

The January 14, 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 Greci also provided the invocation.

Roll call was taken with all managers present with the exception of Mr. Silvestri and Mr. DeLaurentis who were both excused. Also in attendance were Superintendent Veras and Mr. Bell.

Public notice of the meeting was printed in the Star Ledger Newspaper and posted on the Firemen Home's website.

The minutes from the December 10, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting were approved.

Communications:

Secretary Hull received two letters: the first from our attorney Mr. Bell regarding an employee's arrest. Mr. Bell spoke on the subject advising that the matter was immediately addressed with Mr. Veras and that it is pending before the Morris County Prosecutor's Office.

The second letter was from the Governor's office approving our budget*. (*2024-25)

Reports of Officers:

Secretary:

Mr. Hull advised that he had sent out manager cards to the new managers and had car decals for anyone who needed them.

Treasurer:

Mr. Sutphen reported that the 2024-2025 budget has been signed and that everything is fine with our current budget. Mr. Sutphen asked for information from managers on toll costs for their round trips as they recently increased. Mr. Sutphen also asked that ONLY Managers sign in the manager book.

Superintendent:

Mr. Veras wished everyone a Happy New Year and reported that there were building and grounds items that the Building and Grounds Committee will expand upon. The "Chris Kringle" outbreak brought COVID to 39 guests and 27 staff members. All were relatively mild and no deaths occurred. With this new variant the Home is following the same CDC guidelines as previous outbreaks. 78% of cases are of the new variant of COVID. All have been vaccinated for the flu and the Home is awaiting State directives for future vaccines. The concern was would there be a new vaccine for every new variant. Mr. Veras added that ties have been discovered between a booster shot and strokes in people over 65 years of age. The Home is staffed well and are prepared for any snow that may occur.

Legal Counsel:

Mr. Bell reported that they are working on an updated policy manual to include:

- Arrest reporting policy, it is the obligation of the employee to report their arrest.
- A social media policy
- A policy for the "complicated" vaccine issues

Mr. Bell also reported that the demolition of the Vreeland Avenue home would go out to bid in the spring.

Mr. Wilson inquired if a policy could be created restricting our employees' secondary employment due to a number of COVID cases at the Home were believed to have come from our staff working other facilities when COVID first began.

Mr. Bell responded that his suggestion would be for testing of the employees and following CDC and NJ State protocols, and that he took note of Mr Wilson's question.

Mr. Veras replied that this was a "strong statement" and that if we restrict our employees secondary employment we would have to make up their difference in their pay.

Buildings and Grounds:

Mr. Signorello provided a written report which is attached. The list contained updates on multiple projects. Mr. Signorello added that the building asbestos removal (Vreeland Avenue house) was a high item; the new PT room was back in progress; and IT upgrades were being worked on throughout the building to bring us up to 2023 version.

Mr. Mitch questioned that at the November meeting we had allocated \$100,000 for demolition of the Vreeland Avenue home and why it is higher now.

Mr. Veras responded that the project would remain under the allocated \$100,000 however the asbestos removal portion was above the monetary threshold and would have to go out to bid.

Mr. Bell concurred that the asbestos exceeds bid limits and needs to go to public bid.

Applications:

Mr. Freeman provided a written report from the application committee meeting held on January 10, 2023 which is attached. The report indicated 60 guest in Long Term Care and 8 in Residential Care for a total of 68 guests. Since the last board meeting through December 31, 2022 there was one admission. *As an aside Mr. Freeman mentioned that the new admission passed away shortly after being admitted. The next meeting for the Applications Committee is 0900 hours on February 7, 2023 at the Home.

Employee Committee:

Mr. Dutch reported that he was made aware of the employee arrest incident that was addressed by Mr. Bell's letter when it occurred. No further report.

Finance and Budget Committee:

Mr. Sutphen provided a written report on the January 10, 2023 meeting of the Audit and Finance Committee which is attached. Mr Sutphen reported bills for the month in the amount of \$302,332.76. All revenue and expense vouchers were reviewed and found to be in order. The committee discussed items pertaining to medical and patient salaries; Insurance and professional services (accounting). The Superintendent provided a thorough explanation of these items. The committee also discussed the importance of conducting an actuarial study in conjunction with the NJSFA to get a clearer picture of the future financial exposure to the Home and NJSFA collectively. The next meeting for the finance committee will be at 0800 hours on Tuesday February 7, 2023 at the Home.

Insurance:

Mr. Strube reported that there were no new claims and that he would be preparing bids for proposal's for July's meeting. Mr. Strube will distribute the paperwork when it becomes available.

Mr. Keyser inquired if this was for ALL of the Home's insurance, and Mr. Strube replied yes.

Legislative Committee:

Mr. Lugossy reported on bill A4127 that was signed into law in September which mandates cancer screenings for career firefighters not enrolled in the State Health Benefits Program. Mr. Lugossy then deferred to Mr. Ordway about ongoing legislative issues.

Mr. Ordway followed up that they are trying to get volunteer firefighters covered regardless if they are enrolled in the State Benefits plan or not. They met with multiple legislators who are on board. One legislator they did not meet with was Senator Gopal who introduced S3405 that would provide cancer screenings for volunteers and raise the insurance tax in doing so. Much discussion from the floor and Mr. Ordway advised they are sorting it out with Mr Gopal. When asked about changing the funding, Mr. Ordway replied "it could be good or bad, and I'll leave it at that".

Mr. Lugossy then went on to report on bills S2712 and A4125 that prohibit the sale, manufacturing, distribution of firefighting foam that contains certain chemical substances. (Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl) that was introduced.

Both houses are currently working on the State's fiscal year 2024 budget.

Mr. Freeman commented that manufacturers stopped making foam with these substances so the bill is sort of a waste of time.

By-laws:

Mr. Jeffer reported that the By-laws committee met last Tuesday (January 10th) and that they want to talk philosophy before specifics and take a straw vote on what is being worked on.

The committee wants to bring meetings into the 21st Century and have remote meetings as an option. The idea is to allow managers to attend 4 meeting remotely and the rest in person.

Mr. Keyser commented that all meetings will be remote but a manager can only attend 4 remotely.

Mr. Matthews advised that he is not computer savvy and would not do remote meetings. He added that he disagreed with having 12 meetings unless 3 were in South Jersey adding the golf course we had a meeting at is NOT South Jersey. Mr. Matthews also noted that some executive meetings only last 20 minutes so why make managers travel for hours for a 20 minute meeting. The executive committee was created to pay the bills in the off months.

Mr. Jeffer then brought up the fact that there is a provision in our By-law that allows executive committee to have binding authority over the full board. Mr. Jeffer stated that this is wrong and against our enabling statute.

Mr. Freeman stated that since he has been on the board the Executive Committee has never acted on matters that should come before full board.

Mr. Jeffer felt there should be more provisions for full board meetings and to do away with the Executive Committee as it has too much power.

Mr. Keyser agreed with the elimination of the Executive Board but is not in favor of remote access meetings. Asked about having them at other locations such as the NJSFA building.

Mr. Apgar read off section 2 page 6 of our By-laws with regard to Executive Committee.

Mr. Bell stated that this could be altered and that the By-laws do need re-vamping.

Mr. Greci then stated that he is against remote meetings but would like full board meetings every month and have them at different locations around the state. He stated he is a strong advocate for monthly full board meetings and didn't care if we had them at a beach or in Mr. Matthews backyard. Mr. Greci added that the board operates under a majority rules and regardless we must honor it. We all took an oath.

Mr. Signorello comment that trying to be flexible is good. Could use remote if we have a snow storm. He said all the comments and ideas are good.

Mr. Heflich commented that he did not think it would be fair to the Superintendent and that the Superintendent can't be expected to bring material everywhere in the State.

Mr. Ordway then remarked that if the purpose of the Executive Committee is to pay the bills and we have approved contracts, such as electric bill etc., why do we need full board to approve bills already approved. He did not feel we need 12 meetings a year.

Museum:

Mr. Hull provided a written report which is attached. Mr. Hull advised that the Northville Fire Department wished to donate a hose cart from the 1800s and had pictures available. The museum committee moved items around this morning at the suggestion of Mr. Heflich to better protect a rare item that is now in a glass case. Comment from the floor about room in the museum and Mr. Hull advised we will need a 2nd floor addition soon (actually a 3rd floor).

Public Relations:

Mr. Wilson reported progress and wished to have a brief meeting with public relations committee following this meeting.

Ethics and Code of Conduct:

Mr. Sutphen advised that he hopes to have the Ethics forms out to all managers soon.

Pension:

Mr. Greci reported "progress".

Inventory:

Mr. Wilson reported that through Mr. Veras' efforts the inventory is complete and all that is required is ongoing maintenance. Everything is in good shape.

Golf Committee:

Mr. Greci reported that only 16 members signed up and the efforts are embarrassing. This event directly benefits the guests and if no one is interested then maybe we should not have it. He asked managers to try to get sponsors and golfers. Fliers were on the front table.

Liaison to the State Association:

Mr. Lugossy reported that he had several phone conversations with Mr. Ordway over the holidays and that things are going well between the two organizations.

Mr. Ordway commented that Mr. Wilson and Committeeman Otterbein have set up a meeting. Mr. Ordway added that Mr. Hull emails everything following our meetings so he doesn't have much to report.

Ad Hock Committee:

Mr. Wilson reported that he spoke with Committeeman Otterbein and an initial meeting of the committee will be held at the Home on January 24th. This will be for the committee only at this time.

Inspections:

Mr. Freeman reported that he conducted the inspection on last Tuesday (January 10th) with the assistance of Mr. Miller. No major issues were found with the exception of a dead bird. *Humor followed from the floor, no CPR attempt was made on the bird.

State Firemen's Association:

President Ordway advised that it is "report season" and that if any manager speaks to their local associations, advise them to get the reports in.

Unfinished Business:

Wildwood and Uries Restaurant was brought up. Mr. Greci advised that he had asked Mr. Matthews to get other quotes from other restaurants.

Mr. Matthews stated that he wished to address a few items. He reported that the father of Cape May County Executive Committeeman Speigel had passed away and asked the board to keep the Speigel family in their prayers.

With regards to Uries Restaurant, Mr. Matthews reported that just prior to our meeting there, they hosted a community fund raising event called "Raggae Fest". This event is usually after the Wildwood Convention however this year it was before. It was a big event and Uries was "out of sorts" to say the least for our meeting and dinner. Mr. Matthews advised that he will talk to them to fix the issues and to also get us the front room that we usually hold our meeting in. Mr. Matthews added that he likes the food and their menu and if someone wants to take over, "go ahead".

Mr. Greci responded speaking on the ice machine issues and the room we were in. He asked for other options and advised Mr. Matthews that the southern managers are not on too many committees due to travel, but he could make Mr. Matthews chair of a committee to look for restaurant. Mr. Matthews responded that he would promptly resign as chair of such committee.

Mr. Matthews then addressed that he is up for election this August for his 4th term. He asked why he has to now fill out a petition from the State Association, get signatures and get it notarized to run for Manager. He asked why, when and how this started adding he previously was nominated from the floor.

Mr. Ordway responded, this was procedure to get on the ballot. "if you don't want your name on the ballot, don't fill it out." Adding, that you would then be a write in candidate and anyone who filled out the petition would have their name on the ballot.

Mr. Matthews then went on to address the lack of "intestinal fortitude" of the managers who didn't support the failed Community Nursing Home Program, warning that if we are not careful the "State will run everything". Mr. Matthews stated that everyone thought it was a good idea until "strong arm tactics" got it shot down. A back and forth debate between Mr. Keyser and Mr. Matthews took place.

Mr. Heflich added about previous attempts for locating guests at off site facilities and how this could have been accomplished many years ago. Mr. Heflich stated his consistent opposition to programs outside of the Home.

New Business:

Mr. Heflich provided a prepared letter and package of materials (attached) regarding his information and OPRA requests about former Solicitor Thomas Ward and his status as an employee. Mr. Heflich has asked why if our attorney was a full time employee had the Home voted to re-appoint him every year. The information of the full board vote to make him (Ward) an employee was found; because if this was not the case, he would not be eligible for a pension.

Mr. Jeffer asked that since we vote on the bills if he could have more information ahead of time. He would like to review the items and possibly have the information emailed to the board ahead of time.

Mr. Grenci responded that anyone can attend the Budget Committee meeting to review the bills. He then directed Mr. Jeffer to call the Committee Chair (Mr. Hull) and it would be addressed.

Mr. Helfich asked if a firefighter becomes disabled other than fighting a fire, such as being a truck driver would they be able to come to the home. Mr. Grenci replied Yes.

Mr. Veras advised the Museum Committee that the IT department had recovered old inventory files from the Museum and that the software would need updating to save the data. The committee can expect to see a laptop soon.

Mr. Jeffer brought to the Board a website that the managers might get some enjoyment from. The site NEWSPAPERS.COM had interesting stuff that Mr. Jeffer found when searching his own name.

Payment of Bills:

Mr. Hull reported the total bills in the amount of \$302,332.76. Upon motions, a roll call vote was taken and the bills payment was approved.

Public Participation:

Robert DeVirgilio from Passaic County commented on how long Passaic County Manager Ken Silvestri could be out due to illness and if there was provisions for an "alternate manager" to fill in.

Mr. Greci responded that if anyone in Passaic needed assistance with applications they could reach out to Mr. Veras.

Mr. Veras added that there are provisions for if a vacancy happens due to death or resignation where Executive Committee would fill in, but Ken is still with us.

Discussion followed about potentially adding an "alternate" provision to our By Laws

Larry Handlin- East Newark/ Hudson County Executive Committeeman expanded on Mr. DeVirgilio's concerns stating Hudson County went through this when their Manager resigned, only to rescind the resignation but then not make any meetings. He stated there should be something in place to fill a vacancy.

Mr. Sutphen responded that this would need the county's vote.

Mr. Greci inquired with Mr. Ordway as to what is the State Association's policy on long term absence of an Executive Committee-person. Mr. Ordway advised if they are out sick, they are out sick. There is no replacement.

Mr. Bell discussed a vacancy provision in By Law, for example if absent 6 months the position is declared vacant.

Mr. Matthews agreed but warned to be careful with the verbiage in the By Laws.

A vacancy by death is filled at caucus. Mr. Jeffer commented on current By Laws regarding vacancy.

Executive Session:

None had.

Good and Welfare:

Mr. Mitch asked how the By Law committee could proceed after today as it didn't seem they were given any direction. Mr. Mitch suggested an informal sheet to give committee ideas from the managers. The committee did seem to get opinions of the Board during their report.

Mr. Jeffer responded that the committee wanted to get a reaction from the Board and "we got it".

Mr. Sutphen advised the committee should review the entire by laws and bring back ideas for vote by full board.

Mr. Freeman commented that remote meetings would be a nightmare for the Treasurer to track mileage.

Mr. Sutphen (Treasurer) replied "thats why I am voting No"

Mr. Greci commented that NJSFA Secretary Tom Pelaia wished to thank the Board for the fruit basket that was sent to him. Mr. Heflich responded that he was glad it was sent.

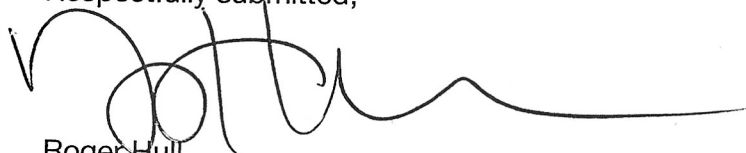
Adjournment:

Motion was made and meeting was adjourned at 1035 AM

****Additional Information**

NOTE: A report from our lobbyist Kevin Hagan was placed on the front table during the meeting, however no report was given on record to the managers. His report is part of the attachments to these minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Hull', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roger Hull
Secretary

APPROVED AT THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING 2/11/2023