

West Ossipee Fire Precinct Commissioners
Non Public Sessions
January 17, 2009

Commissioners Present: Joseph Goss, Henry Ela, Paul Jay
Others Present: Carl Huddleston, Matthew Welch, Chris Tozier, and Mellisa Ferland
Minutes Taken By: Marilyn Bolduc

The Commissioners made a motion to go into non public session at 11:42am. Passed 3-0.

The Commissioners were meeting with the representatives of the West Ossipee Firemen's Association in regards to a letter they received from the association signed by C. Huddleston. The letter included two years of bank statements and a list of expenses the association had determined were not the responsibility of the association. The association wanted the Commissioners to address the questions they had submitted.

The Commissioners didn't feel that the intent of the letter was strictly for fact finding as it contained statements that could be construed as accusations. C. Huddleston said he had heard some accusations and some had included him. He stated that he has no agenda and in hindsight he could have worded the letter better.

J. Goss said it is the association's officers to be responsible for the association's Tax ID number. Because the Tax ID number got mixed up the Precinct's tax number, the Commission is now involved. The Commission should not be ruling in the expenditures of the association's funds.

C. Tozier said as of January 30, 2009, the association will have their own number.

The Commission directed the association officers not to accept any checks from the Town Fire Warden to pay the firefighters for fighting forest fires. They are to instruct the Town Fire Warden to pay the individual firefighters directly.

Carl Huddleston said he had presented the Fire Chief with department problems he had observed and possible remedies. He has not seen any change in behaviors. Complaints had come to him through the chain of command. Complainants wanted to know how to file a complaint against an officer. M. Welch said everyone goes to Carl as part of the chain of command. The proper procedure is in writing and submitted to the Commissioners.

The Commission asked what the association officers wanted out the meeting. M. Ferland, secretary to the association, would like the Commission to review and consider the pattern of behavior the Fire Chief has exhibited. The association wants to resolve these past issues and move forward with a clean slate.

The Commission said they can't make any rulings without absolute proof of wrong doing. The money may or may not have been spent as it was intended, but at the time of the expenditures there was no written spending policy in effect. The spending policy must be written and in effect at the time of the infraction otherwise, the Commission can't rule on it.

The Commission is not the governing body of the association. The association has to have written policy in place to govern it.

It is up to the accuser to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt when accusing someone of wrong doing. Once proof is presented then the Commission can review it and take action.

The association officers felt it was hard to put trust in someone when they had questions of his integrity. You must have faith and trust with the people you work with. C. Huddleston has not talked directly with the individual yet, but in time he will.

The Commission will address any expense that involves the precinct when they are presented with documentation. They can't rule on any personal expenses. Once the association presents all of their documentation, the Commission will present the information to the Precinct Attorney and follow her recommendations.

The association will have to make their own decisions on how to pursue the unresolved expenses. Everyone may not like the outcome. If it's not resolved, it will eat away at the organization. Once this is resolved, everyone needs to move forward without hard feelings, grudges or retaliation. The association needs by-laws to address issues such as this. The monetary problems fall back onto the person signing the checks. Debits cards are not a good idea as they require no signature.

If the association has issues to discuss they need to contact the board. They can have a meeting by putting the request on the Commissioners' meeting agenda.

J. Goss stated that in the beginning stages of the association, the association wanted space. The board stepped back. No one came forward with any problems. There have been errors on both sides. Everyone needs to put these problems to rest. For any disciplinary actions to be taken, the Commissioners must have proof. They can't rule on moral issues, only legal ones. To rule on moral issues, the must be written policies in place.

C. Huddleston said that to have the person acknowledge his action were not ethical would go far. The Commission said the accused would have to do it voluntarily, they could not order it to be done. C. Huddleston said not matter what the outcome; at least the process is working.

The Commission advised when there is a problem to come before the board and ask for an executive session. Any signer of a letter sent to the Commission should be present to stand and defend his statements to the board. If he can not be present, then the signer should appoint a representative to come before the board.

This has been a huge learning curve for everyone. From now forward, everything will be different. The past must be resolved and the department must come together as a unit.

The Commission will do their share to make it better. Everyone needs to communicate. Meeting notices are posted at least five (5) days before the meeting. They can contact the clerk to be put on the agenda. The Commissions' meeting public minutes are posted after every meeting for people to review.

The Commission directed the association to seal their checkbook immediately and make no further expenditures. The Commission will need instructions from the State, in writing, on the proper way to transfer the association's funds back to them.

J. Goss told M. Ferland that the Precinct's computer needs to come back to the station. The clerk needs a lockable, secure office for the precinct's records. All minutes and files pertaining to the clerk's position need be turned over to the new clerk. C. Huddleston said he and Glenn could share an office and the new clerk could have Glenn's office.

A motion was made to end the non public session at 12:55pm. Passed 3-0.

A motion was made to go into a non public session at 1:05pm. Passed 3-0.

Commissioners Present: Joseph Goss, Henry Ela, Paul Jay
Others Present: Fire Chief Brad Eldridge
Minutes Taken By: Marilyn Bolduc

Chief Eldridge said he was present out of respect for the Board members.

Chief Eldridge has reviewed the West Ossipee Firemen's Association expenses and has marked the ones that are precinct expenses. There are three charges the bought gasoline for members of the fire department. The firefighters had come to him saying they couldn't afford to buy gas to get to work. There are charges that he freely admits are his and he will take care of them.

Once a list comes from the association, it will be compared with Chief Eldridge's list. The Commission will give it to the Precinct's Attorney for review and recommendations. The Commission will then make their decision. The chief needs to get rid of the debit card.

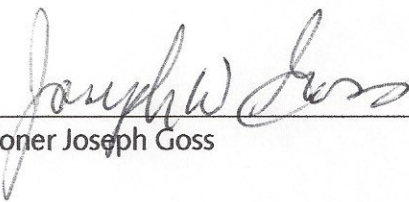
The Commission said there has been an accusation of trust. Chief Eldridge needs to meet with the association and straighten out the trust issue. The Commission can not order him, but he needs to look within himself and work it out with his people. Meet with these people and put the matter to bed so everyone can move forward with no reprisals.

There were problems on both sides and blame for everyone. Now we all need to find out what needs to be done and how to handle the bookkeeping. This came to light when a clerical error was caught by DRA. This is not a witch hunt, but it can not be swept under the rug. All discussions and decisions stay in the meeting.

A motion was made to end the non public session at 1:20pm. Passed 3-0.


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Minutes Approved 2/7/09
Date



Commissioner Joseph Goss

Commissioner Henry Ela



Commissioner Paul Jay