

**Westchester County Fire Advisory Board
September 8, 2011 Meeting
Westchester County Fire
Training Center**

Chairman Bergson opened the meeting at 7:20 PM.

The meeting was scheduled to meet with the County Executive, Rob Astorino and discuss the Fire Advisory Board. Hank mentioned that we will ask the County Exec about the Training Center, New Commissioner of DES and also the status of the proposed merger. Hank asked the Board to think of any other issues they would wish to discuss with Count Executive.

Minutes we approved from the June meeting

DES

Acting DES Commissioner John Cullen gave the following report:

- The Swift Water Rescue team was sent upstate to assist in rescue efforts from the Hurricane and also the additional rains that followed. Yorktown's Swift water team will be covering in their absence; the team should be back on Sunday.
- The County should get disaster money from FEMA, the estimates for damage was 3 million County wide and \$20 million statewide.
- The State is trying to get requests out for assistance earlier, in many instances by the time the notice arrives, the request has either been filled or assistance is no longer needed.
- The Swift water team got quite a workout recently. The Croton River Rescue was quite involved and the rapids were estimated as class 5 and much of the rescue was performed at night.
- The Emergency Operations center worked very well during the hurricane. The Planning and Logistics branch was a little weak but the State helped out.
- Fire Fighting 1 class and Career academies are running during the day.
- There has been 76,328 training hours with 15,877 participants.
- Career Chiefs – 12 to 15 participants
- Budget is being developed now, any proposed cuts will not affect training or dispatch.
- Larchmont and Scarsdale are now using 60 Control. 41 of 58 departments are using the facility

County Executive Rob Astorino

Chairman Bergson welcomed the County Executive and thanked him for taking the time to meet with the Board. Hank asked the County Exec to discuss the role of the Fire Advisory Board.

The County Exec stated that John Cullen has been appointed as acting Commissioner of DES. He believes that John will be a stable force and has experience, knowledge and compassion. The merger as it was first proposed is pretty much off the table at this time. The Legislators have not acted on it so it is not moving forward at this time, it will probably die at the end of the year. Any proposed merger will have evolved from the 1st proposal; it will most likely just involve back office operations, support staff and the like. There was a lot of discussion and good ideas that came forward when the 1st proposal was rolled out. There are still very real budget concerns, there was a 166 million dollar budget gap in 2011, it will be 100 million in 2012. This year it will be tougher. Departments will have to make tough choices; most if not all of the low hanging fruit is gone now. The County Exec

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asked the Board to evaluate the Capitol needs for the DES building, the building the County just got from the State and the County Police Building. He asked what we need to meet the practical training tools we need, what do we see in the next 5 years?

Mutual Aid Plan – The plan is still at legal, it has been accepted by all involved parties. John Cullen commented that some issues were in there they did not meet legal standards, many of them have been worked out and it will come back to the FAB & OFPC for review at that time.

Federal Grants - Hank asked about Federal Grants, John will be setting up a grants committee to make sure money is going to where it is needed. The County Exec commented that we have good allies at the Federal level and that should help.

GIS Mapping – Hank mentioned that a lot of work has been done with the County I/T department, Sam Wear, can we get feed back to get the mapping done. Districts have worked with the department to get hydrants and water sources (for rural areas) located. This information has been sent to Sam, is the work being funded? John will check into that.

Opened to the floor for questions-

It was asked what the County could do to look at Fire Districts and Fire Departments, and possible mergers. The County Exec replied it is difficult for the County to perform this; there are levels of Government involved here while the County would be happy to assist they need to be asked to do this. There was a Battalion study done several years ago, this was funded by grant money. The study basically concluded that further study was required. The County Exec said he thought the study looked at about 9 departments in the Southern Portion of the County. The County would be willing to go to the State and assist with this but there needs to be willingness (agreement) with all departments and political entities involved that this is the best approach. There are lots of governing bodies involved.

Hank – Think of DES as a service provider at the county level versus the local level, 60 Control is very important. It would be beneficial for 60 Control to be primary dispatcher instead of 30 other odd dispatchers in the county.

John reviewed the County contracts – Hose Bid, Turnout Gear cleaning and repair, purchasing new gear, escape equipment (rescue ropes) There presently a hose testing bid out at this time.

General Question – The training center needs money to fix the building and also some of the props in the back lot. The County Exec responded to come up with a list of what we need, please be realistic. The County workforce has been reduced by about 11% and the County is also assessing its Real Estate at this time as well. We are taking a hard look at what we have, what we need and also maintenance and capitol projects. We need to decide where available dollars go. It was commented that what the training center does supports many other areas, departments and communities that should give some importance. The County Executive that DES & Public Safety now has 3 buildings with lots of needs. They are currently looking at back office operations and what can be done to consolidate. We should look to see what we need and if it can be used by other areas.

Joe – Are you contemplating a Deputy Director – The County Exec responded that yes, but it will take a while.

Hank – is EMS going to be moved under the Department of Health, the answer was no.

Bob Bend – can we use other locations (i.e. Police Academy) if classrooms here are full, both the County Exec and John responded yes, they are looking at being able to use other locations. There was consideration for charging for training but that was taken off the table.

Bob Broderick – there is a problem with people signing up for classes and not showing up, can there be a penalty system for this or at least giving priorities to departments that show up. John responded we are looking at that, much if it is taken care of informally at this time but in the future there might be penalties involved.

Pete – Can all communications be moved into 1 location? John responded that they have a grant to study this. Pete heard that 30 County Police Officers went for Haz Mat training, does this mean they will be taking over Haz Mat calls? John – the answer was no, they are officers that are involved with the Bomb Squad. John responded they needed Haz Mat training for possible contamination from a dirty bomb.

Hank thanked County Executive Astorino for meeting with us and discussing our concerns and giving the Board some direction as to what he needs from us. County Executive Astorino thanked us all for being on the Board. While the merger legislation may have stirred some commotion when it came out, it started a good conversation with all parties concerned and that will continue. He will go back and look at GIS, Phase 2 of the study on consolidation if all parties are agreeable. Hank mentioned that we have several vacancies on the Board, the County Exec said they will look to fill those vacancies.

There will be a meeting on September 22nd, we'll meet and review the facilities.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.