



LAGRANGE FIRE DISTRICT

504 Freedom Plains Rd • Poughkeepsie, NY 12603



MINUTES BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS Regular Meeting – Tuesday March 26, 2024

ATTENDEES: Chairman Marc Komorsky (*absent*) Commissioner Richard Sassi
Commissioner Anthony Pignataro Commissioner Barry Ward
Commissioner Robert Taft Chief Anthony Champion
Treasurer Mark Pozniak (via Teams)
Secretary Bria Le

At 6:01 pm, Deputy Chairman Richard Sassi called the Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting to order for Tuesday, March 26th, 2024 and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He welcomed everyone to the meeting.

MINUTES: - 3/12/24 Regular Meeting, 3/14/24 Special Meeting, and 3/21/24 Special Meeting

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Pignataro and SECONDED by Commissioner Ward, the Board RESOLVED to approve the 3/12/24 Regular Meeting minutes. Sassi – Aye, Pignataro – Aye, Ward -Aye, Taft – Aye. **Motion Carried.**

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Pignataro and SECONDED by Commissioner Ward, the Board RESOLVED to approve the 3/14/24 Special Meeting minutes. Sassi – Aye, Pignataro – Aye, Ward -Aye, Taft – Aye. **Motion Carried.**

The minutes for the 3/21/24 Special Meeting were held over until there is a quorum of members that were present at the meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Tabled for Executive Session.

ROOM USE REQUESTS:

- Station 3 on April 27th for Scott Price for a birthday party. He did not include the times.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Pignataro and SECONDED by Commissioner Ward, the Board RESOLVED to approve the use of Station 3 on April 27th for Scott Price. Sassi – Aye, Pignataro – Aye, Ward -Aye, Taft – Aye. **Motion Carried.**

OLD BUSINESS/UNRESOLVED ITEMS:

- Station 1 Building Update – Commissioner Ward stated there is no change.
- Station 3 Storage Room – Commissioner Ward stated there is no change.
- Station 2 Brick Pointing – Commissioner Ward stated there is no change.
- Physicals status update – Commissioner Sassi stated there was nothing new to report.

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- Staffing Community Events – Commissioner Sassi said there was nothing new on this. Chief Champion stated there is a community event that was sent to him via a text message. He will be communicating it out to the officers so they know when and where it is.
- ESO Reporting status update –Chief Champion stated this is a work in progress. He did reach out to ESO with a couple of questions and they did get back to him. He did share that contact information with Jeff. He is going to be primary but they are working together on this project.
- Grant update –Chief Champion stated he did more paperwork for the Covid Grant 4480 to finalize that. They have an RTM meeting for closeout and then that should be done. There is no forward movement on the storm grant where they went mutual aid to Orange County. The MIG, as it relates to ballistic wear, is in Dutchess County’s hands and they are waiting to move forward on the agreement. In regard to the SAFER Grant, he just submitted additional paperwork for reimbursement. He should be getting notification back by the end of the week.
- Station 2 Meeting Room Videoconferencing System – Chief Champion stated this is a work in progress. They are waiting on one additional component and then they will schedule a time for installation and the re-addressing of the setup.
- Diesel Tank Accessories - Chief Champion stated they are still in a pending status with New York State DEC PBS. He will reach out to them when the weather breaks to work on getting the bollards. They are completing monthly inspections on the tanks out back. He did reach out to a third-party to get a formalized needs assessment on any additional containment for the tanks.
- HIPAA Compliance –Commissioner Sassi stated this is a work in progress.
- Building Repairs/Repair Requests – Commissioner Sassi asked if anybody has anything and no one did.

Commissioner Sassi asked if there was any Old Business not already on the agenda. There was none.

NEW BUSINESS: -

- Out of County Training - Chief Champion stated he has a request from volunteer Richard Sassi to attend the annual fire police seminar for updates and refresher training on April 17 to the 24th. He is requesting a district vehicle for the 17th only. He is already a member of the Association so there is no cost for the training. It is in Putnam County.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Ward and SECONDED by Commissioner Pignataro, the Board RESOLVED to send firefighter Sassi to attend the annual fire police seminar for updates and refresher training on April 17-24 and the use of a district vehicle on the 17th. Ward– Aye, Pignataro – Aye, Sassi – abstain, Taft – Aye.
Motion Carried.

- In County Training – Chief Champion has two individuals who would like to take Fire Officer 1. It is Joseph Zaluski and Randi Skuza. They have both been sent to Fire Instructor 1 and this is the next logical step. They will be able to assist in running classes. It is a two week program.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Pignataro and SECONDED by

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Commissioner Taft, the Board RESOLVED to send Firefighter Zaluski and Firefighter Skuza to Fire Officer 1. Sassi – Aye, Pignataro – Aye, Ward – Aye, Taft – Aye. **Motion Carried.**

Chief Champion stated he had a few additional items under training. Probationary Firefighters Pierson and Tambini are assigned to groups have been there for a few shifts now. They are doing well. They're training in the EMS and fire side and are nearing completion on the tasks that were allocated to them. If everything stays on track they should be to the minimums by the mid to the end of April. At that point they become minimums and would bring all groups up to 8.

Additionally, Chief Champion met with Central Hudson today at the high school. They are planning a community gas emergency exercise to be coordinated with neighboring departments and DCSO. He believes this will be happening in June. As that develops, he will continue to bring information forward. He will probably ask to bring people back in for overtime to cover their participation.

There is additional training as it relates to active shooter situations. The County is spearheading a Train the Trainer Course in April. Lieutenant Rancourt and Firefighter Henry are attending. They will be conducting a tabletop exercise in May, with plans to run a larger drill in August.

- Stericycle - Chief Champion stated he sent this out in an e-mail and it is also in the Teams folder. This pertains to the disposal of sharps and expired medications. In the past the hospital has been fine with using their disposal system, but LaGrange's sharps containers have grown in size. The hospital is looking to cut back on things, and they asked the outside agencies not fill up their containers. Chief Champion said Firefighter/Medic Whalen has been doing all of the work on this and has found the quote. FF/Medic Whalen stated Stericycle is the company used by Mobile Life. They take sharps containers and regular bio hazard. You get a cardboard box with the red liner and once you fill it up, they come and take it away. The quote is for one time each quarter. They also do a once per year pharmaceutical waste pickup. It is either an eight- or eighteen-gallon container that you fill up with expired medications. Right now, the expired medications go into a box. They have really no way to dispose of them. The monthly service does include the pharmaceutical pickup. That is only once per year. He did work with the Chief and Lieutenant Merritt and they believe once a year for the expired meds is enough. You could also put regular red bags in the boxes as well as sharps. Once it is filled, they will need to locate a place to secure the box until pickup. Boxes from the stations will come here for one location pickup. The cost of \$131.00 per month includes the sharps, bio-waste, and pharmaceuticals.

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Pignataro and SECONDED by Commissioner Ward, the Board RESOLVED to accept the Stericycle estimate for \$131 per month for a budget subscription as presented. Sassi – Aye, Pignataro – Aye, Ward – Aye, Taft – Aye. **Motion Carried.**

REPORTS: (by officers present)

- **Treasurer Pozniak**

Treasure Pozniak stated they do have Positive Pay up and running with the bank. He believes it will go a long way towards preventing future fraud. There were a few little bumps in the beginning, but this should be a good thing. The second thing is that for the first 10 or 11 years

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that he was treasurer the Board received bank statements and reconciliation of financial statements each month. That did not happen for most of 2023 due to a variety of reasons. They should now have access to all of those bank reconciliations for their approval. The expectation is that the Board should have those on a monthly basis and last year should be the exception. He stated the same goes for the financial reports. He is not in his home office, but he did prepare 2023 numbers for the Board. He will send out the actual numbers when he gets home, but he believes there was a net operating surplus of approximately \$1.2 million last year. The windfalls are largely from the FEMA grant, which was the Covid money and the amount of the money for the EMS cost recovery income netted over \$800,000.00 after paying the fee. Commissioner Pignataro asked if that was a December 31 statement or a March 31 statement. Treasure Pozniak stated it was December 31. This is the additional cash generated from last year's calendar year. It is the revenues in excess of their expenditures. They normally budget to break even. That gets added to the fund balance, which is already 1.8 million. He does know there are some challenges coming up so that money shouldn't get spent right now. It does mean they have a little bit more of a buffer than they have had prior years. Commissioner Ward asked if their spend rate per month was between \$350,000 and \$400,000. Treasure Pozniak said yes, if you back out some big expenditures. Commissioner Ward stated to get to March 31 they need approximately \$1.2 to \$1.5 million. Right now they are at approximately \$3 million. He stated ESO has a different way of recording everything. Bria is doing most of the work, with a little counseling from him, to get better overtime information for the Board. He asked if she had any luck yesterday and she said a little. Commissioner Pignataro stated he appreciates the information and it is good to know exactly where they are.

- **Chief Anthony Champion**

Thank you – The Mulford family was grateful for the engine and fire presentation at Ed Mulford's services and wake. He thanked the Board for their support.

Updates – Chief Champion said he is still waiting on a second quote for the cores for the keys to change out all of the cores in the building to a singular key. There is no forward movement on that at this time.

He is in process with Lieutenant Kile and the other officers to standardize the presentation of the flags of the firehouse when it comes to deceased members.

The Chief reached out to Personal Touch Flooring to do the floors upstairs in the chief's office and District office. The bid is under his purchasing purview, and he will forward that estimate to the Board. They're looking to have that done on the 17th through 19th of next month. They are looking for a date to coordinate with IT to come in and deal with disassembling, moving, & reassembling the computers and electronics during that project. Commissioner Pignataro asked who was going to move all the furniture and Chief Champion stated he is going to ask the on-duty staff if they could help. They have also enlisted the services of Hudson Valley Office Furniture. They came in today to help with various ideas for furniture placement. They will be having additional conversations as they move forward.

The recognition and ceremony that was held a few weeks ago was much appreciated. The Chief is trying to get a meeting set up with Senator Rollins' office in recognition of the individuals that were instrumental in the water rescue last summer. That date has yet to be

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determined. He does have the data from City Poughkeepsie and Arlington for their participation as well.

Membership - On the volunteer side, the membership committee comprised of Joan Siebert, Bob Michael, Art Holzmann, Jeff Kaiser, and Rick Bohlinger did meet with two applicants. The Chief is awaiting those recommendations based on the interviews. He does have something to discuss in executive session regarding the membership committee for a personal aspect. The Chief asked the committee members if they were still interested in being involved in this committee and they all still are. He sat with them prior to the meeting and gave them the outlines for firefighter, exterior, interior, and EMTs. He went through the process to make sure that they communicate with incoming perspective numbers the time commitments, what is needed of them, what training is required of them, and what steps they are going to need to take. He gave them the information for LOSAP and pertaining to driving. They went through it and now we are waiting for their recommendations. Then they will be sent for their physicals depending on what they are doing. We are trying to adhere to the outline steps that have been in place and be consistent.

Mutual Aid - Multiple companies have reached out looking to utilize LaGrange for FAST operations on their structure fires. They do have minimal structure fires throughout the year. They are willing to split their districts between using Lagrange and a department from Connecticut. This has happened because LaGrange notified the County that they are FAST capable. Last year they asked LaGrange to give a tanker for their assisted living on the other side of Route 22. This does fall under mutual aid for neighboring departments. The Chief has told them that if LaGrange gets used in a fashion that they don't prefer, this will be revisited and possibly rescinded. Beekman is trying to incorporate LaGrange into some of their assignments so the Chief will be discussing that with them. This is closer to LaGrange so there may be a mutual benefit use. This will be a slow discussion. EMS is clearly separate from this. Arlington has moved forward with their EMS. Chief Champion has not heard how that is going. They have kept it in-house for 30 days and after that will be opening up for mutual aid departments. Commissioner Ward stated he does believe mutual aid issues will increase with the fire service dwindling and they do have exposure with 207A as the Mutual Aid Plan only covers equipment and not personnel. This is a topic they need to address. He believes there are two options. The first is alteration of the mutual aid plan. He does not believe that will happen. Second would be does Lagrange consider some sort of individual agreements with surrounding entities that want to start using Lagrange as mutual aid. Chief Champion stated even if he says no to them Lagrange is still obliged due to participation in the Mutual Aid Plan. Commissioner Ward stated there is a reasonable-ness to this and going to Dover does not seem reasonable. He does understand the dilemma the Chief has. It doesn't seem reasonable for the taxpayers in Lagrange to own a 207A that could potentially cost millions of dollars for mutual aid that could insure against it. They do have options in terms of how to address that liability. This is something that needs to be thought through before somebody gets hurt. Commissioner Pignataro asked what their financial options would be. Commissioner Ward stated he did not know but he thinks they need to think about what could be done to address LaGrange's liability. There may be a way for them to insure against it. Chief Champion stated that when they have a structure fire, they ask for mutual aid companies to cover them for a FAST Team. They are looking to change their coverage as well so that would also increase

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mutual aid companies' liability. Commissioner Ward stated that the 207A liability is far greater than the volunteer department's workers comp. There is a parity between Arlington, Lagrange, and Poughkeepsie. An all-volunteer organization does not have the same exposure. That would be a risk that the commissioners are accepting on behalf of the taxpayers of LaGrange. Attorney Hekle stated there is a principle of negotiation. If the liability is far greater in the situation with the volunteer districts, would they be willing to do something. He's not sure where that leaves LaGrange. Mutual aid companies may not be willing to take on the potential exposure. Commissioner Pignataro asked if there is a way for them to insure for this. Attorney Hekle stated he did not believe there was. Commissioner Sassi asked if there was a way for them to insure against it for themselves. This becomes a point of negotiation and this is something they need to look into. Attorney Hekle stated he does believe the Board has visited this conversation several times over the years. Commissioner Ward stated this has been discussed in the past for EMS but sending their ambulance in is very different than sending their paid firefighters. Commissioner Ward stated he is not sure where this could go but if they discussed this with commissioners of Arlington and Fairview this might be something that could be addressed in the Mutual Aid Plan. Attorney Hekle stated if there is some consensus and forward movement on this, their next step would be to see how they can contractually bring this to reality by limiting their exposure. Commissioner Ward stated he is willing to talk to other commissioners. Chief Champion stated this also runs parallel with special operations. Commissioner Ward stated the special ops were funded by the State, but this is a slippery slope and he would rather address it up front rather than wait for a crisis to appear.

EMS - Chief Champion said this is still an ongoing process researching with the Medical Director aspect. In conjunction with Lieutenant Merritt, they are going to meet with the Medical Director within the next few weeks to get signatures for CME re-certifications. The ongoing piece is bringing in the new director. He would like to get something together for legal to look at on the Board to review. BLS core classes will begin March 26 at Arlington Station 2. They have pushed this out to the membership so they are aware the training is coming up. Attorney Hekle asked if there was a prior contract with the past Medical Director that they can work off of. Chief Champion stated there is nothing substantial to work off of. They can work together to figure something out. The state and region are recommending some sort of compensation to the Medical Director. Previously the Medical Director has not received anything. He is looking to make things right if the State and the standard is to do this. Commissioner Ward questioned that not been any agreement. Chief Champion stated that Bria and he both looked and they found a one-page document. Attorney Hekle would like to look at that as some parts of it may still be valid. Chief Champion stated they did have one for Doctor Strauss that he can get to Attorney Hekle. Commissioner Sassi asked if there was any forward motion on the County EMS and Chief Champion said not at this time.

Safety Committee Reports - Chief Champion stated the last meeting he did communicate that there were concerns with reports coming from the Safety Committee. They are all now under the Board of Fire Commissioners in the Teams folder. He has not had a chance to sign and return them yet.

Executive Session – Chief Champion does have two personnel items for executive session.

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Chief Champion said he will be leaving the district on April 1 with Jen to attend the ESO seminar and training. After that he will be back for the weekend and then he plans to go to Maine for the eclipse and will be back on Friday. He will also be going away in May for two weeks as well. He has started to inform line staff of that so they know will be away.

- **Department** –there was no one.
- **Union** – There was nothing to report.

ABSTRACT: \$23,068.59

Upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Pignataro and SECONDED by Commissioner Taft, the Board RESOLVED to pay the bills for the month of March as per the abstract for \$23,068.59. Pignataro – Aye, Ward– Aye, Sassi– Aye, Taft – Aye. **Motion carried.**

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

At 6:45 PM, Commissioner Sassi opened the meeting to public comments.

At 6:47 PM, Commissioner Sassi closed the public comment section of the meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

At 6:48 PM, upon a MOTION made by Commissioner Pignataro and SECONDED by Commissioner Taft, the Board RESOLVED to go into Executive Session to discuss two personnel issues from the Chief, one contractual issue from Commissioner Ward, one contractual issue from Commissioner Sassi. Sassi – Aye, Pignataro – Aye, Ward – Aye, Taft – Aye. **Motion carried.**

OPEN SESSION:

At 8:02 PM, the Board resumed Open Session.

Commissioner Sassi asked if there was anything else to be discussed. There was nothing.

PREPARE 4/09/24 MEETING AGENDA: Secretary Le will prepare this.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 8:03 PM, upon a Motion made by Commissioner Pignataro and SECONDED by Commissioner Ward, the Board RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting. Ward – Aye, Pignataro – Aye, Sassi – Aye, Taft – Aye. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted by Julie Beyer on behalf of Bria Le – District Secretary
Approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners on 4/9/24

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