



Three Rivers Fire District  
50 Springfield Street  
Three Rivers, MA 01080

# Prudential Committee Minutes

September 14, 2016

Chairman Stephen Chiacchia called a meeting of the Prudential Committee to order at 7:00 p.m.

## IN ATTENDANCE:

Stephen Chiacchia; Prudential Committee Chairman  
Richard Pobiegló; Prudential Committee Clerk  
Raymond Domey; Prudential Committee  
Lorinda Baker; District Treasurer

Scott Turner; Fire Chief  
Scott Majka; Water Superintendent  
Sherrie Bellefleur; District Recording Secretary

Absent from tonight's meeting is David Basler; District Clerk and Stephen Marhelewicz; District Accountant.  
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

## Approval of Minutes

The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes from the August 17, 2016 meeting.

**MOTION (POBIEGLO, CHIACCHIA): To approve the August 17, 2016 minutes. 2-0-1**

## Public Comment

A question about the water rate increase was asked. Chairman Chiacchia has stated that water rate increases will be discussed later on in the meeting.

**Presentation by Bondsville Water Commissioners – interconnection:** The town of Bondsville would like to connect to Three Rivers and had hoped to make a presentation. Bondsville Water Commissioners needed to postpone until the October 2016 regular monthly meeting.

## Committee Reports

The Finance Committee has not met as of yet.

The Bylaw Committee had sent an amended product to Attorney Joseph White to be sure it is presentable. Attorney White has returned the amended bylaws with his comments to the Chairman of the Bylaw Committee; David Basler, who in turn has shared them with his bylaw committee. Marge Cavanaugh has confirmed with Chairman Chiacchia that David Basler has sent a copy of the bylaws to the committee and asked the committee for their comments.

## Report of the Treasurer

### Review of August 2016 Financial Statements:

Treasurer Lorinda Baker has presented the Prudential Committee with the District-Profit & Loss vs. Actual July – August 2016. There are not any budget lines that are over budget. Balances in the banks are as follows, Country Bank for fire and water are \$87,365.12 and North Brookfield \$ 124,030.36, for a total of \$ 211,395.48. Last year (2015) at this time the balance was \$380,000.00.

Lorinda presented Steve Chiacchia with forms that need to be completed to enable online access with UniBank.

Lorinda asked if there was a special form that needed to be filled out for a warrant. Chairman Chiacchia said the financial reports are sufficient; a warrant is a list of expenditures that either a select board, or in this case the prudential committee, would approve all of the expenditures.

Lorinda informed Steve Chiacchia that UniBank requested documentation to show that she had been appointed to be the District Treasurer. Lorinda was supplied with the May 2016 minutes from recording secretary Bellefleur, this was the meeting that Lorinda Baker was voted in as the new District Treasurer.

Michael Matthieu questioned the treasurer about the association dues. Routinely these dues are withheld from the two checks the firemen receive each year. These dues were withheld but the association has not received a check yet to pay the dues. The money goes to the association and the majority goes back to the town whether it is for little league baseball, basketball or donations to the schools. Lorinda will see Steve Marhelewicz; District Accountant about this.

**MOTION (POBIEGLO, DOMEY): To accept the Report of the Treasurer. 3-0-0**

## Report of the Fire Chief

### Call Report:

- **Total Calls August 2016:** 9
- **Inspections:** 6 smoke/carbon monoxide, 2 oil furnace, 1 tank truck (Chudy's).
- **Fire Department Training:** Engine Company Operations, Search & Rescue, Crowd Manager.
- **Chiefs Meetings:** One (1)
- **Seminars:** Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), U.S. Forrest Service Grant Seminar.
- **Public Events (benefits, parades, ceremonies, etc.):**
- **Other:** Wake and funeral for Deputy Danitis (Ware Fire Department), Engine's 1 & 2 pump test (both are pending final report, repairs need to be made on both).

The Engine Search and Rescue training took place at the Three Rivers Fire Station, Pulaski Park, St. Anne School and Pathfinder.

Public events discussed briefly even though they were September were the 9/11 Ceremony that TRFD was represented at and the Association had the Chicken BBQ event that was very successful.

### Capital Budgeting and Long Range Update:

Chief Turner spoke about Engine 2, the first item under the 1-3 year range. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) is opening up at the end of September. There is a grant that can be applied for that is strictly for apparatus replacement which can be done for Engine 2. This cannot be an upgrade it would have to be another engine. \$500,000 is the limit on the price and for up to \$500,000 the district would have to match \$25,000. Pobieglo requests the committee and Chief Turner meet and discuss this further, mainly to see if the district can afford this. Chief Turner plans to spec out a price, he's already worked with other Chiefs on similar specs and is aware of features he does not need. The grant can be submitted even if a decision has not been made. This is to be sure the deadline has not been missed. If the district finds they cannot afford this at this time they can always turn the grant down.

A summary of this discussion is, the fire department needs to replace Engine 2, a 1984 Hahn 32 years in service. The cost for a truck like this is \$ 500,000 - \$ 750,000. There are grants available now that will only require us to contribute \$25,000 toward the whole purchase.

The second item under the 1-3 year range is the furnace. Chief Turner does have calls out to several companies for quotes but no return calls as of yet.

### Firefighter Retirement Exemption:

Chairman Chiacchia has sent a copy of the August 2016 minutes to Representative Todd Smola. There is a state law that all firefighters are required to retire at the age of 65. Three Rivers has one particular person, Deputy Michael Matthieu that is requesting an extension of his time. Michael Matthieu spoke to Todd Smola and was assured that if Todd's aides have in fact received these minutes then they would follow through.

**MOTION (POBIEGLO; DOMEY): To accept the report of the Fire Chief. Approved 3-0-0.**

## Report of the Water Superintendent

### Report on current condition of water distribution system, projects and compliance, work with Chris McClure:

Chris McClure gave a presentation to the board and on 9/10/16 he gave Water Superintendent Scott Majka an update. Majka has made quite a few improvements to the pump station. Chairman Chiacchia states that work on the pump station and other areas of the water systems needs to be done. There are a list of conditions that we received from the DEP and were chipping away at them. W.S. Majka assures the board that he is right on schedule with the DEP's conditions.

### Capital Budgeting and Long Range Plan - update:

Water Superintendent Majka put together a Capital Budgeting and Long Range Plan and this is in the \$5,000,000 range. This could consist of things being done over a time period but some work will need to be addressed immediately. There will be an efficiency plan with an engineer. Scott Majka has not put together his long range plan prioritizing by years as of yet but will get going on doing this very soon.

**Water Department financial condition and expenses:**

**Water rate increase discussion:**

The cash balances have been depleted substantially. A total of \$600,000 is what we used to have in cash, and now it's less than \$300,000. We have sustained over the last two (2) years, substantial losses of almost \$200,000 according to our District Accountant Stephen Marhelewicz. The water department is operating at a deficit and at the same time we are making capital expenditures and repairs that increase our expenses. We are spending money in the right area, it's just that the revenue that is coming in is not adequate. Chairman Chiacchia has asked our accountant Steve to take a look at our numbers and what our water rates are at this time. Marhelewicz did do this and he and Chiacchia have come up with at least a 50% increase being needed with our water rates. Currently the charge is \$30.00/10,000 gallons of water per quarter; this is .003 cents per gallon. This rate would go to \$45.00/10,000 gallons of water per quarter; this is .0045 cents per gallon.

Some research was done by Richard Pobiegló and Steve Chiacchia. Pobiegló has identified a Massachusetts Water Rate Survey, by Tighe & Bond that shows the average water bill in Massachusetts 2 years ago (2014) was \$531.00 with the mean being \$503.00. Three Rivers average bill was about \$250.00. Three Rivers has the lowest water rate in the state of Massachusetts.

The district has lost money the last two years, there were two different superintendents involved during that period and it needs to be repaired. The principal reason is that water revenue went down but the expenses went up. To date the expenses have been tightened, payroll and legal fees have been cut, but as far as expenses go we still need to consider the additional cost for repairs that must be done. The previous water superintendent was not able to do repairs due to not having enough money, every water rate increase that was asked for was denied without any research being done, this is a total of at least 3 increase requests in the last 6 years, all 3 denied. Chairman Chiacchia asked to entertain a motion to raise the water rates by 50%.

At that time before a motion was filed Ray Domey asked to say a few things. He began to say John Sasur, the previous Water Superintendent led the DEP to believe that all of the changes that need to be done were done. Sasur had ample time to let the board know if there were any problems prior to the monthly meetings. Sasur did not only neglect to tell the board that changes needed to be done; he just did not do them, according to Domey.

When Scott Majka took over as the Water Superintendent he took a water sample and found out there was elevated copper. Domey says it was not know prior to, if those tests had been compromised. Domey even went to say that the DEP representative that came out to the last meeting stated that he trusted Sasur and he found he's lied to him for years. Two other board members that were at that same meeting and table did not hear the DEP representative say such a thing. Chairman Chiacchia firmly states that calling anyone a liar that is not present is not appropriate. Domey says "well I just did". Domey also said that Sasur lied to the board and he lied to the people of the district, because the district thought we were getting safe water. Domey says that last year there was \$200,000 in the UniBank account which the board authorized the Water Superintendent to use to upgrade the meters. Meters are only good for 20/25 years and most of our meters that are out there are 30/40 years old. In those meters there is a lead component and no longer can you have a lead component in Massachusetts since 2006. This is why those meters need to be changed. Domey says there was a meter fund but they took the meter money and put it in the general account so it got spent.

Domey's point is because we do not know the expense of what Majka needs to do yet how can you know how much to raise the water rate? Chairman Chiacchia states this has been estimated by Steve Marhelewicz and Chiacchia reviewed it with him.

W.S. Majka plans to replace the commercial meters first then residential.

Pobiegló asks Ray Domey about some missing files and boxes but Domey states he does not know anything about missing files or boxes. Paid receipts, for the last year and a half are what are missing according to Chiacchia. A past Prudential Committee member Donald Reim stood to question Raymond Domey where receipts from 2012, 2013 and 2014 where. Domey responds to Donald Reim with saying the receivables could not be located.

Chairman Chiacchia states that he is not going to be the Chairman of an organization, a public entity, a municipality that operates in the red and loses money year after year. It is illegal; you are not supposed to do that. The rates have been increased by 50%, we are still below the state average. Domey says that is irrelevant, the amount of money that we need to do the job is important.

Pobiegló also mentions it may be possible down the road to start tacking on a late fee for those bills that are not paid by a certain date. Chairman asked Pobiegló to look further into this late fee and discuss what he finds at the next regular monthly meeting in October.

**MOTION (POBIEGLO; CHIACCHIA): To increase the water rates by 50%, from \$3.00 to \$4.50. Approved 2-1-0**

**MOTION (POBIEGLO; CHIACCHIA): To increase the water meter rental fee from \$4.00 to \$5.00. Approved 2-1-0**

**MOTION (POBIEGLO; DOMEY): To accept the report of the Water Superintendent. Approved 3-0-0**

Old Business

Richard Pobieglo has asked Raymond Domey to return all and any contracts, receipts and or bills that are in his possession by the next regular meeting on 10/12/16. Legal options will be looked into if these are not returned to the committee. Pobieglo states these are all public records and should be available to be viewed.

Domey assures Pobieglo that he has none of these records in his possession. Domey has had access and control over these records and now they are missing. When Stephen Coache previous Treasurer resigned he dropped off a box to Pobieglo that contained one month's worth of records only, that went right over to Lorinda Baker current District Treasurer, then Lorinda passed it on to the current district accountant Stephen Marhelewicz.

A list was then read by Pobieglo of history of how Raymond Domey handled things. 1. Rented a storage unit in Hartford CT., for \$85.00/month 2. Paid storage rent a box for almost a full year \$150.00/month 3. Paid himself mileage for over \$500.00 4. Ran an illegal election to win, receiving absentee ballots before the election 5. Overspent the water department by \$130,000 for fiscal year 2014. Domey shouts "I'm not on trial here"

Pobieglo would like to file a motion for lack of any confidence for the job that Raymond Domey is doing, also a motion for Raymond Domey to resign his position on the Three Rivers Prudential Committee. Domey says "I will not resign my position to leave you two crooks in charge".

In closing before a motion to adjourn the meeting has taken place committee member Raymond Domey has decided to leave the meeting. Pobieglo reminded him that he not only missed the last two (2) monthly meetings he is now leaving before this meeting was adjourned.

Chairman Chiacchia closes with "we are moving in a new direction and Richard Pobieglo and I are in agreement with just about everything. We are going to balance the budget, and make the improvements that need to be made".

**MOTION (POBIEGLO; CHIACCHIA): For lack of confidence for the job Raymond Domey is doing. Approved 2-1-0**

**MOTION (POBIEGLO; CHIACCHIA): For Raymond Domey to resign his post on the Three Rivers Prudential Committee board. Approved 2-1-0**

New Business

No new business

**MOTION (POBIEGLO; CHIACCHIA): To adjourn from the Open Meeting at 8:03 p.m. Approved 2-0-0**

Submitted by:

  
Sherrie Bellefleur, District Recording Secretary

Approved as to Form and Content:

  
Stephen Chiacchia, Chairman

Date: 10-12-16

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