

Board of Fire Commissioners

Greenfield Fire District
P.O. Box 103
Greenfield Center, NY 12833

The 2010 proposed budget public hearing of the Greenfield Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners was called to order at Greenfield Center Company #1 by Chairman Kugler at 7:00 PM on October 20, 2009. The flag salute and a moment of silence were recognized for the departed.

Present were:

Commissioners: B. Bishop, Kugler, Spackmann, Waite; Secretary Petkus, Treasurer J. Bishop.

Six residents and/or firefighters were also in attendance (see attendance sheet).

Chairman Kugler announced that in accordance with NYS Town Law §105, all Fire Districts must, prior to the adoption of their budget, hold a public hearing on their budget. He then also noted the following:

- This budget hearing must be held in such a manner as to maximize participation in the budget process;
- The purpose of this hearing is to discuss the contents of the budget;
- The Secretary of the Fire District has filed with this District an affidavit stating:
 1. That the notice of this public hearing was published or posted at least once, five days before the date specified for the hearing in:
 - The official newspaper of the Fire District,
 - The official signboard of the Towns where the District is located,
 - On the Fire District website,
 - On the town or towns websites where the District is located;
 2. The notice of public hearing specified the time and date when, and the place where this public hearing would be held;
 3. The Fire District Secretary also made available for inspection at least five days before the public hearing by any interested person during District office hours, copies of the proposed budget.
- The purpose of this public hearing is to allow members of the public to make comments on the budget. Any person may be heard in favor of, or against the preliminary budget or any item in it. Please note that this is only a proposed budget until the Board of Fire Commissioners adopts the final budget.
- Prior to the public comment portion of this budget hearing we will hear from the Fire District Treasurer, who will make a brief presentation about the preliminary budget to the Board of Fire Commissioners and the members of the public who are present. The

Fire District Treasurer will be asked to submit the proposed budget to the Board of Fire Commissioners and members of the public who are here this evening. The Treasurer

should not answer specific questions during this time so not to make this a question and answer session.

The Treasurer then read the through the 2010 proposed budget (see attached). The total budget presented: \$1,346,686.00.

Chairman Kugler then asked anyone present wishing to be heard on this proposed budget to come forward so the person may be heard in favor of, or against the proposed budget or any item in it. He requested that if anyone wished to address the Board on the proposed budget, to come directly in front of them or raise your hand to be recognized. He also asked to clearly state your name and address for the record and to please limit comments to five minutes. All questions/comments should be directed to the Board or the Treasurer. He reiterated that this was not a question and answer session; the questions will not be answered when asked. The Board is looking for opinions on the budget, and what anyone is in favor of, or against in the budget. Questions will not be answered by the Board or the Treasurer until after the conclusion of the public comment period.

Chairman Kugler then announced that the public comment period would begin.

1. George Habig, resident, 4007 Route 9N, Greenfield Center:

- Thanked the firefighters for their service; thanked the Board for their service also;
- Not yet out of this country's financial crisis;
- Has been attending a lot of the meetings, and would like to hear more of the word "No" from the Commissioners on stuff that is proposed. Thanked Mr. Bishop for his voice on that subject;
- Has a few comments about the budget:
 - Regarding EMS, according to the website there are 1350 calls. In the 2006, 07, and 08 budgets EMS was allotted \$12,500.00. He would assume that most of the 1350 calls are non fire calls, yet the 2010 EMS budget only allows \$9000.00 and felt an adjustment needed to be made; he clarified to the Board that it needs to be more.
 - In the 2009 budget pump testing was \$2500.00 and hose testing \$2000.00. In 2010 the two are lumped together for a total of \$13,500.00, a spread of \$9000.00 from the 2009 budget. He is not favor of that and wants to know why it is \$9000.00 more.
 - The telephone account is another \$2000.00 higher than last year and substantially more from the year before. He has no disagreement if it is not for personal use but rather business use and would like an explanation.
 - Under personnel service, \$40,000.00 is for maintenance and he would like an explanation on that. Not in favor of that either.
 - Repairs to apparatus are up to \$70,000.00. Lucked out and got rid of old 293, which was a money burner and that year it was only \$60,000.00. Why is it so high again this year? He understands we have a lot of trouble with the trucks, but there was talk about maybe eliminating some of the fleet. Why is the repair apparatus budget higher since we got rid of 293, felt is should be going the other way.

2. Stan Weekes, 4 Ashlor Drive, Greenfield Center:

- Thanked the Board for the newsletters, thinks they are very helpful.
- Noted that getting a copy of the budget off the website was not very easy, was not where he expected it to be. MaryAnn Johnson finally found it for him.
- Noted he is on social security, and people on social security aren't getting any increase next year and he is pretty sure we are not getting any two years from now either, so when he read about the 4% increase he felt he should take a more detailed look.
- Has several questions regarding the budget:
 - Vaccinations: has no clue what that is, but is struck him as being a new item, \$11,000.00 for vaccinations and he would like to have an explanation
 - Under personnel services, you have no previous listing for maintenance and all of a sudden maintenance shows up for \$40,000.00.
 - Under building reserve, which has been running \$100,000.00, maybe a little more, all of a sudden it went from \$100,000.00 last year to \$200,000.00 this year, which is a 100% increase and that seems fairly dramatic.
 - Has a serious complaint here, because in the newsletter it talks about a budget increase of 4%, there is no way the budget increase is 4%, it is almost 6%, 5.9%. Thinks that is really outrageous in today's economic times. Felt it was very misleading that whoever calculated the 4%, it just is not.
 - Suggested cutting the building reserve back to \$125,000.00 and your increase would be zero, and asked the Board to at least consider that.

3. Jack Atwell, resident and firefighter, Route 9N, Greenfield Center;

- Has the same questions regarding maintenance under personnel services and the big increase in the building reserve fund, and would like an explanation.
- He is retired as well and no one is getting any raises that are retired in their pensions, everybody is screaming about trying to hold the line in their budgets this year.
- He is also a firefighter and he gets used to this money, but it is still tough for him to keep coughing up the money every single year.

Chairman Kugler asked if there were any other comments; there being none he then announced that the public comment period of this annual budget hearing is concluded. He then asked each member of the Board of Fire Commissioners present if they had any questions for the Treasurer.

1. **Commissioner B. Bishop:**

- Echoed some sentiments from some of the folks tonight, he does not think it is the right time to add a maintenance person. Felt not enough research was done on it at this point to see if it will actually be as much of a cost saving measure as we think it will be. It was originally put in there because of rising maintenance costs and the thought was that if we actually hired someone as an employee rather than contracting out some of this work to be done, that we may incur enough of a cost savings to warrant having the position. For his own peace of mind he has not done enough homework on the subject.
- Part of the reason the building reserve was raised is because of the age of the buildings and it is becoming time to start looking into possibly replacing buildings, and rather than bonding them we think we would save more as we go along. He is definitely in favor of increasing the amount, maybe not as much as it is currently is, but like the issues with

Porters building, these buildings are starting to reach their anticipated life expectancy and he would rather be more proactive and save incrementally for that expense.

- Thanked Mr. Habig for his comments regarding his “No” votes. It is very difficult because the Board has to weigh the needs and the wants of the District along with their responsibility to the taxpayers, and as most of them are members of the District as well, they see first hand the needs of the District.
- The budget is certainly a work in progress and in discussions there are things that everybody is looking at trying to trim down more; his big thing is the maintenance position and they are just not ready for that yet.

2. Commissioner Waite:

- Referenced the comment on the pump and hose testing; this is the first year they have started doing it and there is not enough money to do it and do it right. That is why there is more money in the hose/pump testing, because if the pumps don't pass then we can't use the truck. Commissioner B. Bishop added that one of the things they are finding as they are trying to do the pump testing, because of the water source that is largely used which are creeks and streams, there is a lot of sediment coming up from the water and unfortunately the valves now being made are plastic and not metal, and the water ends up being like sandpaper on these valves and requires replacement of them much more often than they would like. Because of the situation with the valves and vacuum seals, etc., they are not passing and are therefore incurring more of an expense, which is part of the reason for the increase in repairs.

3. Commissioner Spackmann:

- Echoed Mr. Habig's comments about the financial crisis, agrees that the word “No” probably has to be used a little bit more often, but it is used often to the dismay of many firefighters and certainly the officers.
- EMS account is used primarily for operational expenses, like gauze and collars, etc. When there are big items like equipment that need to be purchased, generally speaking it is taken out of the equipment reserve or the EMS reserve.
- Reiterated Commissioner Waite and Commissioner B. Bishop's comments regarding hose and pump testing, they are discovering that there are deficiencies in the maintenance on the trucks and having to replace hose.
- The maintenance position was finally added into the mix in the hope that we could finally start attacking the nightmare that is repair costs of this district. He noted he would also agree with Commissioner B. Bishop that perhaps they have not thought enough about it to make that argument, so he would suspect they would probably see that come out of the tentative budget.
- Regarding the newsletter, felt it was not misleading, believes it was improperly worded however. The newsletter was put together during the budget process, which is a multi-month effort. When that figure was put in the newsletter it was an accurate figure as it did not include at that time a maintenance person. He also clarified that it was also a budgetary increase, not a tax increase. If you look at the tax rate, it only went up one penny; the Board was able to get more money without raising taxes because there was a lot more property that came on to the tax rolls, which benefits the District.

- Vaccinations are an NFPA requirement and we have to provide them for our firefighters, as they are subjected to a multitude of nasty things when they respond to medical calls; vaccinations are something the Board can offer to help protect the firefighters. It was something previously paid for by the District, but this is the first time it has actually showed up as a line item.
- A lot of people, particularly the Board, have taken a some heat about raising taxes, they take a lot of careful time in the budget process. He went to Wilton Fire District today to look at what they do for their budget process. Their budget is not online, isn't posted in the town hall, nobody knows what is going on there; we are very open, we have a newsletter, and there are things we are doing as part of the budget process in the hopes of being open and transparent that he knows other fire districts do not do. On a final note, the Jonesville fire district, one of the busier districts in the county, second to us, their tax rate is \$1.22.

4. **Commissioner Kugler:**

- Agreed the maintenance item probably will come out of the budget and he felt the tax increase would be close to zero.

Chairman Kugler noted at this point that the Treasurer would answer any questions, if able to do so, discussed during the public comment period.

Treasurer J. Bishop commented that she had nothing to add as the Board already answered most everybody's questions.

George Habig noted he did not get a response to his phone bill question. Commissioner B. Bishop commented that some phone lines were added because the County uses something called the rip and run system, which is a fax generated report, as well as including all mobile phones, land line phones and all the fax lines. He also noted there are a few more mobile phones, and something he has mentioned in the past is that it is certainly worth looking at again, but you hope to have them in place when they are needed. There are some that sit idle each month that we still pay for and it is definitely something we can look at. The landline phones do not get used much except for company business. Commissioner Kugler also noted that the phone companies have increased their rates and the increase reflects that as well.

Chairman Kugler then asked for a motion to close the hearing.

Motion to declare the public hearing regarding the 2010 proposed budget closed was made by Commissioner B. Bishop with a second from Commissioner Waite.

VOTE: All in favor, motion carried.

Chairman Kugler then asked for a motion to set the 2010 budget adoption date.

Motion to set the 2010 budget adoption date for the Commissioners workshop on October 27, 2009 at Greenfield Center Co #1, 13 South Greenfield Road, at 7 pm made by Commissioner B. Bishop, with a second from Commissioner Waite.

VOTE: All in favor, motion carried.

Chairman Kugler then adjourned the meeting at 7:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce A. Petkus
District Secretary