

DRAFT MINUTES

(Subject to approval by the electors of the Kingston Fire District at the Annual Meeting in May of 2025)

KINGSTON FIRE DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING, KINGSTON FIRE STATION, KINGSTON, R.I. MAY 6, 2024

Call to Order: Moderator Valerie Maier-Speredelozzi called the Kingston Fire District (KFD) Annual Meeting of May 6, 2024 to order at 7:03 p.m. at the Kingston Fire Station, 35 Bills Road, Kingston, RI. She noted that fifteen (15) qualified electors were in attendance, as confirmed in the 2023 Tax Roll for the District and South Kingstown Voter Rolls. Moderator Maier-Speredelozzi declared that a quorum was present.

AGENDA (SEE HANDOUT)

MOTION: Tom Vignali moved to accept the Agenda as presented. Doug Carr seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES OF 2023 (SEE HANDOUT)

MOTION: Sandra Koerner moved to accept the Minutes as presented. Susan (Axelrod) Spranger seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion. Moderator Maier-Speredelozzi asked if there were any questions. There were none. The motion carried unanimously.

CHIEFS' REPORT (SEE HANDOUT)

MOTION: Sandy Koerner moved to accept the Chief's Report as presented. Elizabeth McNab seconded the motion.

Chief Tom Reed presented the Chief's Report. The report was reviewed. He let the taxpayers know that over the last year, KFD completed 760 emergency calls and that this year, we responded to 258 calls so far. Reed noted that along with these calls, KFD's volunteer firefighters continue to train multiple times a week. Reed let the taxpayers know that fire prevention has been busy with a total of 23 inspections in 2023 and another eight already during 2024. Reed noted that planning, meetings and providing input for the multiple projects happening on the University of Rhode Island's (URI) campus continue to be an important part of the Fire Marshal role he also holds. He also noted that plan reviews and business license renewals are conducted throughout the year as well. Reed let the taxpayers know that KFD's partnership with the Town of South Kingstown and moving to an online portal has been beneficial for users and that it allows for one action that all departments and inspectors can see and update.

Reed let the taxpayers know that the operating budget for this current fiscal year and next year are in solid shape. He let the taxpayers know that KFD's Finance Committee will be meeting with URI reps to discuss and plan for a process for the future regarding KFD's Cooperative Agreement with URI. He noted that we are currently working under multiple single-year extensions of our 2019 Agreement. He noted that the hope is to work together with URI to develop a renewal process and negotiate a multi-year agreement, allowing KFD to facilitate a roadmap for future expenditures and maintain our elevated level of service while updating equipment and apparatus. Reed let the taxpayers know that our budget has absorbed large increases for all our equipment and operating expenses and that we are reviewing all our expenses to examine potential savings across the board. He noted that one of our budget expense lines that needs scrutiny is the cost we pay for hydrant rentals and that water districts across the state are charging fire departments an estimated 10% of their operating budgets for the potential use of fire hydrants. Reed let the taxpayers know that he is working with our State Legislators on a plan to audit the fees

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that fire departments are paying and that it is his hope to cap the expense or determine a better plan for use of the funds they are generating billing that is likely seldom used.

Reed let the taxpayers know that our commitment to our relationships with our surrounding partners is ongoing. He noted that Deputy Chief Brierley and KFD Firefighter Paul Decerbo have developed a robust training regimen that area law enforcement and fire departments are using to train and plan for armed aggressors and potential mass causality incidents. He noted that this endeavor as well as other responses including our multi-day response to the Block Island fire, the large brush fires in West Greenwich and Exeter, and our recent response to an injured worker elevated and trapped fifteen above the floor are notable examples of our regional partners coming together to work and train better. Reed thanked all of KFD's personnel and firefighters for their continued hard work and dedication to the Village of Kingston and surrounding areas.

Brierley presented the Deputy Chief's Report. He let the taxpayers know that KFD's training hours totaled close to 4,500 man hours over the last year which has increased from the previous year. He noted that KFD has sent members to various conferences around the United States and that the Armed Aggressor/Active Shooter Rescue Task Force is going well. In terms of recruitment and retention, Brierley let the taxpayers know that KFD has been able to maintain its numbers.

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any questions. There were none.

The motion carried unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT (SEE HANDOUT)

MOTION: Doug Carr moved to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Kris Bovy seconded the motion.

Treasurer Thomas Vignali presented the Treasurer's report. The report was reviewed. He gave a brief review of the report which included the District's cash balances, capital assets, long-term debt, fund balances, current grant awards and budgets. He highlighted several budget lines that he expected to run over and noted that overall the FY2023-24 operating budget is expected to finish under budget. It was noted that KFD's expenses for personnel protective gear are running over budget due to rising costs in NFPA and OSHA standards. Vignali let the taxpayers know that the capital projects budget for FY2023-24 is trending as expected.

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any questions. There were none.

The motion carried unanimously.

TAX COLLECTOR'S REPORT (SEE HANDOUT)

MOTION: Elizabeth McNab moved to accept the Tax Collector's Report as presented. Bill Flatley seconded the motion.

Tax Collector Susan (Axelrod) Spranger presented the Tax Collector's Report. The report was reviewed. Spranger let the taxpayers know that the collection rate for 2022 is at 98.7%, six months after billing and that the collection rates for 2022, 2021 and 2020 taxes are just under 100%. She let the taxpayers know that there is one account that eligible for tax sale right now; but that she has been in contact with the owner and expects to receive payment soon.

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any further questions. There were none.

The motion carried unanimously.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (SEE HANDOUT)

MOTION: Doug Carr moved to accept the President's Report as presented. Sandy Koerner seconded the motion.

President Bill Flatley presented an oral President's report. He thanked the Fire Chiefs and KFD's firefighters, Flatley let the taxpayers know that we added two Wardens over the past year, Doug Carr and Steve Davis, and thanked all the Wardens, Treasurer, Tax Collector and District Manager for their service and dedication. He noted that he was honored to work with everyone here and that it is a great operation. Flatley let the taxpayers know that KFD is working with a new attorney to represent the District who has extensive experience with fire departments and municipalities. He noted that she is billing us at a municipality rate which is very reasonable.

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any questions. There were none.

The motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi stated that according to last year's minutes there were no motions tabled or carried forward to address at this year's meeting.

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there was any other official business under the category "Old Business." There was none.

FY2023-2043 BUDGET MOTION (SEE HANDOUT)

Tom Vignali presented the Budget. The FY2024-2025 Budget was reviewed. Tom Vignali let the taxpayers know that there is a two-percent increase over last year's budget. He noted that there were not any large increases to any line items and that the increase is due to inflation. Vignali also let the taxpayers know that KFD has drawn down funds in our Capital Projects Fund for large expenditures and that the amount of reserves has been trending downward over the last few years. There was some discussion about needing to replace KFD's heavy rescue and ladder trucks in the near future and the significantly rising costs of fire apparatus. Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any questions. There were none.

MOTION: Richard Vaccaro moved the following Budget Motion: "I move that the budget be approved as presented, and that the Board of Wardens be directed to calculate the tax rate, based on the valuation of assessed property according to the South Kingstown Tax Assessor's rolls as of December 31, 2023, so as to meet the amount of money specified in the budget to be raised by taxation, plus or minus five percent (5%), to account for authorized abatements and additions to the tax roll throughout the tax year." The motion was seconded by Doug Carr. Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any questions. There were none.
The motion carried unanimously.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT (SEE HANDOUT)

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked the taxpayers to review the Nominating Committee Report.

MOTION: Tom Vignali moved to accept the Nominating Committee Report, as presented. Doug Carr seconded the motion.

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any questions. There were none. The motion carried unanimously.

NOMINATIONS FROM FLOOR

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any further nominations from the floor. Bill Flatley let the taxpayers know that Anita Jacobson is interested in a Tax Assessor position and presented information about her background; however, he noted that she was not present. For this reason it was agreed that she should not be elected at this meeting but could be appointed for the interim by the Board at a future Board Meeting.

RESIGNATIONS:

Bill Flatley announced Dorald Beasley's resignation as Tax Assessor in his absence.

ELECTION

MOTION: There being no further nominations or discussion, Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked for a vote to elect those individuals nominated in the Nominating Committee Report (excluding Dorald Beasley). Bill Flatley moved to elect the individuals nominated. Sandy Koerner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS (SEE HANDOUT):

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked the electors to refer to the Resolutions to be approved under "Other New Business."

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked the electors to review the first resolution, *Resolution for Emergency Contingency Fund for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.*

MOTION: Linda Mendillo moved to accept the Resolution for Emergency Contingency Fund for Fiscal Year 2024-2025, as presented. Angelo Mendillo seconded the motion. Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any questions. There were none. The motion carried unanimously.

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked the electors to review the second resolution, *Resolution Transfer of Smoke Detector Funds.*

MOTION: Elizabeth McNab moved to accept the Resolution Transfer of Smoke Detector Funds, as presented. Ted Jakubowski seconded the motion. Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any questions. There were none. The motion carried unanimously.

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked the electors to review the third resolution, *Resolution Transfer of Fire Detail Funds.*

MOTION: Susan (Axelrod) Spranger moved to accept the Resolution Transfer of Fire Detail Funds, as presented. Sandy Koerner seconded the motion. Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked if there were any questions. There were none. The motion carried unanimously.

Moderator Maier-Sperdelozzi asked the electors if there was anything else to be heard under "Other New Business." There were no further questions or discussion. There were no motions.

Adjournment:

MOTION: Ted Jakubowski moved to adjourn. Bill Flatley seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenifer Madison
District Manager
Kingston Fire District (On behalf of Eric Axelrod, District Clerk)

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