

## *Minutes*

Kingston Fire District  
Board of Wardens' Meeting  
28 October 2021

**Present:** Wardens Ina Sciabarrasi, Sandra Koerner, Elizabeth McNab, Bill Flatley and Mark Barabe. Also present were Jeffrey Wadovick, CPA, Wadovick & Co. (departed at 7:00 p.m.), Rob Salmani, CPA, Wadovick & Co. (departed at 7:00 p.m.), Robert Civetti, CPA, Tax Collector Susan Axelrod, Treasurer Tom Vignali, Auditing Committee Member Valerie Maier-Sperdelozzi, URI Director of Public Safety & Chief of Police Michael Jagoda (arrived @ 6:36 p.m.), Chief Tom Reed and District Manager Jenifer Madison.

**Absent:** Deputy Chief Erik Brierley

**Call to Order:** President Sciabarrasi called the Board of Wardens Meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

**Information/Comments/Questions from the Public:** Zach Richards was present. There were no comments from the public.

### **President of the Board of Wardens Transition:**

- **Resignation of Sciabarrasi as President** – Sciabarrasi let the Board know that she is stepping down as President of KFD's Board of Wardens at this time and will be resigning her position as a Warden once this meeting is complete because she is moving out of district and no longer eligible to serve in these roles.

- **Election of new President**

**Motion:** Sciabarrasi made and Barabe seconded a motion to nominate Flatley as Interim President of the Board of Wardens. Flatley accepted the nomination.

The motion passed unanimously.

Flatley took over leading the meeting at this time.

- **Reassignments of Finance Committee and KFD's Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws Committee Chair**

**Motion:** Sciabarrasi made and Flatley seconded a motion to nominate Barabe as Chair of both Committees, replacing Sciabarrasi.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **New Business:**

- **FY2020-21 Draft Audit Presentation:** Wadovick and Salmani from Wadovick & Co. presented the final draft of the FY2020-21 Audit. They noted that it was Wadovick's 6<sup>th</sup> year conducting KFD's audit. The auditors let the Board know that they gave KFD a "clean audit opinion" and stated that they identified no deficiencies which is positive. Additionally, they noted that KFD is a very strong district with a strong net position under the accrual

method of accounting and that our fire district taxes receivable are historically low which is very good. They advised KFD to continue budgeting and managing the budget in the same way.

**Motion:** Koerner made and Sciabarrasi seconded a motion to accept the FY2020-21 Audit Report. There was no further discussion or questions.

The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes:**

**Motion:** Sciabarrasi made and McNab seconded a motion to accept the Minutes from the Wardens meeting on 9/23/21. The minutes were reviewed. There were no questions.

The motion passed unanimously.

**Tax Collector's Report:**

**Motion:** McNab made and Koerner seconded a motion to accept the Tax Collector's Report.

Axelrod presented the Tax Collector's Report. The Board reviewed the report. Axelrod let the Board know that the 2020 tax roll collection rate is at 99.2%. She let the Board know that KFD rolled over into the new tax collection software system for the 2021 collection and that it went well. Axelrod noted that a total of 856 tax bills are going out tomorrow for the 2021 tax year. She also noted that former Tax Collector Linda Mendillo was very helpful in ensuring that all previous items were part of the new system.

Axelrod let the Board know that one of the businesses that owes tangible tax for years 2019 and 2020 (Shades of Sunderland Tattoo) is now out of business.

**Motion:** Sciabarrasi made and Flatley seconded a motion to abate Shades of Sunderland's 2019 and 2020 taxes.

The motion passed unanimously.

Axelrod also let the Board know that another business (Mama DeLuca's Pizza) listed on the Town of South Kingstown's tax rolls in 2021 and billed tangible tax does not actually exist as a separate entity but is instead part of another restaurant. Axelrod requested that the Board abate this account and noted the Town has since deleted it from its tax rolls.

**Motion:** Koerner made and Sciabarrasi seconded a motion to abate Mama DeLuca's Pizza 2021 tax.

The motion passed unanimously.

Axelrod also asked the Board to reverse the abatement (approved during the 9/23/2021 Wardens Meeting) of Caliente Mexican Grill's 2017 and 2018 tangible taxes since they are still in business and still owe for the 2020 tax year and will be billed for their 2021 taxes. Reed confirmed that the restaurant is still in business but that they have undergone a number of ownership changes through the years. Discussion ensued. The Board agreed to continue reviewing this issue at future meetings. There was no further discussion or questions.

The motion passed unanimously.

**URI Report:**

**Motion:** Koerner made and Sciabarrasi seconded a motion to accept the URI report.

Jagoda presented the URI Report. The Board reviewed the report. Jagoda let the Board know that there were no issues with the 2020 Commencement ceremonies held this month. He noted that URI has a hiring issue, like the general trend. Jagoda also let the Board know that URI Public Safety will be one of the first agencies in the state to hopefully use body cameras. There was no further discussion or questions.

The motion passed unanimously.

**Chief's Report:**

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

Reed presented the Chief's report. The Board reviewed the report. Reed let the Board know that to date, KFD has responded to 590 emergency responses this year with 72 calls being from this past month, and overnight hours this past Tuesday into Wednesday due to the windstorm. He noted that KFD has been working closely with other area departments to assist them in covering calls and staff shortages and that this has been going well and there has been good communication. Reed noted that during the past month, KFD has assisted with calls involving a boat on the rocks in Jerusalem, car accidents requiring extrication and a dryer fire on the URI campus. He also let the board know that our vehicle fleet has all undergone its annual National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) required inspection and testing and passed all Rhode Island Department of Motor Vehicle inspections. Reed noted that the new Chief's truck is being outfitted and is expected to be in service in the next three weeks. He also let the Board know he has been getting contractors to come in and bid on station projects and that the plan is to get everything done this winter; supply chain and vendor staffing issues have delayed the timing on some. Lastly, Reed let the Board know that we have been working to revisit and revamp the recruitment and retention incentive program due in part to KFD's four-year SAFER Tuition Reimbursement grant ending on 1/31/22. Reed noted that this plan will continue to reward our volunteer members for their service and dedication while accounting for KFD's budget constraints and includes streamlining the incentives KFD offers and disbursing incentives twice a year. Reed also let the Board know that he has begun working with Vignali on long-range planning and budgeting. There was no further discussion or questions.

The motion passed unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:**

**Motion:** Koerner made and Sciabarrasi seconded a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report.

Vignali presented the Treasurer's Report. The Board reviewed the report. Vignali noted that the budget is trending as expected. He reviewed the accounts receivable with the Board and asked the Board to abate the Taylor Farms aging invoice for the Hazmat incident on 4/2/2020. Reed explained that the North Kingstown Fire Department (NKFD) was the lead agency for this incident and decided not to bill for it. He noted that former Chief Nate Barrington paid KFD's responding firefighters and billed Taylor Farms before NKFD made the decision not to bill. Koerner asked if this is a one-time issue; Reed replied in the affirmative and noted that KFD has since changed its policy to only pay our responders once we recoup payment from the vendor. There was no further discussion or questions.

**Motion:** Sciabarrasi made and Barabe seconded a motion to abate the Taylor Farms invoice.

The motion passed unanimously.

The motion passed unanimously.

**Finance Committee up-date/report:** Sciabarrasi presented the information that was discussed at the 10/21/2021 Finance Committee Meeting. She noted that Wadovick & Co. attended that meeting as well and reviewed KFD's draft FY2020-21 Audit with the Committee. She also noted that the Committee discussed budget planning and that Vignali let the Committee know that he requested a two-percent increase from URI (at the request of URI Public Safety) for FY2022-23. She let the Board know that the Committee started to review the current pay and billing rates for firefighter details and proposed rate increases and agreed to discuss further at the meeting tonight since there were no URI representatives in attendance at the Finance Committee Meeting. No motions were made at this meeting. There were no other updates.

**Next Meetings:** To Be Determined

**Other New Business:**

- **Review and recommendations for Pay Rates and Billing Rates for:**
  - Firefighter Details – Reed presented proposed new pay and billing rates for Details. Jagoda asked if the rates are on par with other fire departments; Reed responded that they are on par with other volunteer departments but lower than career departments. Flatley asked if the proposed billing rates already include the administrative fee; Reed responded in the affirmative. The Board agreed to table a vote on the proposed rates until the next meeting on 12/02/21 to give URI time to review the information.
  - Decon Trainings – Reed let the Board know that he recommends leaving the pay rates of the Decon Trainings as is, the Board agreed. No motions were made.
- **Review of KFD By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation:** Sciabarrasi presented an updated draft of the proposed revisions to KFD's Articles of Incorporation and let the Board know that the next step would be for our district attorney to take the finalized version of changes to the Rhode Island State Legislature for a vote; she noted that KFD's Board of Wardens does not have to vote. It was noted that a typo was found. The Board agreed that Barabe and Madison would review the updated draft for typos and then Barabe would let the attorney know.

**Old Business:**

- **Tax Assessor Committee Update:** Sciabarrasi suggested that if Tax Assessor Dorald Beasley is going to resign, then the Board should plan to have him train the other Tax Assessor Committee members. She suggested that Beasley be asked to attend the next Wardens Meeting and talk about a plan for this to happen. Flatley let the Board know that he would reach out to Beasley.
- **Covid-19 Effort and Effects:** Sciabarrasi inquired about booster shots for KFD's firefighters. Reed responded that KFD is following the guidelines of the Rhode Island Department of Health and masking up during calls.
- **Radio System Project Update:** Reed reported that the final proposal for the town-wide radio system upgrade is being finalized and will be presented to the South Kingstown Town Council on 11/08/2021.

**Communications:** Sciabarrasi let the Board know that she exchanged an e-mail with a former KFD Warden who may be interested in returning to the Board and who is planning to attend the next meeting. Discussion ensued about what happens if multiple individuals are interested in serving as interim Warden. No motions were made.

**Information:** The Board recognized Sciabarrasi' s contribution to KFD, serving as a Warden for ten years. They thanked her for her service and dedication.

**Future Planning:** None

**Next Meetings:**

- December 02, 2021 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting

**Adjournment:**

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

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenifer Madison  
District Manager