

**Gaston County Fire Commission Meeting**

October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Members Present:**

Scott Hunter

Rob Smith

Richard Albaugh

Brian Weyeneth

Blair Gribble

Bob Hovis

Jamie Ramsey

Will Keller (Zoom)

Justin Westbrook (Zoom)

Eric Withers (Zoom)

Vincent Wong

Alston Watts (Zoom)

Lance Foulk (Zoom)

**Guest Present:**

Jeff Hicks

The meeting was held Thursday October 10<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. in the Emergency Operations Center located at 615 N Highland Street, Gastonia.

**I. Call to Order, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance**

Rob Smith called the meeting to order. Eric Withers made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Bob Hovis. The motion carried.

**II. Public Comment**

No public comments were made.

**III. Business Agenda**

- A. Bob Hovis made a motion to approve the September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 meeting minutes. Jamie Ramsey seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- B. New Hope Fire Department presented a Certificate of Need for SCBA replacement. The commission discussed the involvement of New Hope Fire Department in a group purchasing plan, the age of the equipment being replaced, and its trade-in value. Bob Hovis made a motion to approve the purchase for New Hope Fire Department. The motion was seconded by Jamie Ramsey. The motion carried.
- C. Sub-Committee Updates
  - Rescue: No new updates.
  - Capital: Bryan Weyeneth provided an update on the capital task force, recommending setting aside 25% of the projected fund balance of no less than \$500,000 for future projects. Bob Hovis made a motion to approve

these recommendations. The motion was seconded by Jamie Ramsey. The motion carried. The capital taskforce also recommended covering 5% of grants up to \$50,000 including the grant-writer fee and associated sales tax to be paid (if any). Bob Hovis made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded by Jamie Ramsey. Commission went into discussion. Bob Hovis withdrew his motion. The taskforce will meet again to delve into further details and bring this back to the board at a later date. Discussion was held on the need for wet sprinkler systems in fire department facilities to meet 24/7 staffing requirements. It was agreed to send a letter to fire departments inquiring about their plans for connecting to municipal water systems and the need for wet sprinkler systems in sleeping quarters.

- Closest Department: No update.
- Apparatus Name: Director Scott Hunter provided an update on the tower operations during a meeting with Deputy Director Foulk, Scott Lambert, and Captain Waldrop, the new Captain overseeing the communication's center. They discussed the request for the tower, with letters sent to the chiefs of Belmont and Dallas. The plan involves a phased approach, starting immediately with the term "tower" to describe operations. Due to the transition period in the communication center, the fire chiefs have agreed to initially use the terminology "tower ladder." Once the telecommunicators become familiar with the distinction, the terminology in the CAD system will transition accordingly. The conversation was productive, and all parties are committed to moving forward.

D. Fire Service Agreement Update: Director Scott Hunter handed out updated contract that has gone through the attorneys and finance department. Upon approval of the Fire Commission, it will be sent to the Fire Chiefs. The commission discussed the dissolution clause and agreed to table the discussion for further review, with plans for a special meeting with the new county attorney to address property ownership and debt repayment issues.

E. Director Scott Hunter

- Director Hunter proposed purchasing seven Starlink units (in the amount of \$3,500) to improve fire department connectivity during emergencies, one per district. The commission discussed the benefits of having roving accounts to avoid monthly fees. Will Keller made a motion to approve the Starlink purchase. The motion was seconded by Alston Watts. The motion carried.

#### IV. **New/Old Business**

No business was discussed.

#### V. **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Bob Hovis, seconded by Richard Albaugh. The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned.