

A special monthly meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Belgium Cold Springs Fire District was called to order at 7:00 P.M. on August 14, 2023, by Chairperson, K. Thompson.

Present: K. Thompson, M. Chura, D. Rafkis, M. Malone, C. LaPrease, A. Speach, J. Root, J. Corcoran, M. Harrison, L. Harrison, M. Evans, B. Raymond-LaPrease, D. Rouselle, M. Speach

Pledge to the Flag.

K. Thompson opened the meeting by stating that the budget committee asked for this special meeting for the purpose of looking for guidance from the entire board for short and long term planning for the fire district.

Chief Root provided a strategic plan. The plan included an apparatus replacement plan to reduce fleet size. The reduction in fleet size would replace some aging vehicles and would also reduce the equipment necessary to equip each vehicle such as SCBA, which is also in need of some updating. Discussion regarding purchasing a second rescue pumper. The apparatus would not be delivered until 2025. The rescue pumper would allow us to reduce fleet size and maintenance costs of aging vehicles. Lengthy discussion ensued and the following topics were discussed:

- equipment placement and trying to place equipment from two vehicles onto one.
- there were concerns expressed about towing the gator trailer
- continued maintenance costs
- What would be the increased cost of waiting 12 months or more to order a second rescue pumper?
- enough room for shoring and other equipment

Additional discussion in response to some of the concerns expressed. The rescue pumper is designed for rescue tools, shoring etc. and the necessary equipment will fit. K. Thompson has reviewed the numbers and if we continue to contribute to the apparatus fund as we have planned we will have the funds available to pay for the second rescue pumper without having to bond for it or increasing the taxes. Discussion. Bonding for apparatus costs additional money in legal fees and interest, it would save us money to just pay for it. The cost is \$907,867, if we don't sign now, the cost is going to go up \$60,000 because the engine offered on the first one we have ordered will no longer be available. The estimated appraisal to sell R1, E21, and E11 would be a total of \$90,000, an estimate for R2 was not available.

D. Rafkis made the motion to purchase a Rescue Pumper from Colden, piggybacking on our 1st Rescue Pumper, for up to \$910,000 from the apparatus reserve pending the following permissive referendum and K. Thompson seconded the motion. All in favor. Carried.

Notice to all residents of the Belgium Cold Springs Fire District that the Board of Fire Commissioners of said Fire District, pursuant to the following resolution, which is SUBJECT TO PERMISSIVE REFERENDUM, intend to enter into a contract to purchase and equip a rescue pumper for the Fire District to be delivered in 2025, to be paid for by expending funds on hand in the Reserve Fund for Apparatus .

Whereas, at a regular meeting of said Board of Fire Commissioners on August 14, 2023 it was resolved to use said funds as follows:

RESOLVED, THAT THE FIRE DISTRICT EXPEND FUNDS IN THE RESERVE FUND FOR APPARATUS THAT THE DISTRICT EXPECTS TO BE FUNDED BY DELIVERY OF THE APPARATUS AS FOLLOWS; NOT TO EXCEED \$910,000 TO BE USED TO PURCHASE AND EQUIP A RESCUE PUMPER TO BE USED FOR THE FIRE DISTRICT, INCLUDING LEGAL AND ADVERTISING COSTS.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF
FIRE COMMISSIONERS OF THE
BELGIUM COLD SPRINGS FIRE DISTRICT

Amy Speach
Fire District Secretary

K. Thompson asked if we should discuss advertising to sell a piece of apparatus now as it takes some time to get offers. We could advertise that delivery would be in 2024 after we take delivery on the 1st rescue pumper. What would we sell? How long would it take to sell? J. Root will discuss with the other chiefs and report back.

J. Root summarized the second part of his strategic plan – staffing. J. Root is recommending that we move towards staffing 2 firefighter/EMTs 24/7 and continue to recruit volunteers. K. Thompson had some preliminary budget figures prepared. Our current staffing costs approximately \$194,000, to increase to overnights would cost an additional \$160,000. This does not include retirement at an estimate \$30,000. We will have money left over from this year, around \$131,000, as we did not staff for a full year as budgeted last year. We can carry that money over and possibly decrease the budget if we do not add additional staffing or refund the taxpayers and decrease the tax rate. The goal has always been to try to keep the tax rate as level as possible. If we budget for half a year with 24 hour/5 day coverage that money would help to offset the additional cost. We could continue to monitor the current staffing, continue to recruit and if that doesn't work, the funds would be there to add additional staff, if we don't need it, the money can be returned. Discussion regarding current staff, response, call volume, call scratches and recruitment. We need more time to see what is working and make an effort to recruit more.

K. Thompson asked for comments from public in attendance. Lengthy discussion ensued with the following topics of concern:

Has there been discussion or thoughts of consolidation if area departments are having the same issues.

- LOSAP considerations
- Duty crews
- The need to review statistics on response
- department morale is an issue and needs to be fixed

K. Thompson made the recommendation to plan for moving to 24 hours/5 day coverage in June of 2024 and when we revisit if we have more volunteer response then we can return the money. This would keep the tax rate level. Further discussion. M. Chura made the motion to budget for 24 hour/5 day to keep the tax rate level, if volunteer response is up and we don't need 24 hour then it can be reduced. K. Thompson and M. Chura voted in favor and D. Rafkis, M. Malone and C. LaPrease voted against. The motion did not pass. Staffing will stay the same for 2024.

Facilities planning. Discussion regarding duty crews, if they plan on overnights where would people sleep. J. Root proposed moving some offices and some temporary solutions that would have minimum cost until it can be determined what will work best. He can draft some plans. Additional discussion ensued.

Old Business:

- K. Thompson stated that the retirement information was sent out to the board members; were there any questions and/or discussion so this can be placed on the agenda for next Monday's meeting. Lengthy discussion. M. Chura provided the information that yes it is mandatory for part-time and full-time firefighters. D. Rafkis confirmed she also called NYS Retirement for more information. M. Chura noted that we can only select the 375 plan now, but in the future can move to the 384 D and recommends that we do that to be competitive with other fire departments that are hiring. M. Chura will provide copies of the information to the board to review for next Monday.

Public comments:

- J. Corcoran asked how this information and the rolls and responsibilities of the duty crews was going to be communicated to the department. Discussion if it should be the steering committee or a separate meeting that the executive board calls. It just needs to be discussed and not kicked down the road. It was determined that the best course of action would be to ask the department president to send an email letting the department know this would be discussed at the next meeting.
- M. Evans asked about the qualifications for E91 and K. Thompson referred him to the committee chairs for Lysander Public safety as it was decided by the coalition.

Meeting dates:

Next Commissioners meeting: Monday, August 21, 2023 at 7pm

C. LaPrease made the motion to adjourn at 9:40PM and M. Malone seconded the motion. Carried.

Respectfully submitted, Amy Speach - District Secretary