

**FIRE DISTRICT #1 PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING**

**Thursday, January 23, 2020 – 6:30 PM**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Prudential Committee Meeting Room**

**144 Newton Street**

**South Hadley, MA 01075**

**In Attendance:** PC Chair Bruce Perron, PC Clerk Kevin Taugher, PC member John Wojciechowski, Interim Clerk/Treasurer Ira Brezinsky, Chief Robert Authier, Captain Kurt Schenker, Assistant Treasurer Kari Scytkowski,

**CALL TO ORDER**

Perron called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion:** Taugher moved and Perron seconded to approve the minutes of January 2. Motion carried 3-0.

**CHIEF'S REPORT (Complete report on file)**

- **Inspections:** Chief Authier reported that there were 41 fire calls and 211 EMS calls in December. Final 2019 numbers are 543 fire calls and 2272 EMS calls for a total of 2,815 calls. In addition, he reported 17 December business inspections, 20 smoke/CO inspections, 0 food truck inspection, and 0 oil burner inspections. There were no Certificates of Occupancy issued and there were 5 lockboxes installed.
- **Community Interactions:** On December 28, 2019, the South Hadley Dive Team responded to Chicopee for mutual aid. The team assisted Chicopee Police and Fire, along with Massachusetts State Police and Environmental Police in a search for a missing child. This was a 4-day operation, in which the child was recovered on December 31, 2019.

Lt Houle and the Chief attended the TRIAD luncheon, which was held at the Tap Room in District 2.

Taugher asked if total calls include those calls which are cancelled on route. Authier confirmed yes.

**CLERK/TREASURER'S REPORT (Complete report on file)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Budget Report:** The FY20 budget is tracking as anticipated with the exception of ADMIN – LEGAL. That budget is 86.96% expended at \$5217.20. The overall ADMIN account is at 41.95%, so there is not a problem in terms of ability to pay bills for the remainder of the FY.

**Election Update:** Nominations for the upcoming annual election are now closed. There are 5 individuals that will appear on the ballot as follows:

Clerk/Treasurer	2
Moderator	1
Prudential Committee	1
Water Commission	1

In the coming weeks, Brezinsky will be putting together election staff, getting training on the details for conducting the election, ordering ballots, etc.

Brezinsky previously sent a memo to the PC and Board of Water Commissioners regarding the historical format of the District Annual Report and potential changes. Specifically, the suggestion would be to remove the future (FY21) years proposed budget and annual warrant and replace those documents with

the prior years approved budget and the minutes of the prior years annual meeting. A separate FY21 budget and Annual District Meeting document would be created for presentation prior to the Annual Meeting. Brezinsky stressed that previous format has been in place for several decades and that he was simply bringing his observations to the attention of District leaders. The decision as to any change in format would be left to leaders in the District.

**Motion:** Taugher moved and Wojciechowski seconded to remove the 2020 annual meeting warrant and 2021 budget from the 2019 report. Motion carried 3-0.

**Motion:** Taugher moved and Wojciechowski seconded to include minutes of the 2019 annual meeting and FY2020 approved budget in the 2019 annual report. Motion carried 3-0.

**2019 Audit and Management Letter:** Included on last month's agenda was the FY19 Audit and Management Letter, however discussion was postponed to the January meeting.

Included in the ML are comments and recommendations regarding segregation of duties, tax accounts receivable, and weekly versus biweekly payroll. Segregation of duties is an ongoing issue that affects most, if not all, districts similar to District 1.

While MGL requires segregation of duties for cities and towns (i.e. separate accounting and treasury departments), this is not a requirement in districts. The procedures that have been established by the District over a long period of time do a reasonable job of simulating the separation required of other municipalities. Generally, the Clerk/Treasurer receives and deposits funds and the Assistant Treasurer records those transactions in the accounting system and reconciles bank and investment statements on a monthly and/or quarterly basis. Additionally, the District now engages in an annual audit as opposed to a bi-annual audit. Auditor Tom Scanlon has been most helpful in providing periodic guidance with accounting tasks that might more typically fall to the Accountant in a city or town.

Regarding accounts receivable reconciliation, Brezinsky has been in touch with the auditor and the Town Treasurer and is addressing this issue.

The management letter makes a recommendation to consider moving to biweekly payroll. Brezinsky agrees with that recommendation. Over the years, biweekly payroll has become more the norm than the exception, both in the public and private sector. There is a significant cost to processing payroll each week, both in terms of the time required by District staff and the fees charged by the District's payroll service. In addition, Brezinsky recommends the District review all aspects of payroll delivery including direct deposit versus paper. The District spent \$13,262 for the payroll service in FY19 and \$4416 so far in FY20. The PC will consider these recommendations following consultation with Labor Legal Counsel.

Taugher commented about cash on hand of \$7.7 million and the status of the OPEB fund, and urged that these issues be clearly explained and understood.

Brezinsky reported that the District has three funds with no activity for several years. They are the Medical Fund with \$114,500, the Insurance Fund with \$51,370.44, and the Unfunded Liability Account with \$72,500. The total is \$238,370.44. After consultation with the auditor, he recommended transferring all of these funds to OPEB.

**Motion:** Taugher moved and Wojciechowski seconded to include an article on the Annual District Warrant to transfer \$238,370.44 from the Medical Fund, Insurance Fund, and Unfunded Liability

Account to OPEB fund with specific allocation of funds between the Fire and Water Departments to be determined. Motion carried 3-0.

The Annual District Meeting will be held on April 27 and Brezinsky will contact Town Hall to reserve the auditorium for the meeting.

A question was asked regarding timeframe for submission of articles and finalization of the warrant for the Annual Meeting. The bylaws state that all articles must be presented to the Clerk no later than 35 days prior the Annual Meeting. This gives adequate time for the articles to be vetted by District Counsel and others and that the warrant be approved by the Prudential Committee and legally posted no later than 7 days prior to the Annual Meeting. All agreed that the Bylaw Advisory Committee should review and make recommendations to adjust the timeline.

#### **AMBULANCE REPORT AND ADJUSTMENT OF RECEIPTS**

**Motion:** Taugher moved and Wojciechowski seconded to approve adjustment of ambulance receipts in the amount of \$164,123.77 for the month of December. Motion carried 3-0.

Taugher commented that, although District rates being charged have increased over the past 5 years, collections have stayed relatively flat. Brezinsky replied that the primary reason is that Medicare/Medicaid payments have not kept pace. The result is that total collections in dollars have increased nominally, but have decreased as a percentage of gross billing.

#### **POSSIBLE CHANGE IN BYLAW REGARDING MASS GENERAL LAW CHAPTER 48 SECTION 42 VERSUS SECTION 42A**

**Motion:** Taugher moved and Wojciechowski seconded to not take any action at this time regarding any change in the District bylaws relative to Chapter 48 Section 42A. Motion carried 2-1 (Taugher and Wojciechowski voted aye, Perron voted nay).

#### **MEMO FROM DISTRICT COUNSEL RE: CLERK/TREASURER ELECTED VERSUS APPOINTED**

At it's previous meeting the PC requested an official opinion from District Counsel with regard to the steps necessary to change the Clerk/Treasurer position from elected to appointed. Counsel provided memo outlining the steps needed to make the change. The first step to have the District Meeting approve the change, followed by approval by the Attorney General. The question then needs to be placed on the Annual District election ballot. Assuming passage, the final step is for our State Representative to sponsor legislation to approve the same.

**Motion:** Taugher moved and Wojciechowski seconded to include an article on the Annual District Warrant changing the Clerk/Treasurer position from elected to appointed. Motion carried 3-0.

#### **CONTINUING FY21 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

The first preliminary of the FY21 budget was presented to the PC. Chief Authier has suggested a possible increase in staffing of 4 FTE's. He stated there is increased need as a result of growth in town. The Chief provided several documents showing ambulance and fire activity in District 1 along with several other area departments. The documents show a significant number of instances where all personnel are

deployed and there is nobody manning the station for a short period of time before additional personnel can respond.

Taugher asked the status of the Call firefighters. The District currently has 12 Call firefighters. Historically, that number has been closer to 20. Authier explained that it has become more difficult to recruit individuals to a Call force and that many departments have moved away from Call staff, opting to have more fulltime coverage. He also stated that the current pay scale for the District's Call firefighters is not competitive with surrounding departments. Authier stated that he has had difficulty obtaining figures from District 2, but estimated that District 2 pays their Call force in the range of \$23 per hour. District 1 pays \$14 per hour to start and caps it's hourly rate at \$16 per hour after 1 year.

**Motion:** Taugher moved and Wojciechowski seconded to ask Clerk/Treasurer Brezinsky to request payrates for all D2 employees, including stipends, overtime, and training. Motion carried 3-0.

It was further agreed that Chief Authier would request the same from Granby.

Wojciechowski asked if District 2 Call staff would be eligible to work in District 1. Authier replied that this could be possible, however there would be several issues to resolve, including disparity in compensation and possible additional training needed. He also commented that there is a \$3000 expense for gear for each individual and would not want to spend that money without assurance that individuals would be available and willing to respond.

Taugher asked that the Chief present a report justifying the requested staff increase. He would like to see a financial analysis showing total cost for each new employee, including stipends, benefits, pension, training, as well as any impact on overtime.

Perron asked what portion of time is the Station left unattended. Authier replied that there is a difference between daytime and nighttime. There are also seasonal disparities.

Brezinsky pointed out that the current budget format does not accurately represent the amount of money spent on Ambulance personnel services versus Fire. Because all fire department staff are also paramedics or EMT'S, and respond as needed to both fire and ambulance calls, it is difficult to determine the exact cost of personnel for both services. Everyone agrees that more personnel time is spent on ambulance calls than fire calls. Taugher responded that the current format is, in part, due to a previous notion that the ambulance service would be profitable as a separate service with ambulance fees and payments paying for the service. While it is clear that ambulance revenue helps to subsidize the amount needed to operate the fire service, the ambulance service would not be sustainable on its own without the benefit of tax revenue. Brezinsky suggested another way to present the budget could be to consolidate Fire and Ambulance service into on entity, perhaps labeled Emergency Services. Revenue could be broken out to show what portion of the total for Emergency Services comes from taxation versus other revenue such as ambulance receipts and grants. No decision was made to revise the budget document.

**NEXT MEETING**

FIRE DISTRICT #1 PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING

The next meeting is planned for February 6 at 6:30 PM.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** Taugher moved and Wojciechowski seconded to adjourn at 8:30 PM. Motion carried 2-0.

Respectfully submitted,

A true copy, attest:

Ira Brezinsky  
District #1, Interim Clerk Treasurer

  
Kevin Taugher, Prudential Committee Clerk





# South Hadley Fire District 1

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Chief Robert Authier

January 21, 2020

## CHIEFS REPORT

December 2019: Calls for Service

FIRE: 41  
EMS: 211

Final Numbers 2019

FIRE: 543  
EMS: 2272

Total Runs: 2,815

December 2019 Inspections:

Business: 17  
Smoke/CO: 20  
Oil Burners: 0  
Food Trucks: 0  
Certificate of Occupancy: 0  
Lock Box: 5

Interactions:

On December 28, 2019, the South Hadley Dive Team responded to Chicopee for mutual aid. The team assisted Chicopee Police and Fire, along with Massachusetts St Police and Environmental Police in a search for a missing child. This was a 4-day operation, in which the child was recovered on December 31, 2019.

Lt Houle and I attended the TRIAD luncheon, which was held at the Tap Room in District 2.

Respectfully submitted

Chief Authier





## December 2019 INSPECTIONS

BUSINESS NAME	DATE INSPECTED				
Dave Minor Home Improvement	12/9/2019				
DM Towing	12/9/2019				
Jones Karate Studio	12/9/2019				
Kaycan	12/9/2019				
United Methodist Church	12/16/2019				
South Hadley Realty Trust	12/9/2019				
Orange Sound	12/9/2019				
Parker Ceilings	12/9/2019				
32 Bridge Street (Apt Block)	12/12/2019				
Firehouse Museum	12/5/2019				
Eink	12/3/2019				
68 School Street	12/11/2019				
Northampton Coperative Bank	12/11/2019				
27 Bardwell Street Condo's	12/13/2019				
Fiber Sonic	12/16/2019				
RFK Childrens Action Corps	12/30/2019				
Whiskey Barrell	12/23/2019				

## December 2019 SMOKE / CO INSPECTIONS

12 Stonegate Drive	12/2/2019				
132 Brainard Street	12/2/2019				
4 Pine Grove Drive	12/4/2019				
20 Valley View Drive	12/4/2019				
412 Granby Road	12/9/2019				
6 Eagle Drive	12/9/2019				
152 Lathrop Street	12/11/2019				
114 Pine Grove Drive	12/11/2019				
502 Alvord Place	12/13/2019				
7 Joan Street	12/13/2019				
11 Spring Street	12/16/2019				
15 Fulton Street	12/17/2019				
14 North Street	12/17/2019				
57 Hadley Village Rd	12/17/2019				
63 Shadowbrook Eststes	12/18/2019				
19 Los Angelas	12/23/2019				
20 Lawrence Ave Unit #41	12/26/2019				
11 Bunker Hill Rd	12/27/2019				
288 Newton Street	11/19/2019				
28 Mountainview Street	12/30/2019				

## Residential Lock Boxes

5 Boxes installed					



Date: January 14, 2020

From: Ira Brezinsky

To: Board of Water Commissioners  
Prudential Committee

**RE: District Annual Report and Contents**

Dear Prudential Committee Members and Water Commissioners,

In preparation for your upcoming meetings on January 15 and 23, I am writing to request your feedback regarding the makeup of the 2019 District annual report. In reviewing prior years reports, I bring to your attention the District's longstanding practice of including information regarding a future year's budget in the past years annual report.

As an example, the 2018 annual report (dated June 30, 2018) includes three documents related to the FY2020. They are the estimated budgets for the Prudential Committee and Board of Water Commissioners, and the warrant for the 2019 Annual District Meeting (intended primarily to approve budgets for FY2020). While this is not a practice that is commonly used in annual reports in other municipalities and districts, there is no rule or law that prohibits it.

Because the purpose of an annual report is to provide an historical summary of the activities of the organization (District) for a specific calendar and/or fiscal year, a more typical approach would be to include past financial data, votes taken, and decisions made in the annual report. A separate document would then be compiled for the purpose of conducting the upcoming District Meeting that would include the approved final warrant and proposed budgets. This document would be referred to as the District Warrant and Budget Book (or something to that effect).

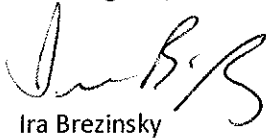
The benefits of restricting the annual reporting to historical information and providing a separate document for "forward looking" information are as follows.

- Publication of the annual report could commence as soon as the prior fiscal year is closed out. For instance, FY19 was closed out in early December 2019, so the report could conceivably be compiled and made available to the public by mid to late January 2020.
- Rather than including proposed future budgets and warrants in the annual report, we could instead include the previous year's actual approved budget and the actual minutes (votes) of the District Meeting.
- By segregating the two documents, deadlines for the warrant and budgets could be moved to a later date closer to the annual meeting, providing more flexibility for late breaking issues to be included for consideration.
- Both documents could be included on the District website and clearly labeled, eliminating any confusion as to where to access information.

As I indicated, the practice of combining historical information with upcoming District Meeting information has been in place for a very long time – in fact generations! I am writing this memo to offer my observations to elicit discussion. Based on that discussion and feedback, I will proceed with preparation of the upcoming annual report, warrant, and budget documents accordingly.

I look forward hearing from you.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ira B. Brezinsky', written in a cursive style.

Ira Brezinsky