

Budget Hearing of the Valhalla Board of Fire Commissioners for October 17, 2023

The Budget Hearing of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Valhalla Fire District for 2023 was declared open by Chairman Ciancio at 7:00pm.

Pledge to the Flag and a moment of silence was held for fallen firefighters and the military.

In attendance were Chairman Ciancio, Comrs. McCarthy, Bonanno, Sciliano, and Secretary-Treasurer Ciancio.

Secretary-Treasurer Ciancio read the public notice which was published in the Journal News, posted on the Town and Fire District website, and posted in the Town Clerk’s office.

Chairman Ciancio read the proposed 2024 budget with a 2.00% increase over 2023:

CATEGORY	FINAL
Communications	\$ 11,000.00
Administration	\$ 36,450.00
Equipment Operations	\$ 53,500.00
Fire Department Operations	\$ 23,500.00
Insurance	\$ 141,592.00
Service Award Program	\$ 63,500.00
Personnel & Contractual Services	\$ 257,200.00
Training Operations	\$ 42,500.00
Vehicle & Apparatus Operations	\$ 70,500.00
Fire House Operations	\$ 118,162.00
TOTAL	\$ 817,904.00
Capital Reserve Account	\$ 593,032.00
Building Reserve Account	\$ 0.00
Repair Reserve Account	\$ 100,000.00
TOTAL	\$ 1,510,936.00

Comments from the floor:

- Captain McGuinn stated he has not been asked for an equipment wishlish as has been done in years past; requested to know how it is determined how much is allotted to particular budget lines – questioned and requested receipts for, budget line for ‘security system-key fob’ could increase from \$3,700 in 2023 to \$40,000 in 2024 – Comr. Bonanno replied that it was due to technology infrastructure upgrades and any receipts are available to be reviewed.
- Lt. DePalma asked if there were any project monies set aside for the purchase of a bailout simulator or EV battery cell blocks. Comr. Bonanno replied that a bailout tower is not a

priority project as there are several departments that have one available for the department to use and that we are waiting for word from Westchester County on how to approach training on purchase of equipment concerning EV batteries.

- Ex-Chief Bratton questioned why the cascade system isn't in the capital projects budget – the Board explained there were other means to access a cascade system and it was not a priority for replacement at this time; he questioned why uniforms and badges are a sub category of training – Comr. Bonanno explained that it's been there historically and has not been corrected during any of the audits, but it can be moved elsewhere if necessary; questioned why the budget line for 'uniforms and badges' was found under the category of 'Training Operations' – Comr. Bonanno explained that's where it's been found historically and if there were any issues with it, the auditors would have brought it to the Board's attention.

It was then moved on a motion made by Comrs. McCarthy/Bonanno to close the public hearing at 7:30pm. MC.

The Regular Monthly Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners for October 17, 2023

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners for October 17, 2023 was convened by Chairman Ciancio at 7:30pm.

In attendance were: Chairman Ciancio, Comrs. McCarthy, Bonanno, Sciliano, Chief DiPrinzio and Secretary-Treasurer Ciancio.

It was moved on a motion made by Comrs. Sciliano/Bonanno to accept the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Fire Commissioners for September 13, 2023. MC.

Correspondence: 1) A letter from the Town re the hydrants in Valhalla Park and on Ronald Ct.; 2) A letter from FEMA that all projects have been paid and will be closed.

It was moved on a motion made by Comrs. McCarthy/Sciliano to change the order of business to allow residents of the fire district to speak on their concerns affecting their quality of life, with the volume of the siren that was moved to the district headquarters property. Comr. McCarthy responded that the siren was moved due to its previous location was on DEP property where the district paid rent and electricity, the building that housed it was dilapidated and falling down and it would cost \$16,000 to rebuild, so in an attempt to a save taxpayers that burden, it was moved. He further explained that in addition to alerts available to members through technology, the actual siren is a necessary, backup safety measure to alert residents that emergency vehicles would be on the road, it is an alert for members that there is a fire call, discussed a recent issue in Hawaii with the wildfires that the siren alert system was not functioning causing a negative effect on residents – also that unlike neighboring fire districts who also use a siren, VFD has had theirs turned off for the past several years from 11pm-7am as a courtesy to residents. The Board agreed they would explore additional options to remediate the disturbance caused to these residents.

Member Tom Fox indicated that where he lives is not affected by the siren but agreed with the residents that something should be done about it.

Chief McGuinn requested permission to address the residents and discussed that all members of the department do not have pagers but if they did, it may be able to alleviate the need for a siren.

CHECKS:

7262	Kristen Ciancio	2,898.36
7263	Kristen Ciancio	2,898.36
7264	Berger Hardware	202.13
7265	WPH Physicians Associates	2,535.00
7266	Con Edison	56.35
7267	Security World	270.00
7268	Cablevision	82.68
7269	Staples	123.37
7270	Verizon	364.35
7271	AT&T Mobility	606.73
7272	Cardmember Services	8.56
7273	Comptroller	514.85
7274	Con Edison	61.95
7275	AAA Emergency Supply Co.	369.00
7276	American Express	138.99
7277	Berger Hardware	107.96
7278	Cablevision	165.11
7279	Clean Air Company	816.70
7280	Fernanda DeCampos	200.00
7281	DeLage Landen Financial Co.	189.00
7282	Firematic Supply Co.	828.43
7283	Hummel & Butler CPAs	600.00
7284	Independent Fire Co.	12,311.50
7285	M. Felice Landscaping	180.00
7286	Mt. Pleasant Highway Department	2,089.64
7287	NuWay Cleaners	6.95
7288	NYS DOT	100.00
7289	Partners In Safety	335.00
7290	QualityPro Pest & Wildlife	654.50
7291	The Journal News	126.00
7292	Valhalla Fire Co. #1	12,311.50
7293	Waterway Mid Atlantic	690.00
7294	WPH Physicians Associates	405.00
7295	Kristen Ciancio	2,898.37
EFT	US Treasury	2,984.76
EFT	NYS Department of Taxation	641.40
EFT	Humana – Wright	875.88
		50,648.38

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Balance Forward	\$	29,106.92
Deposits	\$	250.00
Transfers-GF	\$	48,000.00
Vouchers	\$	50,648.38
Closing Balance	\$	26,708.54

STATUS OF ACCOUNTS:

Regular Checking	\$	26,708.54
Fire District Money Market	\$	690,235.65
Capital Reserve Checking	\$	6,522.17
Capital Reserve Money Market	\$	3,235,751.68
Building Reserve Money Market	\$	422,071.72
<u>Repair Reserve Money Market</u>	\$	<u>524,446.46</u>
TOTAL:	\$	4,905,736.22

SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM:

Service Award Program – DBC	\$	1,193,815.72
Service Award Program – DCP	\$	312,701.98
TOTAL:	\$	1,570,841.99

TRANSFERS:

FROM:	GF Money Market Acct #8388562	
TO:	GF Checking Account #8388546	\$1,000.00
FROM:	GF Money Market Acct #8388562	
TO:	GF Checking Account #8388546	\$48,000.00
FROM:	CR Money Market Acct #8388575	
TO:	CR Checking Account #8388614	\$17,000.00
FROM:	GF Money Market Acct #8388562	
TO:	CR Money Market Acct #8388575	\$538,759.00
FROM:	GF Money Market Acct #8388562	
TO:	RR Money Market Acct #8388588	\$100,000.00

It was moved on a motion made by Comrs. Sciliano/McCarthy to accept as read the Treasurer's Report, the bills submitted for payment be approved, and transfers executed. Comr. Ciancio abstained from voting on checks #7262 and 7263 as this is his daughter. MC.

Secretary Ciancio reported she contacted the Comptroller on having not received a PILOT check for Grasslands for 3 years; sent a follow-up letter to the Town on hydrants on Ronald Ct and the

water main replacement in Valhalla Park; sent a letter to NYPA to closing electric account for tower siren; Quality Pro Pest & Wildlife removed a mouse from the ceiling in the office and sealed openings from outside to prevent any more coming in; received and replied to a FOIL request for by-laws; received inquiries from the public on having moved the siren; provided requested financial information to department members.

It was moved on a motion made by Comrs. Bonanno/Sciliano to accept the Secretary’s report.

Due to an incomplete Chief’s activity report for the month of September 2023, it was not read. It will be read at the November meeting.

Chief DiPrinzio reported 9/11 TL49 attended flag detail at Kensico Dam; 9/11 members attended First Responder appreciation at WHS; 9/18 the dept. responded to an automatic alarm at 115 E. Stevens Ave. smoke from elevator; 9/14 members participated in live burn drill at WCFTC with Chappaqua FD; 9/29 the dept. was dispatched to numerous calls due to heavy rain – 2 water rescues in town and one on the Sprain Brook Parkway that was handled by Yorktown and Hawthorne FDs; mutual aid was requested from the county to assist in Mamaroneck during the storm; members attended a walkthrough at WMC as construction continues – fireground radio coverage was tested; will discuss with Roger King about updating the fire alarm panel in the Children’s Hospital; members attended VHS Club Fair; R59 attended family day at Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital; TL49 participated at a flag detail in Elmsford; there will be a debrief about the storm response by officers; 10/24 the department will participate in a walkthrough of the UV Plant.

Comr. McCarthy reported both new Engines have been delivered to Hudson Valley Fire – will get the radios there for install; received an email from the Town on Pleasant Ridge water; the Town contacted him about using VFC #1 as a polling place for a special vote; discussed E83.

Comr. Sciliano reported he received a quote for bailout trainer; received quote for heating system upgrade.

Comr. Bonanno reported progress.

Comr. Ciancio reported members are having issues with boots taking on water during these storms and is looking in wading boots; discussed adding additional generators and pumps to the fleet; working on recouping some money from FEMA from the recent rain storm;

There was a discussion on additional buildings on the Grasslands Reservation.

It was moved on a motion made by Comrs. Deegan/Sciliano to adopt and transmit to the Town the 2024 budget of \$1,529,494.00. MC.

CATEGORY	FINAL
Communications	\$ 11,000.00
Administration	\$ 36,450.00

Equipment Operations	\$ 53,500.00
Fire Department Operations	\$ 23,500.00
Insurance	\$ 157,000.00
Service Award Program	\$ 63,500.00
Personnel & Contractual Services	\$ 260,350.00
Training Operations	\$ 42,500.00
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TOTAL	\$ 1,529,494.00

Comments from the floor:

Captain McGuinn spoke on behalf of the Valhalla Fire Company #1 on the following and their discontent with the Board and feeling bullied and civil service laws have been violated:

- Ex-Chief Bratton's Bailout system replacement recommendation was overlooked
 - o Board responded that the current system in place was chosen in 2019 due to: the District was in the process of litigation with Firematic; there was no interest from Ex-Chief Bratton or any officers from VFC #1 on viewing a demo on the system from Firematic
- Chief McGuinn was not nominated for Assistant Chief in 2020 and this violates NYS Civil Service Law Section 175. He further stated that the position should have been 'kicked back' to the company and has to be filled per the aforementioned Civil Service Law
- Lt. DePalma asked where in the bylaws it states about eligibility for Chiefs positions.
 - o Board discussed the Board did not feel Chief McGuinn was qualified due to lack of experience as Captain, which required to move up the ranks.
 - o The eligibility for holding a Chief's position is stated in the by-laws.
- There were not any invitations for the annual Inspection sent to members so they were unable to reply with a count and that the sign-up sheet posted at VFC #1 concerning the Inspection, was to count the number who would be utilizing the bus to and from the Inspection, not a count for those attending. As a result, the Inspection was cancelled, further bringing the morale down. Also, the invitations did not correctly state where the Inspection was taking place.
 - o Board replied that invitations have not been sent to members in several years. Members are to report to the Captains of each company with a head count for the dinner, which is relayed to the Board. The Board did not receive this information. This led to the cancellation of the Inspection. There was an error on the invitation

- re the location of the Inspection and invited guests were individually called and informed.
- Chief McGuinn learned through a certified return receipt letter that he was relieved of his duties and decision making, due to being out on medical leave. And that Chief McGuinn emailed the Board on September 10, 2023 that he was injured, but did not receive a response.
 - o Board replied that they did not receive any written or verbal communication from the Chief on his status and that it is protocol to put into writing and send a certified letter to a recipient when it involves important decision making information. On September 1, 2023, the District's IT vendor, KD Systems, emailed all district email users, that the new system would be implemented on September 7, 2023 and in order for emails to be received in the new system, the user would need to log in and create their credentials. It was later learned that the Chief's email sent, was done so through the old system that was turned off on September 7, 2023, and this resulted in his email not being properly received to the new system. By request of the Board of Fire Commissioners, a copy of the email was pushed from the old system to the new one, by KD Systems on October 14, 2023.
 - VFC #1 has not received any equipment that has been requested.
 - o The Board asked what specific equipment they asked for that has not been received. The Captain replied 'hurst tool'. Chairman Ciancio responded that the department has 2 hurst tools on each Rescue and there is no need for an additional hurst tool as we have more than any other department in the county.
 - Front helmet pieces had to be replaced was a petty request.
 - o The Board responded that member helmets must be standard department issue, not personally purchased.
 - Ex-Chief Bratton stated that he had not previously seen a 'no video or voice recording' sign in the meeting room before and that was unlawful and by the Secretary recording the meeting, it was violating the Board's own rule.
 - Thomas Fox stated, as President of VFC #1, what's new affects change, starts from the top, meaning the Board of Fire Commissioners.
 - Chief McGuinn stated VFC #1 does not have training on Independent Fire Co. tools
 - o Comr. Bonanno suggested the company's cross-train on equipment; there is much room for improvement in communication and teamwork between the companies.
 - Assistant Chief DiPrinzio stated members need to better respect each other.
 - Lt. DePalma discussed that VFC #1 is displeased with the totality of the issues presented; better teamwork and communication is necessary; the same logic removing Chief McGuinn from office was not applied to Ex-Chief Kohany.
 - o Chairman Ciancio discussed that Ex-Chief Kohany was not deemed on medical leave by his doctor and that Chief McGuinn is not 'removed' from his position, he is only on 'medical leave'.
 - o Comr. McCarthy stated that Chief McGuinn is only on medical leave, not removed from his position.
 - Ex-Chief Bratton stated that 'due to the treatment of Chief McGuinn, members are being forced to not disclose when they are medically incapacitated'.

- Chief McGuinn stated he has no issue with Assistant Chief DiPrinzio acting as Chief while he is injured, but was disappointed with the way the Board handled informing him. He further stated that “collectively the Board are A**HOLES”.
- Lt. Radesich surveyed the Board if they are in support of Chief McGuinn as Chief of the department.

Chairman Ciancio asked the members to name one thing they felt the district has done right or positive, no one responded.

With no other business to come before the Board of Fire Commissioners, it was moved on a motion made by Comrs. Bonanno/McCarthy to adjourn the meeting at 9:24pm. MC.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen Ciancio
District Secretary