

**Minutes of the Public Hearing on the 2011 Johnsburg Fire Protection Contracts for the Johnsburg Fire Protection District held on Thursday, November 4, 2010, at 6:00pm, at the Wevertown Community Center, Wevertown, N.Y.**

The Public Hearing on the Johnsburg Fire Protection Contracts for the Johnsburg Fire Protection District was called to order at 6:09pm. by Supv. Goodspeed.

The Town Clerk read the legal notice as it appeared in the October 30, 2010 edition of the North Creek News – Enterprise.

Roll call showed the following persons present: Supv. Sterling Goodspeed; Town Councilmen/ Eugene Arsenault and Ronald Vanselow; Town Clerk/ William Rawson. Councilmen Frank Morehouse, Jr. And Arnold Stevens were absent.

Guests: On attached list.

Supv. Goodspeed explained that included in the 2011 Town of Johnsburg Budget there was a proposed 1.5% increase in fire protection over the 2009 budget and he added that he believes that the Town Board is in support of the fire companies.

North River Fire Chief John Donohue speaking for the fire companies asked why the North Creek Fire District is involved; Secretary Cherie Ferguson said that there was a separate contract with the North Creek Fire District.

Fire Chief Donohue said that the other fire companies were seeking the \$10,000.00 which has been paid to the North Creek Fire District. Supv. Goodspeed said that he had looked into the question of the North Creek money and the history seems to be that at a point in the 1980's the North Creek Fire District agreed to freeze its Town contribution at \$10,000.00 instead of seeking ongoing increases since it had its own taxing district. Supv. Goodspeed said that he had personally received three comments on the \$10,000.00 payment one each saying that the payment should be eliminated; the payment should continue; and that the payment should be gradually eliminated. Supv. Goodspeed said that he has looked into the situation and has determined that the North Creek Fire Company carries a significant load in both education and manpower; he added that the payment is not set in stone and that he is willing to discuss the money.

Fire Chief Donohue asked if any one has asked the other fire companies about their reliance on the North Creek Fire Company; he added that the other companies can handle minor calls without assistance, but need help with structure fires. Fire Chief Donohue said that he had good feelings toward the North Creek Fire Company, but not even the North Creek company can fight a structure fire without help.

Fire Chief Donohue said that this was moving back to the 2009 funding level as the injection of funds for 2010 is not included in the amount for determining the 2011 funding level. Fire Chief Donohue said that the six fire companies need the \$10,000.00. Mr. Arsenault said that this was discussed at the meeting between the Fire Committee (Arsenault and Morehouse) and the fire chiefs; it was left as an item for discussion. Mr. Arsenault said that also discussed was the possibility of moving \$5000.00 to the other fire companies; he said that this may be a fair compromise and worth discussing with the North Creek Fire District. Supv. Goodspeed asked for a response from the North Creek Fire Chief or a member of the Fire District Board of Directors. Ms. Cherie Ferguson, saying that she spoke as a member of the North Creek Fire Company said that the Town

of Johnsbury has a contract with the North Creek Fire District for fire protection and that North Creek Fire company answers more calls than any of the other fire companies and questions why the \$37,000.00 amount of support is justified. Fire Chief Donohue said that the number of calls doesn't matter; it is the availability of fire fighters and no wants to lose a life in a fire due to lack of equipment. Mr. Vanselow asked if the loss of the \$10,000.00 payment would be a difficulty to the North Creek Fire District; North Creek Fire District Commissioner Richard Bennett said that it was included in the funding for the 2011 budget and that it was too late to change the North Creek Fire District Budget. Bakers Mill-Sodom Fire Chief Lewis Hitchcock asked if the North Creek Fire District Budget can be reopened; Ms. Cherie Ferguson said that the final date for filing was in October. Fire Chief Donohue said that if the North Creek Fire District is closed then it should be discussed so as to have a decision for the next year; he said that there is no intent to hurt North Creek. Supv. Goodspeed said that the question seemed to be now versus the ongoing funding.

Ms. Cherie Ferguson said that the Town supports some entities for educational purposes and that possibly some funding could be drawn from these to support fire protection. Mr. Robert Nettle said that he remembered that a one time North Creek received \$20,000.00, but about twenty years ago the amount was lowered to \$10,000.00; he said that now all of the companies have pumpers and tankers and that North Creek should stand on its own.

Fire Chief Donohue said that the fire companies do not believe that 1.5% is enough and believe that 3% would be fair. Supv. Goodspeed said that equal is not always fair. Fire Chief Donohue said that there should be agreement. Fire Chief Hitchcock said that the fire companies would be willing to work with the proposed funding if it was decided that the \$10,000.00 payment to North Creek would end this year. Mr. Arsenault does not believe that such a decision should be made without talking to the North Creek Fire District Commissioners. Supv. Goodspeed agreed with Mr. Arsenault about having a meeting to discuss the solution for next year. Mr. David Bulmer asked why there are two groups; Supv. Goodspeed said that there are two taxing districts, Johnsbury Fire Protection district and North Creek Fire District, and for about the last twenty years North Creek has received \$10,000.00. Mr. Bulmer asked how many companies the Johnsbury Fire District is split among; there are six companies.

Supv. Goodspeed said that the Town Board has had some discussions about the responsibility of fire protection; he added that his feelings were that the Town Board needs to get tighter with the districts actually providing protection and that the Town Board will act to be sure of a district getting out for calls and that this is the Town board's job. The job of the Town Board is to contract with the fire companies to provide fire protection. The Town board will look at the fire companies to be sure that all the districts are protected. Supv. Goodspeed said that he will start tomorrow for possible increases and that he will write to the fire companies informing them of the result. Mr. Vanselow said that he may have some ideas at the next hearing.

Supv. Goodspeed said that he believes that the Town Board should be meeting with the fire companies more often and earlier in the year. Mr. Arsenault agreed that the Town Board should be meeting more often and that possibly consolidation should be discussed. Mr. Arsenault added that part of the problem is that the state regulations fit more toward paid and municipal fire companies and that this creates problems for rural

and volunteer companies.

Mr. Arsenaull presented the following motion and moved it forward with a second from Mr. Vanselow to adjourn the Public Hearing on the Fire Protection Contracts at 6:48pm. With 3 members voting in favor the resolution is declared carried. Ayes-3 (Arsenaull, Vanselow, Goodspeed) Nays - 0

The Public Hearing was closed at 6:48pm.

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Prepared by William E. Rawson, Town Clerk