

Watervliet Fire Board

Meeting Minutes August 18, 2020

The meeting was called to order at **7:00 pm** by Chair, **Deane Fizzell** who led us in the **pledge of allegiance**.

Board Members Present; Fizzell, Bambrick, Stepich, Marvin and Brinker

A **motion** was made by **Stepich** and supported by **Brinker** to approve the **minutes from the July 21, 2020 meeting. All in favor, motion carried.**

Brinker presented the July 2020 Treasurer's Report and **payables in the amount of \$19,033.51**. A motion was made by **Marvin** to approve the July payables. Motion was supported by **Stepich. All in favor, motion carried.** Copy of payables on file at the fire department.

Chief Jones presented his written reports. Written reports are on file at the fire station.

New Business:

- **Chief Jones informed the board that Command Truck is getting to the point where its in need of repairs. A new truck has been budgeted for in the 2022 projected budget.**
- **Chief Jones informed the board that 2nd Lt. Justin Scheetz has resigned as 2nd Lt. Chief stated that Justin told him that he "Just wants to be a black hat". Chief Jones explained that Justin has not been showing up for any training and had only responded to two calls in three months. Dave Woodward confirmed that Justin is not up to date on his training and therefore would not be allowed to respond. When asked if Justin had been notified of his "non-compliant" status, Chief Jones confirmed that "He has been made aware" and went on to state that when informed that due to his status, he would not be allowed to respond to fires. Justin informed him that he would respond to fires and use someone take someone else's turnout gear if necessary to do so.**
- **Chief Jones informed the board that he has appointed Blake Kinzler as acting 2nd Lt. and that the position will be posted, following the guidelines.**
- **Brinker asked Chief Jones what the current status of Cara Weiberg is and how much is she being paid. Chief Jones stated that she is still employed part time, paid \$400.00/month and she does data entry and payroll which is all part of the emergency reporting.**

Old Business:

- **Billing process and alternatives are still being discussed.**
- **Chief Jones stated that there is no update regarding the PRSO meeting**
- **Chief Jones gave a COVID update. He stated that the numbers in Berrien County continue to rise.**

Anyone to be heard:

- **Darrell Stanford, owner of County Line Farms Premium Genetics, LLC came in to address the Board. Per Mr. Stanford, he had a "controlled, legal burn going on his property on Thursday, August 13, 2020. He stated that a neighbor called in a grassfire. He said that Watervliet Fire Department arrived on scene and that Chief Jones approached him and said, "The fucking fire needs to be put out now". Mr. Stanford stated that he asked the Chief why because he had followed the burn guidelines of Watervliet Township and had a 10 ft. berm around the perimeter of the fire, had two fire watchers and equipment standing by. He said that the Chief did not give him a reason and continued to be confrontational at which point Mr. Stanford became confrontational. Mr. Stanford stated that after the chief left the property, he came back and at that point they were arguing again, at which time the police were called to the scene. Mr. Stanford said he was not told why the Chief was requiring the fire be put out. He allowed the Chief to put some water on it but not fully extinguish it. The responding police officer waited until the WFD had cleared the scene and left. Chief Jones came back a third time and Mr. Stanford was in a piece of heavy equipment tending to the fire by this and didn't see Chief Jones and the other responding firefighters and almost hit them with the piece of equipment while backing up. Mr. Stanford said that when he saw them, he turned the machine off and Chief Jones immediately stuck a business card in Mr. Stanford's face and said, "I told you I would put that fucking fire out". Mr. Stanford said he does not know why Chief Jones came back after the police had left. He feels that some of the Chief's actions stem from a prior fire at**

that property about four years ago when an uninsured building on the property burned and the Chief accused Mr. Stanford of attempting to commit Insurance fraud. Mr. Stanford said that he feels that the Chief should act in a more professional manner and not be confrontational with people from the start.

Chief Jones said that he made Mr. Stanford put the fire out because it was an unsafe burn because there were trees nearby that were smoking and that the fire was located in the railroad right-of-way. Mr. Stanford stated that the trees nearest to the fire were going to be taken down and burned in that fire. He further stated that the fire was located 160 feet from the center of the railroad tracks and 140 or 150 feet from the center of the road.

Board members asked Dan why he thought the fire was unsafe to which he stated the location of the fire and the trees. Discussion ensued and no action was taken by either party. Board Chair Fizzell told Chief Jones and Mr. Stanford that in all future dealings with each other, they must both remain respectful and courteous and situations should not be allowed to escalate to a confrontational point. Chief Jones and Mr. Sanford both agreed.

Next regular meeting to be **September 15, 2020 at 7:00pm.**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by **Stepich** and supported by **Marvin. All in favor. Motion Carried.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melanie Marvin