

MINUTES - REGULAR MEETING

August 8, 2022

Commissioner John Gethins called the meeting to order on the above-mentioned date at 7:30 pm, at 10 Troy Hills Road, Whippany, NJ

Commissioners present: Gethins, Cobane, Quinn,
Absent: Willans & Ehrich

At this time Comm. Gethins read the following: Pursuant to statutes made and provided, let the minutes show that notice of this meeting was transmitted to the following newspapers: the Daily Record; and filed with the clerk of the Township of Hanover and the Clerk of this Board.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Chairman called for the acceptance of the regular minutes from last month. Chief Perrello pointed out a wrong date on one of the documents. (This has been corrected). Comm. Cobane made a motion to accept the minutes with the corrected page. Comm. Quinn seconded the move, and it was carried by the following vote:

AYES: Cobane, Gethins, Quinn
ABSENT: Willans, Ehrich
NAYS: None

TREASURER'S REPORT

The following Treasurer's report was submitted. Commissioner Cobane made a motion to accept the report. Comm. Quinn seconded the move, and it was carried by the following vote:

AYES: Cobane, Gethins, Quinn
ABSENT: Willans, Ehrich
NAYS: None

**Treasurer's Report - August 8, 2022
For the month of July 2022**

General Checking Account #7859643244

TD Bank

Balance On Hand - June 30th, 2022	\$1,112,989.96
July Checks	(\$94,758.76)

Deposits for the Month of July 2022

Cobra Auto	Permits & Fees	\$427.00
AAA Auto Wreckers	Permits & Fees	\$427.00
Michelle's Catering	Permits & Fees	\$54.00
Whippany Fire Company	Cell Tower income	\$11,615.44
Elemental	Permits & Fees	\$54.00
Chase Paymentech	Registration Fees	\$1,725.00
Registration Fees		\$2,175.00

Balance on Hand, June 30, 2022 (matches Quickbooks) **\$1,034,708.64**

Checks Submitted this Month's Meeting **\$115,334.18**

Business 12 Month CD -x0575 Matures 12-7-22 .05% **\$207,448.90**
Interest 8.53

Business 6 Month CD - TD Bank X9425 Matures 9-4-22 .05% **\$205,217.32**
Interest

Penalty Checking Account # 4408763773
TD Bank \$1,100.00

Balance on Hand, July 31, 2022 **\$1,100.00**

At this time, Comm. Cobane made a motion to move \$3000 from Promotions and \$4000 from Operating Materials and Supplies and put the monies into Professional Services to cover the invoices from Nisivoccia for our budget and audit needs.

The motion was seconded by Comm. Quinn and passed by the following vote;

AYES: Cobane, Gethins, Quinn

ABSENT: Willans & Ehrich

NAYS: None

Comm. Cobane also asked that the bills for Uniforms and Personal Equipment be looked into as some of them may belong to the company.

CHIEF'S REPORT:

Supplies, Equipment, and Maintenance

- Supplies were purchased from Staples / Amazon

Apparatus

- E-83 cab lift repair / AC work
- Quote for Repair of AC compressor for R-80 from FIS for \$1,785.76
- E-81 will need new tires

Training

June, we conducted 2 training drills

Purchases / Requests

- Tires for E-81

Fire Prevention

- 87 Inspections / re-inspections were conducted last month. \$ 1,333.00 in fees were billed and being collected. Total of \$19,407.00 for 2022

EMS

- (49) Calls were answered last month.

Fire

- (40) Calls were answered last month.

89 Total calls answered

Other Matters and Announcements

- Spec reviews and Special event reviews were conducted.
- Walk Thru @ Care One Harmony Village
- Plan Review For 24 Melanie Lane
- Plan Review Meeting for Bayer Solar Project
- Site Inspection at construction projections
- Still waiting on Bayer Fleet for lettering of new car

Chief said that 83's cab is done. And the lettering on the car will be done this week. He has 1Purchase request – A/C repair on Engine 80 and if there is money left, to get new tires for 81. This will be brought up under New Business.

A motion was made to Accept the Chief's report by Comm. Quinn. It was seconded by Comm. Cobane and passed by the following vote:

AYES: Cobane, Gethins, Quinn

ABSENT: Willans & Ehrich

NAYS: None

COMMUNICATIONS -

- McNeil is going to renew our Liability insurance, but it is going up 11%.
- TD Bank – Our CD is coming due and will roll over.
- A Thank you letter form the Town for the fireworks and help at annual Patriotic Day.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Personnel: Nothing at this time

Apparatus: Cab lift is getting fixed on 83

Insurance: Nothing at this time.

First Aid: Nothing at this time.

TOWNSHIP - Nothing at this time

FIRE CO: - The 5k has been cancelled. Landscaping has been put on hold for now due to the heat conditions.

A request was made to use the apparatus at the annual Boonton Parade. A motion was made by Comm. Cobane to approve that request at the Chief's discretion. It was seconded by Comm. Quinn and passed by the following vote:

AYES: Cobane, Gethins, Quinn

ABSENT: Willans & Ehrich

NAYS: None

Firefighter Koba stated that the Officers have discussed the bylaws regarding drivers. A few members have come from other districts and have been drivers before and have experience. He would like to see an amendment to SOG 2-2, which he then read. It would allow members to begin driver training after their probation period. It would benefit the town to have more drivers qualified to drive. Right now, it stated 10 hours behind the wheel training, etc.... They would like the part where it said 2 years fire service history with the department amended so they could begin training earlier.

Chief said he would look into it. It could be written as 2 years of fire service experience – not necessarily with us. He will reach out to other departments for their history so we can cover our bases. He would like members to have experience with the way we do things.

OLD BUSINESS –

Paul got a quote for a repair to the compressor from FIS. The A/C on 83 has been fixed and while it was being repaired, the repairman said that the compressor was shot. The quote from FIS was \$1785.76.

The State is increasing medical also, though nothing is definite yet.

NEW BUSINESS –

At this time, Comm. Cobane made a motion that we allow the repair to the Compressor on 80 from FIS. It was seconded by Comm. Quinn and passed by the following vote:

AYES: Cobane, Gethins, Quinn

ABSENT: Willans & Ehrich

NAYS: None

Paul will get a quote on tires for Engine 81.

At this time, Comm. Cobane read the attached resolutions.

- A Resolution approving the review of the audit and questionnaire.
- A Resolution regarding Claimant Certification signatures on our vouchers.

A motion was made by Comm. Cobane to approve both these resolutions. It was seconded by Comm. Quinn and passed by the following vote:

AYES: Cobane, Gethins, Quinn

ABSENT: Willans & Ehrich

NAYS: None

BILLS

Comm. Cobane moved that the following bills be paid. The move was seconded by Comm. Quinn and was carried by the following vote:

AYES: Cobane, Gethins, Quinn

ABSENT: Willans & Ehrich

NAYS: None

07/01/2022	12101	Braslow, Richard M. Esq	Legal	-630.00
07/01/2022	12102	US Bank Equipment Finance	Copy Machine lease	-258.83
07/01/2022	12103	Verizon Wireless 884	Utilities	-152.04

07/01/2022	12104	Rescue Products International	Training and Education	-375.00
07/01/2022	12105	Verizon 838	Utilities	-183.07
07/05/2022	12106	ESO	Membership Dues & Subscriptions	-246.40
07/05/2022	12107	The Emblem Authority	Uniforms and Personal Equipment	-336.00
07/05/2022	12108	Cobane, Rob	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
07/05/2022	12109	Cowley, Dale	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
07/05/2022	12110	Cusmano, Gaetano	Fuel Vouchers	-15.00
07/05/2022	12111	Danus, James	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
07/05/2022	12112	Danus, Joshua	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
07/05/2022	12113	Desien, Marc	Fuel Vouchers	-15.00
07/05/2022	12114	Jake Dodson	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
07/05/2022	12115	Gallo, Matt	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
07/05/2022	12116	Gethins, John	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
07/05/2022	12117	Jubinski, Ken	Fuel Vouchers	-15.00
07/05/2022	12118	Kelly, Brian	Fuel Vouchers	-50.00
07/05/2022	12119	Kelly, Eric	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
07/05/2022	12120	Koba, Jack	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
07/05/2022	12121	Mihalko, Joseph Jr.	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
07/05/2022	12122	Santini, Anthony	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
07/05/2022	12123	Shearer, Derrick	Fuel Vouchers	-75.00
07/05/2022	12124	Tursi, Frank	Fuel Vouchers	-15.00
07/05/2022	12125	Van Seggern, Steven	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
07/11/2022	12126	Election Graphics, Inc.	Elections	-1,012.50
07/11/2022	12127	SMCMUA 10 Troy	Utilities	-458.04
07/11/2022	12128	Police & Firemen's Insurance Association	Police & Fire Insurance	-586.01
07/11/2022	12129	PSE&G 10 Troy	Utilities	-81.01
07/11/2022	12130	STAPLES CREDIT PLAN	Office Supplies	-73.98
07/11/2022	12131	Optimum 10 Troy	Utilities	-349.71
07/11/2022	12132	Amazon Business	Operating Materials & Supplies	-254.45
07/11/2022	12133	Mihalko, Marianna	Reimbursements	-44.13
07/11/2022	12134	Township of Hanover	-SPLIT-	-116.11
07/11/2022	12135	POSTMASTER	Office Supplies	-116.00
07/11/2022	12136	Amtrust North America	Insurance Premiums	-6,610.00
07/11/2022	12137	Township of Hanover	Operating Materials & Supplies	-75.00
07/11/2022	12138	NJMVC	Membership Dues & Subscriptions	-60.00
07/14/2022	eft	NJ Division of Pensions & Benefits Health	Medical Benefits	-10,787.46
07/15/2022	12139	Amazon Business	Operating Materials & Supplies	-248.55
07/15/2022	12140	JCP&L 10 Troy	Utilities	-2,021.11
07/15/2022	12141	VE Ralph & Sons, Inc	Medical Supplies	-168.00
07/15/2022	12142	Wegman's	Operating Materials & Supplies	-36.16
07/15/2022	12143	Whippany Pizza	Promotion	-143.10
07/15/2022	eft	Board of Fire Commissioners	-SPLIT-	-21,326.65
07/18/2022	12144	Finish Line Car Wash	Equipment	-24.00
07/18/2022	12145	McNeil & Company	-SPLIT-	-214.59
07/22/2022	12146	Amtrust North America	Insurance Premiums	-17,704.00
07/22/2022	12147	US Bank NA	Debt Service	-1,250.00
07/22/2022	12148	Standard Insurance Co	Life Insurance	-2,076.40
07/22/2022	12149	GovConnection, Inc	Equipment	-103.41

07/25/2022	12150	Gear Wash	Gear Cleaning	-550.00
07/25/2022	12151	Janet Hammond	Office Supplies	-4.00
07/25/2022	12152	Morristown Medical Group	Medical	-463.00
07/29/2022	12153	Verizon 838	Utilities	-183.39
07/29/2022	12154	US Bank Equipment Finance	Copy Machine lease	-258.83
07/29/2022	12155	Home Depot Credit Services	Shop Supplies	-44.46
07/29/2022	12156	FIS On Site Services, LLC	Engine 83	-525.00
07/29/2022	12157	Fire Fighters Equipment Company Inc.	Gloves	-81.00
07/29/2022	12158	Nisivoccia, LLP	Professional Services	-4,525.00
07/29/2022	12159	Lifesavers, Inc.	CPR Training Expense	-38.00
07/30/2022	eft	Board of Fire Commissioners	-SPLIT- Membership Dues & Subscriptions	-19,374.37
08/01/2022	12160	Division of Fire Safety	Subscriptions	-210.00
08/01/2022	12161	Verizon Wireless 884	Utilities	-152.04
08/01/2022	12162	Amazon Business	Operating Materials & Supplies	-1,209.63
08/01/2022	12163	Electronic Measurement Labs	Equipment	-675.59
08/01/2022	eft	NJ Division of Pension & Benefits- Pension	Pension Expense	-4,000.00
08/01/2022	eft	NJ Division of Pension & Benefits- Pension	Pension Expense Uniforms and Personal Equipment	-700.00
08/02/2022	12164	Turnout Fire & Safety - Little Falls	Equipment	-949.15
08/02/2022	12165	Morristown Medical Group	Medical	-463.00
08/02/2022	12166	Township of Hanover	-SPLIT-	-853.73
08/02/2022	12167	Chenong, Darren	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12168	Cobane, Rob	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12169	Cook, Tim	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12170	Cowley, Dale	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12171	Cusmano, Gaetano	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12172	Danus, James	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12173	Danus, Joshua	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12174	Desien, Marc	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12175	Jake Dodson	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12176	Gallo, Matt	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12177	Gethins, John	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12178	Graziano, Jesse	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12179	Hansch, Henry	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12180	Heizmann, Pauline	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12181	Jubinski, Ken	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12182	Kelly, Brian	Fuel Vouchers	-75.00
08/02/2022	12183	Kelly, Eric	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12184	Koba, Jack	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12185	LaSota, Matthew	Fuel Vouchers	-15.00
08/02/2022	12186	Mihalko, Joseph Jr.	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12187	Mihalko, Marianna	Fuel Vouchers	-15.00
08/02/2022	12188	Santini, Anthony	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12189	Santini, Joseph	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12190	Shearer, Derrick	Fuel Vouchers	-75.00
08/02/2022	12191	Tursi, Frank	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/02/2022	12192	Van Seggern, Steven	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12193	Willans, Benjamin	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00
08/02/2022	12194	Wodynski, William	Fuel Vouchers	-25.00

08/02/2022	12195	Zicarello, Ricky	Fuel Vouchers	-40.00
08/08/2022	12196	MS&B	Debt Service	-7,884.96
08/08/2022	12197	STAPLES CREDIT PLAN	Office Supplies	-234.21
08/08/2022	12198	Finish Line Car Wash	Equipment	-12.00
08/08/2022	12199	Optimum 10 Troy	Utilities	-349.71
08/08/2022	12200	Eastern Janitorial	Building Maintenance	-1,210.00
08/08/2022	12201	Electronic Measurement Labs	Equipment	-275.00
08/08/2022	12202	Braslow, Richard M. Esq	Legal	-150.00
08/08/2022	12203	ESO	Membership Dues & Subscriptions	-246.40
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				<u>115,334.18</u>
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				<u><u>115,334.18</u></u>

PUBLIC PART OF THE MEETING - Over 30 members of the public attended in the room with more outside in the hallway and on Zoom.

At this time, our attorney, Richard Braslow logged into the meeting via Zoom to talk about Consolidation of the 2 Fire Districts. The meeting is on tape but will be summarized here.

The LUARCC **Local Unit Alignment, Reorganization and Consolidation Commission** was formed to look into consolidations. They found that consolidating was not necessarily a cost saving measure. Every case is different.

Fire is the only municipal entity where there are multiples. You only have 1 Board of Education, Utilities Dept, Rec Dept, etc....

Braslow went over 2 different examples of consolidations that he has worked on. He mentioned Cherry Hill, Voorhees, Jackson model and the Hamilton model.

There are three options when you consolidate:

1. The two existing Districts would dissolve. Elect five new Commissioners and form the creation of a new Fire District.
2. The two districts are dissolved and merged into one existing district. No new election would be needed and that is the district that moves forward.
3. The Hamilton scenario – both districts dissolve and the town takes over. It becomes a Municipal Fire District.

Every District has 5 Commissioners. After consolidation, you would still only have 5 Commissioners - either the surviving commissioners, or through a new election.

Some Districts have a "Gentleman's Agreement" – that there would always have three from 1 district and 2 from the other on the Board. It is not an enforceable agreement. There is no guarantee that there exists a 3 and 2

The fear among one district is not having a seat at the table.

If the 2 Districts agree to consolidate: there is a hearing by the governing body, which is the town. If the town proceeds, they introduce an ordinance, hold a hearing for the public and then apply to the Local Finance Board for approval to consolidate. They have to approve any creation, consolidation or dissolution of any public entity.

If the consolidation is approved with one district absorbing into the other – there is no election. If not, they'll establish an election date for all of the town.

There are 2 criteria in order to dissolve.

1. Must be able to address existing debt service.
2. Fire Protection would still be provided and adequate

The Local finance Board would want to see that the firehouses and the protection would still continue – and that there was enough manpower, facilities, etc. to provide service.

There are 2 Chiefs now. That could result in one Chief and one Deputy Chief. They would want to see that and what the structure would be now.

ADVANTAGES to Consolidation:

- It would level the tax rate. People say it is not fair – it should be the same cost. The counterargument to that is that different parts of the town have different needs. The State would like to see the tax rate in one budget and the fire tax all the same rate.
- Greater Efficiency – Fire? EMS? What is the structure – how it works. Would it lead to greater efficiency. Maybe not.
- Cost Savings – You would save on the Commissioners stipends – 5 instead of ten. But there are different contracts to be worked out. Maybe you could save there. Legal fees, audit fees, advertising fees and even trucks and equipment – you would have one entity instead of 2 to pay for all these things.

The strong counter argument is consolidation gives you much larger responsibilities. Now the Board is responsible for the whole town and wider needs. Maybe you need more clerical, maybe legal costs increase.

DISADVANTAGES to Consolidation:

- With only 5 Commissioners, certain entities are not at the table.
- If you are not REDUCING costs and not providing greater efficiency, why do it at all?

Questions from Public:

Gary Keyser – What if 1 District has debt service of \$10 million? Does the other district pay that to equal out the taxes?

Braslow – One requirement is that you have to show that existing debt can be paid. Any debt gets rolled into the next budget. Someone could see the tax rate go up- maybe because of debt service.

Steve Cornine – Commissioner District 3 – Who manages the implementation of this?

Braslow – Each District adopts a resolution that supports it. You may need petitions to support it after that. The town will hold hearings and they introduce the ordinance and then apply to the Finance Board for the consolidation.

There is money available in the form of grants to assist with this.

Keyser – If this goes through, will the new Board of Fire Commissioners be the Board for the whole town?

Braslow – If you merge into one board, people may say ‘Hey, I did not vote for those sitting members. You should have a new election. New board would be newly elected from across the town. Two would be elected for the first term and then the next election for 3-year terms after that – like it is now.

Keyser – Could 5 new Commissioners sell off and absorb assets like a firehouse?

Braslow – Yes. The sitting Commissioners can sell assets if they don’t feel they need them.

Judy Iradi – Studies were done for consolidation in the past. What were the arguments for NOT consolidating then and why NOW are we going ahead? What or who is the impetus for the consolidation?

Braslow – Numerous studies have been done in different towns where consolidation was recommended, and nothing happened.

Judy – If it wasn't good to do then, what has changed now?

Braslow – The climate has changed. Back then there was not a lot of consolidations going on.

Duplication of services and different tax rates have led to people looking to lower taxes. Cost-sharing is being discussed in many towns and not just fire. School Boards and such also.

Judy – The DCA is pushing this more than local?

Braslow – I can't really say but the DCA has gotten aggressive and active in consolidation and merging. There is money there to help get you where they want you to go. If it gets to the DCA, it will pass.

Judy – So will the overall budget be reduced?

Braslow – You would assume so but it's not a given.

Judy – Why would you want a consolidation if it doesn't save money?

Braslow – The argument would be better efficiency of services and a cost savings. Fewer Commissioners and Chiefs, etc. But you may have other expenses to pick up. A lot of towns do the studies and then nothing happens.

John Gethins – Both of the studies done recommended merging. The past boards decided not to, but we are looking at those old studies too.

Steve Cornine – He met the State Czar of consolidation, and he said funds are available for us to do this. We should be looking at EMS, the new firehouse, and service to the whole community.

Judy – People are looking at taxes. Our district is efficient now and if there's not going to be a cost savings – why do it?

Tom Braviak – Anna terrace – I don't want to spend all this money on the attorney's time. I want to know if the Boards think this is a good or bad idea. Everyone wants to see it going as it's going now. It has the beginnings but not the implementation plan yet.

The Implementation plan – a new board could throw it all out the window. The newly elected board is not going to know what to do. Tax rate now is 8 cents / 100 in Whippany and 10 cents / 100 in Cedar Knolls. The Cedar Knolls tax rate which is likely

The 2 budgets together and add more money to it to level it out. What is the new tax rate? No consolidation in the history of the state has EVER saved money.

So the 1st year, tax rate is 9 cents. Then the next year, it goes up and again and again for the rest of our lives. The tax rates are close together now. Figure out here's the problem we see and here's how the consolidation solves them. Then talk to us and see if it makes sense.

Terri Baird – Has the attorney had experience with the tax rates with the consolidations he's seen? Did they go up or down in the other towns? Are they leaning toward more career staff rather than the volunteers.

Braviak – Taxes never go down.

Braslow – All those consolidations were union driven in every instance. In Hamilton, there was displeasure – the career staff felt the town was not adhering to what they promised and also there was not greater efficiency.

In Jackson – the costs increased. In Voorhees the rate has gone up – the costs increased.

In Cherry Hill, the 20-million-dollar budget reflected many firehouses. They have a significant amount of career staff, and the taxes keep going up.

One other thing – If you decide to proceed – there is no going back. You would never get approval to go back to being 2 different districts.

Shawn Waldron – District #3 – Cedar Knolls is looking to make promotions and hiring and also maybe tearing down a 1933 firehouse or refurbishing it. If all these things are in progress, grants are

obtained, and the merge goes through, we could end up with no tower ladder, no new firehouse, or new ambulance and would all the members we promoted be demoted?

Braslow – One of the presentations to the Local Finance Board is the terms of the career staff. They want to see that – no 2 Chiefs, the contracts, etc.

All of that has to be in the structure layout. Is anyone being laid off? Etc. Anyone who was promoted would be reflected in that chart.

As for Capital Projects, because the voters approve a capital project doesn't mean it has to go forward. You have the authorization to go forward but you can change your mind. If it has gone past a certain point, like a contract has been signed, then it should go forward. Otherwise, you could be in breach of contract or something. But if the Board doesn't think it's appropriate to move forward on those items, whether it's a firehouse, a truck or what have you – they don't have to.

The existing debt is a big discussion in what is best for the town.

Greg Manning – Whippany - Money seems to be important with consolidation. Was anyone upset with the service to the community?

Braslow – Some in Hamilton felt the quality of service is not what they thought it would be. Braslow thinks it improved service.

There is a strong argument that representations to the Local finance Board were not adhered to. The Local Finance Board is presented with a particular plan. But if it's not adhered to, they don't monitor it, - unless it's a flagrant offense and obvious. The DCA does not intervene either. If there's something you don't like, you just have to vote for new commissioners in the next election. That's your only recourse.

Braviak – Any pre-approved Capital Project do not survive the consolidation, correct? If a Capital Project has been pre-approved, can the new district go forward with it?

Braslow – The new Board is not bound to proceed, the answer is no. But the new district CAN go forward with a pre-approved project.

Michael Dugan – District #3 – Two Chiefs have laid out a basic plan. How much of a plan should be in place for the new commissioners to so they can have something to follow?

Braslow – When the Finance Board says they want us to show them a plan, they will want you to engage in negotiations BEFORE the consolidation. They should know what terms and conditions with the unions are going to be in place. The Finance Board wants to see that. Then the new Board should adhere to that.

Dugan – So the 2 Boards now – they should have that all set before we go forward?

Braslow – you should because the application to the Finance Bd – they'll want to look at all facilities, union contracts, equipment – all parts of a plan. They'll expect to see everything that can provide good fire protection.

Dugan – At no point are the 2 Boards eliminated and it gets taken over by the town?

Braslow – No – the town makes the application, but the Boards come up with all the fire information. The town won't know all that. Both boards stay involved through the whole process.

Jan 1 to Dec 31st is the fiscal year. If you proceed, it will be February or March before you can put in an application. You may want it effective till the 1st of the next year. You don't get approved that day. You have to be able to get things in place and be ready.

Chad DiGiorgio – District #3 Chief – Both Chiefs took this on in late December. There is a draft of a plan that lays some of this out. Petitions? Is there still a need for them in order to dissolve?

Braslow – If there is no agreement with both boards, you would need a petition.

DiGiorgio – What if one Board agrees and one doesn't – how do we proceed?

Braslow – Then you use the petition process.

DiGiorgio – How do we carry the debt?

Braslow – Under the statute is the ability of the entity to satisfy that debt. That is absolutely part of the application.

Chad – regarding voter approvals, Can a future district reverse that? What if a contract has been signed – Can that be continued?

Braslow – An effort to terminate a signed contract would be a breach of contract. By the way - All of the districts that have applied to consolidate – proceeded.

Chad – If the voters approved say, a ladder truck and signed a contract, a future board cannot back out of that?

Braslow – Yes – It's legally not smart to try to do that.

Chad – regarding the replacement of Commissioners. It can be 5 new commissioners but 5 can also be from the old Boards – it doesn't necessarily mean all 5 have to be brand new.

Braslow – Yes – that's correct.

Chad – The DCA has already assessed our draft. They are willing and able to sit with us. They're knocking at the door already.

Steve Cornine – What is stopping both Boards from setting it all up for a new Board before we go forward?

Braslow – Nothing. Both Boards need to do their due diligence. The public will want all the information they can get. If it takes another year or so – so be it.

You can't rush this process till all the issues have been addressed.

Cornine – Does the DCA have the right to enforce the existing agreements?

Braslow – They may comment on it. The Boards still have to continue to operate as two boards. You can discuss whether to delay a project but you still have an obligation.

Cornine – What is the most critical element that affects the success of a new Board?

Braslow – The biggest issue is the need to feel that the Board is representative of all the volunteers, the career staff and all the taxpayers. That can ruin what you have. Everyone needs to be heard. People will be against this consolidation if they feel they are not being treated properly or heard.

Cornine – For the new Board, what needs to be in place?

Braslow – The contracts are the biggest issue. You don't need to re-develop every policy in existence. You need to have all that in order already. If you have different policies, straighten it out now before you go forward.

Gethins – We've been saying that in merger meetings and trying to get 90% of this settled instead of 50%.

Braslow – The contracts with the career staff – make sure that whatever you give the volunteers is consistent between the 2 Districts. Make sure the volunteers are taken care of. That's the best way to move forward.

Why should that matter?

The Finance Board can say "Ok we have the career staff addressed – where are the volunteers?"

Cornine – After both the Boards vote, we have no more say to the public?

Braslow – When the plan is put together, that's still your obligation. You're still going to be presenting until this gets done. The Boards continue to have a role. The information provided to the Finance Board comes from the districts – not from the town.

At this time, the Boards thank Attorney Braslow and he exits the meeting.

Cornine – We have a lot of homework to do.

Braviak – this has been the best session on this topic. Going forward, the 2 Boards have to keep the public informed as to what's going on so the public can be aware of what's going on. To the last point that Rich made, all of the stuff on the list, contracts, insurance, projects – is solvable through negotiation and the process. What's not solvable is what the consolidation can do to enhance the volunteer aspect for both districts.

None of us could afford to live in this town if you had to hire enough career staff to do what the 2 fire companies do, because we're dependent on the volunteers.

So, if the consolidation has a positive impact on attracting and keeping volunteers, that's a real positive thing. If you haven't considered the impact on the ability to attract volunteers, then you're doing a disservice by even discussing it.

You can continue to hire all the people you want to hire as your call rolls go from 30 to 25 to 12 but in the long run – 2 districts – 2 guys on an engine – putting out a structure fire – Sorry. You'd have to have 40 engines show up to a house fire during the day. We don't live like that. We still have close to 30 active volunteers between the 2 districts. Need to get more of them in the door. If not, there's not a lot of advantage here to consolidating.

Manning – I was a volunteer for a long time. All the EMS – you see signs – the police. Can't seem to have enough people. Volunteers in general are declining. One should not be exclusive of the other.

Braviak – You can self-fulfill that prophecy of the death knell of the volunteer services if you're not careful. I understand that point but if they take us there – it's a bad thing. They shouldn't take us there.

Rob Cobane – Dist. #2 – Other towns have gone that – all Career – and we don't want to go that route. Don't want to become like other towns that have pushed out the volunteers.

Gethins – Can we use state employees as responders?

Braviak – you can't stop them – It's a state law. Those guys SHOULD be leaving to go to calls.

Cobane – It's not encouraged.

Braviak - If they get grief for it, maybe our town liaison can help with that.

Brian Cahill – Fire Liaison – If it's law – it won't be an issue.

Shawn Waldron – It's right in their policy. They're allowed to leave.

Cobane – Is district 3 potentially hiring? I thought we had an unofficial hiring freeze while we work out the merger details. It's news to us that District 3 is hiring.

Shawn – Before we started our promotional process, Jim Davidson said that each Board needs to move forward. If Cedar Knolls has 3 Fire Lieutenants and Whippany has none, we may decide 3 is all we need in total. Whippany guys would have to wait years before their next promotion.

Steve Cornine – Our committee's last session – we said - Let's save the taxpayers money – Don't increase staffing and let the new board evaluate it. The Boards have to work on the new budget. Also, talking about the new firehouse in District 3, or a renovation, and a possible new truck – hadn't heard of that. We need better communication overall.

Chief Perrello – Then that means if District 3 is hiring, then we can too. The taxes will be flat and provide better services to our side of town.

Dugan – We are in need of another guy. For both boards, if you feel you need more people, then hire. This could take another year.

Cobane – Do what you have to do.

Matt Gallo – asked the Chief if he still feels there is a need to hire.

Chief Perrello – I still feel strongly that there is. We were waiting on the numbers for the merger.

Gallo - FF – It's not the 1970's anymore. Most volunteers work out of town and can't leave their jobs. If there is a need in the daytime, think we should hire if we need to. Cedar Knolls is hiring so maybe we have that need also.

Quinn – I'm all in for that.

Cornine – If you need us to get to step one in the merger, we had agreed to ceasing things but if it's taking over a year, then we have to go forward. It's going to be a long process.

DiGiorgio – None of us are experts. We looked at the past studies. How do we continue to move this forward? A feasibility study would have cost us \$25,000. Last time, the study was \$20,000. The DCA can come in and give us free service with a grant. But the boards have to agree to move forward.

Manning – If the consolidation goes forward, how about a live-in program for the volunteers? We are a busy town. If you get the right group of kids and say you have to give us 40 hours and you can live in our firehouse. Have to follow the rules. It's an olive branch to the volunteers. We have to reach outside the box.

Dugan – Cedar Knolls has been talking about that – especially with the addition or a new facility.

DiGiorgio – We both have the same needs - We have 3 messages that we send out in Hanover Township. Join Cedar Knolls as a firefighter – Join Whippany as a firefighter – or join as an EMT. We need to send out 1 single message. We can do a Recruitment Drive – Hanover Township Day – First Responder Day. We need to start talking now with both boards for better recruitment.

Chief Perrello – There are free ads available for Facebook, etc.. We need to send out 1 central unified message. Rather than 3 groups targeting the same people. The target pool is limited. It is difficult for volunteers to get here – their kids have sports, you work, other commitments, etc. The volunteer sign is back up.

Terri Baird – Does the High School still have a Community Service program?

Cobane – Not anymore.

DiGiorgio – The seniors have to do a service project but it's usually the last 3 months of high school.
Cobane – I had reached out to the high school but then the pandemic hit. We do have a junior program for 16- year- olds and up.

Dugan – But the State hinders what they are allowed to do.

Cobane – They can still do drills, ride on a truck and get experience and camaraderie.

Chief – the State has so many restrictions.

Di Giorgio – we should get a volunteer who is a high school student to get their parent to join also.

Braviak – When discussions were done 15 years ago, it was a good idea but the actual plan was horrible. It was written by someone who didn't live here and wanted to knock down both firehouses and have a central one.

We should be able to write our own plan ourselves that makes US happy, We don't need the DCA and their money to re-write it.

DiGiorgio – In 2011, no one was sure what was happening with District 2's new firehouse or EMS. There was nothing in place and in balance in taxes were almost double. NOW, the firehouse is built, EMS is in place and budgets are almost equal. Now is a much better time to look at this. There is an imbalance in rateables but even with District 3's residents paying for this firehouse, it will still be good.

Braviak – The Commissioners have to be wary that the volunteers are still paying the large mortgage on this firehouse. We promised the community this service in order to lower their tax burden. For the next 30 years, volunteers will be paying the commissioners. There is no rental agreement.

It's not rent – It's a deed restriction in our payback plan.

The County took that plan and made it a DCA requirement that it couldn't go forward unless the Commissioners owned it. The Company still agreed to pay a share.

Is it rent for the bays? No, It's part of the debt. Nothing to do with the debt.

Terri Baird – Will that still continue after the 30 years are up?

Braviak – After 30 years, the deed stays the same. The relationship of the volunteers with the District should be carefully considered. After 30 years, they could be kicked out.

The cell tower income is its own block and lot. That income could change as cell service changes are different. It could go away.

DiGiorgio – asked Tom Braviak to join the sub-committee due to his experience and knowledge.

At 9:54 Comm. Cobane made a motion to go into closed session.

At 11:01, the Board came out of closed session and Comm. Cobane made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Comm. Quinn and passed unanimously by all Commissioners present.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:02

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Hammond