

The May 13, 2023 Executive Board meeting of the New Jersey Firemen's Home Board of Managers was called to order by Vice- Chairman Jeffer at 0900 hours followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Jeffer also 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 Executive Board present except Mr. Wilson and Mr. Washer who were excused. Also in attendance were Managers Dutch, Freeman, DeLaurentis, Heflich, Lugossy, Miller, Keyser, Silvestri, Superintendent Veras, Mr. Bell and President Ordway.

The minutes from the April 8, 2023 Full Board Meeting were approved.

Communications:

Mr. Hull read cards and emails from the Sargeant and Vaillancourt families thanking the Home for the care of their family members; a thank you card from Manager Freeman for the basket he received after suffering an injury; and a packet from the Core Development Group regarding solar panels was distributed for informational purposes.

Reports of Officers:

Chairman:

Mr Jeffer had no report.

Secretary:

Mr. Hull advised that he had no further report.

Treasurer:

Mr. Sutphen reported that there is 10 months left in the budget, everything is on track and there will be no problem with paying bills for the rest of the year.

Superintendent:

Mr. Veras reported that today was a big day as it was our first BBQ of the season. The much anticipated Sussex County Pig Roast will be this afternoon. Mr.Veras added that everything else is good. There is no COVID in the building. There is no more masks needed and that it is a great day at the Firemen's Home.

Legal Counsel:

Mr. Bell reported that it has been a busy couple of weeks with the demolition project at Vreeland Avenue. Seven different applicants submitted proposals and a pre-construction meeting was held at the site. Bids ranged from \$31,999 up to \$78,000. Our environmental experts are reviewing the low bidder's credentials to make sure there are no impediments and that they also comply with items such as prevailing wages. Once approved the contract will be awarded in the amount of \$31,999. Through the efforts of Mr. Veras and Tom Hodiern we have met with the neighbor and there are no anticipated issues with the neighbor and this project. We are happy with the selection and have worked with him in the past. Notice will be provided to the State within 10 days and the asbestos removal project can be completed in 21 days after the bid award.

Mr. Sutphen asked if this amount was just for the asbestos removal and Mr. Bell responded in the affirmative, \$31,999 is just for the asbestos portion of the project.

Buildings and Grounds:

Mr. Signorello advised that he will forward a written report on projects by e-mail to the secretary (copy attached). The committee met this morning and the big topic was the asbestos removal that Mr. Bell addressed. Mr. Signorello added that Mr. Keyser will have some information on a potential solar panel project that will be presented under new business. The window in the museum has finally been repaired, but the crew didn't clean up.

Applications:

Mr. Freeman provided a written report from the application committee meeting held on May 10, 2023 which is attached. The report indicated 66 guest in Long Term Care and 8 in Residential Care for a total of 74 guests. Since the last meeting there have been 3 new admissions and 1 guest answered their final alarm. The committee is reviewing 4 applications- one was beyond the scope of our care, 2 were sent back for more information, and 1 will be admitted when completed with rehab. The next meeting for the Applications Committee is 0900 hours on Tuesday June 6, 2023 at the Home.

Mr. Veras asked that Mr. Bruining's first name be corrected on the census report.

Mr. Miller advised that he was present at the meeting. The report incorrectly had him as excused. Mr. Freeman advised he would correct.

Employee Committee:

Mr. Dutch reported that he has spoken with Mr. Veras and there are no employee problems at this time.

Finance and Budget Committee:

Mr. Hull provided a written report on the May 10, 2023 meeting of the Audit and Finance Committee which is attached. Bills for the month were reported in the amount of \$448,012.01. All revenue and expense vouchers were reviewed and found to be in order. The committee had a lengthy discussion on two invoices from our attorney, Mr Bell. The invoices totaled \$45,000.00. The committee found the invoices to be very detailed for the work performed, but due to the amount referred it to Chairman Greci to confirm what is beyond the agreed contract of "routine". Also, due to the dollar amount, the committee felt ALL the Managers should be made aware and that invoices are available for review. Mr. Bell's contract was also reviewed by the committee chair, Mr. Hull. The work performed that was beyond routine business was the asbestos/ demolition project of the Vreeland Avenue House and the much needed review and updating of our policy manual. It was noted that the bill was for an approximate six month period and contained Mr. Bell's monthly retainer (totaling \$18,000 of the bill). Mr. Hull, Mr. Veras, and Chairman Greci met this morning and discussed the invoices. The committee recommends paying the invoices, but again, wanted the managers to be aware so there is complete transparency.

The next meeting for the finance committee will be at 0800 hours on Tuesday June 6, 2023 at the Home

Insurance:

Mr. Strube was not present and Mr. Veras reported that the policies are up for renewal and they are being updated with minor additions such as active shooter incident. Mr. Veras advised that they are working with our agent and are shopping around. Mr. Veras added that some companies do not want to touch nursing homes or the historical nature of our building. Mr. Veras elaborated on the need for proper coverage for our facility.

Mr. Greci questioned why we are going through a agent and Mr. Veras advised that he was not sure you can just go direct. Mr. Greci inquired about our current agent. Mr. Veras responded that we are looking at four big policies through them. Mr. Greci followed up that

we should consider using someone who sponsors us, that they should have the courtesy to do it. Mr. Veras advised he had no comment on that.

Mr. Keyser inquired if Hartford was the only company to bid because we are historic in nature. Mr. Veras advised that they are the only ones who came back at this time that cover the uniqueness of our building and the artifacts in the museum.

Legislative Committee:

Mr. Lugossy reported that on May 8th, Governor Murphy signed into law the Healthcare Heroes Violence Prevention Act. This makes it a crime to threaten or assault a health care worker or volunteer in the performance of their duties.

Mr. Lugossy reported that bill S3090 allows Police and Fire Pension members to retire with 20 years of service is currently on the Governor's desk.

Mr. Lugossy added that a new bill has been introduced: A5275 which allows for municipal government to have a Fire Department Chaplain. Municipalities would decide if they would receive a salary or benefits. This mirrors what had been established for Police Chaplains.

With regards to the Governor's 2024 budget, Mr. Lugossy reported that \$400,000 has been allocated for the Fallen Fighters Memorial in Allentown. This was sponsored by Senator Gopal. Additionally, \$10,000,000 from the American Rescue Plan has been allocated for the Firefighter Grant program which goes for departments in need of gear, sanitizing equipment, hoods, cleaning of gear, hoods, etc.

Mr. Lugossy also added that the COVID 19 mask mandate has been lifted.

By-laws:

Mr. Jeffer reported that they are working on changes. They are 100 years old and there is no reason to have two executive committees. The reason for this committee (executive board) is to approve the bills. If the treasurer certifies the bills are in accordance with our approved budget, why do we need to meet to just pay the bills. This executive board has no power and there is not need for it. With modern technology with communications, we don't need to meet every month. This is what the committee is working on recommending.

Museum:

Mr. Hull advised that Mr. Dutch has been in contact with an individual from the Pleasantville Fire Department who wishes to donate a number of hand carved wooded replicas of their antique trucks. Pictures were provided (attached). The window in the museum has been repaired. Last year we accepted an antique bugle and brought the donors to the meeting to thank them on record. We also did a press release in two of the fire news newspapers and social media for receiving the item. They contacted a member of their department requesting the bugle back as they felt they weren't thanked publicly enough. Mr. Veras will handle the return of the item.

Public Relations:

Mr. Wilson was excused absent. Mr. Hull advised that a report was not provided by Mr. Wilson, but the Firemen Home "post it" note pads have been received.

Ethics and Code of Conduct:

Mr. Sutphen advised that he had no report.

Pension:

Mr. Greci had no report.

Inventory:

Mr. Wilson was excused absent, no report.

Golf Committee:

Mr. Greci thanked all the managers that attended the event and requested that Mr. Veras send out a message thanking the Home Staff members that assisted. Mr. Greci reported that we had 160 golfers and raised approximately \$10,000. We have close to \$80,000 in the golf fund to be used for the benefit of the guests. Mr. Veras has met with the Resident's Council and they are discussing new chairs and couches for the auditorium area.

Liaison to the State Association:

Mr. Lugossy reported that he has had conversations with Mr. Ordway and everything is going well.

Inspections:

Mr. Mitch was not present but had submitted a written report to Mr. Hull which was read (attached). The inspection was conducted on May 11th at 1100 hours. Two minor items were found which were peeling ceiling paint which could indicate a water leak and a cable support in the laundry room. The reported added that both the maintenance and nursing staff are doing an exceptional job.

State Firemen's Association:

President Ordway advised that on May 1st the funds were sent to the Home. On Monday (May 15) the money will be going out to Local Associations. "Things are moving along".

AD Hock Committee:

Mr. Wilson was excused absent and there was no report. Mr. Apgar added that the committee has a meeting coming up on June 13th.

Mr. Freeman asked if the Ad Hock Committee and the Liaison to the State Association Committee are redundant. Mr. Greci responded that they are not as they each have different assignments.

Unfinished Business:

Mr. Keyser advised that he received a packet for potential solar farm on our property. There are a couple of ways we can go with it and we need to put together a committee. Mr. Apgar and Washer have previously volunteered, does anyone else wish to be on the committee? Mr. Keyser reported that he has already met with Senator Bucco and talked about the idea.

Mr. Jeffer interjected that this board will not be setting a committee as it has no authority to do so.

Mr. Signorello added that the potential solar project was discussed by buildings and grounds committee and with the Superintendent. We want to move forward but need to know are we allowed to do it here.

Mr. Veras advised that he had given the proposal to the auditor and a big part of the financial tax advantage, we are not eligible for as we don't file taxes. That's approximately \$600,000 we can't take advantage of. The power certificates that we can sell in open market, who is going to buy them? It is not a given, these are some big questions.

Mr. Keyser spoke with the solar consultant about those same questions adding that once we have a committee we can meet with auditor and attorney.

Mr. Veras added that when we actually start getting return on investment, the panels are past two thirds of their useful life.

Mr. Signorello commented we need to find out if "the juice is worth the squeeze".

Mr. Greci suggested that the buildings and grounds committee form a sub-committee under them for the solar project.

Mr. Freeman asked didn't we look into this 6 or 7 years ago?

Mr. Dutch commented that it was longer than that, Manager Tom Miserendino had looked into a long time ago.

Mr. Greci commented that Tom Miserendino looked into then Manager Paul McDougall was asked to look into again but he failed to get re-elected, so now Mr. Keyser was asked to look into it. If someone one wants to take the time to research something and run with getting information that should be no problem, it is their time.

Mr. Signorello advised that we should get the information and he appointed a sub-committee under buildings and grounds with Mr. Keyser, Mr. Apgar and Mr. Washer.

Mr. Jeffer advised that it must come to the full board.

New Business:

Mr. Sutphen suggested that based on rumblings in the State we should consider looking into single rooms. It is a good idea for long term planning to start thinking about a possible addition. Heaven forbid we are forced to single guests per room and have to ask people to leave the Home.

Mr. Keyser stated he agreed with Mr. Sutphen and we need to look into long term planning. We need to get the State Association involved and start now.

Mr. Jeffer interjected again that a committee must come from the Full Board. We can think about what ever we want, but decisions to move will come from Full Board, not this one.

Mr. Sutphen agreed stating that he wanted to put it out so all the managers can read it in the minutes and begin a discussion.

Mr. Freeman commented that if we had single rooms during COVID we would have had half the deaths we had. Mr. Veras concurred.

Mr. Greci stated it was a great idea and suggested a committee be formed at the next re-organization meeting since elections are upon us and we don't know what changes may occur.

Payment of Bills:

Mr. Hull reported the total bills in the amount of \$448,012.01. Mr. Hull commented that approximately \$100,000 of that amount is for our State Health Benefits. Upon motion, a roll call vote was taken and the bills payment was approved. (*Note- Mr Apgar has stepped out of the meeting and missed the vote.)

Resolutions:

None.

Executive Session:

None had.

Public Participation:

Rich Otterbein, Essex County Committeeman, had a question about the Applications Committee report where it was stated one applicant was denied because they were beyond the scope of the facility and what that meant. Mr. Jeffer responded that we don't have the facility to care for them, we are not equipped to do so.

Mr. Veras cautiously stated that due to the safety of the staff and residents, some applicants, once evaluated by our medical and psychiatric staff, require care that is beyond what we can offer. We are not a psychiatric unit and have no authority to restrain violent guests. We do not have orderlies to protect the staff and others.

Mr. Otterbein followed up asking if they could be placed somewhere such as another facility and be re-evaluated at a later time if for example they are medicated. Mr. Veras responded

yes. Mr. Otterbein asked if the applicants are aware they can re-apply and Mr. Veras again stated yes and we have a process with our social workers.

Mr. Otterbein then asked about comments Mr. Sutphen made with regards to long term planning and the possibility of regulations limiting occupancy to one guest per room. Mr. Otterbein asked Mr. Veras in the discussion he has been having with various agencies and organizations do we know if this is something that is 1 month, 1 year ,or 5 years away?

Mr. Veras advised that the suggestion of single guest per room began in approximately 2017-18. All new facilities built can only be one guest per room. Mr. Otterbein asked that the State would mandate this and discussion about current facilities being retro-fitted or grandfather ensued. Mr. Veras asked rhetorically what liability do we open ourselves up to if we are "grandfathered" and allow 4 guest to continue to share a bathroom. Mr. Otterbein stated that it was good long term planning. Mr. Veras commented further about when the Feds eventually become involved because of medicare is when push comes to shove.

Good and Welfare:

Mr. Sutphen asked Mr. Veras if a check was received from Mr. Mitch. Mr. Veras advised that it was a golf sponsorship not a general donation.

Mr. Hull advised he was glad to see Mr. Freeman present after his accident and then reported on Mr. Wilson's medical incident that occurred at the golf event. Update on Glenn was provided and everyone wished him well. Mr. Hull then advised that former Ocean County Manager and now guest of the Home, Don Wiesner turns 90 this week and wished him a Happy Birthday.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 1005 AM

APPROVED AT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING JUNE 10, 2023

Respectfully submitted,



Roger Hull
Secretary