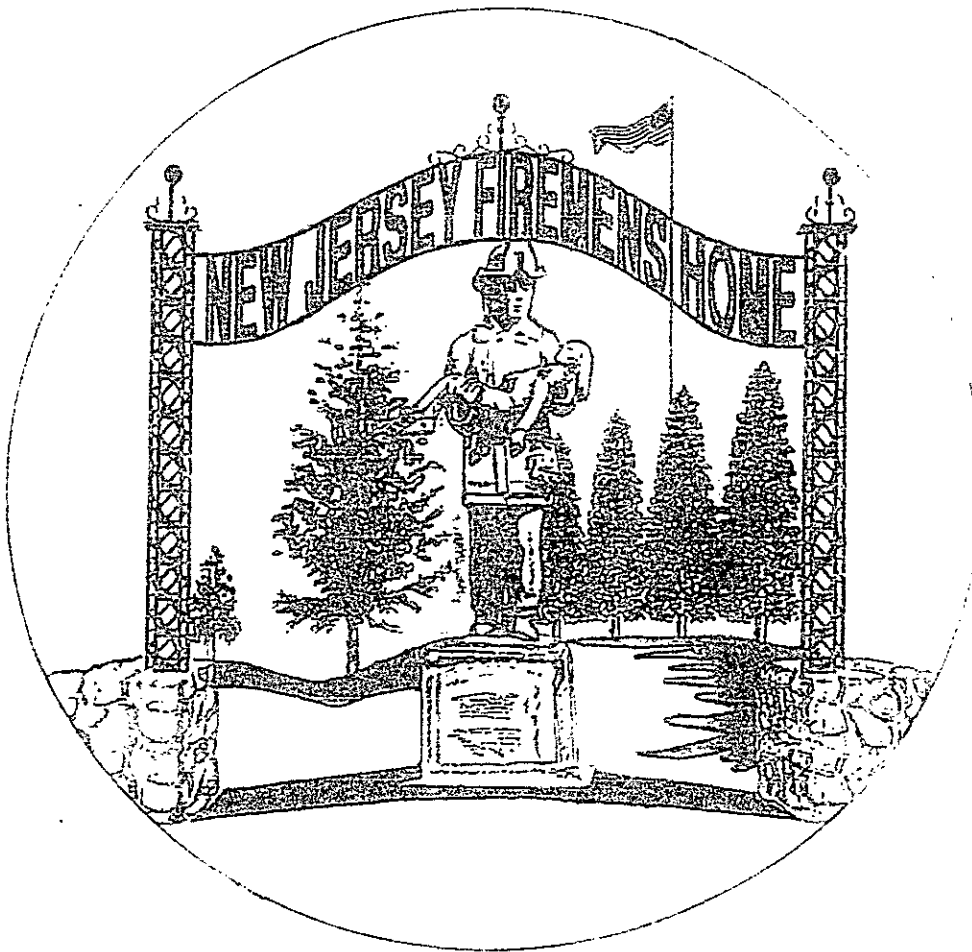


# New Jersey Firemen's Home Full Board Meeting



December 14, 2024

The December 14, 2024 meeting of the New Jersey Firemen's Home Board of Managers was called to order by Chairman Washer at 0900 hours and was followed by the pledge of allegiance. A beautiful invocation was provided by Manager Dutch.

Mr. Hull advised public notice was provided in the official newspaper, the Star Ledger, and on the Home's website. Mr. Bell commented on the Star Ledger's transition to a strictly digital format. Mr. Bell's firm has filed a lawsuit in Warren County and there is also pending State Legislation that addresses the use of digital format of media for public notice. He commented on the use of digital news, citing Morris County and other "Tap In" web sites. Due to the hearing next month, the meeting notice will be re-published.

Roll call was taken with all managers present except Mr. Dunn, Mr. Mitch, Mr. Strube and Mr. Heflich who were all excused.

The minutes from the November 9, 2024 Board meetings approved.

**Communications:**

Secretary Hull read of a letter from the Bergen County Firemen Home Association commending the Home's staff at their Christmas event. (copy attached.)

**Reports of Officers:**

**Secretary:**

Mr. Hull reported that he, as requested, put together a summary of minutes and proposals of the Application Committee's admission policy to help clarify, hopefully, what was approved, or not and help move forward on the issue. It was emailed to all managers.

**Treasurer:**

Mr. Sutphen reported that there may be another increase in tolls, but believed it would only be for bridges and tunnels. He asked any manager who is effected by the increase to contact him and their travel reimbursement will be adjusted.

**Superintendent:**

Mr. Veras expressed extreme gratitude towards the staff for the decorating they did at the home. There are numerous Christmas trees throughout the building. There are a lot of Fire Departments doing Christmas parties and the guests really appreciate them.

An employee party was held on Wednesday and the entire staff was thankful.

There are gifts for each manager in the Superintendent's office. Please take one (only one) after the meeting.

The chlorination system was installed and experienced one minor issue with calibration that needed to be adjusted as the incoming chlorine was so low. Hopefully with this now up and running it will get us out of the Legionella "noose".

Mr. Veras wished everyone a Happy Holidays.

**Legal Counsel:**

Mr. Bell reported that there will be a hearing next month at the meeting to address complaints made against a manager. It was requested to be held in public. The meeting will be held in the auditorium and a Judge and Prosecutor have been selected. Mr. Bell advised that managers should not be discussing the matter as they are basically the jury.

Questions from the floor:

What is the order of business for the day? We will call the meeting to order, conduct roll call and go into the hearing.

Will materials be presented ahead of time? No, but copies of the charges will be emailed and sent by regular mail to all managers.

If contacted by the manager in question, is it jury tampering? Mr. Bell responded that he would let the Judge decide that matter if it occurs. Mr. Bell again advised that it is best to not discuss the matter to keep the hearing fair.

### **Buildings and Grounds:**

Mr. Keyser provided a written report from Maintenance Director Hodierne listing the status of various projects. A copy is attached.

Mr. Keyser reported that the chlorination system is in service, the elevator project will start on January 13th after the holidays, the 3 new dryers were installed, and they also replaced 13 exterior sprinkler heads as part of the ceiling project in the ambulance area.

### **Applications:**

Mr. Freeman provided a written report of the application committee meeting held on December 10, 2024 which is attached. The report indicated 74 guest in Long Term Care and 6 in Residential Care for a total of 80 guests. Since the last meeting there have been no admissions to the Home; and two residents answered their final alarm this month. There are 14 applications under review or awaiting pre-admission interview on the waiting list. There are two applications approved but are waiting until after the Holidays for admission. The next meeting for the Applications Committee is 0900 hours on Tuesday January 7, 2025 at the Home.

### **Employee Committee:**

Mr. Dutch advised that there was nothing to report other than what our Solicitor reported.

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

Mr. Hull read a written report from the December 10, 2024 meeting of the Audit and Finance Committee which is attached. The committee reviewed revenue and expense reports as well as vouchers for the period. Bills were reported in the amount of \$543,702.89.

The next meeting of the committee will be at 0800 hours on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at the Home.

### **Insurance:**

Mr. Strube was excused from the meeting and no report was provided.

### **Legislative Committee:**

Mr. Lugossy reported on bill A 3895 which amends certain fire safety statutes to update license and equipment requirements. Mr. Lugossy also reported on the Social Security Fairness act of 2023 which is moving through the House of Representatives. The bill repeals provision that reduce social security benefits from individuals who receive a pension from a state or local government, commonly known as the Windfall Elimination Provision. Bill passed 327-15 and has been sent to the US Senate.

### **By-laws:**

Mr. Apgar reported that since the new committees have been formed, he will be distributing a digitized version of the By-laws to be reviewed. Any committee that needs changes to

language, please contact Mr. Veras. The goal is to have the by-laws cleaned up such as removing the old Superintendent's name and having it ready for February.

**Museum:**

Mr. Hull advised that Mr. Heflich did an inspection on behalf of the committee and advised that the basement area needs to be cleaned of leaves, asked if maintenance can blow them out.

**Public Relations:**

Mr. Wilson reported that the committee will be meeting today after the board meeting.

**Ethics and Code of Conduct:**

Mr. Sutphen advised there was nothing he could talk about at the moment.

**Pension:**

Mr. Washer advised no report.

**Inventory:**

Mr. Wilson advised nothing new.

**Golf Committee:**

Mr. Signorello stated "progress"

**Liaison to the State Association:**

Mr. Hull reported that he attended the State Association meeting on November 23rd with committee members Mr. Keyser and Mr. Miller. Mr. Cunningham also attended the meeting. Most of the items discussed at the meeting were in President Ordway's informational report that was distributed to all managers. (attached) Mr. Hull reported that at the meeting the Home's researching an addition was discussed and concerns over financial implications. Also an email was received from a firefighter's family who was upset that after being turned down for the Home, they were not made aware of the State Association's programs. Mr. Hull addressed the State Association with regards to this and that our social workers and managers push the State Program. This one instance must have slipped through the cracks. Additionally, it was asked that communication between the State and the Home should be open. Members of the State's Home committee should not be required to have to send an OPRA request for information.

**Inspections:**

Mr. Miller advised that he conducted the inspection with Mr. Dutch. The found windows in the day room in need of cleaning and the entrance by the day room needed the exterior to be cleaned as debris was brought in when the door opened. Windows at room 223 needed cleaning as well. The roofs should also be cleared of leaves.

**Long Term Planning/Addition Committee:**

Mr. Cunningham reported the committee had a meeting on December 3, 2024 with KAE. They are a company that work only with non-profits for construction projects. At the meeting the committee discussed the scope of what they wanted.

Mr. Cunningham then read a portion of a report from the Governor's office in which they want to eliminate high occupancy rooms in nursing homes (explained as rooms with multiple guests).

Mr. Cunningham advised that KAE would provide a concept plan for the project for \$18,000.00.

~~Mr. Keyser inquired if the committee only met with one company. Mr. Sutphen responded that KAE provided initial information, free of charge. Mr. Keyser asked if, based on cost, they should be approved as a professional service.~~

Mr. Freeman inquired if this was under the threshold for professional services. Mr. Bell stated that he has not reviewed the information.

Mr. Hull inquired if we had \$18,000 as this was not budgeted for.

Mr. Ordway asked what is the project that is being referred to? Mr. Sutphen responded that we are looking to go to one guest per room. Mr. Ordway asked, what that means, is the Home looking to expand? Mr. Dutch responded that we need more rooms. Mr. Sutphen added that we are looking to expand. We need 39 rooms to achieve one guest per room. We would also renovate what rooms we currently have.

Mr. Freeman commented that the actuary study tells us how many rooms we need down the road.

Mr. Miller added that the report advised we needed 148 rooms.

Mr. Hull commented there is no rush for this project as the study's projection is 15 years out. Additionally, Mr. Hull asked for the reports from the Governor and KAE that Mr. Cunningham was reading from. Mr. Hull asked for the proposal to see the scope of the project. There were already concerns from the State that has also come back to our counties. Although separate autonomous organizations, we compete for the same funds. We need to offer the best for all firefighters. Mr. Hull made a motion that all of the information Mr. Cunningham had be sent to all managers so it can be reviewed, "digested" and then we can make informed decision, particularly since our attorney hasn't even seen it yet. Managers should also share the information with their counties. After some debate, the motion passed. Information will be distributed. (\*note: at the conclusion of the meeting, our stenographer also requested copy of what Mr. Cunningham read for the minutes)

#### **State Firemen's Association:**

President Ordway advised that it is the State's "major report" season. All reports can be done online and once the President, Secretary or Treasurer finalize their report, they will be able to see on the screen what their relief allowances are.

Mr. Freeman asked if the State will be holding more training sessions for new treasurers and secretaries. Mr. Ordway responded that you can contact your county executive to set up a workshop and there are also manuals online. Mr Apgar responded that the workshops were helpful in his area and 67 people attended the training.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

Mr. Freeman reported that the OPRA request for the number of rejected applications was processed and responded to quickly by Ms. Baumgartner.

Mr. Apgar brought up the ongoing admission policy changes. An email with a new admission policy was sent out by the committee that now indicates no changes should be made to the policy. Copy of proposal attached.

Mr. Freeman responded that the applications committee voted and they felt no change was needed. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". Mr. Apgar advised that the committee was asked for a proposal to be sent out and it never was. Mr. Keyser felt that the board could vote on the committee's policy.

There was much discussion on the floor about the admission policy. Mr. Ordway still asked what is the proposal? There has been nothing in writing voted for. No one wants to put it in writing. We received copies of submitted proposals from the secretary, but which are we voting on? Mine (Mr. Ordway's)?, Mr. Hull's? or the something else?

Mr. Keyser presented copies of the by-laws and what was sent out by the secretary. Discussion added further to the confusion on the policy.

Mr. Hull outlined the summary of the proposal in which we received something in writing that was approved as part of the Committee report in February only to have it changed verbally in the following two meetings. The verbal changes are contrary to what the managers believed they voted on in February. This was brought up over several months with the item being tabled; a different proposal from the committee being submitted; two managers submitting counter proposals and ultimately the committee's third proposal which is no change.

It was asked that an updated admission policy be put in writing and voted on. Mr. Hull advised that he will type up all of the proposals received thus far and mail them to each manager. We will vote on them one at a time. Mr. Apgar brought up that January's meeting is less than 30 days away as 30 days notice of any change is required by the by-laws. Mr. Hull advised it will be on February's agenda.

#### **New Business:**

Mr. Veras added that managers have received notice about switching over their emails to utilize a NJFH.ORG email. This is to be 100% compliant with HIPPA, particularly when attachments pertaining to guests are sent via email. All managers are asked to update the handbooks, removing their personal emails.

Mr. Joas brought up that firefighters in South Jersey seek a second home in their area. He advised that they made him aware of a nursing home for sale in Cherry Hill (490 Cooper Landing Road) The building was constructed in 1999 on 5 acres and is currently vacant. It can accommodate 103 beds.

Mr. Cunningham inquired about the price. Mr. Joas will find out.

#### **Payment of Bills:**

Mr. Hull reported the total bills in the amount of \$543,702.89. Upon motion, a roll call vote was taken and the bills payment was approved.

#### **Motions and Resolutions:**

None

#### **Public Participation:**

Essex County Executive Committeeman Rich Otterbein who is chairman of the State Association's Firemen Home Committee wished everyone a happy holidays on behalf of his committee. He asked if he could get information on the length of service of guests at the Home and those on the waiting list. He advised he has asked in the past and only received an "average" length of service for the guests.

Mr. Veras advised that he would be able to provide the information using the guest's initials and if they are currently in the Home or on the waiting list. At Mr. Apgar's request, a copy will be given to all of the managers.

---

**Executive Session:**

None had.

**Good and Welfare:**

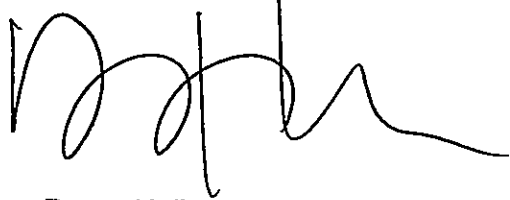
Mr. Miller presented a check for \$500 from the New Jersey Volunteer Fire Chiefs Association.

Mr. Apgar presented 82 pairs of socks that will be gifts to the residents from Hunterdon County. The socks were firefighter themed and said "First In, Last Out".

**Adjournment:**

Meeting was adjourned at 0946 hours.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RH", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roger Hull  
Secretary