

Board of Fire Wards Town of Stoddard, NH

Minutes of Fire Ward meeting held on August 6, 2015

In Attendance: Fire Ward/Chief Stephen J. McGerty, Fire Ward/Deputy Chief Joseph Sarcione and Fire Ward Patricia J Lamothe

Also in attendance: Several Stoddard FD Members and several local residents

The meeting was called to order by Fire Ward Joseph Sarcione at 1900 hours. Pledge of Allegiance recited.

First order of business: Ward McGerty nominated Ward Lamothe for position of Chairman of the Fire Wards which she declined. She then made a motion to nominate Ward Sarcione for Chairman for a 1 year period, Ward McGerty seconded and it was passed. Motion was made to name Deborah McGerty as secretary, seconded and passed.

Joe Sarcione wanted to establish the following: What will be the intent of the Fire Wards, how much the Wards will be involved in the operation of the Fire Department and the structure of the Fire Wards. Discussion ensued – the Fire Wards should follow the same rotation type structure as the Selectmen. Meetings of the Wards should be quarterly, or more often as deemed necessary for special circumstances. Length of meetings: Stephen McGerty suggested doing an agenda prior to the meeting and posting it on the town's website. Joe Sarcione wants the other two Wards to be involved in creating the agenda. Patricia Lamothe commented that the Board is responsible for and oversees the Fire Department except for the normal day to day operation which is the responsibility of the Fire Chief. The Board will also oversee the Fire Department budgets which should be submitted in a timely manner and acts as a liaison between the Fire Department and the Selectmen. Joe Sarcione stated that he only recalls two previous meetings of the Fire Wards, however a resident asked for meeting minutes which prompted the Wards to meet on a regular basis and post the minutes on the town's website. A vote followed on making meetings quarterly, was seconded and passed.

Other business: Joe Sarcione stated that it was brought to his attention by a fire department member that there was drinking at the station during Old Home Days. Stephen McGerty stated that it was addressed that day and those members were spoken to and warned. Although the town stated there was no drinking on town property, it has in the past allowed drinking for special occasions provided an insurance policy was obtained. Insurance cost would be prohibitive for the Fire Department and it would not be a good idea or a wise decision to allow drinking at the Station.

Joe Sarcione also expressed concern regarding children on fire apparatus. During this year's Old Home Parade, Joe witnessed children on the FD boat going up to the parade starting point

at what he felt was an unsafe speed. He said that children should not be allowed on the boat driving up to the staging area, and only allowed on it for the actual parade at a slow speed. He also stated that children should never be allowed on any fire apparatus (other than the parade) since it is a safety and liability issue.

Joe Sarcione asked about how the Forestry clothing was going to get paid for and Stephen McGerty told him it was taken care of and coming out of this year's warrant article budget for SCBA. Joe Sarcione said it needs to be paid by the end of the month and Stephen McGerty stated it will not be paid until it is delivered. Stephen McGerty suggested doing it earlier next year. Due to company name changes and re-establishing profiles all orders were on hold. Jenn Phillips-Merrill had gotten the paperwork in during May according to Patricia Lamothe due to having a hard time getting members' sizes and Stephen McGerty suggested getting it in by January next year. Stephen McGerty also asked Joe Sarcione to get another bill from the company with the correct date.

Question from the audience by a resident: "Couldn't the Fire Department get a quarter master in charge of purchasing so all orders go through one person?" Patricia Lamothe stated that usually everything goes through the Fire Chief. Chief McGerty stated he has already started developing a voucher system for purchases.

Joe Sarcione asked about opinions of spending budgeted money and warrant articles. He asked how much do the wards want to be involved. Patricia Lamothe said the Chief will submit the budget and the board will review, make recommendations and accept.

One resident asked why Fire Wards are needed. Doesn't it just add to the bureaucracy? Joe Sarcione stated that anyone can recommend a warrant article to dissolve the Board of Fire Wards if they wished. Patricia Lamothe stated that the New Hampshire Fire Laws annotated has a lot of information. Joe Sarcione asked about the town hiring an attorney to explain the responsibilities of Fire Wards. Stephen McGerty asked if there is an attorney who is familiar with Fire Department issues. Discussion will continue at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 5, 2015 at 1900 hours (7 PM).

Stephen McGerty made motion to adjourn meeting, Joe Sarcione seconded, all in favor.