

NORTHWESTERN JOINT FIRE DISTRICT

July 10, 2024

Minutes

The Board met in Regular Session at 7:00 p.m.. The Board opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Logan Rife, representative of York Township, Ms. Beth Marshall, representative of Taylor Township, Mr. Jerry McClary, representative of Liberty Township, Mr. Bill Lowe, representative of Leesburg Township and Mrs. Allison Hamilton, Fiscal Officer were in attendance. Chief Merrick, Mrs. Amy Beene, District Administrator, Lt. Morey and FF Furry was also in attendance.

FF Tyler Furry presented the Board with a copy of a letter from the State Employment Relations Board for a Request for Recognition of Northwestern Fire District Local 5493-International Association of Fire Fighters & Northwestern Fire District. The Members are moving forward in joining the IAFF. The Board asked why there was a need to join the IAFF. FF Furry explained the Association has benefits available to Fire Fighters such as education benefits, death benefits. He said there has been nothing the Board has done or any bad decisions made; the wages and benefits were not an issue. He advised in his conversation with Mr. Brian Gatley, Employee Organization Representative, the Firefighters were happy with what they have and felt there was no need for a contract. It was felt there was a need to secure what they currently have for the future should there be a change in the District Board Members or leadership (if the Chief would retire). The membership would only be offered to Full Time personnel and 51% of the members have to agree. Members wouldn't be able to make any changes until the end of a contract. There was discussion if this move would attract or turn off applicants.

(It was later noted that the address for the PO Box was incorrect on the letter and had not been received in the mail)

The Board fully supports its Fire Department members and don't fully understand the need. Members are more than welcome to approach the Board with any ideas or concerns. There was discussion how a contract locks members into terms and the members would potentially lose money. There was discussion of public perception. Mr. McClary advised the Community would look at this in a negative manner. He is not in support as he does not believe it is in the best interest of the District or its members. The Board does not have to make recognition.

There was discussion of contributions and Ms. Hamilton advised that essentially collectively the Members would pay over \$10,000 per year directly to the IAFF with no effort coming from the Association, for pay and benefits in which the Member have already in place. The Board reviews salaries at least twice a year to ensure rates are competitive. If there are additional benefits the Members are seeking; the District could look at bringing in additional benefits. She advised she looks at the cost versus the benefit of what is being provided, why not keep more money in the Member's pockets?

There was discussion of timing; the District is currently going through a review process seeking Member involvement to determine the next course. In addition, there are station renovations being planned along with the building a new station. Maybe this is something that needs to be revisited at a later time, when the District is more formed.

Implementing the IAFF would limit the Board on assisting individual members in their time of need; in addition there is a misconception that joining the IAFF provides job protection. The policies would be more strictly implemented, as the IAFF ensures that employers follow policy.

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The Board appreciated FF Furry coming to the meeting and explaining the reason to join the IAFF and opening the discussions.

The Board asked FF Furry to go over what was discussed with the Members and ask Chief Merrick to present factual information on how policies would be enforced.

The Board reviewed the June 12, 2024 meeting minutes.

- I. Mr. Rife made a motion to accept the minutes; Ms. Marshall seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Ms. Hamilton provided the Board with the financial report. Payroll, accounts payable were presented in the Board's packet. Ms. Hamilton noted that on the back of the Board's packet was the appropriations through the first six month of 2024 for them to review. The Golden Giant check was issued and sent. Ms. Hamilton sent a reminder out with the pay stubs of the upcoming meetings with the consulting firm, in addition, she reminded members that the minutes are available on the website. Ms. Hamilton provided the Board with the AOS Fraud Training. The Trustees will provide a copy to Ms. Beeney to keep on file. Ms. Beeney advised she has registered for the September conference. Ms. Beeney posted the EMS Coordinator and Training Coordinator positions in accordance to policy-policy states 4 days to post. There was one letter of interest for the EMS Coordinator and one letter of interest with a resume attached for the Training Coordinator. She noted a member had reached out via email prior to the deadline; she responded back advising she would need a letter of interest. As of the date of this meeting, a letter of interest was not provided. Discussion about Members not receiving emails from Ms. Beeney when sent out in groups. Lt. Morey advised he would review the groups. Ms. Beeney has completed her probationary period. Ms. Hamilton advised Ms. Beeney would begin her training on the UAN system in-house and then attend a training in the fall. Ms. Beeney advised everything is ready for the consultants. The Board will have their session on Friday. Audit items needed have been pulled.

- II. Mr. Rife made a motion to accept the Fiscal Officer's Financial Report; including the Purchase Orders/Blanket Certificates, payments and payroll. All payments were approved. The motion included the District Administrator's report. Mr. McClary seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Chief Merrick presented his report to the Board. The Department responded to 55 calls and the staff had 574.25 hours of training. Radio problems have been identified, last group of headsets have been installed, no further information on grant awards, manikin & intubation heads have been received, coroner training has been done twice; still have to schedule a third time. FF Brewer will receive the 40 and 8 community action hero award and then compete against another state winner for the national award.

The Board approved the new medic being showcased at the Ohio Fire Chiefs Convention; it has not been placed into service. Chief will ask the vendor if they could make the minor repairs on the unit in exchange.

- III. Ms. Beth Marshall made a motion to accept Lt. Barrett's letter of interest in the EMS Coordinator position and as such name Lt. Barrett as the District EMS Coordinator. In addition, Ms. Marshall also moves to accept the letter of interest from FF Brewer for the Training Coordinator position and as such name FF Brewer as the District Training

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Coordinator. Mr. McClary seconded the motion. The Board also recognized another interested party for the Training Coordinator position; however, did not have the requested letter of interest to review. All were in favor.

The Chief presented the Board with updated policy changes. The changes include changing the minimum monthly hours for Part Time members from 27 hours to 24 hours per month, re-instate the permanent part time member role and as such update the minimum monthly hours to 96. With the reinstatement of the permanent part time role, the call-off procedures were updated and comp accrual will be implemented for hours above requirements. Additional change to policy would be allowing one Full Time member per shift to off on approved leave at a time. This will help with staffing and overtime costs. Mr. Lowe asked about filling shifts. The Chief showed the Board that any member can go on the website and look for open shifts and fill them.

- IV. Mr. Rife made a motion to accept the changes relating to the modification of the part time monthly hour requirements, the reinstatement of the permanent part time role(s), the additional policy for part time call off procedures. Mr. McClary seconded the motion. All were in favor.
- V. Mr. Lowe made a motion that the District allow permanent part time members accrue comp time over required hours; as presented. Mr. Rife seconded the motion. All were in favor.
- VI. Ms. Marshall made a motion to remove the COVID policy as it is no longer a relevant matter. Mr. Rife seconded the motion. All were in favor.
- VII. Mr. Rife made a motion to reimburse up to \$2000 in education expenses for part time members; along with implementing a minimum of two years of service to the District following reimbursement. Ms. Marshall seconded the motion. All were in favor.

The Board signed the environmental study agreement, as required by the USDA for the loan application process. Chief Merrick is to contact Cleman & Nelson for consultation services as it relates to policies and human resources; Mr. Gray from the UC Prosecutors and Mr. Comstock are not responding in a timely manner to questions that arise. Chief will report back at the next meeting.

The Board discussed the letter from the SERB as presented by Mr. Furry. There is a 21 day window in which to respond; Chief is going to make contact with SERB and determine when the 21 day clock starts. He will report back.

- VIII. Mr. Lowe made a motion to object to the request for recognition and file the form 1009. Mr. McClary seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Ms. Marshall advised she has reached out to UCATS for transportation of residents when discharged from the hospital.

Mr. Rife made a motion to adjourn with Mr. McClary seconding the motion. All were in favor and the Board adjourned at 10:27 p.m..

Respectfully Submitted By:

Allison M. Hamilton, Fiscal Officer Northwestern Joint Fire District

Reviewed: _____ Logan Rife _____ Beth Marshall
_____ Jerry McClary _____ Bill Lowe