

The November 11, 2023 Full Board meeting of the New Jersey Firemen's Home Board of Managers was called to order by Chairman Washer at 0930 hours and was followed by the pledge of allegiance. A beautiful invocation was provided by Manager Dutch.

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

Roll call was taken with all managers present with the exception of Mr. Sutphen, Mr. Strube, and Mr. Denny who were excused.

The minutes from the October 14, 2023 Re-Organization Meeting; Full Board Meeting; and Executive Committee Re-Organization Meeting were all approved.

Chairman Washer then introduced the first guest speaker to the Board. NJFH Nurse Educator Lisa Sicilian gave a presentation on HIPPA regulations. *All managers were given a copy of the Home's policy with a cover letter to sign by Superintendent Veras. Ms. Sicilian gave an overview of the regulations and how broad they are covering electronic devices to conversations and how we can discuss patient care. She added that violations of the regulations carry fines that range from \$100 to hundreds of millions of dollar. Verbal discussion about patient information is the most common violation of the law. Ms. Sicilian provided examples of violations which included a conversation between a nurse and cooking staff; or two nurses discussing patient outcomes in a common area such as the lunch room.

Ms. Sicilian added that during the application process the committee come across protected information, however that information was volunteered by the family during the process. Once a patient is admitted the facility becomes liable for that information. She described the Firemen's Home as a "unique facility". At this time questions and comments from the floor were entertained.

Mr. Hull commented that we are very unique and that we sometimes get inquires about guests or complaints from other fire organizations. Mr. Hull cited a complaint about a piece of equipment not being paid for by the Home and complaints were received by the State Association. The policy lists discussing payment as a HIPPA violation. Ms. Sicilian advised that the family volunteered the information in that instance.

Mr. Signorello inquired if it is possible that we can draft a waiver to be added to our policy. Mr. Bell will research.

Mr. Mitch inquired if there is questions about a patient or care, can we go into private executive session to discuss the matters.

Mr. Bell commented that we need to be very careful and handle things case by case. He will look into a waiver. The penalties for violations are quit severe.

Mr. Handlin, Executive Committeeman from Hudson County, asked permission to speak through the Chair and asked about unique situations involving firefighters. In his example, Mr. Handlin stated that if a family member is not happy about care, or being billed for an item they believed is covered by the Home, the family contacts the local relief association and the info is forwarded to him as a Local Relief Secretary

Mr. Veras responded that the family needs to refer to "part B" of the application as there are items not covered by the Home that are the family responsibility. The family signs off on this.

Mr. Handlin advised his question was more about HIPPA and him being contacted by the family.

Ms. Sicilian advised that the family can give information and permission to ask. They volunteered the information.

Ms. DeVirgilio commented reminding Managers to remember that not all e-mails services are secure.

This concluded Ms. Sicilian's presentation and any Managers who had further questions could contact her of the Superintendent.

The Board then heard a presentation on a Solar Farm prepared by the Opal Design Team. Making the presentation were Zachary Koch and Kyle Shroufe. Mr. Shroufe noted that his grandfather had been a guest at the Home.

Two packages were prepared that represented a large solar farm and a smaller solar farm. They were distributed to the managers to review during the presentation. For presentation purposes, Mr. Shroufe went over the smaller plan as an example of their proposal.

In summary, the smaller array is a 377.6 KW system. It would produce 508,000 Kw hours. Our use at the Home is 790,000 Kw hours. The cost to install would be approximately 1 million dollars and we can make approximately 3 million dollars in incentives. The system would pay for itself in 6 years.

Mr. Shroufe was aware of our situation as a non-profit, State agency and he added that there are allowances for non-profit to receive "direct pay" in lieu of tax deduction incentive. Mr. Veras advised that we don't file taxes. Mr. Shroufe advised that the program is structured to help put municipalities and tribal agencies.

Mr. Shroufe continued advising that we would be paid on production of KW hours produced per year, which he estimated a \$45,000 for the smaller system. He noted that the panels do degrade slightly each year and that production would decrease annually. It was estimated that \$672,000 would be made over 15 years.

The next item discussed was our potential utility savings. Mr. Shroufe estimated that in year one we would save \$53,000. This number would go up each year with power company increases (3% was used as the standard increase). This would produce \$2 million in savings over the life of the system. The larger system would produce more savings and more income.

Mr. Shroufe added that all of the components are made in the United States. There is a 25 year warranty.

The discussion was opened to the floor.

Mr. Freeman noted that the diagram did not show a fence. Mr. Shroufe advised that they will do a fence or trees as they try to make it as aesthetically pleasing. If a fence is installed the Home would maintain outside of fence and with a small array, they would possibly stone the area to prevent anyone from having to access it.

President Ordway asked about the warranty and repairs. Mr. Shroufe advised that repairs would be made if necessary with ZERO cost to the Home.

Mr. Dutch asked what would happen if their company gets sold. Mr. Shroufe responded that they use 3rd party warranties in addition to their own. So the manufacturer would cover any items in the event they sell out. You would also be protected by who we sell to if that is the case as well.

Mr. Keyser inquired about the life of the power inverters. Mr. Shroufe advised that the inverters have a 12 year warranty, but that could be extended to the life of the system adding that OPAL would cover the cost of the extended warranty.

Mr. Veras questioned the location of the solar farm on the proposal as not being where they had discussed at their previous meetings and it might interfere with future building expansion. Mr. Veras also asked about the cash "shell game" and when does the system actually pay for itself.

*Mr. Signorello had to leave the meeting at this point due to other commitment.

Mr. Heflich asked if we need to lay out 1 million dollars up front.

Mr. Shroufe responded that there would be structured payment like any other major project. (Example : 50% at signing 20% at certain point, balance at completion)

Mr. Apgar asked when we would know if we are eligible for the tax credits described. Mr. Shroufe stated he would have an answer within a week.

Mr. Koch then addressed the location of the solar farm on the proposal. He advised that the far field that the Home suggested would not yield us a return on our investment. There would be additional equipment needed such as step up transformers and the location itself would not make it worth it.

Mr. Keyser asked if we would need to go out to bid on this project. Mr. Bell responded yes.

Mr. Cunningham asked how long the project would take. Mr. Shroufe estimated 4 to 8 months.

Mr. Freeman commented on how our budget cycle works and that it needs State approval, and they could turn it down. Mr. Shroufe stated that they could assist us with the process including any feasibility studies.

Mr. Jeffer asked if they would need site approval. Mr. Shroufe advised that they would "fine tune" it on the front end with regards to approvals, engineering, permits so that there is no snake pits during the process.

Mr. Freeman asked what happens to the system at the end of 25 years, who takes it out. Mr. Shroufe responded that at that time we could look to have the steel structure re-galvanized and new panels to re-vitalize the system, or there are people who recycle that could take it down for nothing.

With no further questions, the proposal copies were left with the managers and Mr. Koch and Shroufe left the meeting.

The meeting then resumed the order of business.

Communications:

Secretary Hull read a letter from the family of Thomas Mertz thanking the Home for caring for Mr. Mertz. Copy attached.

Reports of Officers:**Secretary:**

Mr. Hull advised that he compiled the committee list that Chairman Washer prepared and apologized from the misspelling of Mr. DeLaurentis' first name as "Carmine".

Treasurer:

Mr. Sutphen was excused but had provided a written which was read by Secretary Hull and is attached to the minutes. Mr. Sutphen report indicates we are one third through are current budget and are right on target. He added that the finance committee discussed the need for a long term planning committee.

Superintendent:

Mr. Veras stated the the HIPPA regulations and potential violations came to light and he requested all managers to sign the form he provided with the policy.

Mr. Veras thanked Hunterdon County for the donations of large patio umbrellas which are large and will provide shade to the guests outside.

The Home had its last BBQ of the season and if any county would like to host one they are already planning for next summer with 4 weeks are already booked. They have been able to extend outdoor events with the purchase of outdoor heaters.

Some Associations are planning Christmas parties and they will be held in the auditorium. Monica from recreation has a "wish list" of gift ideas fro guests.

Mr. Veras then commented on the visit to the Home from Senator Bucco and Assemblywoman Dunn. Also there were President Ordway and the President of Leading Age. It was a productive meeting/ tour and they discussed possible future legislation. There is a lot in the works due to the issues and lawsuits stemming from the Veteran's Home. There have been 70 million dollars in settlements against the Veterans Home and they are being sued by the Department of Justice under the 14th Amendment. With regards to possible legislation, Mr. Veras advised that there maybe potential funding for changes to the Veteran's Home that we could hitch ourselves to.

Mr. Veras added that Senator Bucco and Assemblywoman Dunn could tell the guests and staff were truly happy at the Home.

Mr. Apgar asked that the Guest's Christmas gift wish list be sent to all managers.

Legal Counsel:

Mr. Bell reported on the continuing negotiations with the Rockaway Valley Regional Sewerage Authority (RVRSA) in regards to a license for them accessing our property. Mr. Bell reported that he received a proposal and appraisal yesterday. The appraisal reflects that the property is in wetlands and is unbuildable. The area requested for the license is .149 acres or 698 square feet. When dealing with the appraisal there are 3 methods to valuation: Cost; Sales Comparison; and Income Approach. For our purpose the Sales Comparison method was utilized. The RVRSA made an initial offer of \$4,650 for the license based on the appraisal. Mr. Bell advised he spoke with Mr. Maraziti from the RVRSA and told him that would not fly with

the Board. Today, the RVRSA offered \$17,000 for the license along with restoration of the site when their work is complete.

Mr. Ordway inquired if this would be a one time payment. Mr. Bell responded yes it would be one time payment of the license fee of \$17,000. Mr. Bell reminded that this system serves 10 municipalities and we could face possible condemnation, which he doubt we would be successful in fighting.

Mr. Wilson commented \$17,000 that is it? What about them being on our property illegally for 50 years? Mr. Bell responded that we took no action that entire time.

Mr. Heflich commented that we need to do something today this has been gong on for 50 years.

Mr. Hull asked about after the project is done their equipment is still on our property, what liability falls on us if there is an equipment failure. Mr. Hull mentioned just giving them the piece of land.

Mr. Bell advised that there would be indemnification clauses protecting us.

Mr. Dutch commented that any work they do would enhance our property.

A straw vote was take and the majority was in favor of moving forward with the license and accepting the \$17,000.

Mr. Bell additionally reported that he will be working with the By-Law committee on revisions as well as specifications for the roofing project.

Buildings and Grounds:

Mr. Keyser reported that he met with Maintenance Director Hodierna on October 23rd. A consultant has been hired for the elevator project which is in this year's budget. New beds were ordered and have been delivered. The maintenance staff is assembling them between other tasks. The committee met this morning and they are moving forward for the betterment of the Home.

Applications:

Mr. Freeman provided a written report from the application committee meeting held on November 7, 2023 which is attached. The report indicated 69 guest in Long Term Care and 8 in Residential Care for a total of 77 guests. Since the last meeting there have been 2 new admissions. The committee is reviewing 3 applications: two have been accepted and one has a pre-admission interview to be scheduled. The next meeting for the Applications Committee is 0900 hours on Tuesday December 5, 2023 at the Home.

Mr. Freeman added the admission eligibility requirement of 1 year 1 month, 7 years, etc. are not in the law or in our by-laws. The application committee sets the term and they will discussing it in December.

Mr. Keyser added that the application committee will be using the Home's psychiatrist moving forward . Mr. Veras commented on the some of the previous reports they would get from guest's doctors.

Mr. Jeffer stated he was not aware of the meeting and did not get any notice.

Employee Committee:

Mr. Dutch reported that everything was good.

Finance and Budget Committee:

Mr. Hull provided a written report on the October 17, 2023 and November 7, 2023 meetings of the Audit and Finance Committee which is attached.

The October 17, 2023 meeting was to prepare the 7/1/2024- 6/30/2025 budget. In attendance were Managers Freeman, Hull, Keyser, Joe Galazo from Yodice and Company and Superintendent Veras. Also in attendance were Managers Washer, Apgar and President Ordway. Mr. Sutphen and Mr. Heflich were excused.

A proposed budget was prepared and copies were sent to all Managers to review and provide feedback. There was very limited feedback which was a typographical error found by Mr. Freeman and questions President Ordway had with regards to the reserve. We will be voting on the budget today.

The November 7, 2023 regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held at 8 AM at the Home. Present were Mr. Freeman, Mr. Sutphen, Mr. Heflich, Mr. Keyser, Mr. Hull and Superintendent Veras. Also in attendance was Ms. DeVirgilio. The revenue and expense report from July 1 through October 31, 2023 was reviewed. The vouchers for the period were examined in accordance with the bylaws of the Home. The total bills amounted to \$512,767.57.

The committee discussed that a consultant was hired for the elevator project. Invoices from Unidine and Coreworks were examined further as they were high for this period. It was found that our purchase order cycle and their billing cycles caused us to have two months payment this month. Additionally Unidine bills the Home for food for the BBQs that is reimbursed by the host Fire Companies/ Associations, thus making the food line item appear higher than normal.

All other projects for the current budget are right on course. The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be at 8 AM on December 5, 2023 at the Home.

The report of the Finance Committee was approved and the floor was opened up to discussions on the proposed 2024-25 budget.

Mr. Hull commented that on page 3, it incorrectly shows a 100% increase in line 10B which if you look at the numbers it is only a 10% increase. This will be corrected.

Mr. Hull added that the budget was prepared with no input about a solar project and the cost (\$1 million dollars) is not in the budget.

The other feedback and commentary received by the committee came from President Ordway who felt that the Home could increase the amount used from our reserves by an additional \$200,000 so that the money requested from the State Fire Tax would be the same as last year with a 0% increase.

Mr. Ordway commented that the use of additional reserves would show the cooperation that the two organizations worked towards over the past year. The increase in the Home's reserves used should also be shown in the last column under "Variance" to show that the Home made a 48% increase in use of reserves. This shows the spirit of cooperation. With regards to Mr. Hull's comment about the possible solar project, Mr. Ordway advised that it could always be added later and an amended budget could be submitted requesting the funding for the project.

Mr. Hull commented about his personal feelings about using our reserve and how the Board and Committee felt he (Hull) wanted to bring it too low of a balance. After input from the Board and our Auditor, Mr. Hull stated that he agreed with keeping an approximate 6 months worth of our operating budget in the reserve would be appropriate. Mr. Ordway's request for any additional \$200,000 would still leave us above that 6 months worth of funds in our reserve. As Chairman of the Finance Committee, Mr. Hull had no issues with adding those funds, but it is up to the Board. Comments from the floor was that it is actually \$199,000 to match last year's request from the State. A motion was made to approve the budget with the additional funds from reserve to match last year's request from State Fire Insurance Tax. (* Note: \$198,500 would be the amount of additional reserves to match the last budget) Roll call taken and all members present voted in favor of the budget with additional reserves used. Mr. Dutch commented his vote was "reluctantly a yes".

*Correction to Mr. Hull's written report. Mr. Keyser is on the Finance committee and was listed as guest at meetings.

Insurance:

Mr. Strube was not present and there was no report.

Legislative Committee:

Mr. Lugossy reported that we are all aware of the recent election results. There are two bills on the Governor's desk awaiting signature.

Mr. Lugossy advised he is aware the State Association is working on drafts of bills that provide for cancer screening for volunteer firefighters, as well as a bill for volunteer firefighter stipend to not be taxed. Mr. Lugossy added that it is hard to tell what may happen with the end of this session.

By-laws:

Mr. Apgar reported that when Mr. Jeffer reported the by-law revisions would be challenging, he wasn't kidding. The committee has communicated through phone calls and emails and met with morning to begin working on revisions. The goal is to be complete 30 days prior to Janaury meeting so they can be sent out to all managers to review prior to the January Full Board meeting. Mr. Apgar thanked Mr. Veras who has computer program to edit the current bylaw digital file (PDF). It was also noted that the 1 year admission eligibility into the Home is part of the applications committee, NOT the bylaws.

Museum:

Mr. Hull advised we had received a plaque from the Hacketstown Exempt Association that provides the history of the hand pumper they donated. It will be displayed on the pumper. We also received an inquiry from former Manager Greci that South Orange Fire Department has a hose cart they wish to donate. Photo and dimensions were provided. The committee will discuss where we can fit it. We are also looking at having shelves built on wall in basement to display the wooden models Mr. Dutch had received as donation.

Public Relations:

Mr. Wilson thanked everyone for a good job in Wildwood. He advised the committee will be meeting before January's Full Board meeting and if anyone had suggestions, to bring them before the committee.

Ethics and Code of Conduct:

Mr. Sutphen was not present and had no report.

Pension:

Mr. Washer advised that he will be setting a meeting with Dave Klien. Everything with the pensions are running good. If any manager had questions they should contact him or Mr. Veras.

Mr. Jeffer asked about what the benefit plan is.

Mr. Veras gave an overview of the benefits and added that this was our "house" plan before employees went into PERS system. It is well funded.

Inventory:

Mr. Wilson reported that the new beds we received were logged into the inventory system.

Golf Committee:

Mr. Signorello had to leave the meeting early due to Veteran's Day obligation in his home town, Chairman Washer provided a report stating they are looking to do away with the golf event. It is getting harder and harder to get sponsors and to also get Managers to work the event.

Mr. Veras added that it is not really successful with just the golfers fees. Without sponsorship it doesn't succeed. We also find ourselves in a "dicey" situation, and per our auditor we can not ask our vendors to be sponsors.

Mr. Freeman commented that it is hard to get sponsors from the south as no one from up north attending the event "shops" down south.

Mr. Lugossy commented on issues we could have as a State agency.

Liaison to the State Association:

Mr. Hull reported that the Chairman re-vamped the Liaison Committee, doing away with the previous Ad Hoc committee making it one with the State Liaison Committee. Mr. Hull added that he will be attending the State Association Meeting next week and he has already reached out to the State in regards to adding Health Care and Nursing Home to the search engine of the program they use for reporting on legislative bills.

Inspections:

Mr. Mitch advised that he conducted an inspection of the Home on November 10th and found minor items that he discussed with the Superintendent. Mr. Mitch commented how pleased he is to see the staff treats the facility like their own home and he commended Mr. Veras for being the "puppet master" leading the staff. Mr. Mitch submitted a written report as well that is attached.

State Firemen's Association:

President Ordway advised that the new year reports will be online after Thanksgiving and that they have been streamlined.

Unfinished Business:

Mr. Keyser commented on the solar presentation.

Mr. Apgar asked if the Board wanted it (solar) at all and what if we plan for a building expansion where the solar might be.

Mr. Jeffer asked that a Solar committee be formed to make recommendations.

Mr. Hull advised that he had insight that Chairman Washer was going to form a long term planning committee to address items such as expansion, renovation, future needs and that the solar discussion can be a part of that.

New Business:

Chairman Washer stated that he is appointing a Long Term Planning Committee to develop a 5 and 10 year plan for the Home. The Committee will consult with the Superintendent about trends, legislation for long term care facilities and nursing home. They will assess the future needs of the Home and seek professional services if necessary (architects/ actuarial studies) they will forward proposals for professional services to the Finance Committee for budgeting purposes. The Committee will consist of Managers Sutphen, Cunningham, Signorello, Apgar and Miller.

Payment of Bills:

Mr. Hull reported the total bills in the amount of \$512,767.57. Upon motion, a roll call vote was taken and the bills payment was approved.

Motions and Resolutions:

None.

Public Participation:

No one from the public in attendance wished to speak.

Executive Session:

None had.

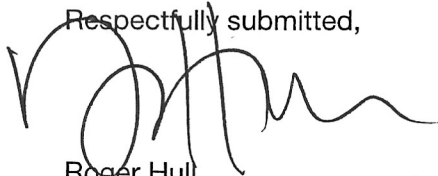
Good and Welfare:

Mr. Dutch advised that he spoke to Ken Silvestri and that he and Dot are doing fine. Mr. Heflich added that he frequently visits Kenny.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 1123 hours.

Respectfully submitted,



Roger Hull
Secretary

APPROVED BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 12/9/2023