the property is not worthless. We are not giving it to them, we are giving them a license to access the property. Mr. Dutch added that our former attorney did not become aware of the matter until 2015 and advised against trying to sue him. Mr. Dutch also gave a brief summary of former negotiations with the RVRSA and the difficulties the Home encountered trying to work with them.

At this time, Chairman Washer recommend a motion to vote on the license. Motions were made and the matter passed unanimously. (\*Copy of executed license attached to these minutes.)

#### **Buildings and Grounds:**

Mr. Keyser provided a written report from Maintenance Director Hodiernie listing the status of various projects. A copy is attached. Mr. Keyser added that the bed replacement project is completed, the Christmas lights are down and a new fiber optic switch is in process of being replaced.

#### **Applications:**

Mr. Freeman provided a written report from the application committee meeting held on January 9, 2024 which is attached. The report indicated 68 guest in Long Term Care and 8 in Residential Care for a total of 76 guests. Since the last meeting there have been 1 new admissions. The committee is reviewing 7 applications: one has passed away; one has a pre-admission interview to be scheduled; two were incomplete and one was deemed ineligible because of behavioral issues. The next meeting for the Applications Committee is 0900 hours on Tuesday February 6, 2024 at the Home.

Mr. Freeman presented the Board with the Applications Committee recommended new policy for admission into the Home. Qualifications for admission are a policy set by the committee and approved by the Board, not a by-law matter. The new policy will go into effect on April 1, 2024. The new policy (attached) is as follows:

- Applicant must have their qualifications from the New Jersey State Firemen’s Association (NJSFA)
- If certificate can not be found, the local relief secretary or Chief will present a statement showing the applicant had 84 months of active service.
- Applicants from a fire company or department not associated with the NJSFA must present proof of 84 months of service using the NJSFA standards for at the time of service. This must be accomplished by the Chief and Township (City or Borough) Clerk presenting a notarized statement to that effect.

- The exception will be any active firefighter injured in the line of duty will be eligible for admission into the Firemen's Home.

Mr Apgar asked if in addition to firefighter injured in line of duty, we consider adding firefighters who have an irreversible medical condition, such as a stroke.

Mr. Veras gave example of a 40 year old firefighter with MS as example of such condition. It is a policy and can be re-worded as needed.

Mr. Freeman advised it would need to be reviewed by our medical staff as it could be beyond the capabilities of what we provide.

Mr. Wilson thanked the committee for their work and moving forward with making changes. He asked if we should incorporate it as a by-law and add stronger guidelines for people we won't accept citing examples of firefighters who steal from their fire companies.

Much discussion followed with regards to the applicant must be in good standing to apply, verified by their departments. This is how the current policy is now, so anyone removed for theft or other offenses would not be in good standing. It was felt that our current policy covers being in good standing.

The board approved the committee report and policy change.

#### **Employee Committee:**

Mr. Dutch reported that they are having a meeting this afternoon with regards to the matter Mr. Veras reported on.

#### **Finance and Budget Committee:**

Mr. Hull provided a written report on the January 9, 2024 meeting of the Audit and Finance Committee which is attached. The committee reviewed revenue and expense reports as well as vouchers for the period. Bills were reported in the amount of \$558,720.32. The committee noted that one large invoice of \$29,029.86 from Med-line was for the new chairs the resident council requested and those funds will be coming from the golf account. The committee added that the elevator project will not be completed during this budget cycle and are working with the accountant to show the funds as encumbered, not reserves as the budget ends. Lastly, the committee recommended that the funds received from the RVRSA license be placed into the dedicated contributions account. The next committee meeting will be held at 8:00 AM on February 6, 2024 at the Home. The report and recommendations were approved by the board.

#### **Insurance:**

Mr. Strube reported nothing new with regards to insurance.

#### **Legislative Committee:**

Mr. Lugossy reported that two bills were signed by the Governor and they are:

- A5179/S861- Fire Life Safety Damper and Smoke Control Inspection Act
- A4125- Prohibits sale of certain Firefighting Foam

Bills on the Governor's desk awaiting approval:

- S723- NJ Domestic Workers Bill of Rights Act
- A5909/S4267- Revises workers compensation coverage for certain injuries to certain volunteer and professional public safety and law enforcement personnel

Proposed bill:

- S4185- Exemption certain volunteer first responders from coverage under unemployment compensation laws

Mr. Luggosy also reported that the Coast Guard is conducting hearings on the marine fire in Newark where two firefighters were killed. There is discussion that the Port Authority be tasked with training firefighters on these types of incidents instead of making a state law for such.

Mr. Luggosy added that a Special Study was completed on the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters that was submitted to the Governor. He noted that some present from the State Association and Mr Heflich were involved in the study.

**By-laws:**

Mr. Apgar reported on the proposed by law changes the committee recommended. Those changes were distributed to all managers to review in accordance with the proper notice as required by current by-laws. Those changes are to be voted on today. Mr. Apgar advised that the committee has received no feedback from any manager after the distribution of the changes. He then read a summary of the proposed changes (written copy attached). The changes are as follows:

-Article IV- Executive Committee

1. Remove this section
2. Throughout By-laws: replace "EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE" with "FULL BOARD" or remove as appropriate.

- Article 1- Meetings

1. Sec. 1- Regularly monthly meetings of the Board of Managers shall be held at the Home in town of Boonton NJ, on the second Saturday of each month or as scheduled at 0900 hours except for the September Meeting which will be held in Wildwood during the NJ State Firemen's Convention. Managers are required to attend 8 of the 12 meetings.

2. The October meeting shall be the reorganization meeting.

3. Section 2. Remove the entire section (Executive Committee)

- Article VI- Order of Business

1. Section 9- CHAGE TO: Twelve (12) members of the Board of Managers shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

- Application for Admissions- General Information (Part B) Page 2, # 4

Mr. Apgar reported that these changes are a policy matter, not a by-law and was reported on by Mr. Freeman under the Applications Committee report. \*Those proposed changes were previously approved under that committee report.

A motion to approve the changes was made and a roll call vote was taken with the Board unanimously voting to approve the changes.

**Museum:**

Mr. Hull thanked Mr. Heflich for working on the tires on the apparatus. Once the winter work is done by the maintenance staff, we are going to ask for them to build shevles for the wood models. Progress.

**Public Relations:**

Mr. Wilson reported that the Public Relations Committee will be meeting this afternoon.

**Ethics and Code of Conduct:**

Mr. Sutphen advised no report.

**Pension:**

Mr. Washer reported that he has spoken with Superintendent Veras and they are setting up a meeting with Mr. Klien.

**Inventory:**

Mr. Wilson reported that Mr. Veras and his employees have been on top of this and had nothing to add.

**Golf Committee:**

Mr. Signorello advised that the Committee is working on a "plan B" for the golf outing, possibly having it at a local golf course with the attendees coming back to the Home afterwards. They are seeing if this is possible, if not they discussed a possible raffle.

**Liaison to the State Association:**

Mr. Hull advised he had no report.

**Inspections:**

Mr. Freeman reported that he completed the inspection with Mr. Cunningham and found no deficiencies.

**State Firemen's Association:**

President Ordway was excused, Vice President Hankins was present and given the opportunity to report on the State's behalf. Mr. Hankins reported that there has been some confusion with the State's Health Care reimbursement program. The State pays for medical care, they do not pay for "rent" at assisted living facilities. It is the medical aspect only. Mr. Hankins also reported on the "paperwork", advising the officers listings are due, treasurer reports are due and everything is to be done online. Instructions are also on line.

**Unfinished Business:**

**Long Term Planning**

Mr. Sutphen reported that the committee had meet and they are looking at items such as generators, roofs, driveways and parking areas with regards to future planning (replacement schedules etc.). Mr. Sutphen asked if anybody thinks of anything to add to the list, contact him. The committee also received an approximate quote of \$3000- \$5000 for an actuary study from PBGC Actuaries. Motion and roll call to approve \$3000-\$5000 for the study were approved.

**New Business:**

Mr. Keyser brought up placing the funds from the license with the RVRSA into the dedicated funds account. This was already approved under the finance and budget committee report.

**Payment of Bills:**

Mr. Hull reported the total bills in the amount of \$558,720.32. Upon motion, a roll call vote was taken and the bills payment was approved.

**Motions and Resolutions:**

None.

**Public Participation:**

Mr. Handlin, Hudson County Executive Committeeman requested a bills list. He added that he had submitted an OPRA request and has not received them. He requested the Home catch up on his request from July.

Mr. Veras responded that he will get the information to Mr. Handlin and due to a software migration he did not have access to the data until recently. The information will be provided.

**Executive Session:**

None had.

**Good and Welfare:**

Mr. Wilson advised that he spoke to Ken Silvestri and checked on him with the flooding in his area. Ken is ok and doing good. He sends his regards to the board.

Mr. Veras reported that he checked on Mr. Jeffer who is home doing rehab. Pete has three broken vertebrae in his neck.

**Adjournment:**

Meeting was adjourned at 1017 hours.

Respectfully submitted,



Roger Hull  
Secretary