

ULSTER TOWN BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 12, 2015 at 7:00 PM

CALLED TO ORDER BY SUPERVISOR QUIGLEY, CHAIRMAN at 7:00 PM

THE SALUTE TO THE FLAG

ROLL CALL BY CLERK

TOWN COUNCILMAN JOEL B. BRINK
TOWN COUNCILMAN ERIC KITCHEN
TOWN COUNCILMAN JOHN MORROW
TOWN COUNCILMAN ROCCO SECRETO
SUPERVISOR JAMES QUIGLEY 3rd

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to appoint Linda McDonough as Registrar of Vital Statistics and Tax Collector

Motion Councilman Brink
Second Councilman Morrow

Town Councilman Brink	- Aye
Town Councilman Kitchen	- Aye
Town Councilman Secreto	- Aye
Town Councilman Morrow	- Aye
Supervisor Quigley	- Aye

CARRIED

Motion to authorize the Town Clerk to attend the NY Town Clerks Association Conference in Rochester, April 25th – 29th, 2015

Motion Councilman Morrow
Second Councilman Kitchen

Town Councilman Brink	- Aye
Town Councilman Kitchen	- Aye
Town Councilman Secreto	- Aye
Town Councilman Morrow	- Aye
Supervisor Quigley	- Aye

CARRIED

Any other matters that may come before the Town Board

None

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Motion to dispense with the rules of the town board for the conduct of a meeting

Motion Councilman Brink
Second Councilman Kitchen

Town Councilman Brink	- Aye
Town Councilman Kitchen	- Aye
Town Councilman Secreto	- Aye
Town Councilman Morrow	- Aye
Supervisor Quigley	- Aye

CARRIED

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion on East Kingston Fire Protection Services

Supervisor Quigley requested that members of the East Kingston Fire Dept. that wish to speak on the record, do so first. We will then proceed from members of the fire company to members of the community, followed by town attorney for explanations of the difference between a Fire District and a Fire Protection district.

Letter read by David Meade 851 Nicholas Ave., Director of East Kingston Fire Company as follows:

The following statements have been prepared by the Board of Directors of the East Kingston Volunteer Fire Co., Inc. in response to comments made at a recent Town of Ulster Board meeting and in the local newspaper.

The East Kingston Volunteer Fire Co. is not upset with the Town Board. Approximately one year ago, rumors started circulating. Rumors that our members were taunted with, saying Ulster Hose was taking over our district. The rumors were denied by Town Officials, but they continued. In May, when our budget proposal was submitted, we were told that it was untrue that the Town was trying to get Ulster Hose to cover our district. But, as the rumors persisted, a group of Ulster Hose officials requested an informal meeting with us. They stated that they were not at all interested in taking over our district, but that they had been approached by the Town Board to do so. They said they refused taking it over but would offer protection if none existed. They were told that the Town would try to get Glasco to cover the district.

There were 2 meetings with the Town. One was to submit the budget proposal which was attended by the Town Supervisor, Fire Company President, Treasurer and a budget committee member. The second meeting was requested by us so that we could ask what the problem was, why we were being singled out, and why a Town Board member was running our cats. Only a portion of our Board of Directors was allowed to meet with two councilmen in the Supervisors office. We assume this was so that the Town

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Board would be in compliance with "Open Meetings" laws and the press would not need to be notified. We still hadn't received an explanation of any problems, either with our finances or with our responses to emergencies.

It has never been explained to us why the Board wants to sever ties with us, nor have we ever been given copies or even been verbally advised that complaints had been received. The Board states that they have been receiving complaints since 2010. We hereby deny any knowledge of said complaints. To our knowledge, this is the first complaint. If there were complaints, they could have been delivered to us at any time, such as one of our monthly breakfasts which were attended by at least one Board member.

Our Fire Company does not hide how we spend the taxpayers' money and will be scheduling our next audit in the spring. The Town Board has been given copies of our IRS form 990 filings for the past three years and our budget proposals to the town reflect the anticipated expenses of the fire company.

For someone to accuse our chief and the Town Board of being negligent is just irresponsible and inflammatory. There is enough pressure without comments about possible deaths and injury when we all know that these casualties can occur at any time and to anyone. We hope that no one is ever killed or injured but we know that it is always possible.

Things are much improved under our current chief, Michael Watzka, who had the job dumped on him in June of 2014 when our former chief quit without any notice and joined a "neighboring company." Mike inherited a company that had been without effective leadership for a year and a half. Records were shabby or non-existent, the training program was lacking any organization and morale was poor. Some members were recruited by other organizations and others just got tired of the constant harassment they felt by having a town official showing up to our calls when we know that this does not happen in other fire districts.

As to the question of the East Kingston Volunteer Fire Co. being short-handed. We maintain that we have covered all problem times of the day. Under a former Chief, a response procedure was put in place that has Ulster Hose respond for any second dispatch as well as for multiple alarm fires. These response plans have not changed in the past several years and have been very effective in providing sufficient and prompt coverage at all times of the day. Chief Michael Watzka has also initiated a plan whereby the Sawkill Fire Co. responds on all first alarms for all calls during normal daytime workday hours. This was a result of offers of assistance from the Sawkill Fire Co. who have two members (both Chief Officers) who work near our district. They also respond with an engine from their district where they are fortunate enough to have several members employed within their district. Since taking over in June, Chief Michael Watzka and other firefighters have recruited 6 new members who are awaiting a Fire Fighter 1 course.

Also! it should be noted that most fire companies suffer from a lack of manpower. If the Town Board would monitor county dispatches, they would realize that many fire departments throughout Ulster County as well as other departments right here in the Town of Ulster get second dispatches. We don't think there are any fire companies that have too much manpower. The difficulty that departments have in

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recruiting members is recognized throughout the country. Demands put on individuals for extensive mandatory training, prohibitive costs for equipping a fire fighter and for the necessity of both parents in a household to have two jobs, does not leave much for volunteerism. Government, both local and statewide must realize that the time given by those who are members of a fire company needs to be appreciated.

As to the operations at the call in question: The East Kingston Fire Co. Board of Directors has reviewed the run sheets and the dispatch information and we are confident that members from East Kingston and Ulster Hose handled this emergency very well.

Supervisor Quigley asked for any other members of Fire Departments that wish to speak Any residents of the Fire District or the Town

Resident – Joseph Alecca of East Kingston spoke as a 38 year member of the East Kingston Fire Department. Mr. Alecca disputes the ability of the East Kingston Fire Department to properly handle calls, and expressed continued concern for the residents of the East Kingston Fire Protection District. He continued with a request for an answer as to why Ulster Hose is not immediately called to assist, and why Glasco is put on standby instead of a callout.

Resident – Mr. Philips a 30 year resident of Union Springs Ln, spoke in support of the Fire Company and their response on calls. He stated that he never has seen East Kingston Fire Dept. not do their job, and is speaking as a resident, not as a past President or Assistant Chief.

Mr. Kovacs – the Towns Attorney explained the difference between a Fire District and Fire Protection District.

Mr. Quigley requested Chief Mike Watzka to the podium to answer questions. Mr. Watzka declined answering some questions at the request of their lawyer Bob Greco. Mr. Greco was not in attendance. Mr. Watzka believes using Sawkill Fire Dept as a responding fire company prudent, as opposed to using closer districts.

A general discussion followed, including information and questions on ISO reports and financial information-budget and actual.

There are perceived issues with the Fire Dept. that present a risk to the town that is unacceptable to the Town Board. At this time:

The Town Board is ordering East Kingston to put Ulster Hose 5 on first dispatch for every fire call immediately

The Town Board is formally requesting a listing of all personnel, ages and training, and the number of calls by month that each member has met over the past year.

The Town Board is requesting a commitment to have a meeting within a week and report back to the Town Board.

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Mr. Secreto has requested an up or down vote on the above Town Board order and requests

Town Councilman Brink	- Yes
Town Councilman Kitchen	- Yes
Town Councilman Secreto	- Yes
Town Councilman Morrow	- Yes
Supervisor Quigley	- Yes

Councilman Secreto urged all residents and fire department personnel to put their differences aside for the good of all.

Supervisor Quigley requested Mr. Meade to add to his list, a commitment from the company a delivery date for a detailed listing of income and expenses for the past two years (2013 and 2014) in relation to the budget for those years which was adopted by the Town Board as submitted at their request.

It was suggested that they also find an auditor.

Thirdly, the town has discussed and would like to know if the fire company would cooperate with a firematic study to be done at the expense of the town. Mr. Meade advised the department will discuss it. Mr. Meade would also like the town to listen to their concerns.

Discussion followed with an explanation by Former Chief Cranston on Countywide reporting.

Former Chief Cranston of Spring Lake Fire Dept. asked that the Town Board tread lightly on dictating to any department how to do anything fire related as they are not fireman.

Supervisor Quigley offered an explanation on his "running calls". The only time he runs calls is when the Town has resources it can provide to help the situation, and has a concern for public safety.

Closing comments were made by each Councilman regarding the safety of the citizens.

Bill McDermott clarified the meeting from last year as being multi conversations as once and many items could have been missed.

Tonight's meeting was clear and concise according to all parties involved.
All points have been clearly articulated.

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Councilman Brink motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 PM
2nd by Councilman Secreto

Town Councilman Brink	- Aye
Town Councilman Kitchen	- Aye
Town Councilman Secreto	- Aye
Town Councilman Morrow	- Aye
Supervisor Quigley	- Aye

CARRIED

Respectfully Submitted by
Linda A. McDonough
Ulster Town Clerk