

The Board of Fire Commissioners, Gloucester Township Fire District # 4 held a Workshop Meeting on November 1, 2023. The meeting was held at Blackwood Fire Company, 14 W. Central Avenue, Blackwood, NJ 08012. This meeting has been properly advertised according to the State of New Jersey Sunshine Laws.

COMMISSIONERS: D. Vannoni, J. Vannoni, M. Jones, J. McCann. Notes Commissioner Cristella will be here shortly.

ATTENDEES: FF Walsh

1. Commissioner J. Vannoni said the topic of career staff call backs has been discussed at the OPS level. It was stated that in District # 4, the career staff is permitted to come back for all building, structure, entrapments and of course all hands. It was brought up at the OPS meeting, and Commissioner D. Vannoni said that has been our policy for the past 6 years. Even though it has been allowed, no one comes back for calls. The Board discussed what apparatus would be utilized, and it was determined that only FAM Prendergast is qualified on Squad 84, and Engine 88, does not have the proper equipment. Commissioner D. Vannoni stated that it has always been the policy, that the career staff was trained on all District # 4 apparatus. In his opinion, the career staff should all be trained on Squad 84, as well as the Cascade. That would be his stipulation to the call back, they must be able to come back and take a piece of equipment out to the call. Commissioner Jones said it was his understanding that the reserve engine would be housed at BCR, if it fits, and they would report there. When they have a crew, they would contact the incident commander, and ask what they are to do, respond to the call, or cover the district. Commissioner D. Vannoni said he would want a handshake agreement between the Union and the District that they would respond to calls, prior to the district pouring thousands of dollars in new equipment for the reserve engine. Commissioner D. Vannoni said he would expand it to any participating district for Squad 88, which would include Blenheim. The question of volunteers responding to BCR was asked as well as the purchasing of equipment for the reserve engine.
2. Commissioner D. Vannoni said the topic the Clerk forgot to add to the agenda, was the fact that Blackwood Fire Company was asked to attend tonight's meeting, and clearly by the overwhelming attendance shown, they have no interest in knowing what the Board expects from them. Commissioner Jones said it doesn't excuse them, but with 2 of them on their way out, they have no interest. Commissioner Cristella said the Chief should be told he's done, and have him return the car.
3. They went back to discussing the reserve engine, and Commissioner Jones stated from day 1, he wanted it fully stocked, so if needed, you are not moving all this equipment. Commissioner D. Vannoni asked Commissioner Jones if we couldn't get a hurst for the reserve engine, so it would have a minimal rescue tool. He went on to say, he would not mind spending some money, but he wants to be assured it is going to be used.
Commissioner J. Vannoni said Administrator Robb said at the last meeting, District # 2 daytime response is non-existent. He went on to say, that he told Chief Reichert that the new tower ladder is going to be housed at BCR. Commissioner Cristella said doesn't that make sense? All agreed. The Board discussed things that are going on in 85 & 86, and the question came up, would 86 be interested in joining the 88 programs? Commissioner J. Vannoni said the first thing we have to find out is are the career staff willing to come back, as David thinks they will not.

Commissioner Jones stated the County has changed a lot of things, and one of them is cover crews. Certain crews cover certain areas. Has anyone at the County level discussed regionalization. Commissioner J. Vannoni said Bill Dukes talked about it for 25 years.

4. Commissioner D. Vannoni asked where we are with the services contract for BCR, and do you To implement it. We have given them 90 days, but have they ever been given the service contract? Commissioner J. Vannoni says the service contract basically is Title 40, and what are we looking for? Commissioner D. Vannoni said he is looking for a minimum of 3 guys on every call. There was a discussion on the quality of responses. Commissioner J. Vannoni said he is looking at crews, like duty crews. Commissioner D. Vannoni said duty crews only man the station for a period of time.

Commissioner McCann said he thinks the minimum of (3) is a good starting point.

Commissioner D. Vannoni said the bare minimum for the career staff is (3). If Blackwood Fire Company cannot provide (3) members to respond to calls, what is the purpose, and he would give them until the first of the year.

Commissioner Cristella said we as a Board are sitting here trying to figure this out, and the Chief, who we are paying money to, is sitting home.

There was a discussion on how and when they were notified to be here, and it was determined they were told at the last meeting, and they were present, that they were expected to be here.

5. There was a discussion on appointing a Fire Chief, and Commissioner J. Vannoni said according to Title 40 the Board is not permitted to do that. He went on to say, the Board is permitted not to recognize the Chief, appointed by BFC.

Commissioner Jones spoke about a paid Chief, and said he spoke to some of the membership about that, and explained the Chief's position is a 40 hour a week position. He does not believe the person running for Chief, will last 60 days. He went on to explain how he tries to inform the membership, and dispel some of the rumors.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said yes, we can negotiate with the BFC and they can relinquish that authority.

6. Commissioner D. Vannoni said going back to the initial question, what are our expectations of BFC?

Commissioner McCann said on the bs calls, you have Squad 88 responding, what else do you need?

Commissioner J. Vannoni said the volunteers are not being dispatched to bs calls.

The Board discussed calls, responses, and how that data needs to be collected.

7. Commissioner D. Vannoni stated to him a qualified firefighter is one who has completed their new firefighter training, and can wear a CBA.

The topic came up of getting the information and data that is needed. It was questioned as to if that information will be provided, and if it can be obtained.

Commissioner D. Vannoni said he is giving them 30 days to come up with the information, if not he will pay OT to a career firefighter to get the information.

8. The discussed what was going on in Fire District #3 with the 2 Captains at this point. One of the plans they are talking about is making a day Captain, which would be Nick Procopio. It will not affect our platoons. The discussion turned to doing this on our platoons. The talk at the OPS meeting was making Nick in charge of Squad 88 repairs.

The Board talked about why we have a mechanic. Why don't we have Nick taking care of it? The salary of the FAM was discussed. He makes a substantial amount more than the firefighter. The Board thinks he should a part of the Squad 88 maintenance.

9. The Board discussed the American Rescue Plan Grant, and the 10 percent match. It will be used in a shared service program.
10. The subject of Power DMS was discussed by the Board, and we will need to pay them in 2024, because we signed a 3-year contract. After that, we are cancelling Power DMS. Commissioner D. Vannoni said everyone has access to Power DMS. Commissioner J. Vannoni said we are in the process of migrating everything over to the Lexipol program.
11. The Board discussed the LOASP Program, and if volunteers who get on a truck should be paid more than associate members. The discussion then turned to comradery, and when the last time BFC held a family event to promote comradery within the company. The Board estimated that to be about 3 years ago.
12. The topic of no representation from BFC at the workshops, or budget meetings was discussed, and the fact that the Board has not received a budget from BFC for the year 2024. Commissioner Jones said he has discussed the \$5.00 per call program, and has told BFC that they need to attend the budget workshops and let the Board know what their intentions are. Commissioner J. Vannoni stated he has done the same thing.
13. The Board went back to the topic of comradery, and how they remember events at the fire company, that members participated in, and the fact that many members socialized outside of the fire company. Commissioner McCann stated he thinks the fire companies disconnect is between the fire company and the Board. Commissioner J. Vannoni said most of their issues are based on rumors, inuendo and mis-information. And he has said this in the BFC meetings. Commissioner Cristella said in years past, when that occurred, fellow members or people in authority set them straight. Commissioner D. Vannoni said the problem is there is a lack of leadership in BFC. Commissioner Cristella said we are public enemy # 1, and the Board has done nothing but to give BFC everything they have asked for. Commissioner McCann stated all this really started after the theft. Commissioner D. Vannoni said if you think about it, the Chief and the Assistant Chief running against each other, shows there is conflict within the fire company. That would have never happened before, they would have worked things out, and rallied the troops behind them.

With no further business to discuss.

Motion by Commissioner Jones, second by Commissioner Cristella to adjourn. All in favor, motion carries.

DATED: November 1, 2023

BY: _____
Micheal Jones, Secretary

