

Minutes

Kingston Fire District
Board of Wardens Meeting
27 February 2020

Present: Wardens Sandra Koerner, Elizabeth McNab, Bill Flatley and Mark Barabe. Also present were Tax Collector Linda Mendillo, URI Director of Public Safety & Chief of Police Stephen Baker, Chief Nate Barrington and Office Manager Jenifer Madison.

Absent: Warden Ina Sciabarrasi, Treasurer Tom Vignali and Deputy Chief Tom Reed.

Call to Order: Vice-President Koerner called the Board of Wardens Meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Information/Comments/Questions from the Public: There were no questions or comments from the public.

Old Business:

Motion: McNab motioned made and Flatley seconded a motion to move the Radio Communications System Project to the top of the Agenda.

Koerner, McNab, Flatley and Barabe voted to pass the motion. Sciabarrasi was absent.

- **Radio Communications System Project Update:** Flatley presented a report. He noted that he and Barabe, as appointed representatives for KFD, attended the radio project meeting held in the South Kingstown Council chambers on February 26th 2020, along with all members of the Town Council and representatives from Union Fire District (UFD), South Kingstown Police Department and South Kingstown Emergency Medical Services. Flatley let the Board know that Town Manager Robert Zarnetske, Finance Director Zack Saul and Fire Alarm Superintendent Lance Whaley gave a presentation which included information on: radio waves and differences in frequencies; the town's experience with the 800 frequency, how it was implemented and ensuing problems; and an overview of the current five year proposed project including assessment and resolutions. He noted that information was provided about the town-sponsored engineering study and the process of implementing a UHF system that gives better land and building coverage. Flatley let the Board know that the current status of the project is to solicit a Request for Proposals (RFP) sometime in late March 2020 to solicit bids to install an all inclusive town-wide UHF system and noted that a bond proposal is the most likely route to finance the project. Flatley noted that depending on the project's actual costs, KFD's contribution would be based on its tax rate of 5.3% and that given the high estimate of the project at \$3 million, KFD's contribution would be about \$39,750. He let the board know this would cover infrastructure, dispatch upgrades, and three years of

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infrastructure maintenance and that a four to twelve-year maintenance agreement would follow the initial maintenance agreement with a similar cost share. In terms of the timeline, Flatley noted that a more realistic figure should be available late summer 2020 after the bids are vetted by the consultants and the Radio Committee, a formal agreement would most likely be formed some time after bond approval and a realistic time frame for actual implementation is 18 to 24 months out. Flatley also let the Board know that the overall cost figure could realistically be 30 to 35% less which would decrease KFD's obligation by the same percentage.

Barabe added that Whaley has already obtained three additional frequencies and South Kingstown already has 14; KFD and UFD have nine together already. Flatley noted that this project will get KFD out of the business of managing radio system infrastructure maintenance, but we will still manage our portables, although there was some discussion of also having a radio subscription fee per unit for each agency. Barrington let the Board know that he thought it was inappropriate that he was told not to attend the meeting and that it was humiliating. Barrington stated that this was a bad plan noting that the portables will not work on digital encryption. He let the Board know that he sent an alternate proposal that would cost \$2.2 million and would allow South Kingstown to use the 800 system, especially since the new Charlestown tower is going up. Flatley stated that he does not agree with Barrington on this and stated that the Town's proposal does not totally do away with the 800 system and that some of it will still be used. Barrington noted that the proposal would work on the fire side and that KFD is able to contribute the \$40,000 cost share.

Discussion ensued. Koerner asked how the Wardens wanted to proceed. She apologized to Barrington for feeling left out but explained that the Board decided to move in the direction of having the Wardens represent KFD during the radio system meetings. Flatley stated that this is what was decided at KFD's Radio Committee Meeting last week and emphasized that he does not agree that the Town's proposal is a bad plan. Flatley let the Board know that the Town and UFD are moving forward with the proposal with or without KFD. He noted that it would not affect our budget this year but probably two years out. He noted that the Town and UFD have been moving in this direction for the past five years and have been putting funds away for it. Flatley also noted that UFD paid for the study by Federal Engineering and that it was not a study conducted by vendors. Barrington disagreed and stated that Federal Engineering are still vendors. Flatley let the Board know that the costs and details of the Town's proposal are still being worked out over the next seven months and then it will be put up as a bond issue. He noted that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be put in place for the RFP but that it cannot be drawn up until the costs are known. Flatley said that the initial numbers are most likely higher than what will be actualized and will come down as the process continues and we incorporate current pieces of the system in place instead of just starting from scratch as the proposal looks right now. Flatley let the Board know that he thinks KFD will be able to wrap our cost share into the bond and pay the Town back. Koerner asked what the next steps were in the process. Flatley stated that the next step is to put out the RFP and await the results which will probably come in during the summer and then put together the plan and costs. Barabe added that Federal

Engineering will be vetting the bids but that the Town Council and Radio Committee will make the final decisions. Barabe noted that Zarnetske talked about using the bid that presented the best value. Flatley said that our goal is to protect the community and having a radio communication system that provides the best safety for our firefighters, since radio communications are a lifeline for first responders, and protects our citizens and URI. McNab stated that she wants to make sure that we consider URI in this proposal since they are our biggest customer. Discussion continued around the fact that KFD has written a lot of the grants that helped fund the current system. Barabe noted that we will be keeping the 800 radios in inventory to communicate with URI, Narragansett, etc. Barabe also let the Board know that we can't manage the town's dispatch but that we can continue to voice our concerns over dispatch issues and keep track of liability issues. Koerner thanked everyone and the Board agreed to keep this discussion going. There was no further discussion or questions.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: McNab made and Barabe seconded a motion to accept the Minutes from the Wardens Meeting on 01/23/20. The minutes were reviewed. There were no questions.

Koerner, McNab and Barabe voted to pass the motion. Sciabarrasi was absent. Flatley abstained since he was absent during the 1/23/20 meeting.

Tax Collector's Report:

Motion: Flatley made and Barabe seconded a motion to accept the Tax Collector's Report.

Mendillo presented the Tax Collector's Report. The Board reviewed the report. Mendillo let the Board know that the 2019 Tax Roll collection rate was at 93%. She also let the Board know that notices of tax sale policy were sent to five taxpayers in January who had unpaid tax bill for two or more years. These accounts are noted in the report. Mendillo noted that no payments from these taxpayers have been received to date and tax sale proceedings will begin at the end of March. She also let the Board know that first notices of delinquency will be sent tomorrow to 26 taxpayers whose 2019 tax bill is delinquent. There was no further discussion or questions.

Koerner, McNab, Flatley and Barabe voted to pass the motion. Sciabarrasi was absent.

URI Report:

Motion: Flatley made and McNab seconded a motion to accept the URI report.

Baker presented the URI Report. The Board reviewed the report. Baker let the Board know that on February 19th, 2020, the URI Department of Public Safety became an E-911 Answering Point which means that all 911 calls originating from the Kingston campus will be immediately directed to URI Public Safety dispatch. Baker noted that this should get rid of delays. There was no discussion or questions.

Koerner, McNab, Flatley and Barabe voted to pass the motion. Sciabarrasi was absent.

Chiefs' Reports:

Motion: Flatley made and Barabe seconded a motion to accept the Chief's Report.

Barrington presented the Chief's Report. He let the Board know that the Safety Officer position will no longer be stipended and that the position will revert to the original Safety Officer duties. He let the Board know that Rescue 6's generator needs a \$27,000 repair and that we are exploring other options and speaking with Greenwood and E-One about this and following up with Cummins about a related bill that we should not have to pay for. Barrington let the Board know that on March 3rd, 2020 he will be attending a meeting for statewide radio operability. He noted that now that the RI Department of Transportation (DOT) is following the FAST federal guideline and posting weight limits on the Rte. 138 bridges, KFD is violating this every time we go over them with one of our trucks. Barrington let the Board know he is trying to get clarification from the DOT on what we should do when we need to go over them. He let the Board know that State Senator Susan Sosnowski and State Representative Kathleen Fogarty are involved in this issue. Barrington also let the Board know that he was invited to be part of the Reinvigorating Kingston Committee which is working on housing, the Kingston Fair and Rte. 138 issues. He noted that KFD has had some good press lately and that two of our firefighters, Daniel Crewe and Rachel Gomes will be featured in another article about our tuition reimbursement program. Flatley asked about our current numbers. Barrington noted that our Recruitment and Retention Coordinator has recently had more people training and that KFD's duty calendar is full and that most of the time there are firefighters at the station during the day. Madison added that we recently increased our ranks by three probationary members and two applicants. There was no further discussion or questions.

Koerner, McNab, Flatley and Barabe voted to pass the motion. Sciabarrasi was absent.

Treasurer's Report:

Motion: Flatley made and McNab seconded a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report. Madison presented the Treasurer's Report in Vignali's absence. The Board reviewed the report. Madison reviewed the profit and loss statements with the Board and explained Vignali's notes on various budget lines. Barrington added that KFD is working on purchasing portable radios and putting the interior paint job out to bid and that these would be capital project expenses. Flatley asked if URI owns the building who is responsible for building maintenance; Barrington responded that while URI does own the building, KFD is responsible for maintenance and building upkeep. There was no further discussion or questions.

Koerner, McNab, Flatley and Barabe voted to pass the motion. Sciabarrasi was absent.

Finance Committee up-date/report: There was no update.

Next meetings:

- March 19, 2020 at 9:30 a.m.

- May 21, 2020 at 9:30 a.m.
- August 20, 2020 at 9:30 a.m.
- October 15, 2020 at 9:30 a.m.

New Business:

- **Policy for Review**
 - KFD Volunteer Incentive Program Policy – Updated: the Board agreed to table until the next meeting.
- **SOG for Review**
 - Firefighter Tuition Assistance SOG – Updated: the Board agreed to table until the next meeting.

Communications: Copies of the following were disseminated.

- Union Fire District (UFD) Radio System Letter
- South Kingstown Town Council Radio System Letter
- Follow-up letter from UFD

Information: There were no updates. No motions were made.

Next Meetings:

- March 26, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- April 16, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Budget Hearing
- April 16, 2020 at 6:30 PM (following Budget Hearing) at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- May 4, 2020 at 7:00 PM at the KFD Station – Annual Meeting
- May 28, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- June 25, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- July 23, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- August 27, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- September 24, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- October 22, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- December 03, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting

Adjournment:

Motion: Barabe made and Flatley seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Koerner, McNab, Flatley and Barabe voted to pass the motion. Sciabarrasi was absent.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenifer Madison
Office Manager