

The Board of Fire Commissioners, District #2 and District #4, Gloucester Township, held a Joint Special Meeting in the Chews Landing Fire Station on Wednesday, September 7, 2022 at 7:00 pm.

GTFD2 Chairman Genzel opened the meeting at 7:02 pm with the flag salute and acknowledgement of the meeting being held in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act.

Roll Call:

GTFD2: Genzel – Present Evans – Present Reichert – Present Donahue – Absent Grady – Present

GTFD4: D. Vannoni – Present Jones – Present McCann – Present J. Vannoni – Present Cristella – Present

Also present was Chief Millisky (8201) and GTFD2 Administrator Robb.

J. Vannoni started the meeting by noting the successes of the Squad 88 program, and citing same as an example of what can be accomplished through cooperative efforts. He added that working together is no longer a luxury, but a necessity, and without additional cooperative efforts both districts are likely to fail. J. Vannoni then asked if D2 is interested in participating in additional cooperative efforts.

Chairman Genzel responded that D2 is interested in continued cooperation and communication in matters of mutual interest, but is not interested in merger discussions at this time.

Evans said he believes the districts need to develop a coordinated 5-year plan. He cited as an example the recent proposal to create a joint Battalion Chief / Fire Official position, which would hinder the districts previously stated goal of meeting the five firefighter per platoon staffing goal. Evans also noted that D2 is planning to fill the firefighter vacancy on the A Platoon, but is awaiting the results of a pending SAFER grant application, and that theoretically that would leave only one additional firefighter position to be shared jointly.

J. Vannoni said at the January meeting the districts passed a motion to make any future hiring decisions jointly, but D2 recently decided to hire a part-time fire inspector who can't respond to fire calls without any discussion with D4, which seems contrary to the staffing goal.

Admin. Robb noted that the intent of the motion at the January meeting was understood to concern personnel assigned to the Squad 88 program, and that D2 did not intentionally violate the agreement.

D. Vannoni then asked if D2 is interested in merging both districts into one Local Enforcement Agency, with a Shared Fire Official. If not, he fully intends to approach D3 to take over their LEA. Evans started to reply with his opinion that additional research is needed before any decisions are made. D. Vannoni responded that he's not interested in the personal opinion of D2 Evans, but wants to know the intention of the full D2 Board. D. Vannoni then stated that he's witnessed numerous examples of Evans expressing support of an idea at the Joint Operation Committee meetings, only to have the proposal voted down unanimously by the D2 Board. D. Vannoni then said as far as he's concerned Evans has no credibility. Evans responded that just because he supports an idea in an informal meeting doesn't mean that he's not entitled to change his mind after further discussion.

J. Vannoni said it's apparent that D2 is not interested in in shared services beyond the Squad 88 program, so D4 will need to explore any other available options.

Admin. Robb asked that the group acknowledge that our current shared service programs involve more than just the Squad 88 program, noting the districts are sharing the costs of a reserve engine, the mapping program and the Cooper Health Care EAP Program. The districts also have signed agreements to share Fire Officials and Duty Crews.

McCann asked why there is no discussion of a D2 / D4 only merger, admitting that it's not the best option but would represent a good start and may set a positive example for other districts to follow.

D. Vannoni and J. Vannoni than asked if D2 is interested in exploring shared Civil Service Hiring and Promotional lists. The topic was discussed, but no decisions were made.

Cristella cited the need for the districts to discuss apparatus needs, noting that both districts have tower ladders that will soon be in need of replacement. Cristella then asked if it makes sense for each district to spend 2 million dollars for replacement ladders, or if it makes better sense to have one district maintain a rescue truck and the other maintain a ladder truck. Reichert said he would be in favor of that concept.

Jones said this may be a good time to revisit discussions with District 1 regarding participation in the Squad 88 program, as they're reportedly having serious staffing issues. It was decided that Genzel and Jones would contact D1 representatives to discuss.

Evans brought up the need for an agreement to maintain a level of professionalism in communications between the Boards, citing a recent e-mail from D. Vannoni. D. Vannoni responded that he stands by his e-mailed comments and feels he has nothing to apologize for. Robb noted that the e-mail was disrespectful and was improperly shared with a wider audience than just the commissioners. D. Vannoni responded that we would agree to disagree. The conversation between Evans and D. Vannoni continued and became argumentative, ending with D. Vannoni abruptly leaving the meeting.

Grady said he's listed to all of the discussions this evening, but would prefer the opportunity to discuss the topics with the D2 Commissioners before responding.

McCann noted that there's not a lot of time for decisions of cost sharing options that will impact the 2023 budget.

After a general discussion, the group decided to schedule the next joint meeting for Wednesday, January 4, 2023 at 7:00 pm at Station 82.

There being no other business, a motion was made by J. Vannoni and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Grady to adjourn at 8:34 pm. Motion Carried

Submitted by Administrator Robb.

Read and Approved:

Chairman:

*Greg Genzel*

Clerk:

*Marianne Robb*

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