

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR FIRE SERVICES
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY
November 5, 2009**

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A Public Hearing for the Fire Services Contract was held on Thursday, November 5, 2009 at 6 p.m. following the Emergency Rescue Services at the Brighton Town Hall, 12 County Road 31 (a.k.a. Jones Pond Road) in Paul Smiths, NY, with the following:

CALL TO ORDER:

The Public Hearing was Called to Order by Supervisor David Knapp at 6:28 p.m.

ROLL CALL OF TOWN OFFICERS

PRESENT: Supervisor David Knapp, Council Members: Sheila Delarm, Jeffrey Leavitt, Steve Tucker and Lydia Wright

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Elaine Sater - Town Clerk

RESIDENTS: Seven people attended

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING: Notice of this hearing was posted Thursday, October 22, on the Town Clerk's Sign Board and at three post offices and businesses in the Town. Notice was published once in the Adirondack Daily Enterprise on Friday, October 23, 2009.

Supervisor David Knapp stated that the purpose of this public hearing was to hear public comment on the Fire Services Contract for 2010 for one year with the Paul Smiths-Gabriels Volunteer Fire Department (PSGVFD) for the amount of \$77,466.00 with two payments of \$38,733 each due on February 1 and April 1. The PSGVFD gave the Town an actual budget for 2010.

The floor was opened to the public for comments.

Tom Willis: Asked how much of this contract comes from the Town of Santa Clara
Supervisor David Knapp said the total Fire Department budget is \$82,902 and the Town of Santa Clara portion's is \$5,436 for 2010.

Tom Willis: Said there was a substantial increase over the 2009 contract; asked what the increase was for.

David Knapp said there were several categories of increases. He went through the PSGVFD budget for the larger changes. Maintenance increased \$1,500, Heating Fuel increased \$1,000. Truck maintenance decreased by \$3,000, truck fuel increased by \$1,100. Portable equipment decreased by \$200. Technical Rescue is a new expense line for \$4,000.
Steve Tucker said this was for cold water rescue dry suits and ropes and harnesses, the volunteers have had new training to help with rescues.

Sheila Delarm said they are currently using Saranac Lake equipment. This will help them save time having the equipment available. She said there might be grants available to the PSGVFD to help with these items.

Steve Tucker said some personal equipment is needed. Franklin County Emergency Services is helping with grants. FEMA grants can be requested by the PSGVFD.

David Knapp said medical physicals expense was added for \$1,000.

Sheila Delarm said there is an OSHA mandate that everybody has a physical; using an OSHA form. They will no longer accept local physicians' forms for physicals.

David Knapp said Dress Uniforms expense is increased by \$1,000, this is for new members who need uniforms. There was zero spent in 2007, \$1,256 spent in 2008, and \$500 in 2009. Training expense was increased by \$800; \$2,052 was spent in 2007, \$2,189 was spent in 2008, and \$2,200 for 2009.

Steve Tucker said instructors are paid to come give classes or people are paid mileage to go to classes.

David Knapp said postage is increased by \$75, computer and peripheral expense was added for \$400, it is offset by an

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accounting expense decreased to zero in 2010; \$425 was spent in 2009. Contingency fund for vehicles was added for \$5,000. The Revenue for an annual appeal was decreased to \$15,000. Revenues received from the annual appeal were \$25,895 for 2007, \$39,227 for 2008, and only \$12,000 is expected in 2009.

Kevan Moss: Asked if donations fell short in 2009.

Steve Tucker said the appeal was sent out in October 2009 and is not reflected in this budget. The 2008 appeal was for a fire truck. He said the PSGVFD doesn't know how the appeal will go this year considering the economy.

Lydia Wright asked where the fund balance goes if there is one at the end of the year.

Steve Tucker said there hasn't been a budget since Dave Kirstein left as Treasurer. The funds go for trading-in trucks.

Jeffrey Leavitt asked why the fire department purchased a truck for \$385,000 in 2008 when the economy was in the toilet.

Tom Willis said he heard it doesn't work properly.

David Knapp said this was not the place to debate the past purchase of a truck.

Kevan Moss said the Fire Department provides a great service.

Sheila Delarm said the contract increase is only 11%.

David Knapp said the previous contract had a 3% increase per year; \$65,676 for 2007, \$67,646 for 2008 and \$69,736 for 2009. This year they are only asking for a one year contract due to the unstable economy. This is the first time he has been presented with a budget from the PSGVFD.

Tracy Santagate said the extra funds at the end of the year should be accounted for, this needs to be tightened up. If the percent increase is creating a slush fund it needs to be addressed. If the annual appeal is over the budget where does the extra funds go? Does it just go into the general fund?

Kevan Moss said the funds should be designated for a special fund for trucks.

Sheila Delarm said the Town Board has asked the PSGVFD for a budget for the 4 years she has been on the board. This is the first year she has seen a budget from them. As a firefighter she said there were a few years when the fire department records were not kept very well. A Financial Officer is now in place and has gone through all the old files and created a very good and transparent budget. Everyone gets a report and every thing is recorded now. It is very tight.

David Knapp said the PSGVFD has recently gone through an audit by the State Comptroller's Office. In 2008 there was revenues of \$134,889 and expenses of \$162,305 causing a \$27,416 deficit.

Tracy Santagate asked how does the fire department keep control of the budget now that it has been created.

David Knapp said the Comptroller's Office is looking over their shoulder and has helped them get on track.

Sheila Delarm said the Town should require a budget every year, this, in and of itself, should keep things on track.

Jeffery Leavitt said the fire budget is an excessive increase. The Town has held every thing else at 0%, this is too much of an increase at 11%. This is a lot to ask of the tax payers in this economy.

David Knapp asked if the Town can dictate the amount paid to them.

Tracy Santagate said everyone else has cut their expenses, they should too; look at how the Highway Department cut back on their budget.

David Knapp said the first budget request was for \$91,069, a 30% increase.

Jeffrey Leavitt said he heard the first budget actually had a 4% reduction, then the PSGVFD added their wish list to the budget.

Tracy Santagate said if the Town has kept its budget low then so should the PSGVFD.

Jeffrey Leavitt said the Town tax payers should pay a lesser amount, they shouldn't be paying for a golf tournament or soft drinks. He said the Town board should not be telling the PSGVFD what each line should be, the total amount is a bit excessive. The Town should ask the fire department to reduce the amount.

Sheila Delarm said she is disappointed that other members of the PSGVFD did not show up to speak to the budget. She said it was unfair to her and Steve Tucker to have to address these issues while they sit on the Town Board. The fire

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fighter in her says the Town owes them everything. The Town board member in her says they should cut the budget.

Tracy Santagate said the PSGVFD does a good job, they are out at night and in bad weather. They need to have special events for themselves but everyone is cutting back on self recreation. The fire department should not expect the tax payers to provide special events every year.

Tom Willis said the Board should ask for a \$5,000 decrease.

Peter Shrope said he would like to see a better itemized listing from the PSGVFD. He said based on the Town budget people have to trust the fire department to spend the funds wisely. The Board provided him a copy of the PSGVFD budget.

David Knapp said the rescue contract is also a one line item, the Town doesn't get a budget for it either. The Fire Advisory Board looks at the rescue contract itemized budget. This public hearing is to discuss the contract with a dollar amount, not to discuss each line item of the contractor's budget. He said more people should be here to discuss this contract. There were 278 people here on Tuesday to vote, but only 7 are here tonight to discuss the budget.

Sheila Delarm asked what a fair percentage increase would be for the PSGVFD contract; it is currently at 11% over the 2009 contract. The Town budget shows 6.6% but \$3,000 of that money had to be paid back to the Town General Fund when insurance funds payable to the fire department were included in the 2008 budget in error.

Tom Willis said that was not a question he could answer. If the Town just asked for a \$5,000 decrease that should be enough.

Jeffrey Leavitt said a \$5,000 decrease would make it a 4% increase. He still would like to see it at 0%. They can cut the soft drinks and banquet costs. Tax payers have said they don't want to pay more if the rest of the Town Budget is being held at 0%. He was a fire fighter in the past and knows the fire department well, he donated food toward the Meacham Lake Inn fire fighters.

Tracy Santagate said a 0% to 4% increase should be requested.

David Knapp said he would go to the PSGVFD Chief and ask him to consider a 0 to 4% increase over the 2009 budget. They can decide which expense lines to decrease.

There were no further comments from the floor.

Motion to Adjourn the Public Hearing at 7:19 p.m. made by Supervisor David Knapp, Second by Steve Tucker, Aye 5 (Delarm, Knapp, Leavitt, Tucker, Wright), Nay 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Elaine Sater
Brighton Town Clerk