

Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS Commissioners' Meeting

Meeting Called By: Commissioners
Transcribed By: Courtney Palmer

Date, Time: 10/03/23, 5:30 PM
Location: Tilton Town Hall
Downstairs Meeting Room
257 Main Street
Tilton, NH

Call to Order

Commissioner Auger called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

Attendance

Commissioners Paul Auger, Eric Pyra, Tim Sattler; Chief Michael Sitar, Deputy Chief Michael Robinson, Deputy Sean Valovane and Administrative Manager Kathy Tobine

Building Committee: Paul Blaisdell, Kevin Waldron, Dennis Manning, Nathan Langione

Reports of Committees

Building Committee

Commissioner Sattler reported the Building Committee met last night. There was frustration that the Commissioners have not moved forward with their recommendation. The Committee was frustrated they are not moving along faster and are getting crunched up against the timeline with the March meeting and info sessions.

Paul commented that there was frustration from members of the Building Committee on what would be presented to the public, should the building proposal move forward. They decided to push forward, target March, and keep realistic goal to put in for 2025. There were questions about the value of Center Street and selling it rather than demolishing and paving. The Committee feels they should continue their work, get the answers to questions but not force it or push too hard for this year. They are still going to do informational meetings at the library. There are two meetings scheduled for November and a third meeting is being decided on for either November or December, on a weekday. He stated that his goal for the meetings is to bring the public up to date on where everything is today. Everything stated at the meetings should be the same for each meeting, which is why there should be an agenda.

Kevin commented that the transfer of property could end up being lopsided. Part of the agreement requires the fire district to spend money. He questioned how they would get that approved and passed by the voters.

Dennis commented that the assessed value of Center Street station is \$205,000. The Sanborn Rd. site is around 2.4 acres and over that \$200,000 threshold.

Nate commented that if the building were to be sold to a private individual or entity it would need to undergo a change of use if it were to be used for anything other than a fire station. It would need to pass building and fire inspections for a certificate of occupancy.

Deputy Chief Robinson asked if they had received any word on the historical value of the building. Chief Sitar replied that as long as they are not using federal funds to demolish the building, there is no Historic National Registry requirement.

Paul asked if there was any conversation about the Selectboard signing over the land to the Fire District without a public hearing. Commissioner Auger commented that he didn't see how they could do that. Commissioner Sattler commented that the discussion they had was targeted to a land swap for Center Street with the stipulation that the building would be removed and land

paved over. Plan B was not discussed with them. Commissioner Auger commented that they should own it. Then, the Selectboard mentioned the swap with stipulations.

Paul commented one of his concerns on the communications tower was what effect that was going to have on the lot at Park Street. What they see now is high tension lines crossing that lot and a high-pressure gas line that goes through the center of the lot that makes the lot unusable. They could add 2-1/2 bays on that building with that electric line there. That is not an unaffected footprint. They have taken that lot and removed 1/3 of it from being buildable.

Nate commented that, according to Loureiro, they cannot add an addition to the current building or add another building that exceeds more than 50% of the existing value of the building without bringing the building up to code.

Commissioner Sattler commented that the Commissioners and the selectmen have an understanding. He stated that the lawyers will need to go over everything before anything can be done.

Commissioner Sattler stated that he doesn't think they should use the arrangement with the Town of Tilton to hold up the process. The Commissioners created the current committee to move forward with coming up with a proposal for a station at Park Street. The Commissioners have changed the goal. The Committee has made a recommendation for the Commissioners.

Chief Sitar commented that they signed a contract with Loureiro for them to deliver for the current district meeting. It might change the contract if it is pushed off by a year. Commissioner Auger stated that if this goes to the meeting this year and the voters vote it down, they have lost everything.

Paul stated that if the new station is not built on the Sanborn Rd. property, the fire district doesn't get the land. There was further discussion on this.

Dennis questioned where the disconnect is with the swap.

Commissioner Sattler commented about the conversation had with the selectman and the arrangement. There doesn't seem to be an incentive for the town to sell that property if there won't be a station on it.

Paul asked for guidance from the Commissioners about whether the Committee should focus on building two stations. The Committee will be looking into space needs.

Commissioner Auger stated that if they propose two stations, he believes that people will be happier with that.

Dennis discussed the "race to March" and how he would like to get more concrete details nailed down before presenting to the district.

Paul stated that the firemen on the Committee are not participating. He asked if both Deputy Chiefs could come to the next Committee meeting on October 23rd. Deputy Chief Robinson agrees to go to the meeting with Chief Sitar's approval. Paul stated that the Committee should give the firemen currently on the Committee a chance to come to the next couple of meetings and if they still cannot make it, they will discuss replacing them.

Paul asked for clarification if the Commissioner's guidance for the Committee would be to keep moving forward, aiming for this year, or would it be to take a step back. Commissioner Sattler questioned if they need to decide that right now. Nate stated that it would be ideal to have an update from Loureiro and the selectman for both sites by the next meeting.

Commissioner Sattler stated that the Committee should not worry about the agreement with the Town of Tilton because if they want to own that piece of property before moving forward, it is not going to happen. He stated that he is fine with spending money on designs for a property they do not own.

Chief Sitar stated that Loureiro is on hold right now because they thought they would have direction by now.

Commissioner Sattler asked what two stations would add to the cost. Chief Sitar commented that when they had the Manville Rd and Park Street proposals, the Park Street proposal included bringing that building up to code with four bays in the front and a living area in the back. That was just shy of \$2 million with the footprint staying the same. It did include a hose tower addition and shed roof construction. The Manville Rd. proposal was around \$5 million for 14,000sqft. That land was donated. \$500,000 was for bringing the water line from in front of the hotel all the way to the site.

Chief Sitar stated that he could bring that older proposal to the Building Committee.

Chief's Report

Budget

- The 2022 audit has occurred. We are waiting for the final documentation.
- The 2023 Budget has been expended 72.1%. We are 75% through the fiscal year.
- Total Apparatus and Equipment Fund Balance through September: \$844,866.36.
- 2023 Ambulance Revenue through September: \$394,866.28.

Commissioner Auger asked what the revenue looks like compared to last year at this time. Kathy reported that at this time last year the revenue was \$383,484.40.

Pressurized Hydrant Use

- No use in September 2023.

Fire Prevention Report for September 2023

- Report included in handout.
- For the Month of September, there were 62 Fire Prevention inspections.

Commissioner Sattler asked for the status on The Preserve. Deputy Valovanie informed the Board that they are changing the name so it won't be The Preserve. They are on time with section A which will be done in about 2 weeks. Then, they will move to the next section. They are waiting for the DOT to approve the berm, so they can pave. He stated that he believes they are on time to finish for July or August of next year.

Commissioner Sattler asked the status on Business Park Drive. Deputy Valovanie responded that it is almost ready.

Deputy Robinson wanted to know the status of Cross Mill Rd. Deputy Valovanie responded that he has heard they are doing things quickly. Their hydrant is operational, but has not been tested.

Run Report for September 2023

- Run report included in handout.
- For the Month of September, we had 188 incidents.
- 129 of the incidents were EMS in nature and that equates to 69% of our total incident volume for the month.
- The engine responded with the ambulance to 50 EMS & MVA incidents last month.

Overlapping/Simultaneous Incidents for September 2023

- Report included in handout.
- We had 96 overlapping/simultaneous incidents for the month.
- Overlapping/simultaneous incidents accounted for 51% of all incidents for the Month of August.
- We received six mutual aid Ambulance responses, one transported.
- We responded to two mutual aid Ambulance requests, one transported.
- We received one mutual aid Engine responses.
- We responded to five mutual aid Engine requests.

Apparatus

- E1 going to Dingees for Warranty Work.

- E2 going to Dingees for many small repairs.
- T1 parts have been ordered for leaking air can. It will be repaired next week at Lakes Region.
- Forestry was repaired at Irving for motor problems.

Website

- Adjustments to the new website are ongoing.
- Training is available to department administrators.
- The launch will take place when all adjustments are made.

Central Maine Cost Recovery

- They are having problems getting information from the PDs which has stalled their efforts in billing insurance companies. I discussed with them on 08/11/23 to go over different methods of getting the information. Some PDs interpret the NH personal privacy law differently.
- Government agencies are allowed to get the information. CMCR is an agent for TNFD and should be able to obtain the information.

Grants

- SAFER Grant is up to date on reimbursements.
- Homeland Security Grant has been awarded in the amount of \$53,853.00 for radio infrastructure upgrades. Equipment has been ordered.
- Applied for a FY 2022 SAFER Grant to extend current SAFER Employees another three years. The grants were awarded and TNFD was not selected. We do not fit any of their criteria for an extension.

Center Street

- New security and access control system is running.

Park Street

- Cell tower is operational.
- Receiving monthly checks of \$1,537.50 for rent on the tower lease.
 - The rent will be adjusted upward as tenants come online.
 - The power was shut off to the radio shelter for non-payment. TNFD never received a bill. The power is now back on.

SAFER Effect

- Average response time to second or greater calls: 07:18 from 22:30.
- The cost of a SAFER Firefighter in 2022 would have been \$0.04/\$1,000 on the tax rate in Northfield and \$0.07/\$1,000 in Tilton.

Personnel

- The Captain Promotional Assessment Center Process was conducted on September 21, 2023. The results of the process will be announced shortly.

Water District

- Notice of Jury Trial
 - One day trial anywhere between January 22, 2024, and February 2, 2024.

Currently Working On

- 2024 Budget:
 - Operating
 - Removed Repairs, Maintenance and Service as voted at last year's District Meeting.
 - Health Insurance is expected to increase by 15.6%.
 - Apparatus & Equipment
 - Added Repairs, Maintenance and Service as voted at District Meeting.
 - This will shift approximately \$76,000 from the Operating Budget to the Apparatus & Equipment Replacement Fund.

New Business

Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2023 Public

Commissioner Satter made a motion to move the minutes of September 12, 2023, to the floor for discussion. Commissioner Pyra seconded the motion. Commissioner Sattler questioned the amount in the in the minutes. He questioned the amount in the Southwick Family Trust Fund. It was accurate.

Commissioner Auger made a motion to accept the minutes of 9.12.23. Commissioner Pyra seconded the motion. A vote was taken. The motion was passed.

September 14, 2023 Public

Commissioner Sattler made a motion to accept the minutes of September 14, 2023, as written. Commissioner Pyra seconded the motion. After discussion, the minutes were incomplete. Commissioner Sattler withdrew his motion and Commissioner Pyra withdrew his second, pending completion of the minutes.

September 26, 2023 Public

Commissioner Sattler made a motion to accept the minutes of September 26, 2023, as written. Commissioner Pyra seconded the motion. Discussion ensued. Recommended changes were made concerning curb cut and timeline - stating that Chief Sitar would look into the curb cut. Chief Sitar commented he has contacted District 3 regarding the curb cut but has not heard back from them.

Commissioner Sattler withdrew his motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Auger withdrew his second. Minutes will be reviewed after they are finished.

September 12, 2023 Nonpublic Session I

Commissioner Auger made a motion to accept the minutes of September 12, 2023, of the Nonpublic Session I as written. Commissioner Pyra seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

September 12, 2023 Nonpublic Session II

Commissioner Auger made a motion to accept the minutes of September 12, 2023, of the Nonpublic Session II as written. Commissioner Pyra seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Any Other Business

The manifests of September 12th were reviewed and signed.

Public Comment

Kevin Waldron

Kevin stated he is no longer a member of the Budget Committee.

He mentioned that insurance is going to go up 15% and that they have no more SAFER Grant money.

Kevin asked about the SAFER Committee. Chief Sitar responded that the SAFER Committee came up with some recommendations, the biggest being, move some items from the operating budget to the apparatus and equipment fund to help offset cost. Those items being moved would be repairs, maintenance, and service contracts. This would be about \$86,000 in the budget. This would not cover the cost of one person. Another recommendation was an increase in ambulance revenue.

Kevin asked about the status of the water department situation. Chief Sitar responded that there will be a jury trial in January, but he cannot discuss anymore specifics at this time.

Kevin recommended that the Commissioners take advantage of NHMA classes.

Kevin questioned the decision that was made to allow the Fire Chief to live outside of the district. He asked for an explanation on if/how that has been beneficial to the district. He stated that he doesn't believe it has benefitted the district at all. He commented that both career Chiefs and career vehicles are out of the district up to 16 hours per day. He questioned when the Chief will retire as it had previously been stated as 2024, but that may not be the case anymore.

He stated that as a member of both the Commissioners and the Building Committee, Commissioner Sattler gets two votes on everything related to the new station. He went on to say that no one should get two votes on the same items in the same organization.

Kevin disagreed that two buildings would pass for more money. He stated that the more you change your mind, the less you look like you know what you are doing.

Any Other Business

Commissioner Sattler commented about updating the CIP. It should be reviewed. He mentioned the apparatus and equipment fund and the ambulance that will need to be purchased in a couple of years that could cost anywhere from \$400,000 to \$500,000. Chief Sitar stated that last year they voted to use money from the apparatus and equipment fund for repairs and service contracts. That amount is about \$86,000. Commissioner Sattler stated at some point there will be all of this money sitting in the account, and it will be more than they need for new equipment. Since that fund is very specific on what it can be used for, that money may just sit in the account unused. He would like the Commissioners to look into how much money is in the apparatus and equipment fund and how much will be added in the next couple of years to determine if they can withdraw funds from the account to use elsewhere.

Commissioner Pyra asked what the bond rate is for the station over 20 years. Chief Sitar responded that he believes it is about 5%. He asked what the dollar amount is. There was no answer.

Regarding ambulance billing, Chief Sitar commented that the legislature, in their last session, passed that Medicaid will be paying the same as Medicare for transports, which is almost a 100% increase in what they were paying before. They are also looking at working with commercial insurance carriers. They are working to come up with a reasonably accepted payment rate for private insurance carriers, which is 19.9% of payments. They are paying close to the same as Medicare rates. The average cost of a transport is about \$2,000.

Chief Sitar stated that he had a meeting with Senator Prentiss about treating a patient and then not going to the hospital. They cannot charge for that, but private commercial insurance carriers do have a code for that. If you put in for it they will pay you. The other situation is trying to get Medicare to do the same thing. 65% of revenue is derived from Medicare and Medicaid.

Commissioner Pyra commented about attending the WRHS Football game on Saturday. There was a firefighter at the game and he introduced himself as a SAFER guy. They need to stop referring to them as SAFER guys. They are firefighters for the Tilton-Northfield Fire District.

Commissioner Sattler commented he does not agree with separating out the cost of the SAFER grant employees as a warrant article. Commissioner Auger said he wanted to have that separate because he wanted the public to see the cost of four guys.

Deputy Valovane commented he agrees with Commissioner Pyra to some extent. He added that from the beginning they were given a different training budget, so they are different. He stated that out in the community there hasn't been 100% support for them. They can say they are the same, but they feel different, attacked and not secure.

Nonpublic Session

Commissioner Auger made a motion to enter nonpublic session per RSA 91-A:3, II(c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, **other than a member of this board**, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to include any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine or

other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant. Commissioner Pyra seconded the motion.

Roll Call vote to enter nonpublic session: Paul Auger, Yes; Eric Pyra, Yes; Timothy Sattler, Yes
Motion passed. Nonpublic session was entered at 8:03 P.M.

Commissioner Auger made a motion to leave the nonpublic session. Commissioner Pyra seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote to exit nonpublic session: Paul Auger, Yes; Timothy Sattler, Yes
Motion passed.

Public session reconvened at 8:15 P.M.

Commissioner Auger commented that they reviewed and acted upon the Disposition Reports.

No motion was made to seal these minutes.

Any Other Business

Commissioner Sattler commented that the Chief received a call from Jeanie Forester. Chief Sitar commented that she would contact the chairman of the selectboard to make sure that they get on the agenda for Thursday, 10.5.2023. She wanted to know if he would be at the meeting with Commissioner Auger. Chief Sitar stated that he would be willing to go if Commissioner Auger would like him to. Commissioner Sattler commented that the purpose of meeting with the selectboard is to confirm the land agreement and ask for what they view as next steps. He also mentioned the water easement and apologizing if this information was supposed to remain non-public. He mentioned discussing some of the scenarios that the Building Committee has been discussing as well. Chief Sitar added that Commissioner Auger may want to talk to the selectboard about how the selectman are not required to have a town meeting vote to approve the sale of land. Would that warrant article be binding or just advisory?

Adjournment

Commissioner Pyra made a motion to adjourn at 8:21 P.M. Commissioner Auger seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney Palmer

Courtney Palmer
Administrative Assistant

Next Meeting Date, Time, Place:

October 17, 2023, 5:30 P.M.
Tilton Police Station
Community Room
45 Sanborn Road
Tilton, NH