

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS,
TOWNSHIP OF UPPER; DISTRICT #1**

November 15, 2018

A meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Township of Upper, District #1 was held on November 15th, 2018 at 5:00 p.m. at the Strathmere Volunteer Fire Company on Commonwealth Ave. in Strathmere, NJ.

Commissioners **Karen Mitchell, Joe Boland, Randy Roash, Donna Diefenderfer** and **Steve Nickelsberg** were present. Also present was **Cheryl Ward, CPA**, Accountant and Recording Secretary to the Board.

The meeting was opened by **Karen Mitchell**, who read the appropriate notice in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey.

As the first order of business, the Board reviewed and approved the minutes of the prior meeting, held October 18, 2018.

Ms. Ward noted that this month's meeting is that at which the 2019 Budget is adopted. **Ms. Ward** informed the Board that the State of New Jersey, Department of Community Affairs has approved the 2019 Budget. After a brief discussion, the 2019 Budget was unanimously adopted. **Ms. Ward** will submit the adopted budget to the appropriate state agency.

Ms. Ward presented a Treasurer's Report, including checks to be signed and paid at this meeting, a review of utility expenses that are directly debited from the operating account, a review of cash-on-hand, and a discussion of year-to-date expenses relative to the budget.

At the prior meeting, held on October 18, 2018, the Board discussed potential cash shortages in the year 2020 and beyond. This is due to government mandates with regards to safety and firefighting equipment that the Commission is required to purchase and maintain. The cost of the new equipment, when coupled with the rising overhead costs of running the fire department, exceeds the funds that the Commission receives from the Township. At the October meeting, **Mr. Bohrer** and **Ms. Ward** urged the Board to begin discussions with regards to finding additional sources of funding, including but not limited to grants, donations from residents, and taxation. They also suggested that the Board consult with their attorney as to its' options in the

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November 15, 2018
(continued)

event that the Board foresees that it will no longer have the necessary funds to operate and comply with all the government mandates.

Because of these discussions, **Karen Mitchell** had a conversation with **John Batastini**, Counsel to the Board. **Mr. Batastini** will investigate options that the Board may wish to consider.

The Board believes it is in the best interest of the Commission and the Strathmere Fire Company to investigate other options to lower operating and overhead expenses and control overall spending while not negatively impacting the services provided by the Fire Company or the safety of the residents and fire fighters. To this end, the Board would like to attempt to control the utility costs. Currently, this can be done by requesting the users of the firehouse to be mindful to turn off the lights and lower the heat or air conditioner when the fire house is not in use, to close the windows when the heat or air conditioner are running, and to unplug equipment that is not in use. For the long term, the Board will consider Solar Power for the firehouse. **Steve Nickelsberg** has agreed to investigate this option and report back to the Board.

The Board realizes that it will be challenging for the Board to continue to operate effectively and efficiently given the extremely tight budget on which it must operate. The Board believes this task can be better accomplished by working closely with the Strathmere Fire Company. The Board would like to invite the Fire Company to share, where appropriate, the financial position of the Fire Company, along with the immediate and long term needs of the Company. The Board believes that a true partnership with the Fire Company will help both organizations better meet their financial goals while providing exceptional services to the township; ensuring the safety of the residents, visitors, and firefighters; and maintaining the tax base for the property owners.

At the September meeting, **Mr. Roash** inquired as to the requirement for the Board to obtain bids prior to entering into contracts or purchasing equipment. **Ms. Ward** discussed these requirements with **Jon Batastini**, Counsel to the Board. According to **Mr. Batastini**, the general rule is that any purchases or contracts that exceed \$17,000 must be put out to bid. There are exceptions to this rule. The Board discussed this and agreed that bids should be obtained for most larger

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November 15, 2018
(continued)

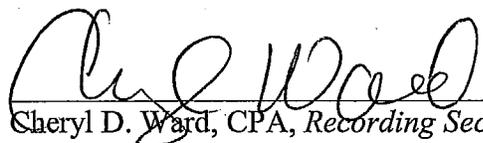
expenditures, even if below the threshold. Further, for purchases or expenses that are shared with the Strathmere Fire Company, the Board would like to review the bids that are obtained by the Fire Company. The Board will request the Fire Company to provide all such bids to **Karen Mitchell**.

In February of 2019, two (2) Board positions, specifically those of **Karen Mitchell** and **Joe Boland**, will be up for re-election. Both **Karen Mitchell** and **Joe Boland** intend to run for the positions. Any other residents wishing to run for the positions may contact the Board to inform the Board of their intent and to obtain a petition.

Ms. Ward reminded the Board that the next meeting will be held on December 20, 2018, at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business for the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Cheryl D. Ward, CPA, Recording Secretary

Approved and Submitted,


Karen Mitchell, Chairman