

Public Safety Committee Meeting

Minutes of September 20, 2018

The Safety Committee Meeting convened at 7:00 PM in Council Chambers, located in Borough Hall, 237 7th St., West Easton.

In attendance was Committee member Matthew Dees, Committee member David Bolash, and Mayor Dan DePaul. Matthew Dees was acting Chairperson as assigned Chairperson Desiree Lake was unable to attend due to employment commitments.

Guests appearing before the Safety Committee, having requested the meeting, were members of the Safety First Volunteer Fire Department (SFVFD). Fire Chief Bill Bogari, Jr. made a presentation to the Committee.

Subject Matter Presented:

Following a brief history of the SFVFD and the relationship between SFVFD, the SFVFD Social Club, and The Ladies Auxiliary, Chief Bogari informed the Committee that a significant increase in the annual donation to the Fire Department would be needed to fund the SFVFD, to ensure it remains viable and able to provide fire protection services to businesses and residents of West Easton.

Background: All entities (Fire Department, Social Club, Ladies Auxilliary) are part of the Fire Department's "Organization." However, each entity is independent in their operation. That is, the SFVFD cannot dictate or control the operation of the Social Club, or Ladies Auxiliary. The Social Club cannot dictate to the Fire Department or Ladies Auxiliary, and so forth.

Discussion:

Following questions asked by the Committee it appears that the revenue stream within the Safety First Organization, that was created to fund the majority of expenses incurred by the SFVFD, has dramatically decreased.

Both the Social Club and Ladies Auxiliary were created with the main purpose of providing funding to the Fire Department, from profit in operations.

While the Ladies Auxiliary has shown significant improvement in generating money the last few years under new leadership, the Social Club is failing in its obligation to fund the Fire

Department. The Social Club seems to be having difficulties in paying their own bills and the possibility of the club remaining viable is in doubt, let alone fulfilling its original purpose of funding the Fire Department. The Social Club appears to have internal problems that the committee can only conjecture upon. With approximately 2000 members paying \$10/yr. membership renewal fees, and what appears to be a steady business from patrons, questions arise of mismanagement. However, the business at hand was the Fire Department, not the Social Club.

It was disclosed The Ladies Auxiliary has been paying bills for the Fire Department, due to the SFVFD having insufficient funds to do so. One bill was for \$8000.00.

Use of Tax Dollars:

The Committee was assured no donation money would be received by the Social Club to keep the club afloat, nor could it be per law. Chief Bogari has no intention of providing support to the Social Club and is only concerned with the survival of the Fire Department and meeting operational costs.

Ramifications of SFVFD Failure:

Per state law, every borough is required to provide fire protection services, or it cannot exist as an independent borough. Should SFVFD cease to exist West Easton would have to contract with a local municipality for fire protection services. It is unknown what the cost of contracting would be, or the yearly percentage increases imposed.

Conclusion:

The Committee expressed its support of the Safety First Volunteer Fire Department – and only the SFVFD – in order to see it past the current financial crisis. The support would be for the immediate situation, with the expectation that the Safety First “Organization” can resolve conflicts among their respective entities, either internally, or following the possible failure of the Social Club and to find alternative revenue streams for funding, other than the borough in the future.

Chief Bogari will present operational cost needs for SFVFD at the next Council Meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:30 PM