

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

**October 15, 2020**

A meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Township of Upper, District #1 was held on October 15, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. at the Strathmere Volunteer Fire Company on Commonwealth Ave. in Strathmere, NJ.

Commissioners **Karen Mitchell, Randy Roash, Donna Diefenderfer, Joe Boland and Gary Riordan** were present. Also present were **Cheryl Ward, CPA**, Accountant and Recording Secretary; **Tonya DeVita**, Senior Accountant with Cheryl Ward, CPA; **Bruce Riordan**, Chief of the Strathmere Volunteer Fire Company, and **Ed Scanlon**, Deputy Chief of the Strathmere Volunteer Fire Company

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 June 18, 2020.

**Ms. Ward** presented the current bills and checks to be signed and distributed along with a financial report, including a list of checks that were approved and signed at her office since the June 18, 2020 meeting. The current bills and checks were approved as presented.

Based upon the review of the year to date actual expenses as compared to the budgeted expenses for 2020, it was noted that several of the 2020 expenses are below the amount budgeted for the year. This includes repairs and maintenance, small equipment and utilities. The Board and the Volunteer Fire Company are to be commended for their diligence in controlling expenses. It was also noted that Upper Township is responsible for the workers compensation insurance policy for the Volunteer Fire Company. The Commission appreciates the township covering this important yet costly expense.

As a matter of fiscal policy, at least two (2) members of the Board review and approve all invoices and bills that are presented to be paid by the Commission. In addition, the accounting firm retained by the Board reviews all invoices to confirm the bills presented are for legitimate expenses that are the responsibility of the Commission. The accounting firm also reviews the invoices for accuracy and reasonableness prior to preparing the checks to pay the invoices and bills. Finally, two Commissioners review and sign the checks as prepared by the accounting firm.

Both the DCA (Division of Community Affairs) and the LFB (Local Finance Board) have issued newsletters in September. The Board reviewed the newsletters for important information applicable to the fire district and to ensure the Commission and Volunteer Fire Company are in compliance with the Local Government Ethics Law.

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(continued)**

**Bruce Riordan** presented the Chief's report. The volunteer fire company responded to more than 70 calls over the summer, the majority of which were medical in nature, with a few being very serious. Approximately 12 call were fire related. The Volunteer Fire Company is proud to report that it currently has twenty (20) volunteers. There are also five (5) EMT's that are recertified annually. During the summer months, Upper Township provided a "Beach Medic" on a daily basis, from 10:00 a.m. until

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8:00 p.m. The fire company found this to be very helpful. The Ocean City Fire Department backs up the Strathmere Volunteer Fire Company. Strathmere and Ocean City have an excellent working relationship.

At this meeting, the Board began the 2021 budget process with a Budget Workshop. During this workshop, the Board informally discussed next year's proposed budget, along with its estimated operating expenses and capital expenditures. **Bruce Riordan** discussed the anticipated needs of the Volunteer Fire Company in 2021. The Board had in-depth discussions with regards to raising the funding received through taxpayer dollars by the allowed 2%. Several members of the Board expressed concern over raising the tax by 2%, especially during the COVID pandemic where many people are financially suffering. After lengthy conversations, the Board agreed that the increase is minimal but is in the best interest of the residents of Strathmere to adequately fund the Fire Company. The funding ensures that the Company has the ability to maintain and replace fire fighting equipment that is needed for the safety and protection of the residents of Strathmere. A motion was unanimously passed to increase the 2021 budget by 2%. However, the Commission and Volunteer Fire Company agreed to continue their conservative spending policies. The Budget process will continue at the November meeting where the Board will approve the budget. **Ms. Ward** stressed the need for a quorum of the board at the next two meetings

**Karen Mitchell** reminded the board that the next meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business for the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved and Submitted,

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Cheryl D. Ward, CPA, *Recording Secretary*

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Karen Mitchell, *Chairman*