

The Board of Fire Commissioners, Gloucester Township Fire District # 4 held a Workshop Meeting on May 3, 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, M. Cristella, J. Vannoni, M. Jones

ATTENDEES: Captain Reiss, IAFF Local 3249 President Kemery

1. Commissioner Jones spoke about replacing the red pickup truck, and purchasing a new 4-wheel drive pickup truck, and sending the old truck down here for the volunteers to use. He spoke about the replacement plan he had for the utility vehicles.
Commissioner J. Vannoni said he is not spending any more money, especially since we just purchased a new Chiefs vehicle. He personally saw last night, a fire call, and one person responded, sitting on the truck, because once again, the truck never got out. He has repeatedly asked the Chief for the reports that show the numbers of responses, and what trucks are getting out. He still has not received anything.
2. Commissioner D. Vannoni said, since this new system does not give us the information that is needed, maybe we need to go back to ESP for run reporting.
3. Commissioner D. Vannoni suggested that something needs to go out, that the pickup truck is only to be used a second due, and not the first truck out.
He said it is not the Board's fault, that the Chief has not done driver training on Squad 84.
Commissioner Cristella added we have been waiting on these numbers for months.
4. Commissioner D. Vannoni said the Board needs to have a serious discussion on taking over the leadership of Blackwood Fire Company. He cited the following, we cannot get any reports, no driver training, terrible Tuesday night drills, and supposedly the Treasurer of Blackwood Fire Company taking thousands of dollars.
In response, IAFF Local 3249 President said at the fire company meeting, the President of Blackwood Fire Company stated they are moving on this. The CPA now has their books, and when they come up with a number, it will be given to the police, who are waiting on the number before they proceed.
Commissioner D. Vannoni said this a failure of the leadership.
IAFF Local 3249 President Kemery said this has happened in other Townships, and the result was the fire company being shut down.
5. Commissioner D. Vannoni spoke about the \$5.00 per call program. The list from the 1st Quarter, only has 4 members who meet the requirements. The others listed do not meet the requirements. Why are we writing checks for \$10.00 or \$15.00? That does not meet the requirements. The highest percentage on the list is 44%...the highest. This is unacceptable.

6. Commissioner D. Vannoni said we need to have a plan in place. The topic of a joint Chief with District # 2 was brought up, and the pros and cons of doing that was discussed. Commissioner D. Vannoni said in his opinion, the Board is not providing adequate fire protection. IAFF Local 3249 President Kemery said he will look into it if he is asked. Commissioner D. Vannoni suggested that he looks into it at the OPS level, and bring up the subject of a joint Chief, and see what their response is. Commissioner Jones asked if District # 2 have said if they are on board with a shared firefighter if we get the Safer Grant. No commitment so far. Commissioner D. Vannoni stated regardless if they want in, we need a plan to fix our Fire District. Commissioner Cristella said he wants to hire 5 firefighters. The question was raised as to where the money would come from. He went on to say, that we need people on trucks, more than the administration. Commissioner D. Vannoni said he does not disagree, however, if we do that, we would have one Captain overseeing 12 employees. He said that is unsafe, and is not the correct way of doing things. He suggested we hire 3 or 4, and then take 3, the FAM, Fire Official and Captain off the trucks, and have them do their administrative duties. They could fill in, if necessary, at times. What happens when it gets to be more than 88 can handle? Are we relying on mutual aid? There was a discussion on where the mutual aid would come from, and how far away. Commissioner D. Vannoni said from Captain Reiss's numbers, it looks like we have 7 guys, volunteers, who are answering 0% of the calls. He believes Commissioner Cristella is correct, we need to hire. Local 3249 President Kemery said the Board would need to re-work the budget. After a discussion on numbers, and things that could be cut from the budget, they came up with roughly \$240, 000.00, which would only cover approximately 2 firefighters. Captain Reiss said approximately 68% of our budget is personnel. Commissioner D. Vannoni said he would be glad to go before the DCA and ask for more. Commissioner Cristella asked who could give us a per household number on how much the increase would be? There was a discussion on the tax rate.
- The discussion then went to consolidation, and if an additional letter to the other 5 Districts, asking if they are interested should be considered? President Local 3249 President said the talks with District # 6 are still open. He suggested a letter to the mayor. He said if the media got hold of the information, it could cause some movement on the part of the Township. Commissioner D. Vannoni said a letter had been sent previously, and that was when the mayor decided to make a mandatory 24/7 crew north and south in the Township. He threw it back on the fire districts.

Commissioner D. Vannoni said that only the firefighters that meet the active firefighter criteria should be paid the \$5.00 per call.

The subject of Workmen's Comp Insurance was brought up, and Commissioner J. Vannoni made it clear, he will only pay Workmen's Comp Insurance for members who meet the criteria of active firefighter, which will come down to approximately 10 members.

Commissioner D. Vannoni said the Fire Company as well as the Chief needs to be put on notice, as to what the Board expects from them. The Agreement to Provide Fire Suppression Service needs to be sent to them. We are paying \$250,000.00 a year for 3 guys.

Commissioner D. Vannoni asked Captain Reiss to complete what he was saying concerning the utility vehicle, since he cut him off.

Captain Reiss said he does not want everyone to get comfortable using the pick-up truck to respond to fires.

Commissioner D. Vannoni said we could buy a 2-wheel drive Ford Explorer, since we have the money in the truck fund, and do not have to hold a meeting or election to do so.

Commissioner Jones reported Firefighter One was out and looked at the Tower Ladder, and have decided they could not repair it. FAM Prendergast contacted other welding companies, who also stated they could not fix it.

He said we have already advertised Engine 842, so he will reach out to the Solicitor, to see if we can just sell it without advertising it again. He suggested making a motion at the next meeting to sell both pieces of apparatus.

Motion by Commissioner J. Vannoni, second by Commissioner Cristella to pass a resolution to go into closed session.

ROLL CALL: D. Vannoni-yes, M. Cristella-yes, J. Vannoni-yes, M. Jones-yes

Meeting called back to order.

ROLL CALL: D. Vannoni-here, M. Cristella-here, J. Vannoni-here, M. Jones-here

Commissioner D. Vannoni said the personnel issue talked about in closed session will remain closed at this time.

With no further business to discuss.

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

DATED: May 3, 2023

BY: _____
Michael Jones, Secretary