

Town of Oneonta Fire District
Meeting Minutes – Regular Meeting
March 13, 2018

Attendance: Michelle Catan, Johna Peachin, Ron Peters, Alan Rubin
Absent: Fernando Volpe

Members of the Public: Town Councilwoman Trish Riddell Kent, Steve Kent, Marsha Tiemann

Ms. Peachin called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Minutes: Mr. Rubin made a motion to accept the February 2018 minutes. Mr. Peters seconded the motion. Passed 4-0.

Treasurer's Report: The balance as of February 28, 2018 in the money market is \$1,227,428.62 and the checking account balance is \$3,179.35. Payments were made to MacNeil and Company for insurance. The tax receipts for \$1,127,820.00 and PILOT payments for \$1,115.67 (Lutz) and \$5,976.79 (Northern Eagle Beverage) were deposited.

Ms. Catan made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. Mr. Peters seconded the motion. Passed 4-0

The following payment was presented for approval:

US Postal Service for 1-year rental of the PO Box – \$82.00

Mr. Peters made a motion to approve the invoice. Mr. Rubin seconded the motion. Passed 4-0.

Procurement Policy: The Procurement Policy was tabled at the organizational meeting. Changes were necessary because the fire district only purchases services. Mr. Peters revised the policy. After some discussion about the wording in Paragraphs C and D, the policy was tabled for further revisions.

Negotiations: Mr. Rubin reported that Mayor Herzig told him that the City Manager and the Director of Finance would be more engaged in the negotiations. Mr. Rubin received a separation of costs for ambulance and fire services. Fire department costs total \$4,415,510.00 of which EMS costs are \$245,312. Ambulance and EMS services comprise 75% of the work of the department. Fire Chief Pidgeon has reported this percentage. Mr. Rubin requested a formula used to derive those numbers but the City did not provide one. There was discussion among the commissioners that a methodology is necessary for the current negotiations and for future contracts. Whether number of calls, hours or runs are used, the 75% for EMS and ambulance service has been consistent for a number of years. It was noted that the fire department is essentially an ambulance service located in a firehouse.

Mr. Rubin stated that we need an allocation of costs that makes sense. To move forward, the Town of Oneonta Board must be engaged because the ambulance costs that have been included in the fire protection contract must be transferred to the Town budget. Mr. Rubin asked Ms. Riddell-Kent how the Town Board reacts to her reports to the Board. Ms. Riddell-Kent responded that the Fire District is an independent Board and the Town is not involved in the activities of the Fire District Board but they recognize the importance of its work.

The commissioner's position is that they will only negotiate for fire service. Ambulance costs must be separated from fire costs. The Town Board needs to be educated on this issue. The cost that the City provided show personnel costs of \$1,675,110 for fire services and \$0.00 for EMS/ambulance services. Ms. Catan said that if 75% of the calls are EMS then the City should allocate 75% of the personnel costs to EMS/ambulance services. The Town will have to pay more than the \$25,000.00 currently pay for ambulance service. The City also includes administrative costs that they should not include for fire service. It does not make sense that the city cannot separate fire and ambulance costs. The City fee for ambulance service is \$1,100.00. To derive this fee, the City must use the cost of ambulance service. Ms. Peachin said that the City cannot set a fee in excess of its cost.

Mr. Rubin said that the next step is to communicate with the Town Board and the public. There must be a methodology that makes sense. If the Town Board had to negotiate for ambulance service, the City would have to provide ambulance costs.

Ms. Catan asked Ms. Riddell-Kent if the Town requested ambulance costs. Ms. Riddell-Kent replied that the Town did not. The City needs to be informed that the Town is willing to pay a fair price for ambulance. The Town should be able to negotiate with the City for ambulance service. Ms. Riddell-Kent will bring this issue up at the Town Board meeting on 3/14/2018. Mr. Rubin emphasized that this issue must be brought to a place of common sense. The formula is antiquated. If the Town is not willing to engage in this issue, they should explain the reason why they are unwilling to do so.

The City's Director of Finance wants to schedule a meeting for 4/5/2018.

OMIG and DOH Opinions: The Office of Medicaid Inspector General requested an opinion from the Department of Health. We expect a response from DOH within the next two weeks. This is a unique situation. DOH must determine the validity of the current arrangement for ambulance service.

Ms. Riddell-Kent told the commissioners that the Town's Public Safety Committee could discuss ambulance service. They meet on the first Monday of the month at 4PM at Town Hall. The next meeting is on April 2, 2018. Mr. Peters and Ms. Catan will attend.

Mr. Peters made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Rubin seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 PM.

Respectively submitted,

Erica N. LaBuz
Secretary