

PUBLIC HEARING FOR FIRE SERVICES 2012
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY
November 3, 2011
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A Public Hearing for a Fire Services Agreement for 2012 was held on Thursday, November 3, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. at the Highway Garage, 17 County Road 31, Paul Smiths, NY, with the following:

CALL TO ORDER:

The Public Hearing was Called to Order by Supervisor John Quenell at 6:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL OF TOWN OFFICERS

PRESENT: Supervisor John Quenell, Council Members: Peter Shrope and Lydia Wright

ABSENT: Council Members Jeffrey Leavitt and Steve Tucker

OTHERS PRESENT: Elaine Sater - Town Clerk

RESIDENTS: Seven residents were present

The "Pledge to the Flag" was recited.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING: Notice of this public hearing was published twice in the Adirondack Daily Enterprise on Monday, October 24 and Tuesday, November 1, 2011. The notice was also posted on the Town Clerk's Sign Board and at three post offices and businesses in the Town on October 24, 2011.

Supervisor John Quenell said the purpose of the Public Hearing was to hear comments on the Paul Smith-Gabriels Volunteer Fire Department Contract for fire services for the Town of Brighton in 2012. He said the contract was the same as last year except for the period covered and the budget amount which went up 2% from \$76,118 to \$77,640.

The Floor was opened to the public for comment

Sheila Delarm spoke in favor of the contract and the 2% increase in the budget. She said in the past the budget was a wish list, but now it is fiscally responsible. The State Comptroller's Office has audited the Fire Departments books and they did not document any significant findings. Two percent is not a significant amount when the Fire Department has lost \$4,000 in fundraising because the State Troopers have stopped them from collecting money from passing motorists by standing in the middle of the road, as a "boot drop". This is not an irresponsible budget.

Peter Shrope said the Fire Department is a great asset to the Town. He thanked the fire fighters for all the hard work they do. He asked about the increase to \$5,000 in the contingent line. The Fire Department has increased this line from \$3,500 in 2011 which equates to the 2% increase in the budget. It's not a reasonable increase when only \$1,000 was spent for 2011 from the same line.

John Quenell, Treasurer of the Fire Department, spoke in favor of the increase in the budget. He said the Fire Department has already spent the contingency money this year and needs to get it back next year. He said the Department has an overrun of \$5,600 for this year. The budget only shows thru 10 months of expenses for 2011.

Roger Smith, Fire Chief, spoke in favor of the increase in the budget. He said he did not see the Fire Department dropping the contingency fund to \$3,500. He said the Town could drop its Contingency Fund by \$1,500 to make up the difference. Fund raising is 17% of their budget and they have lost \$4,000 from the "Boot Drop". A two percent increase is not too much to ask. The Fire Department has State mandates it has to meet for OSHA, equipment is expensive and he doesn't know where else to get the money. Equipment they bought five years ago is already out of date. The State gives them mandates but doesn't provide the funding. They are losing volunteers because people don't want to spend 90 hours in training to get qualified to be a volunteer firefighter. The building was built in 1998 and needs repair. The training tower is being repaired by volunteers using their own tools.

Mike Quenell spoke in favor of the increase in the budget. She said the Fire Department applies for all the grants it qualifies for and has to come up with funding to cover the differences. There were 80 calls in 2011, the fire fighters help other communities, they respond to rescue calls and auto accidents; they don't just do fire calls.

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Nik Santagate said he also wanted to thank the Fire Department for the work they have done. This is about the budget not the performance of the fire department. He asked about the past increases to the budgets. Over the past three years on paper there has been a 12% increase to the Fire Department's budget. (3% 2010, 7.5% 2011, 2% for 2012). This looks bad. He asked if the Town Budget has had similar increases. Discussion was held on the different lines that have had large increases, such as health insurance and self insurance.

Shelia Delarm said that people who are questioning the increase in the budget should stop by and watch what the fire department does while on a call.

Nik Santagate asked when the mortgage on the building was finished, this should help out the fire department.

Roger Smith said there were two more years on the mortgage. The payments are \$21,233 per year.

Mike Quenell said new trucks need to be purchased.

Lydia Wright said that no one is questioning the work done or the dedication of the fire fighters. But as a Board member she needs to be fiscally responsibly to the tax payers of the Town.

Roger Smith said he understands about the need to cut budgets but the 2% increase is not much for the services received from the fire department.

Nik Santagate asked how the fire calls to Paul Smith's College were going.

Roger Smith said they have dropped somewhat. The dual alarm system has helped. OFPC helped to bring this about; they recommended it to the College. There is an increase in the size of the campus and the number of students and another dorm has been added.

Sheila Delarm said that 2 years ago there were 5 first responders trained so the fire department can respond quickly to rescue calls.

Roger Smith said they have the "jaws of life" also for car accidents. Six people are trained to use them. He would really like the board to consider the 2% increase but if they don't approve it and a call comes from one of their homes the fire department will still respond.

Amber McKernan asked what the contingency funds are used for and do the funds get rolled over if not used or does the fire department just ask for more. Does the fire department have to return it to the Town if not used.

Roger Smith said the fire department received a grant they waited a long time for and used it to purchase a compressor to fill air packs. It cost more than was anticipated. There were also some repairs to equipment. They spend the funds so there is nothing to roll over. Discussion was held on the items that were purchased with the contingency funds. Air compressor \$1,765, Air tank \$1098, heating fuel etc.

Sheila Delarm said the compressor has saved the fire department from running into Saranac Lake to have the air pack refilled. She used it during the Meacham Inn fire.

Peter Shrope said he would like to thank everyone for their comments. He would suggest that the fire department put the expense of repairs of equipment into a budget line for that purpose in the future instead of using the contingency line.

Holly Huber asked if the public had access to the Fire Department financial records.

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Lydia Wright said yes they should fall under FOIL; the Fire Department is obligated to follow the same rules as the Town. The books are audited just like the Town's books.

There were no further comments from the floor.

Motion to Adjourn the Public Hearing at 6:42 p.m. made by Supervisor John Quenell, second by Peter Shrope, Aye 3 (Quenell, Shrope, Wright), Absent 2 (Leavitt, Tucker)

Respectfully Submitted,

Elaine Sater
Brighton Town Clerk