

The Board of Fire Commissioners, Gloucester Township Fire District # 4 held a Workshop Meeting on March 6, 2024. 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:** M. Cristella, J. Vannoni, M. Jones, J. McCann

**ATTENDEES:** IAFF President Kemery, Captain Reiss, FM Urso, FF Ricciardelli

1. There was a discussion concerning the Squad 88 members meeting. The subject of the patches, that were approved by the Board, contingent upon District #2 approving them, and who is paying for it. The total will be \$217.00 per district. Commissioner J. Vannoni suggested the Board pay for the patches. The Board agreed.
2. Commissioner J. Vannoni stated the mutual exchange of hours, has had a few minor changes. The question was raised by Commissioner McCann, that if a career firefighter works his regular shift, and then switches for another 24-hour shift, that would be a straight 48 hours. He thought the maximum they could work was 36 hours straight. Commissioner Vannoni said that seems to be changing in the fire service. He does agree, it is a long stretch. He said this has not been approved by the Union, or the labor attorney yet. IAFF President said it is a trend that is 48 on 96 off. He also stated the 36 hours, Bill Robb pointed out in their meeting, is not a hard fast rule. Commissioner McCann stated he thought a joint policy recently approved, did have the 36 hours as a maximum allowed. He said he will have to look into it. Commissioner J. Vannoni said it is a work in progress.
3. The topic of the Mutual Exchange Memorandum of Understanding was discussed by the Board. Commissioner McCann stated it says we will provide mutual aid to District # 1 at no cost. His concern is, if District # 3 sees District # 1 is getting the same service as District # 3 at no cost, they will stop paying District # 2 and District # 4 for the service. Commissioner Cristella stated he thinks the Board needs to speak to someone, other than our Solicitor concerning mutual aid. He feels mutual aid would apply to the volunteer fire service, but he feels Squad 88 is a paid squad, separate from the volunteer service, and should be considered a pay to play type of service. Commissioner Vannoni said it has been looked into, and if District # 3 refuses to respond to calls in District # 2 or District # 4, then it becomes a pay to play. Commissioner Vannoni asked Commissioner Cristella to stop bringing up District # 1, because things are never going to change with them.  
Captain Reiss stated in his letter to the Board on this topic, states the career employees all want to respond to any and all calls for mutual aid.  
Commissioner J. Vannoni said he never remembers the Board having an issue with our apparatus going into another fire district to assist. He asked the Board if they have an issue with it. He also went on to say, the shared service committee is working on a plan, to make sure if Squad 88 is tied up on a call in another district, there is a plan for the

volunteers to serve as a back -up, should a call go out. Commissioner Cristella brought up the topic of the cost of our apparatus going to other districts, not going out of district for calls. There was a discussion on that topic.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said he went off on Fire District # 1 at the shared services meeting. As things are right now, we only go to Fire District # 1 for dwelling fires.

The topic of gas leaks was also discussed by the Board, and everyone agreed that they can at times be serious calls, where mutual aid is needed.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said this is an operational decision, one in which the Chief and the Operations Commissioner will decide.

Captain Reiss stated the employees only wanted to gather information for Squad 88 going into District # 1, to just get an idea of how many calls and what the cost would be. It would just benefit us, to know the numbers, not that anyone is going to present that to District # 1.

There was a discussion with Captain Reiss, concerning a training concept he is working on, along with the Chiefs.

Commissioner J. Vannoni stated he is very happy with the direction things are going with training. Captain Reiss held cold water training, that was open and advertised to everyone, unfortunately, there were not as many members participating as he would have liked. B Platoon and C platoon show up for drill night, it's all good.

Captain Reiss spoke on staffing numbers, and he stated since the start of the Squad 88 program, the goal has been to get 3 platoons, of 5 staffed career members. We currently have 2 platoons with 4, and one with 5. He asked what is the plan and the goal moving forward. The members feel the goal of 5 per platoon should remain, but the question to the Boards, is what is their plan?

Commissioner McCann asked if there is a 5-man platoon, but one man is in the shop, do you consider that a 5-man platoon. He said he does not, he considers it a 4-man platoon.

Captain Reiss stated when Procopio was moved to days, and to the shop, there has been no communication or policies, on what he does, or does not do, as far a fire calls.

Although, he is on the list for overtime.

Commissioner Cristella asked would he make up a 4- or 5-man crew?

Captain Reiss said you should probably call Administrator Robb and ask him that question.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said it is a work in progress. He does not disagree with some of the stuff Frank said, but he said we have to work through some of this stuff. It has been difficult to get answers to some questions.

Commissioner Cristella asked if District # 2 is going to hire?

Commissioner J. Vannoni said he did not know.

Captain Reiss said what they do with their personnel is their prerogative, they are simply asking what the plan or goal is moving forward.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said another thought is to have 4 platoons, the 4<sup>th</sup> being a daytime platoon, with 4 on each platoon.

He said this will not be resolved tonight.

IAFF President Kemery said he has a few points to make. # 1 he said this topic was glanced over by the shared service committee, and there was dialog, but it was not in depth. He said the shared service committee must buckle down, and come up with a plan to present to the Boards. Point # 2, they will have to go back to the shift making policy, and amend that policy, to account for the firefighter who is now on day work. He said it has been verbally discussed, but not put in the policy.

Commissioner McCann said he asked the question, to see if platoon A was 4-or 5- man staffed.

IAFF President Kemery said FF Procopio doesn't respond to incidentals, but if a dwelling fire happens, verbally it was stated he would get the tower ladder or rescue out. But that has not been put in writing.

Commissioner Cristella wanted to set the record straight, and confirmed District # 2 has a career Captain, that does not run calls.

IAFF president said he does not run incidental calls. He will run dwelling or calls that need the rescue. He went on to say, they did not just go off and do this, they did let the committee know if their intentions.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said they came to the committee with several plans, but the bottom line is we cannot tell them what they can or cannot do.

IAFF President said the Union supported the idea, because he does work on 88 as well as work for 82, and it kept the captain position in tack. Everyone knew, and no one objected. The policy needs to be amended.

Commissioner McCann said he agrees with Captain Reiss, and the model needs to be discussed. Either here or at the shared service level.

Starting a truck committee, for a new Squad 88 was discussed, and the current time frame to acquire a new truck is 48 months. It was stated it does not hurt to look into it. There was further discussion on the topic.

Captain Reiss stated the DCA is going to change the rule, where Boards can sign a contract, prior to taking delivery of the vehicle. Currently, you cannot sign a contract, until you take delivery. Since the time frame to get a truck is 4 years, the way the current rule is, Boards would have to pay for the truck for 4 years, before ever receiving it.

Commissioner Cristella told Captain Reiss he does not mind them looking into ways to expand or improve Station # 2, but he said he would have to see what that may entail, because if it calls for moving walls, etc., that would be something that he feels needs to involve District # 2. He gave Captain Reiss the ok to come up with a plan.

4. Commissioner J. Vannoni said the Board was emailed copies of the Mutual exchange of hours as well as the Mutual Exchange Memorandum.
5. Commissioner J. Vannoni brought up the topic of EMT/ EMR for career and volunteers. The EMR is the new First Responder Program, and is currently being used in New Jersey. Captain Reiss said there is a third option, CPR, which he provided the detail to the Personnel Director, which is done by the American Red Cross.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said he is not willing to go that low. He went on to say Chairman D. Vannoni wants to keep EMT, since we have people who had their certifications and let them lapse. He went on to say our EMS System may be failing again, as there are rumors out there, and he is not sure where that will fall on the fire departments.

Commissioner Cristella asked Commissioner Vannoni if he is thinking since the current EMS system may fail, that it may fall on the firefighters.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said he knows EMT is more expensive, but all of our guys, with the exception of one, have all previously been certified, and therefore would only have to take refresher courses, so for us to get back to that would not be a big jump. For District # 2, it would be a larger expense, because most of their staff has never been certified.

Commissioner McCann asked if it would be feasible to have one EMT on each platoon, and maybe a back up on each platoon, with the remainder being EMR's.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said he is going back and forth on this topic.

IAFF Local 3249 said the Union has no issue, if the Board would like to make this a condition of employment going forward. However, the Union would object to the Board making this mandatory for all existing employees, and the reason is, if someone is unable to pass the test, it would not be fair to terminate them.

Commissioner McCann asked if the same would apply to the Fire Official, if that person lets his certification lapse.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said if that happened, he would lose the stipend/pay associated with that title.

IAFF Local 3249 President said he has encouraged the Boards to get together and decide what certifications should be required for future firefighters.

There was a discussion concerning the EMS system in Gloucester Township, and if it will collapse, and the consensus was, if that happens, that is the Township's problem, not the Fire District's problem.

Commissioner J. Vannoni stated he wants our staff to be able do what they need to do correctly, and with the most knowledge possible. As it stands, the lowest certification, CPR and now they have oxygen as an additional course, would handle calls where CPR is needed. EMT would allow them to provide medication.

IAFF President Kemery suggested for the Board to just decide what they would like the first responders to do, and be certified for.

Commissioner Jones said he would go for the EMR.

Again, a long discussion took place on the pros and cons of CPR, EMR or EMT, and it was brought up that a policy needs to be put in place, that specifies what is required. It was also discussed, that in today's world, with cell phones, that if a law suite would occur, the responding firefighter who acted, could be sued if it was determined correct procedures were not followed. In response, the firefighter could say he was never directed to maintain his CPR training.

Commissioner McCann stated he would like to see everyone have some type of training, even if its manual.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said he is not fond of everyone having the lowest form of training. He went on to say, at this time career and volunteer all are required to have the CPR training. CPR is part of Fire One.

Captain Reiss said at this time, there is not any mandated additional training for career staff.

Commissioner Jones brought up that when the rescue was in service, there was a preference that EMT's ride that apparatus.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said this subject will be brought up at the regular meeting, so be prepared for a vote.

6. The topic of a new healthcare provider was discussed. Commissioner J. Vannoni told the Board that the information they have in front of them is a new provider, located at the old Dicks Sporting Goods in Deptford. He said the other (2) providers we inquired about, never got back to us. He went on to say he is not happy with Interstate, as it is taking applicants 4 weeks to get an appointment. It was stated Premier Occupational Health provides all services, where Interstate does not. Members can go there for their physicals, workmen's comp injuries, small injuries, as an urgent care would do. Mary Jo, who worked for Inspira, will now be working for them in Deptford, which is a plus. He is going to ask the Board to approve them at the meeting. At this time, he believes the opening date is April 1, 2024.
7. The residency requirement for the Chief was discussed, and at this time, there is no residency requirement for the Chief.
8. Joint Commission meeting, with District # 6, for April 4, 2024 was discussed, and nothing was decided at this time.
9. Renovations at Blackwood Clementon Road was brought up for discussion, nothing decided at this time.
10. Commissioner Vannoni brought up the topic of Chief Georgio, and the presentation at District # 6. He stated he made a presentation at the BFC meeting last night. He said the rumor mill has been running ramped, thinking we would be getting rid of the volunteers. The presentation by the Chief was very informative, and it needs to keep moving forward. (2) members of District # 2 were present also, which is a good sign. He stated we have been dancing with District # 2 for 6 years, and whether you like them or not, we should be consolidating with them. John Carlin now agrees, it is easier to consolidate with (1) or (2) districts, than taking on all (5) at one time.
11. The grant that was awarded to Fire District 4 and Fire District # 2 for \$52,000.00, that Captain Reiss, and Captain Giambri worked on together, for new gear. Captain Reiss stated it was originally for 14 sets of gear, but with increased costs, he will have to see how it works out now. He suggested that both district's order from the same vendor,

because there could be a cost saving with ordering 14 sets from one vendor, instead of ordering 7 from one, and 7 from the other.

Commissioner McCann questioned why other Camden County fire districts received more than we did.

Captain Reiss said the maximum was \$75,000.00, but they used (14) firefighters as their bench mark. He said in hindsight, they should have asked for more, but at the time, they thought it would be beneficial, not to ask for the maximum.

Commissioner McCann asked what the matching cost is, 5% and would that be divided between the (2) districts? It was determined the match would be 10%.

Captain Reiss said the matching funds would be \$2,500.00 per district.

Commissioner Jones said he did the math from the last quote, and 5 sets of gear would be approximately \$26,000.00.

Captain Reiss said he has never dealt with a NJ Grant, so he is unsure of how they operate. He did say, the matching funds were suggested to be put in the grant to show the fire districts were doing their part, investing in the cause. He is not sure if the matching funds will actually be required.

Commissioner Jones asked Captain Reiss who District # 2 uses for gear purchases.

Captain Reiss replied, but the audio was not clear.

Commissioner Jones asked if the expectation of the grant was to provide new gear to all of our career firefighters.

Captain Reiss replied said he was not sure. They used the number because they thought it gave them the best chance to acquire the grant. It was just a strategy to write the grant. He said you can do whatever you want with the grant money. He said the Board can decide where the 7 sets go.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said he would need to see an inventory of all the career gear, and he agrees with Captain Reiss, the gear needs to come from one vendor. He would suggest, buying new gear for the career staff, and move their current gear down.

There was a discussion on if the fire company should be on the gear. It would save on cost, not to have it.

12. The topic of the up-and-coming Safer Grant was discussed, and the Board was asked if they would be interested in applying for one, when we are eligible to apply.

Commissioner Jones said he would be interested in applying, especially if our staffing levels should be at 5. The discussion turned to who will write the grant, and the subject of grant writers was discussed.

Commissioner J. Vannoni asked Captain Reiss to get them the information, and costs for a grant writer.

IAFF Local President Kemery said you can apply for a hire grant, as well as a recruitment and retention grant. The same grant writer could be used for both. He said currently you have the paid duty crews, and you could call it by another name on the grant.

Commissioner J. Vannoni said could we include the per-diem program, in that grant. It would take some of the weight off of the career guys, for filling in.

Captain Reiss said it is 10% match for all 3 years.

Motion by Commissioner Jones, second by Commissioner McCann to pass a resolution to go into closed session to discuss personnel. All in favor, motion carries.

**ROLL CALL:** Commissioner Cristella-yes, Commissioner Jones-yes, Commissioner J. Vannoni-yes, Commissioner McCann-yes

Meeting called back to order.

**ROLL CALL:** Commissioner Cristella-here, Commissioner Jones-here, Commissioner J. Vannoni-here, Commissioner McCann-here.

Commissioner Cristella said the item discussed in closed session, will remain closed at this time.

With no further business to discuss.

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

DATED: March 6, 2024

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary, Michael Jones