

COMMUNITY FIREFIGHTERS FUNERAL BENEFIT FUND
1755 ASHLAND AVENUE
HOMEWOOD, IL 60430

MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 10, 2015

DEPARTMENTS IN ATTENDANCE: 18 DEPARTMENTS INTERESTED BUT UNABLE TO ATTEND: 5

DEPARTMENT	REPRESENTATIVE ATTENDING	DEPARTMENT	REPRESENTATIVE ATTENDING
Alsip	Joe Schmitt; Sharon Szynalski	Midlothian	Martin Rita
Blue Island	Richard Holdefer	Munster	Bill O'Brien
Burbank		Oak Forest	
Burnham		Oak Lawn	
Calumet Park	Tom Battistella	Palos FPD	Pat Gericke
Chicago Ridge		Palos Heights	Tim Sarhage
Country Club Hills	Bob Kopec	Park Forest	<i>(Interested)</i>
Crestwood		Peotone	Bill Schreiber
Crete	Lyle Bachert; Jon Sloop	Posen	
Crete Township		Riverdale	
East Hazel Crest	Bill Vallow	Robbins	
Evergreen Park	<i>(Interested)</i>	Sauk Village	
Flossmoor	<i>(Interested)</i>	South Chicago Heights	Larry Nardoni
Glenwood	Kevin Welsh; Tim Zabelka	South Holland	
Hazel Crest		Steger	
Homewood	Bob Grabowski; Clint Johnson; Greg Knoll	Steger Estates	
Lansing	<i>(Interested)</i>	Thornton	Dave Habecker
Lynwood	John Cobb	Tinley Park	Ken Dunn
Matteson	Chris Schwalbe	University Park	<i>(Interested)</i>

Meeting called to order at 1015 hours.

Chief Kevin Welsh, representing MABAS Division 24, welcomed all in attendance and thanked those who are here and who are interested in the organization.

Glenwood FD Chaplain Herb Searfoss gave the invocation, and the Pledge of Allegiance was spoken by all.

A roll call of departments resulted in the above attendance record.

Chief Welsh then explained the reason for today's meeting, and gave some background on the organization:

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- Long-time Community Firemen's Association officers Tom Battistella and Richard "Sparky" Holdefer had requested help in reviewing the organization's records and in moving it forward into the future.
- MABAS Division 24 offered time, personnel, and facilities to work with them to streamline and digitize the records and the operation of the organization.
- A core group met on 12-02-2014 and 02-10-2014 to discuss the current status of the organization and to plan for today's meeting of member and former/potential member departments.
- The by-laws have been revised, and will be discussed during today's meeting – they call for at least one annual meeting of the organization, however it is likely that more meetings will be called this year as we work through the direction to be taken.
- The Homewood village attorney is researching (pro bono) the reinstatement of the group's State of Illinois corporation status, as well as the establishment of the group as a 501(c)(3) recognized organization.
- Based on the findings of the Fund's officers as the records and membership are reviewed, decisions will have to be made as to our financial health and future, relative to the current assessment and benefit payment process and amounts.

Chief Welsh then requested a motion to amend the Order of Business to move Item 11, Election of Officers to the next position. Moved: Homewood, Seconded: Midlothian. A unanimous voice vote of voting departments was recorded in favor of the motion. The motion passes.

Chief Welsh nominated a slate of officers as follows:

- President – Thomas Battistella
- Vide President – Richard Holdefer
- Secretary – Clint Johnson
- Treasurer – Greg Knoll

After calling three times for nominations from the floor and hearing none, Chief Welsh requested a motion to elect the slate of officers as presented. Moved: Peotone, Seconded: East Hazel Crest. A voice roll call of voting departments present resulted in a unanimous affirmative vote in favor of the motion. The motion passes.

Chief Welsh said that all organization files will be kept at the MABAS 24 Headquarters building, the very building in which we are meeting today.

Chief Gericke asked if a quorum was in attendance today. Chief Battistella replied that 17 departments are represented today out of the 32 departments listed as members, which constitutes a quorum.

DC Johnson explained the changes that were made to the by-laws, and that were made available for review via a link on the MABAS 24 website, and the following discussion occurred:

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- The major change was to combine the separate “Community Firefighter’s Association” and the “Funeral Benefit Fund” article sections into one set of articles, governed by one set of officers. Since there is no more affiliation with the Illinois Firefighters Association, and now the purpose of our group is solely the administration of the Funeral Benefit Fund, the group’s name is also changed to be the “Community Firefighters Funeral Benefit Fund”, or “CFFBF”.
 - Eligible members needn’t be from only Illinois departments, and must now belong to MABAS Divisions 7, 19, 21, 22, 24 or 27.
 - Language now requires the Fund to be incorporated, and to be a recognized 501(c)(3) entity.
 - The maintenance of an internal auditing committee is eliminated and is replaced by language requiring audits by an auditor to be selected by the Board.
 - The meeting schedule is changed to require a minimum of one meeting per year, with the option to hold additional meetings as needed. The meeting location is the MABAS 24 Headquarters building at 17555 Ashland Avenue in Homewood.
 - There shall be no more membership dues.
 - Language which allowed for a death benefit assessment to be waived has been eliminated.
 - The Associate Member classification is eliminated.
 - Language clarifying the requirements for submitting a funeral benefit claim has been added.
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- Chief Vallow questioned the delay in paying funeral benefit claims, saying this benefit was designed to help the deceased firefighter’s widow at the time of the funeral.
 - Chief Battistella and Chief Holdefer explained that in the 1980s the secretary and treasurer’s offices were held by one person, and that approximately \$3600 of the Association’s funds were embezzled by this individual. The missing funds were found during an audit, the responsible party was dealt with, and the two of them then took over the books in 1985. As the years went on, processing delays crept into the system.
 - Once current records are established, regular financial reports will be made available to the membership.
 - It’s important to re-establish and to maintain the corporation, to insulate the officers from liability.
 - We discussed where benefit checks should be sent when issued – directly to the listed beneficiary, or to the deceased member’s fire department. The consensus was that it doesn’t matter, but that it is imperative that the deceased member’s fire department be notified any time a benefit claim is paid.
 - The method for processing assessments was briefly discussed. When a covered member dies, an “assessment” is invoiced to each member department, and to each non-affiliated individual member. Assessments are assigned a sequential identification number for tracking; the last assessment invoiced to date was # 800. Each assessment is for \$1.00 per active member. (Honorary Members are exempt from paying assessments.) For example, if three covered members die, and Funeral Benefit claims are paid to their beneficiaries, an invoice containing three assessments is sent to all member departments and to any non-affiliated individual members. If a department has 50 active members on their CFFBF roster, this invoice will cost that department a total of \$150.00.

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- Chief Knoll reported that, with a current roster of approximately 1330 active members on our books, if everyone pays their assessments when due, the funeral benefit payments are covered, with some left over to continue maintaining the corpus. As we move forward, we will need to decide on the level of assessments and benefit payments that the Fund can maintain.
- Membership in the Fund is up to the individual departments. Some departments include their clerical staff, etc as part of their CFFBF roster, which is acceptable.
- Honorary status was discussed – eligibility requirements are at least 20 years with the member department, and having reached age 60.

With no further discussion, Chief Welsh requested a motion to accept the changes to the by-laws as drafted and as submitted for review. Moved: Thornton; Seconded: Peotone. A voice roll call of voting departments present resulted in a unanimous affirmative vote in favor of the motion. The motion passes.

DC Johnson discussed the current status of assessment records on file. The current set of (15) outstanding assessments contains numbers 786-800. It was first issued on 08-01-2013, and was re-issued on 12-02-2014. As of today, the records indicate that 19 departments have not paid these assessments. Some departments may have already paid this assessment, and unfortunately the record of their payment may be lost. Please contact the secretary – DC Johnson – if you have paid these assessments. Provide a copy of your canceled check identifying the payment, and the records will be updated. You may mail your records to the Fund address above, or may email them to cjohnsonfd@gmail.com.

He also mentioned that 68 letters were sent to current and former member departments, announcing this meeting, soliciting their interest, and inviting them to participate.

Chief Knoll reviewed financial information available at this time. The new officers are working to consolidate the records into one central location, and they will be reviewed.

- At a roster of member departments of approximately 1330 members, at an assessment level of \$1.00 per member, we can cover funeral benefit fund payments if all members pay their assessments when issued.
- We currently have approximately 385 Honorary members, which is more liability exposure than balance available to pay all of those claims at one time.
- We will seek higher yielding accounts for the funds in the corpus.
- A question was asked about a member who may belong to more than one member fire department. It will be up to the individual departments to decide which one will continue having that person on their CFFBF roster. At the time of death, only one benefit payment will be made.
- It was also asked if it is really worth maintaining the Fund. We will have to evaluate the Fund's viability after our membership levels and financial revenue/expense picture have been reviewed. That is why we are looking at the organization, and why this meeting is important to help gauge the level of interest.

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Chief Welsh said that the Fund will also need to decide what type and amount of “buy-in” will be needed for delinquent, former and new member departments to either return to or join the Fund.

Chief Welsh requested a motion to purchase a computer system with software for use in the maintenance of CFFBF records and the conducting of CFFBF business, and which will be installed in the MABAS 24 Headquarters building, at a cost not to exceed \$1,000.00. Moved: Homewood; Seconded: South Chicago Heights. A unanimous voice vote of voting departments was recorded in favor of the motion. The motion passes. Chief Knoll and DC Johnson will select, purchase and configure the system.

DC Johnson reminded all member departments to provide to him a current roster of personnel, to include the member’s name, date of birth and the date they joined your department. Please email your information to cjohnsonfd@gmail.com.

There being no further business for today, Chief Welsh requested a motion to adjourn this meeting. Moved: Lynwood; Seconded: Midlothian. A unanimous voice vote of voting departments was recorded in favor of the motion. The motion passes.

Meeting was adjourned at 1135 hours.



Clint Johnson – Secretary
Community Firefighters Funeral Benefit Fund

Minutes approved at 03-31-2016 membership meeting.