

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Fire District No. 1 was held on Wednesday, May 28, 2025 at 6:00 P.M.

Commissioner John C. Kenny called the meeting to order.

Commissioner John C. Kenny – All the requirements of the “Open Public Meeting Act” have been complied with by advertising in the Home News Tribune and Star Ledger. Copies of the meeting notice have been sent to the Municipal Clerk’s Office and posted on the bulletin board of the fire house and the post offices of Woodbridge and Sewaren.

Commissioner John C. Kenny led a pledge to the flag.

A moment of silence for our departed members.

PRESENT: Commissioner P. Kenny, Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr.,
Commissioner John C. Kenny, Commissioner Jay Barcellona
EXCUSED: Commissioner Jeffrey Moran
ALSO PRESENT: Chief Michael Balog
Deputy Chief Minkler
Christopher Howell, Attorney

Commissioner J.C.K.: This Special Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Commissioners is to meet with District No. 4 in regards to some requests and needs so I need a motion to go into Executive Session to talk about legal and personnel matters and contractions.

Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr. made a motion to go into Executive Session for legal and personnel matters and at 6:05 PM which was seconded by Commissioner Patrick Kenny and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr. made a motion to return to the Special Meeting at 7:19 PM which was seconded by Commissioner Jay Barcellona and carried unanimously.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Chris, do you want to give a summary of our Executive Session?

Christopher Howell, Attorney: Sure, thank you Mr. President. Tonight’s Executive Session we met with Keasbey Board members to discuss a Mutual Joint Service or Aid Agreement with Keasbey. It would be mutual in both directions. We would be looking to support them with some staff and they would be looking to help us on some of our calls as well. In follow up of that we then also heard from President of Local 290, David Hines and got his opinion with regards to that and we concluded our Executive Session from hearing from a Town Administrator, Joe Nisky, and getting his support as well of our agreement with Keasbey and the Board will get into the

details with that following my summary. But that's all we discussed tonight at the Executive Session this evening.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Okay, so I need a motion to enter into an agreement with District 4 of Keasbey for off duty resources as we've done for other districts.

Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr. made a motion to enter into an agreement with District 4 of Keasbey for off duty resources which was seconded by Commissioner Jay Barcellona and carried unanimously.

Commissioner J.C.K.: The meeting is open to the public on the Fire District 1 for agreement. Anybody have any questions?

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: I just have a few questions. Is this just for that or is it an open public meeting we can bring up anything?

Commissioner J.C.K.: Just about this case. We have a regular meeting next Wednesday. You are more than welcome to be at our regular meeting.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: I guess it does apply to that. I just have two questions because I have a whole thing but maybe I will be at the meeting next week. Is it the intention of District 1 and the Board to take over the fire fighting services and become the lead fire district of the entire township including working with Keasbey District 4, yes or no?

Commissioner J.C.K.: No, and we just told District 4 that the only thing we are doing here is doing the same thing as we've done for other districts where we offered off-duty man power when they roll themselves and become their own department.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: And that's before they had a contract in place with union members. Keasbey already has a contract with union members. Do they get over-time prior to offering an off-duty rate to your employees?

Commissioner J.C.K.: I don't know what they are doing with theirs.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: Because it's different than what you're doing now. No, they have an existing five man paid department that you are now going to alternate so I'm just curious by that.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Chief.

Chief Michael Balog: I can answer that. Yes, we are going to offer our five guys over-time. We discussed that with the union plus the off-duty District 1 people.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: I just have one statement to read because you said it is not your goal to make one fire department in the township, correct? You just said that. I have sworn testimony from an employee of your department that said "it's going to hurt our local in (inaudible) to create more jobs within the township. Our ultimate goal is to have one fire department in Woodbridge Township." So, was he lying or are you lying? I'm confused. I just want to make sure we are all on the same page here.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Who are you talking about Ed? Are you talking about me personally?

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: No, this was testimony years back. I'm just making sure that you're a man of your words saying this is not an attempt to take over the township.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Not that I know of, no.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: I have sworn testimony. I just want to make sure.

Commissioner J.C.K.: The Board of Fire Commissioners of Woodbridge Fire District No. 1 have no intention of being lead fire department.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: Okay, and as far as manpower numbers how much manpower will you be supplying from Keasbey Fire Department to staff their apparatus?

Commissioner J.C.K.: I think its two.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: So you believe sending two of your employees from District 1 is safe by themselves in District 4 to respond to calls, yes or no?

Commissioner P.K.: I think that's a question for the Chief.

Chief Michael Balog: We never said they would be by themselves.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: Okay, I want to ensure the safety of your employees because in District 1 sometimes you have two guys on a engine, two guys on a truck, which I believe is not safe. With \$15 million there should only be four guys on the engine, four guys on the truck. You know I bend over backwards for anybody to help everybody but I believe that the focus, and I commend you for trying to help Keasbey, but you guys got to look at your own employees to make sure they are safe rolling out of here because right now a chief officer going x amount of miles over there, you know, he's torn from your district but I think what about an accident already but that is not a continuous town. You're

literally driving over other districts to get there and to have two guys or more stationed there to handle calls is that adequate? Same thing is it adequate to have two guys on an engine here or two guys on a ladder truck here.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Chief.

Chief Michael Balog: I'll just say on that is we do have a strategic plan in place to guard our department to the exact spot we need to be to provide the staffing on our apparatus. Neighboring departments and other cities near by have followed a very similar pact to get where we are as I'm sure you know. It takes time and I have full confidence that we could safely provide the manpower needed when needed.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: Alright, like I said I'm just here because I do care about other guys. I'd work with you at Woodbridge any day but I see trying to put a band aid to help out Keasbey but in that doing so you know if I'm a Woodbridge Fire Fighter and they're sending me to go work there two guys by myself to now handle a car fire or what not I don't even have a third guy on the line so if they said, hey they're sending four guys there so that they have a staffed company remotely of District 1 it's a lot safer for your members, right, you would have to agree.

Chief Michael Balog: If you worry about time getting there we....

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: No I'm just saying pulling up on scene God forbid somebody is hanging out a window you got to stretch a hose on and throw a ladder. Those two guys are by themselves and you can get one of your employees seriously hurt so if you're going to do it you should do it correctly and give adequate staffing now to Keasbey you should have adequate staffing here too. Like I'm just encouraging that to grow. You know, we've grown in another town but if we're worried about Keasbey I think you guys should really focus on getting your trucks staffed here so that it is safer for these guys. I mean on holidays they pulled up five guys to work on fire; five guys. Then the Division of Fire Safety came up and the audit say, hey is this acceptable. You're a career department. You should have fourteen guys. You got \$15 million. Staff your trucks here and then worry about Keasbey. I commend you for helping Keasbey but there are other districts I think that want to help so I'm just trying to help your guys to focus on making the trucks here as safe as can be. So, I'll leave you with that because I had a whole other bunch of stuff to get into but I just want to let you guys know these OPRA requests that the volunteer districts are getting that are not on topic are not going to be tolerated. We want to work together. I want this nonsense to stop Mr. Hines. Knock that stuff off, please.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Okay, okay. It's about the Keasbey item.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: I know. I just wanted to say that.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Okay.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: Because we got the OPRA request, four districts here. We're sitting here because we want to work together; we want to work together guys. But we got to knock off some of this nonsense. I'm just pleading with you. I'm saying I want to shake all your hands; I want to shake his hand. Why are we going after each other. I don't want to do that.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Okay.

Edward Mullen, Chairman of the Board of Fire District 9: Just please let's work together. You can work with the union. Listen, let's work together as a township. You said you don't want one township fire department; let's work together individually. When the fires hit the fan, we work together great. We love to help each other but you got to help yourselves here first then help them and make it safe for your guys working in Keasbey. I would hate to see the Keasbey firefighters get hurt but we got to work together and give them adequate staffing, adequate, not just a little band aid, thank you Commissioners.

Commissioner J.C.K.: You're welcome. Anybody else?

Brian Turcotte: What's the plans staffing around the clock supposed to look like?

Commissioner J.C.K.: Chief.

Chief Michael Balog: We're still fine tuning some things but it should be three.

Brian Turcotte: Three all day; 20 (inaudible)?

Chief Michael Balog: Except for Saturday and Sunday during the day.

Brian Turcotte: But what's that?

Chief Michael Balog: Volunteers will have that.

Brian Turcotte: What volunteers?

Chief Michael Balog: The Keasbey volunteers plus if they have their personnel. Keasbey is going to hand it out themselves. 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM on Saturday and Sunday we won't provide any staffing as of the model now.

Brian Turcotte: So three career guys five days a week, how does that satisfy 2 and 12 or are you still relying on Mutual Aid coming in and still supporting the cause over there and supplementing the staffing that's still inadequate?

Commissioner J.C.K.: That's a question for Keasbey.

Brian Turcotte: It's a joint agreement so I'm asking how does three personnel, as this solution goes, support an adequate staffing when there is an actual fire and you have people hanging out the window, how are those three people supposed to adequately support that or are we just doing this for show because we're going to try to say, oh you know we're fixing the band aid and you know we're providing extra staffing so we can put more people on but we're still having three people show up to a call who are either inexperienced or ready because we still have guys that have maybe one or two years on as a firefighter, not even just as a career firefighter, as a firefighter who can't even make the decision needed to be at a call. Okay, so now we have three of them. I don't know what the level of expertise is going to be sent over there but I know you all have you guys here as well so if you're sending the bottom people you're now looking at three guys with one or two years experience running a scene which A can't be done because they don't have Level One at that point but there are a lot of things that don't compute when you just add one extra person or two extra people to make a three person staff and how that accomplishes anything and I know what you're going say, oh well we're supplementing it by volunteers; four or five total that they have on the rolls. That's not supplementing anything, you know, so they're going to get out the door and you know you won't know where I'm from we're going to show up and to still supplement all of the staffing and take the bullshit that we deal with on a regular basis because we're the ones that are the blunt of everything. So, you're saving them by providing the staffing but still relying on us to get our full five or six guys out the door as that engine to come in and actually put out the fire and actually make sure that everybody is operating safely. So, I don't think it's going to work but you know I think it's just a band aid and it's not a long-term plan and it's not a solution to the problems that already exist.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Anybody else? Okay, motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr. made a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting at 7:32 P.M. which was seconded by Commissioner Jay Barcellona and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria Bucsanszky
District Clerk