

The August 12, 2023 Executive Board meeting of the New Jersey Firemen's Home Board of Managers was called to order by Chairman Wilson at 0904 hours followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Wilson also provided the invocation. A moment of silence was held for Lieutenant Governor Shelia Oliver who recently passed away.

Mr. Hull advised that public notice was provided in the official newspaper, the Star Ledger, and on the home's website.

Roll call was taken with all members of the Executive Committee present except Mr. Signorello and Mr. Jeffer who were excused. Also in attendance were Managers Dutch, Freeman, DeLaurentis, Mitch, Heflich, Miller, and Keyser along with President Ordway, Superintendent Veras, and Mr. Bell.

Secretary Hull reminded everyone present that only members of the Executive Committee can make motions and vote on items.

The minutes from the July 15, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting were approved.

Communications:

None

Reports of Officers:

Secretary:

Mr. Hull reported that invitations for the Wildwood meeting, dinner and tour have been sent out to managers past and present. Please RSVP. The list of past managers that was provided to the Secretary was also sent out by email to everyone to review so we don't miss anyone from your county.

Treasurer:

Mr. Sutphen reminded managers that they will be paid through the Home for the Convention at the Delegate rate for their county along with the Manager stipend for attending the meeting. Past managers who attend will be paid just the delegate rate, not the meeting stipend.

Superintendent:

Mr. Veras thanked the Bergen County Association for a "heck of a party" and BBQ that was thrown for a guest who turned 100. All of the guests are still talking about how great it was.

Our lobbying firm, PPAG, set up a meeting with the Department of Health to discuss future regulations and what could effect the Home. The DOH recognized the Home as one of the best facilities in the State due to our no deficiencies. The DOH wish to set up pilot programs and use the Home as a test facility for those programs. Everything is running smoothly and if anyone has any questions about the Home, please direct them to the Superintendent.

Legal Counsel:

Mr. Bell reported that he worked with Mr. Veras and Sharon on personnel issues that the staff has had. They are still trying to get their arms around the marijuana issue. There is very little case law on if someone has a marijuana prescription card. This requires changes to our policy handbook. This would also address employees who may have a prescription for marijuana and that use would be permitted as long as they are not impaired or it effects their daily job.

The power of attorney in our admission policy needs to be address as it creates a duality in the power of attorney as currently written. This causes there to be two power of attorneys and interference with the staff. Mr. Bell provided examples of the potential conflict such as when a guest is taken out of Home by family for care off site. Mr. Bell feels that our power of attorney should be the one in charge. As it stands, if the two power of attorneys can not work together it would go to probate court.

Mr. Bell then discussed the ongoing issues with the RVRSA (Rockaway Valley Regional Sewerage Authority). He has been in contact with their attorney, Mr. Mazareti, who advised that perhaps our relationship broke down over time and he would like to meet with us to talk about the license for the piece of land in dispute. Mr. Mazerti took responsibility for the strained relationship. Mr. Bell reiterated from previous meetings how the RVRSA has been on our property for over 50 years and it would be hard for us to say "we didn't know". Additionally the line that traverses our land serves 10,000 sewer customers, so there is the matter of adverse possession where the effect on the Home and the sewer customers would be weighed. Mr. Mazareti is away until September and would like to meet then.

Mr. Dutch, who has had long time dealings with the RVRSA on behalf of the Home, reported that the land in question is "not a little piece of land" as described. It is 1.3 acres and one of the issues is the RVRSA had not been honest with the Home about their plans on the property. The Home found that it included additional pipes, and an asphalt area to hold cranes etc. Mr. Dutch provided Mr. Bell with documentation of plans from the RVRSA.

Mr. Greci added that we have a committee and they should get together before meeting with the RVRSA.

Mr. Keyser then inquired with Counselor Bell what happens if someone brings marijuana in for a guest. Can we stop them?

Mr. Veras address how they have handled prohibited items in the past. He added that it is currently not a big problem as there is one guest involved. The issue is the use of marijuana could have medical interactions.

Mr. Keyser then addressed the RVRSA issues and stated that some managers terms are up and we should wait until new managers are in. Mr. Bell responded that there is a construction schedule in place. Mr. Veras added that they (RVRSA) have already begun construction work "upstream" with this project, noting that the system handles 10 million gallons a day.

President Ordway commented that as a sign of good faith the committee has to meet with them and not delay it.

Mr. Dutch provided more historical facts about the conflict adding that this began when we had a property survey done and questioned them. Their building was so dilapidated and run down that they were going to have the power shut off.

Mr. DeLaurentis commented that the RVRSA attorney is away until September so we can't do anything until then.

Buildings and Grounds:

Mr. Signorello was excused and Mr. Sutphen spoke on the Vreeland Avenue demolition project. Mr. Veras added that we are awaiting final letters from New Jersey Natural Gas. We will then go out to bid for demolition. Mr. Veras then read a project report from from

Maintenance Director Tom Hodierene (see attached) which provided a list of updates on current projects. Mr. Apgar commented that the report needs to be sent to everyone on the committee as they all were not included.

Applications:

Mr. Freeman provided a written report from the application committee meeting held on August 8, 2023 which is attached. The report indicated 67 guest in Long Term Care and 9 in Residential Care for a total of 76 guests. Since the last meeting there have been 2 new admissions, 1 guest answered their final alarm and 1 guest was discharged at his own request. The committee is reviewing 5 applications- four of which have been accepted. The next meeting for the Applications Committee is 0900 hours on Tuesday September 5, 2023 at the Home.

Employee Committee:

Mr. Dutch reported that everything is up to snuff with the maintenance crew.

Finance and Budget Committee:

Mr. Hull provided a written report on the August 8, 2023 meeting of the Audit and Finance Committee which is attached. Bills for the month were reported in the amount of \$418,651.35. All revenue and expense vouchers were reviewed and found to be in order. The committee discussed an O.P.R.A. request for a "bills list" that was received, and supporting documentation will be sent to the requester. The committee also discussed that our budget information was posted on the NJ State Firemen's Association website with an inaccurate description. This was addressed by the Superintendent and the Ad Hock committee. Questions remained about our employee retirement health insurance benefits and the amount they reimburse the Home. Mr. Veras will obtain the reimbursement records for the committee. The next meeting of the finance committee will be held on Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 8:00 AM at the Home.

Insurance:

Mr. Strube was not present and Mr. Dutch advised that there was nothing to add to his (Mr. Strube's) report from last month. Mr. Dutch commented that its is getting hard to find an insurer for the Home.

Legislative Committee:

Mr. Lugossy was not present, but he had provided a report to Secretary Hull by phone. Mr. Lugossy reported on the following bills that have passed the legislature and are awaiting Governor's actions:

- A5179- Fire Safety Smoke Damper inspection act
- A5275- Allows for FD Chaplains to hold rank and receive salary.
- S861- Allow municipalities to have annual x-mas tree burn

Mr. Lugossy added that the two Volunteer Cancer screening bills (S3405, A5081) are awaiting legislative action. The legislature is shut down for summer vacation after the budget was approved.

Mr. Freeman commented on a new law the Division of Fire Safety enacted that requires farm labor houses to be sprinklered. Mr. Freeman felt this was unnecessary and needs to be addressed as we are a "right to farm" state and this could effect farmers.

By-laws:

Mr. Jeffer was not present and there was no report. Mr. Wilson advised that he spoke with Mr. Jeffer and a By-law committee meeting is scheduled for August 21, 2023 at 9 AM at the Home.

Mr. Wilson reported that they talked about the eligibility for admission into the Home with the Ad Hock committee and everyone's thoughts and ideas were shared. Possible ideas include applicants have a firefighter 1 certificate; an Exempt certificate; be qualified through the State Association; or a minimum amount for years of service (1, 2, 3, or 4 etc). The by-law committee will discuss. Anyone with a suggestion should contact Mr. Jeffer.

Mr. Heflich commented that 7 years sounds good to him.

Mr. Sutphen responded that he doesn't see a problem with what we have now.

Mr. Keyser then commented that the By-laws need to address the terms of service for Managers. Our by-laws states that managers take office on October 1st. Mr. Keyser added that managers terms end on September 13th and new manager doesn't take office until October 1st. Additionally, Mr. Keyser stated there should be changes to limit the power of the Executive Committee to only approve bills after the finance committee reviews them. Mr. Keyser requested these changes be drawn up and presented in September.

Mr. Greci responded that he spoke with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Bell and our attorney is looking up the term of the managers, and he will speak to Mr. Jeffer about the Executive Committee.

Mr. Appgar inquired with Mr. Bell with regards to the manager's term that if it is in the by-law, we must adhere to it.

Mr. Freeman commented that new managers are not technically elected until voted on at the convention.

Mr. Ordway then read from our by-laws which state Managers terms end on September 30th (not the 13th as reported) and new managers take office on October 1st. So this is a moot point.

At this point, Mr Keyser responded that he stood corrected.

Museum:

Mr. Hull thanked Mr. Dutch for coordinating the receipt of a collection of hand-made wooden models representing the Pleasantville Fire Department's apparatus. They are downstairs in the museum and we will be working on a place to display them. Mr. Hull then thanked Mr. Heflich for working on the flat tire issue that has dragged on as well as checking the house keeping cleaning agreement for the museum area with regards to what they do and don't handle.

Mr. Heflich advised someone will be here next week to take care of the tire.

Mr. Wilson described the Pleasantville models received as "breathtaking".

Public Relations:

Mr. Wilson thanked President Ordway and the State Association for transporting our public relations items to the convention. Last year everyone did a fantastic job handing out the items and we were done Friday morning. He hope for same this year. Our table is set for the convention and additional chairs have been requested.

Mr. Wilson added that the committee approved purchase of small mementos for the Managers and employees to commemorate our 125th Anniversary which is this year. Those items are a lapel pin and a drink coaster. Mr. Wilson thanked Mr. Veras for creating the design for the items.

Ethics and Code of Conduct:

Mr. Sutphen advised no report, but did make light of Mr. Keyser's error in reading the By-law.

Pension:

Chairman Greci reported progress.

Inventory:

Mr. Wilson advised nothing new and no changes.

Golf Committee:

Chairman Greci advised the Golf event will be discussed at September's meeting and if we wish to continue doing it. Mr. Veras added that the funds are used for the benefit for the guests and they have requested new chairs for the auditorium and public space areas.

Liaison to the State Association:

Mr. Lugossy was not present, but had reported to Mr. Hull by phone that he has had conversations with Mr. Ordway and all is going good with the caucuses. Mr Hull added that committee members had attended the State Association meeting on July 22, 2023 and a written report (attached) had been sent to all managers. Mr. Hull then suggested the the Ad Hock committee and the Liaison to the State Association committee be merged next year when we set committees. There is a duplication of sorts, and the Liaison committee members are not part of Ad Hock and do not wish to misspeak at a State meeting with regards to their discussion and debates. It puts us and Mr. Otterbein (Chairman of State Association's Home Committee) in an unfair position when questions arise at a State meeting and a member of Ad Hock committee from Home is not present. Mr. Freeman commented that he agreed and brought this up two meetings ago that the committees are a duplication.

Inspections:

Mr. Keyser reported that he and Mr. Washer will get together during the remainder of the month to conduct the August inspection.

State Firemen's Association:

President Ordway reported that 6-7 caucuses have been completed and a new manager has been elected in Passaic County. Ms. Amy Devirgilio will be replacing Mr. Ken Silvestri who is retiring.

AD Hock Committee:

Mr. Wilson reported that the committees met on Tuesday (August 8) and they reviewed items discussed at the quarterly meeting such as the length of Manager's term, the qualifications to get into the Home, and the committee's feeling that an actuarial study still needs to be done to set up for 5 to 10 year long term planning. The next meeting of the Ad Hock committee is tentatively set for October 24, 2023. It will possibly be an evening meeting, to be announced.

Unfinished Business:

Mr. Keyser reported that he and Mr. Washer attended the New Jersey Natural Gas drill held at the Home and it went very well.

Mr. Veras added that good things came out of the drill for the Home such as the need for accountability system with outside vendors etc. The time clock can provide an attendance

report that can be used for a P.A.R. report for employees and vendors. This can be generated instantly on phone.

Mr. Washer added that it was a great drill overall with a few operational differences between the gas company and the fire department, such as apparatus placement, that were all worked out.

New Business:

Mr. Keyser stated at last year's re-organization meeting he felt that there should be resolutions voted upon for our professional services staff such as our attorney, stenographer, auditor etc. Mr. Sutphen advised that we approve the list of providers. Mr. Keyser retorted that it should be done by resolution.

Mr. Bell was asked his opinion and he suggested a resolution be done as it looks better.

Mr. Wilson stated he will have Mr. Bell work on the resolutions.

Payment of Bills:

Mr. Hull reported the total bills in the amount of \$418,651.35. Upon motion, a roll call vote was taken and the bills payment was approved.

Motions and Resolutions:

None.

Public Participation:

Rich Otterbein, Essex County Executive Committeeman advised that the Home's budget information that was placed on the State's website was due to an error. The way that the report was copied, placed non-audited information mixed into our auditor's report. The paperwork was not sequenced properly. Mr. Otterbein advised that when it was brought to his attention, it was removed and corrected. The information was corrected and will be re-posted and distributed with the correction.

At this time a debate ensued between Mr. Sutphen and Mr. Otterbein with regards to our financial information being posted on the State's site. Mr. Otterbein advised that it is public record that is given to the State Association. Mr. Sutphen felt it was unethical and that it should not be broadcast. The debate included that the State does not give out their financial information, Mr. Otterbein disagreed stating it is shared and available. The debate ended with both sides stating their points, and disagreeing with each other.

Mr. Mitch spoke on the possible license agreement with the RVRSA and asked about our current sewage fees. Mr. Veras responded that the fees established by the RVRSA are set based on water consumption, which we are high use due to our type of operation. We pay approximately \$11,000 a quarter for sewerage. Mr. Mitch commented that maybe as part of license we can negotiate better rate.

Mr. Otterbein asked about the changes on our property that the RVRSA wants to make and do we know what they are.

Mr. Bell responded that the survey for the new pipe does not impact our property, the plans for an equipment staging area and to rebuild facilities does. Our desire is to negotiate a license and not give them an easement. An easement is permanent. Mr. Bell advised that Mr. Veras is working on getting us an original deed for our property.

Mr. Dutch described the location of the pipes and sewer chamber as well as the area of Monroe Street that is a "paper street". Mr. Dutch added that in the past the RVRSA threatened the Home with condemnation of our property. (Mr. Bell responded that won't happen.) Mr.

Dutch continued that the area is not a “small piece” as they described however it would probably enhance our property.

Mr. Freeman inquired about the improvements to be made to Monroe Street and would that be approved by the township.

Mr. Hull asked Mr. Dutch about how we did try to negotiate with the RVRSA for a lower rate or free sewerage in the past, but the RSVRA shot down the idea. Mr. Dutch advised that was correct.

Executive Session:

None had.

Good and Welfare:

Superintendent Veras commented that he lost his brother-in-law last Wednesday to small cell lung cancer. He stated his only symptom was just being a little short of breath and 8 months later he was gone. Mr. Veras recommended that if you feel short of breath to ask for a chest x-ray as this is a fast moving cancer.

Mr. DeLaurentis commented on the lawsuits that are out there with regards to exposure to firefighting foam. Mr. DeLaurentis told the board of his exposure to foam products and that he contacted one of the lawyers involved and they got back to him right away including him in the suit. Mr. DeLaurentis stated that there was no fees until the suit settles.

Mr. Bell responded to use caution with some of the class action suits out there. Make sure they are legit because it is the attorneys who always make the money.

Mr. Dutch advised that he will be taking the ATV down to the back of our property where the RVRSA issues are. He invited any manager who wanted to go for a ride. There was much joking from the floor as several managers volunteered Mr. Heflich to go with Mr. Dutch.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 1014 AM

Respectfully submitted,



Roger Hull
Secretary

- **APPROVED AT SEPTEMBER 14, 2023 FULL BOARD MEETING**