

Minutes

Kingston Fire District
Board of Wardens' Meeting
24 March 2022

Present: Wardens Bill Flatley, Sandra Koerner, Elizabeth McNab and Mark Barabe. Also present were Tax Collector Susan Axelrod, URI Director of Public Safety & Chief of Police Michael Jagoda, Chief Tom Reed, Deputy Chief Erik Brierley and District Manager Jenifer Madison.

Absent: Treasurer Tom Vignali.

Call to Order: Interim President Bill Flatley called the Board of Wardens Meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Information/Comments/Questions from the Public: KFD Members Charles Hall (arrived at 7:24 p.m.), Lauren Hannon and Robert Hutchinson were present. Comments were made by Hannon and Hutchinson. See *Future Planning* below.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: Barabe made and Koerner seconded a motion to accept the Minutes from the Wardens meeting on 2/24/22. The minutes were reviewed. There were no questions.

Koerner, McNab and Barabe voted to pass the motion. Flatley abstained since he was absent from the 2/24/22 meeting.

Tax Collector's Report:

Motion: McNab made and Barabe 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 2021 tax roll collection rate is at 96.7% and that she received an additional three payments which were not posted at the time of this report. She let the Board know that she sent out 46 delinquency notices earlier in the month and that we have received 19 total payments to date. Axelrod noted that we have one property owner who was delinquent for three years (and as a result would have been up for tax sale) who we received a partial payment from, which will take them off the tax sale list as long as the payment clears. She let the Board know that Madison spoke to the property owner on the phone and let her know that she had the option to establish a payment plan for the remainder of the taxes due. There was no further discussion or questions.

The motion passed unanimously.

URI Report:

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

Jagoda presented the URI Report. The Board reviewed the report. He let the Board know that Spring Commencement 2022 will take place over three days in May and that the events will be located in the Ryan Center on the Friday and

Saturday and in Mackal Field House, Keaney Gym and on the URI Quad (rain location at the Ryan Center) on the Sunday. There was no further discussion or questions.

The motion passed unanimously.

Chief's Report:

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

Reed presented an oral Chief's Report. Reed let the Board know that to date, KFD responded to a total of 152 total emergency responses this year and 36 calls during the past month. He let the Board know that KFD responded to a small stubborn fire at an auto repair facility on 3/8/22 with the Union Fire District (UFD) and that our response included all four KFD apparatus, our two Chiefs and a crew of 12 firefighters. He noted that there are no major maintenance issues or projects to report on and that there have been no major issues or repairs to our apparatus over the past month. Reed let the Board know that regarding our lighting upgrade project, our electrical contractor is continuing to work with URI and National Grid to secure cost savings for us through grant and rebate programs and that the project should be complete in April. He noted that the project should yield about a 32% decrease in our electrical consumption and that the project will be partially funded by the USDA grant KFD was awarded and the rest will come out of the Capital Projects Fund. Reed let the Board know that discussion regarding KFD and UFD getting a portion of the federal Covid-19 funds that the Town of South Kingstown received was tabled by the Town Council because they are waiting to hire a consultant to guide them through the process. Reed also let the Board know that South Kingstown Police Chief Joel Ewing Chow retired as of today and that the new Town Manager was voted in and will start in May.

Brierley presented an oral Deputy Chief's Report. He let the Board know that KFD has had four new applicants over the past month and that one applicant is training fast and has already become a probationary member. Brierley noted that our retention numbers are stable but that one or two of our members may leave this summer for career opportunities. He also let the Board know that KFD is hosting an upcoming training for the entire RI State Firefighter's League. There was no further discussion or questions.

The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report:

Motion: McNab made and Koerner 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 operating and capital projects profit and loss statements and how they are trending. Reed noted that some of the personal protective equipment expenses for our new members will get reimbursed by a grant program through the Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs. Flatley asked how the Town of South Kingstown will know the amount to bill KFD for the new town-wide radio system. Reed responded that each agency's share of the costs was based of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and that these costs were already agreed upon in the MOU. Jagoda asked about the status of KFD's invoice to URI Public Safety for the URI-KFD FY2022-23 Cooperative Agreement. Madison responded that she could not process the invoice until KFD's taxpayers vote on and approve our FY2022-23 budget at our Annual Meeting on May 2, 2022. Reed suggested that KFD could provide a quote in the meantime. It was agreed that Madison would get in touch with URI Public Safety's Fiscal Clerk regarding this matter. There was no further discussion or questions.

The motion passed unanimously.

Finance Committee up-date/report: Barabe presented the information that was discussed at the 3/17/22 Finance Committee Meeting. He let the Board know that the Committee discussed the proposed FY2022-23 operating and capital projects budget projections. He noted that the proposed operating budget is based off a two percent overall increase in revenues and expenses and that the two percent increase to revenues translates to a two percent increase for KFD's taxpayers and URI's contribution. He let the Board know that it seems URI's Division of Administration and Finance accepted the two percent increase to the university's contribution. Barabe noted that most of the proposed expenses in the capital projects fund is to replace KFD's SCBA because the current are from 2008 and nearing end of life which is significantly increasing their maintenance costs. Reed noted that he plans to go after as many grants as we can for the SCBA. Barabe let the Board know that Vignali predicts that KFD's capital reserves are going to decrease significantly over the next few years and may reach the lowest they have been in 10 to 12 years. It was noted that due to this, KFD may have to review how we run operations down the line. Reed noted the costs of supplies are increasing and that KFD will look at our apparatus fleet down the line and review the current needs of the district; he let the Board know that KFD will request input from our experienced firefighters during this process. Flatley asked if KFD's taxpayers provide input during this process; it was noted that our taxpayers have the opportunity to do so at our annual Budget Hearings and Annual Meetings. There was no further discussion or questions.

Next Meetings:

- May 19, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.
- August 18, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.
- October 20, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

New Business:

- **FY2022-23 Budget Projections:** Reed presented the Board with the FY2022-23 budget projections and let them know that these were developed with input from the KFD Finance Committee and through a series of meetings between Vignali, Madison and himself.
 - Operating Budget – Reed let the Board know that the operating budget projections include a two-percent increase across the board for revenues and expenses. He noted that on the revenue side, the two-percent increase will come from both the taxpayers and through KFD's cooperative agreement with URI. McNab asked about the increase in fuel prices and how it affects KFD. Madison responded that we are still trending on track for FY2021-22 and have increased that expense line in the projected FY2022-23 budget in response. Jagoda asked about whether KFD fundraises for training and operating costs. Reed responded that the Kingston Volunteer Fire Company (KVFC) fundraises for some training costs but that KFD's budget covers operations and other training costs.
 - Capital Projects Budget – Reed let the Board know that we are assessing our capital needs over the next few years and are planning and structuring funding in response. He noted that KFD may be looking at purchasing new apparatus in two years. There was no further discussion or questions. No motions were made.
- **Review of Open District Positions and Upcoming Elections:** Flatley let the Board know that he has reached out to several people and has other names of those who may be interested in the open Warden's position and that as of now, he thinks there are three people who are possible candidates. He asked the other Board members whether they know of anyone interested and encouraged them to talk to other KFD taxpayers about the position. Flatley also said he would reach out to the other KFD officers who are up for re-election to see if they are interested in running again. It

was suggested that it may be an opportune time to talk about KFD's volunteer opportunities at KFD's upcoming 100th Anniversary celebration in 2023. There was no further discussion or questions.

- **Update on KFD's Articles of Incorporation:** Barabe let the Board know he spoke with KFD's attorney and that the proposed changes are being passed to the RI State Legislature for review and approval. He noted that he will be notified when it has been voted on and approved and will update the Board. Reed noted that he heard "a rumor" that it has been voted on and approved already. There was no further discussion or questions.

Old Business:

- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Covid-19 Response and Recovery Funding:** This update was covered in the Chief's Report. See above. No motions were made.
- **Radio System Project Update:** Reed let the Board know that the costs for the new tower are being figured out and that KFD's portion of the costs will still be covered by our previously agreed upon contribution. There was no further discussion or questions.
- **Covid-19 Effort and Effects:** There was no update.

Communications: There was none. No motions were made.

Information: KVFC Chicken BBQ will take place this year and is scheduled for 6/4/2022.

Future Planning: KVFC Members Lauren Hannon and Robert Hutchinson opened a discussion about KFD's 100th Anniversary celebration planned for July 2023. An overview of the budget and expenses and where funds are coming from was discussed. It was noted that there is a 100th Anniversary Committee comprised of KVFC members, a KFD Warden and KFD's Chief and that this Committee will oversee costs and revenue.

Next Meetings:

- April 14, 2022 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Budget Hearing
- April 14, 2022 at 6:30 PM (following Budget Hearing) at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- May 2, 2022 at 7:00 PM at the KFD Station – Annual Meeting
- May 26, 2022 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- June 23, 2022 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- July 28, 2022 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- August 25, 2022 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- September 22, 2022 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting

- October 27, 2022 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting
- December 01, 2022 at 6:30 PM at the KFD Station – Monthly Wardens Meeting

Adjournment:

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

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenifer Madison
District Manager