

The November 9, 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. An 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. Hull commented that the Star Ledger is no longer printing newspapers and will be only digital. We are working with legal counsel to see if digital only is acceptable or if we need to find a new official newspaper.

Roll call was taken with all managers present except Ms. DeVirgilio and Mr. Apgar who were both excused.

The minutes from the October 12, 2024 Board meetings approved.

Communications:

Secretary Hull reported that there were no communications received.

Reports of Officers:

Secretary:

Mr. Hull apologized for getting notices out a little late this month as he began a new job. It won't happen again!

Treasurer:

Mr. Sutphen reported that the budget is in good shape. We all have seen a rise in prices on all ends and it that effects the cost of being a top rated facility, so keep that in mind.

Superintendent:

Mr. Veras reported in October they had a breast cancer awareness campaign with a contest on who could wear the most pink. November is men's health month and staff will be wearing blue ribbons.

The Department of Health asked to come back to visit us to review our infection control as they were impressed with us on their last visit and want to possibly use us as a model for their policy.

We are back up to 82 guest and all guests and staff are doing well.

Legal Counsel:

Mr. Bell reported that there has been an allegation of inappropriate conduct lodged against a manager by a guest. The Ethics Committee met on the matter, due process will be afforded and a hearing will be scheduled to address the allegation.

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 water treatment is ongoing and the last two tests came back negative for Legionella. The elevator parts are in and the project will be started after the holidays. The cracks in the driveway were sealed and we will do more areas in the spring. The exterior ceiling tiles outside of the laundry area have been replaced.

Applications:

Mr. Freeman provided a written report of the application committee meeting held on November 5, 2024 which is attached. The report indicated 75 guest in Long Term Care and 7 in Residential Care for a total of 82 guests. Since the last meeting there have been 3 admissions to the Home; 2 residents were discharged at their own request; and thankfully no residents answered their final alarm this month. There are 11 applications under review or awaiting pre-admission interview on the waiting list. The next meeting for the Applications Committee is 0900 hours on Tuesday December 10, 2024 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 November 5, 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 \$393,078.03. The committee reviewed two larger expenses this month which were \$35,000 to replace the ceiling tiles and soffits in the exterior ambulance entrance (laundry area) and \$52,000 for the elevator parts for the new elevator project.

The committee held discussions about the 2025-26 budget and as of the meeting we only received feedback from Mr. Ordway. Mr. Ordway requested that the proposed budget be amended and approximately \$900,000 be used from our reserves to offset the budget, lowering the funds requested from the Fire Insurance Tax. The committee discussed this at length and recommended to not use reserves this budget cycle.

The next meeting of the committee will be at 0800 hours on Tuesday, December 10, 2024 at the Home.

Insurance:

Mr. Strube advised that all was in order and there was nothing new to report.

Legislative Committee:

Mr. Lugossy reported that now that the elections were over things will start to move in the Legislature. Mr. Lugossy advised that State Vice President Hankins was in Trenton on October 24th to show support of Bill A1429 which exempts certain volunteer first responders from coverage under "Unemployment Compensation Law", excludes from gross income amounts received for certain volunteer emergency services for coverage. The bill covers both volunteer fire and first aid members for amounts received through stipends, including clothing allowance, provided by a municipality for services performed.

By-laws:

Mr. Apgar was excused and no report provided.

Museum:

Mr. Hull deferred to Mr. Lugossy who made a presentation of a historical blanket that was donated by the State Ladies Auxiliary that he accepted during an event at the Pennington Fire Department on October 19th. The flag will be displayed in the museum.

Mr. Hull reported that Mr. Heflich had also inspected the basement area and it is full of leaves again that need to be addressed.

Public Relations:

Mr. Wilson reported thanked State Vice President Hankins for coordinating the donation of 4 large bags of knitted lap throws for the guests. Mr. Wilson read a letter from the Knit and Stitch Ladies of Meadow Lakes- Whiting NJ (copy attached) who made the throws. Mr. Veras will send a thank you note.

Mr. Wilson added that now that the new committees have been established, he would like to hold a Public Relations Committee meeting after the board meeting in December to discuss ideas for the next convention.

Mr. Freeman commented that we could be presenting the wrong message by giving away things that are related to alcohol consumption.

Ethics and Code of Conduct:

Mr. Sutphen advised that they are looking into an unfortunate incident between a manager and a guest.

Pension:

Mr. Washer advised no report.

Inventory:

Mr. Wilson advised no report, everything is good.

Golf Committee:

Mr. Signorello stated "progress"

Liaison to the State Association:

Mr. Hull reported that he will be at the State's next meeting later this month and that he also had a productive phone conversation with Executive Committeeman Otterbein about the long term plans of the Home and funding concerns.

Inspections:

Mr. Mitch reported that he will be conducting the inspection with Mr. Cunningham after today's meeting and will forward any report to the Secretary to be added to the minutes and to Superintendent Veras so they could be addressed.

Long Term Planning/Addition Committee:

Mr. Sutphen reported that they have been reviewing the actuary report and he feels it should be distributed to all managers. The report projects that in 15 years we would need 142 beds. The report includes our current bed count but does not consider single beds.

Mr. Cunningham then proceed as part of the joint committee and reported that he would like to get a motion from the body to move forward on the addition project. Mr Cunningham felt that it was necessary to look at the needs of the Home and address the prevention of illness being spread. We lost 24 guests due to COVID and we owe it to them.

Mr. Ordway commented that there is NO legislation at this time requiring single beds.

A debate comparing the number of COVID deaths in nursing home facilities followed.

Mr. Hull wanted to make sure it was clear that we are NOT voting to approve any addition but rather information gathering on costs of construction and future staffing adding "there is nothing wrong with getting information".

There was discussion about if a vote was necessary for the committee to conduct assigned committee work to gather data. The committee desired an informal vote (show of hands).

Mr. Hull commented again that this was for information only.

The board approved the gathering of information, with Mr. Ordway dissenting

State Firemen's Association:

President Ordway advised no report at this time.

Unfinished Business:

None.

New Business:

Mr. Heflich commented that in March or April we were to make a decision on updating the admissions criteria changing it from one year. Mr. Heflich added that it is simple, if they are ACTIVE they qualify, it should not be they do one year, leave for thirty and come back for the benefits.

Chairman Washer advised that he has not received anything from the Applications Committee.

Mr. Freeman commented that the Actuary Study found that the average length of service of the guests is 26 years and he didn't believe we had any guests who served just one year. He added that consensus of the Application Committee is to keep the criteria the same.

Mr. Ordway brought up the fact that we held a confusing vote with regards to changing the admission policy after April 1, 2024 to seven years. There was discussion on this and if it was tabled or in effect.

Mr. Hull added that the actuary study had the original proposed change listed in it, that was or was not approved.

After discussion Mr. Strube brought up the same motion he made in August, that application committee should send out the proposal so we have it in black and white, and we vote on it in.

Mr. Keyser asked that the proposal be sent out at least two weeks in advance so it can be reviewed.

Mr. Mitch asked that the average years of service should also be sent out so the managers can make an informed decision.

Mr. Hull was asked to research previous minutes as to the vote of the original proposal.

The 2025-26 Budget was then discussed. Mr. Hull advised that there was no feedback from any managers with the exception of President Ordway. Mr. Signorello and Mr. Ordway had a disagreement about the manner in which Mr. Signorello perceived Mr. Ordway's email was distributed (utilizing "reply all").

Mr. Mitch thanked the committee for their work on the budget and commented on rising costs such as groceries.

Mr. Joas inquired as to how long the guest fees had been suspended for.

Mr. Hull responded that the rising cost of food and supplies, such as adult diapers, was a big factor in our budget considerations. Our contract with our food provider has built in increases for rising food costs. Mr. Hull then addressed the use of reserves and that the committee has discussed this at great lengths. It was agreed that we should try to hold approximately six months worth operating budget in reserve. The proposed budget has us with slightly less than six months in reserves. The guest fees were suspended two years. The resident council is aware of the fees being re-instated and ongoing discussions are held with Mr. Veras, the residents and families. We are re-instating the fees effective July 1st and even so we budgeted taking into account the possibility that not all guest have the means to pay. The committee feels the budget was appropriate and "tight". We did not recommend the use of reserves this cycle, but it can be re-visited next budget.

A motion to approve the budget as presented was made and a roll call vote was taken with Mr. Ordway being the sole "no" vote.

Payment of Bills:

Mr. Hull reported the total bills in the amount of \$393,078.03. Upon motion, a roll call vote was taken and the bills payment was approved.

Motions and Resolutions:

None

Public Participation:

Hudson County Executive Committeeman Larry Handlin asked the Application Committee, through the chair, about the number of applications they have rejected and read a letter from the family of an applicant who was rejected because they were beyond our scope of care. Mr. Handlin questioned the Home being there for ALL firefighters. Mr. Handlin asked if the actuary study projected the number of applications we would accept and how many we would possibly reject.

Mr. Sutphen advised that was not part of the study.

Mr. Freeman responded that the applications are reviewed by our professional, medical staff who determine the guest needs. If they are combative or way beyond our scope of care they would be rejected.

Mr. Handlin asked how many of our rejected applicants were referred to the State's Health Care Program, adding that the State serves approximately 450 members in their program.

Counselor Bell responded that the Home can provide the total number of rejected applicants, but the member name and health information is protected and a privacy issue. Mr. Bell added that to keep things cleaner, Mr. Handlin's request should be made as an official OPRA request.

Executive Session:

None had.

Good and Welfare:

Mr. Ordway advised that they are still trying to get a Manager for Salem County. Salem doesn't see the need for a manager as they are utilizing the State's Health Care Program.

Mr. Dutch then commented and read a letter that he had received from his County Exective Committeewoman. The letter from Mr. Ordway reported that a large addition to the Home would have effects on benefits offered by the State including reducing the death benefit.

Mr. Dutch asked if our Chairman could draft a letter about what is going on at the Home. Right now everything is just hearsay. A uniformed statement from the Home for Managers would be appropriate.

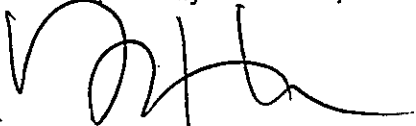
Chairman Washer advised that he would draft something up.

Mr. Ordway addressed his letter and advised that it was sent to all of the County Executives on October 15th.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 0946 hours.

Respectfully submitted,



Roger Hull
Secretary