

The July 15, 2023 Full Board meeting of the New Jersey Firemen's Home Board of Managers was called to order by Chairman Greci at 0930 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. Jeffer who was excused. Also in attendance were President Ordway, Superintendent Veras, and Mr. Bell.

The minutes from the June 10, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting were approved with corrections being noted by Mr. Wilson to page 7 line 17 of the verbatim minutes where Mr. Bell was incorrectly referenced as "Mr. Ward" (previous solicitor).

At this time Chairman Greci requested the meeting go out of order from the agenda so a guest could speak on an upcoming drill at the Firemen's Home.

Steve O'Gorman from New Jersey Natural Gas (NJNG) who is also an Elizabeth Firefighter spoke on a full scale joint exercise that will be taking place at the Home on July 23, 2023. The drill will involve the Boonton Fire Department, Police Department and various stake holders and will be a simulated migration of gas into the facility, victim removal and relocation. The drill will end with a picnic hosted by the gas company. Mr. O'Gorman added that NJNG offers training to fire departments and will do outreach.

Mr. Veras commented that this drill had been in planning since 2019 and was put on hold due to the COVID pandemic.

Mr. Signorello added how he has known Mr. O'Gorman for 25 years.

The meeting then went back in order of the agenda.

Communications:

Memorandum from Mr. Bell dated 7/6/2023 on the RVRSA and an activity report from Princeton Public Affairs Group (PPAG) were distributed.

Reports of Officers:

Secretary:

Mr. Hull advised that he had no report.

Treasurer:

Mr. Sutphen reported that the 2022-23 budget period has completed. The surplus left over is to make up for the loss of room and board fees and it will be used until it runs out. Mr. Sutphen added that we will be transferring \$4,000,000 from account #****1145 to a new Certificate of Deposit, account #***5478, at a rate of 5% for a term of 9 months. The signers on this account will be Secretary Roger Hull and Treasurer Tom Sutphen.

Superintendent:

Mr. Veras reported that today was a our annual memorial service (program attached) and Prince will be making lunch for the Managers who are attending. BBQ season is going good and some fire departments have asked us for guest "wish lists" items that they could purchase such as patio umbrellas. The Home held a faculty BBQ on July 7th as part of staff enrichment that included a dunk tank and it was enjoyed by the guests and the staff. Raises for the staff have gone back to merit based raises. During the past two years due to COVID and the economy we had hefty raises, we are now back to regular merit based increases.

Legal Counsel:

Before Mr. Bell's report, Chairman Greci commented on the great article about Mr. Bell's work (*re-opening of a cold case file into a 1946 mass lynching) that was distributed to the managers.

Mr. Bell reported on his memo regarding the Rockaway Valley Regional Sewerage Authority (RVRSA). The RSRVA has been operating on our property since the 1970s. They service multiple municipalities and equipment including a syphon chamber and transmission lines that are on our grounds. It is unknown exactly when these were installed on our grounds. If there was an agreement, it was never memorialized. The disagreement between us and the RSRVA has been lingering for years. During that time there was discussion of an easement or a license to the RSRVA. At one point the RVRSA threatened condemnation of our property. The main issue is the equipment is on our property and they need to access it. In the past there was discussion of a license. In 2019 an appraisal was sought and was estimated at \$25-30,000.

Mr. Bell knows the lawyers and the RVRSA and has a working relationship with them. Mr. Bell recommended a license instead of an easement, as an easement is permanent. Additionally a legal issue we might face is called "adverse possession" as they have been operating here since approximately 1972. It is recommended a committee be formed to consider a license which in we may be able to negotiate lower sewer costs for the Firemen's Home. The area of our property is near impossible to get to with the exception of the RVRSA.

Mr. Strube agreed with Mr. Bell on doing a license and try to lower our sewer cost. Mr. Strube recommended the license include that they maintain the access road and that a hold harmless agreement is included.

Mr. Bell responded that a hold harmless and indemnification would included.

Mr. Ordway asked if the RSRVA had wanted more property as he believed that they wanted to take 5 acres from the Home. Mr. Strube responded that they did, but during talks it was negotiated to 1.6 acres (*never memorialized or formal agreement). Mr. Strube added that 90% of the managers have never been down there.

At this time Mr. Dutch spoke on the matter and provided a brief history of the disagreement between the Home and RVRSA. Mr. Dutch reported that he had been part of the discussion with the RVRSA for many years and they are not too honorable or honest. Mr. Dutch advised that he has been involved since approximately 2000 in these discussion. The RSRVA was asked about free sewerage for the Home and they said no. They came to the Home with a print which should be here at the Home that showed plans to take 3 acres. The plans had another transmission line through our property, a parking area with 12" of asphalt. The Home had a survey done to show our property lines, and the RVRSA went out and placed wooden stakes around the area claiming it was their "survey" until we showed them otherwise. Mr. Dutch again called them less than honorable.

Mr. Dutch continued, stating that they RVRSA claims on how they access the property is not accurate. The only way down there is by ATV. Monroe Street is not driveable and the water department has key to the gate. At one point they were cutting grass down there, but that was on our property. We have a fence down there, but our property line is actually 15 feet past the fence. We ran into issues in the past with the residents who thought the fence was the property line and placed steel sheds and pool houses on our property. Those have been settled and agreements have been made with those homeowners. The RVRSA claim that they need to go through our property to get to their equipment is not true. The two 36 inch mains that they put across Monroe Street onto our property were done so without permits. Due to this

storm water took out an old railroad bed that had been their since the 1800s. The RVRSA offered to give us \$100,000 for the damages as we are cut off from our own property now. Mr. Dutch concluded by joking that there must be a \$100,000 lying around here somewhere.

Mr. Sutphen motioned that a committee be formed as recommended by Mr. Bell. Chairman Greci formed a committee consisting of the Full Board Officers, Mr. Dutch, Mr. Veras, and Mr. Bell.

Mr. Keyser than inquired with Mr. Bell the status of the demolition project fo the Vreeland House. Mr. Veras responded that the asbestos removal is done; the water is disconnected; the gas is disconnected; the Historical Commission has given us the green light; permits are being signed off on and the electric company estimates 1 to 2 weeks to disconnect.

Mr. Keyser then asked Mr. Bell about the status of our cannibas policy. Mr. Bell responded that it is in limbo.

Buildings and Grounds:

Mr. Signorello provided a written report from Maintenance Director Tom Hodierene (see attached) which had a list of updates on current projects. Mr. Signorello added that the Buildings and Grounds committee met this morning and walked through the property. Chairman Greci asked if there were any pressing issues and Mr. Signorello stated that there were nothing other than what Mr. Keyser had already asked about the demo project. Mr. Signorello asked Mr. Bell if time was an issue with the RVRSA and should we move quickly and not drag our feet. Mr. Bell responded that we should move on the matter as we dragged our feet too long.

Applications:

Mr. Freeman provided a written report which is attached. He reported that the committee met on July 11th and that the census as of June 30, 2023 was 77 guests. Since last meeting there were two new admissions and no guests passed away. The next meeting of the applications committee will be 9:00 AM Tuesday August 8, 2023 at the Home. Mr. Freeman added that since the report was compiled, 2 more guests were admitted bringing our total to 79 which is close to our budgeted total of 80.

Employee Committee:

Mr. Dutch reported that the maintenance crew is back to “full snuff”

Finance and Budget Committee:

Mr. Freeman provided a written report on the July 11, 2023 meeting of the Audit and Finance Committee which is attached. Bills for the month were reported in the amount of \$444,028.03. All revenue and expense vouchers were reviewed and found to be in order. During the meeting, Mr. Veras indicated that reviews and raises were complete. The raises ranged from 2-5% based solely on performance, attendance and merit. The next meeting of the finance committee will be at 8:00AM on Tuesday August 8, 2023 at the Home.

Insurance:

Mr. Strube reported that he sought out quotes as requested and he thanked Mr. Veras for his assistance. Mr. Strube recommended we stay with our current insurance provider, Hughes Palmer. Mr. Strube elaborated that he contacted the company Mr. Greci mentioned at our golf outing and they did not want anything to do with it. He contacted private insurers such as Selective and no one wants this type of business. Mr. Strube added that Hughes Palmer does the most for us without going to outside markets.

Chairman Greci asked if it is the committee recommendation to stay with what we have.

Mr. Strube responded that we stay with what we have and vote at the re-organization meeting.

Chairman Greci thanked the committee.

Legislative Committee:

Mr. Lugossy reported that one of the most important issues in the State was the early detection of cancer and testing for firefighters. Mr. Lugossy advised that this is being addressed federally and Mr. Ordway and Mr. Hankins met with US Congressman Gottheimer to get this passed not only in New Jersey but Nationwide. The New Jersey bills being worked on for cancer screening are S3405 and A5801.

Mr. Luggosy then reported on bill A757 which provides a \$2000 state income tax deduction for volunteer firefighters. Mr. Ordway followed up advising that it is NOT a net \$2000 deduction and explained how the deduction would work. Mr. Ordway also explained that to be eligible the volunteer would have to meet 60% of calls or if the department does shift work, they would have to do over 400 hours. The bill includes a \$10,000 fine if anyone is caught committing fraud.

Mr. Lugossy thanked Secretary Hull for getting the information out to the managers from the legislative committee and PPAG. Mr. Luggosy concluded that currently there are a lot of bills sitting on the Governor's desk for his signature or not.

By-laws:

Mr. Wilson advised that he had spoken to Mr. Jeffer and to date nothing is done in writing. He is not sure the changes will be done by October as requested.

Mr. Keyser asked will we have something for September's meeting?

Mr. Wilson responded "hopefully".

Museum:

Mr. Hull advised that he had no formal report. Mr. Heflich added that the museum needs to be cleaned and the trucks dusted. If this is not part of our cleaning crews duty, we should hire a company to do so. Mr. Heflich added that we have waited too long for the flat tires to be fixed. We need to repair them or jack the trucks off the ground. Mr. Wilson advised that Mr. Washer had been working with a tire company.

Public Relations:

Mr. Wilson reported the committee purchased a different style can coozie for the convention give away. 1000 are here in Mr. Veras' office that managers can take some for their caucuses. The other 4000 are at the State Office as they will transport them to Wildwood for us. Mr. Washer asked if we received the correct one as he "tested" it and a bottle barely fit. The new coozies are for the tall slender style cans.

Ethics and Code of Conduct:

Mr. Sutphen advised no report.

Pension:

Chairman Greci advised nothing to report at this time.

Inventory:

Mr. Veras and Mr. Wilson reported that everything was present and accounted for.

Golf Committee:

Chairman Greci recommended that we no longer do the golf outing as it is a lot of work for the few managers that do it. We will discuss it further in September if we will have it.

Liaison to the State Association:

Mr. Lugossy reported that he did not have his monthly calls with Mr. Ordway, but reported that we are ok and there are no problems.

AD Hock Committee:

Mr. Wilson reported that the committee had three points to bring back to the full board as a result of their meetings.

The first item was that the managers terms be reduced from 4 years to 2 years. The State wished to increase their terms from 1 year to 2 years. Mr. Wilson felt that we should leave our side alone as it involves changing statute and we should stay with 4 year terms for managers. Mr. Keyser commented that he is newer manager and that it takes a few years to learn about the place and get acclimated. He agreed with keeping 4 year terms. Chairman Greci asked for a show of hands with regards to keeping 4 year term. All managers raised hands, unanimously.

The second item the committee wished to discuss was the eligibility to enter the Home. Currently it is 1 year of service. The committee does not know who would address this such as the by-law committee and what is the recommendation: passing fire school?, having a firefighter ID#?, 2 years of service?

Mr. Keyser commented that he thought the by-law committee was going to address this.

Mr. Signorello responded that they did look at it and felt possibly it should be firefighter 1 graduate with State ID#.

Mr. Keyser added that everyone has their opinions, the committee must make a recommendation.

Mr. Heflich commented that everyone know his opinion on the matter. There are a lot of guys with 1 year out there, are they gonna bump someone with 40 years?

Mr. Strube commented that we do need a guideline, but we are not being "overrun" with applications.

Mr. Wilson added that a concern was the State changing membership to being able to join at age 57.

Mr. Ordway responded that the age change has no bearing on the Home. You currently do not have to be member of Association to enter the Home. If your town allows someone to join at age 70 or even 90 they can.

Mr. Keyser then read page 2 of our by-laws where it states "minimum of one year service". Again stating the by law committee needs to look at it.

Chairman Greci asked Mr. Wilson when they want this done, and Mr. Wilson advised ASAP now that we know where to go with it (By-laws Committee)

Mr. Delaurentis commented that the By-laws committee got a lot done that just needs to be finalized.

Mr. Signorello advised that he will meet with Mr. Wilson to put "the train back on track."

Mr. Freeman then added that if we change the By-laws this could effect any study that we are looking to do with the proposed resolution.

Mr. Wilson then spoke on the third item which was a resolution that was discussed at length by the committee with regards to conducting a joint actuarial study. They felt it should be done together and no need for two. We should get started so we can see what comes in the future of us and the State with regards to benefits and budgets. The ad hock committee, which consists of members from the State Association, agree we need a study.

Mr. Keyser inquired if the State Association agreed to paying 50% of the study?

Mr. Ordway responded that it had not come before them this resolution may be premature. Do the study for you (Home) just in case and then can do joint if approved. The resolution is wrong as the State has no talked about it.

Mr. Apgar added that the committee did discuss a study but no where did we discuss presenting a resolution. The state meets next month. The resolution is out of line.

Mr. Dutch discussed the need for planning and that the Home used to have 5 year plan that we are way past.

Mr. Mitch commented that we are capable of voting. Nothing happens for years when things get tabled.

Inspections:

Mr. Luggosy deferred to Mr. Apgar for the report. Mr. Apgar advised they conducted the inspection and also had time to "chat" with residents and employees. Few items found were forwarded to Mr. Veras. Mr. Apgar advised that the place is very clean and they were very impressed.

State Firemen's Association:

President Ordway reported that they are moving forward with the convention. If the Home has an annual report that they want included in caucus packets to get them to State Secretary Pelaia this week. President Ordway continued that the convention will be a two day convention with registration being 7 to 11 each day. On Friday meeting will start at 11 with the memorial then go into the meeting. On Saturday it will be voting.

Mr. Dutch advised that Mr. Hankins recently spoke at his county and asked about workshops being conducted during the convention weekend. Mr. Ordway responded that there will be workshops held on Saturday. Mr. Keyser commented that the workshops are very informative.

Mr. Signorello added that the Union County caucus had to change location to a more adequate facility. Mr. Ordway advised that due to a complaint, locations must be ADA compliant.

Unfinished Business:

At this time, Chairman Greci asked our lobbyist, Kevin Hagan from PPAG to speak and give a brief report. Mr. Hagan reported that June 30th the State just finished their budget cycle in Trenton. A new 54 billion dollar budget was approved after much debate on spending items and rebates. Good news, on July 1st Senator Oroho stepped down as minority leader and was replaced by Senator Bucco. This is important to the Home. We are entering into the "quiet" time in Trenton. Everyone in the legislature is up for re-election. Murphy is entering into the last 2 years of his term, so potential gubernatorial candidates will be emerging. Mr. Hagan added that reports are emailed regularly from PPAG to Mr. Veras and the Board Secretary. A meeting is scheduled for 2 weeks with the Department of Health, Mr. Veras and the Director of Nursing to discuss potential issues that may pertain to the Home.

Mr. Veras commented on Mr. Hagan's report that Mr. Luggosy had forwarded him the name of contact at Department of Health and we are meeting with the deputy director. It is important to have a voice.

Mr. Keyser then reported that he had received a second, smaller proposal for a potential solar project.

Mr. Keyser also asked if we were voting on keeping the lobbyist our not. It was discussed in April that we would be voting today.

Mr. Freeman commented to Mr. Keyser about the solar project and that we are not eligible for some of the rebates as we are a State organization, not a non-profit.

Mr. Keyser again asked if we are voting to keep the lobbyist of not.

Mr. Apgar asked Mr. Bell's opinion on the lobbyist.

Mr. Bell opined that having someone to open doors is important.

Mr. Heflich then commented on the \$5000 a month we spend. He added that we have 6-7 volunteer firefighters in the legislature who take care of the career guys not the volunteers, citing the cancer screen bill as an example.

A roll call vote was taken with regards to continuing to retain our lobbyist PPAG until the October re-organization meeting. 11 to 9 in favor of keeping lobbyist until October.

New Business:

Chairman Greci brought up the 125th Anniversary of the Home which was this year.

Mr. Freeman commented that these type of events take years of planning and we do not have enough time to do it.

Consensus from the floor was to worry about the 150th Anniversary.

Mr. Strube then asked the Secretary about an annual report from the Home for the upcoming caucuses. Mr. Hull commented that bullet points had been sent to Managers with highlights of past year. They were also sent to Mr. Wilson for the Exempt Convention. They will be re-sent today so Managers can add items they feel are important. Please reply ASAP so report can be submitted to Mr. Pelaia. Mr. Ordway added that only report from Home should be sent for inclusion into the caucus packets. There were issues with multiple reports for individual counties which resulted in a page being missing. So please only send one report to Mr. Pelaia.

Mr. Matthews reported on the tours that will take place for spouses during our meeting in Wildwood. The distillery will be charged per person so we need a head count. The other part of the tour is minimum of 20 regardless of how many spouses show up. A complimentary cocktail is part of the event and a menu will be forthcoming.

Mr. Signorello inquired if we have always held the memorial service in July as it is a busy time for managers. Mr. Freeman responded that we discussed moving it once before, but this time of year is better for travel for older people.

Payment of Bills:

Mr. Hull reported the total bills in the amount of \$444,028.03. Upon motion, a roll call vote was taken and the bills payment was approved.

Resolutions:

Chairman Greci presented Resolution 02-2023 (Agreement between NJ Firemen's Home and NJ State Association to Contract Actuarial Service for the Future, Growth, Planning and Development)

Mr. Hull motioned to table the resolution. Motion seconded and roll call voted taken. 18-2 in favor of tabling the resolution.

Public Participation:

No one from the public present wished to speak

Executive Session:

None had.

Good and Welfare:

Mr. Dutch advised that after the meeting in August he will have the Home's ATV available for any manager who wishes to tour the remote areas of the property, particularly the location in dispute with the RVRSA. He suggested wearing old clothes.

An update on Mr. Jeffer's brother was given as well as Mr. Strube's wife.

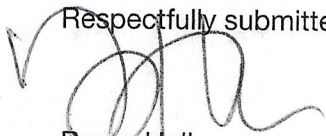
Mr. Mitch inquired about the turn out of participants in the golf outing. Mr. Veras advised that it has been kind of "flat". Mr. Veras added that if we continue, we may have to move the date due to new superintendent at the golf course. Mr. Greci added that the costs keep going up; sponsors are where we make our money and it is a lot of work for 2-3 people.

Mr. Hull asked the managers if receiving the minutes and attachments electronically were working out ok. Some managers had requested hard copies mailed out and if you would like hard copies mailed as well, see the Secretary after the meeting to be added to that list.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 1059 AM

Respectfully submitted,



Roger Hull
Secretary

- **APPROVED AT THE AUGUST 12, 2023 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**