

7-08-2008 – SPECIAL INFORMATIONAL MEETING RE: FIREMEN'S SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM

Present:

Councilman Ann M. Bean
Councilman Heather M. Phelps
Councilman Norman J. Uhteg
Supervisor Kathleen M. Balus

Absent:

Councilman Ronald L. Kenyon

Also Present:

Damien Ulatowski of Firefighters Benefit & Insurance Services
Donald Brooks of Tomkins Insurance Agencies
Town Clerk Betsy A. Marsh
9 Fire Company Members

The Sardinia Town Board held a Special Informational meeting with representatives of the Fire Company for the purpose of discussing a Service Award Program for the Fire Company. The meeting was held on July 8, 2008 at the Sardinia Town Hall/Community Center. The meeting had been advertised in the Arcade herald and the Springville Journal. Supervisor Balus called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Damien Ulatowski of Firefighters Benefit & Insurance Services was introduced, and stated that Firefighters Service Award programs are designed to retain volunteer members and draw new members in to the Fire Companies. He stated that 60% of the governing body needs to approve a program and then it goes to the voters in the form of a mandatory referendum. Mr. Ulatowski went on to explain that Service Award Programs are regulated by New York State law, how firefighters become eligible, and how they earn the award. He stated it is not a giveaway program and they are strictly regulated by the State. He stated that firemen are vested after 5 years of active service with the company, and when they reach entitlement age, they can collect. He explained that the Town Board sets the entitlement age, which can be between 55 and 65. Mr. Ulatowski explained that the firemen earn the time annually on a point system, with such things as attending training courses, participating in drills, holding an office in the fire company, miscellaneous sanctioned activities, etc., but the most points, up to 50% can be earned by responding to calls, with the State legislation mandating at least 10% of the points earned from responding to calls. Mr. Ulatowski went on to explain how the program works, and what choices are available.

Fire Company President Danny Heineman spoke to the Board and stated that the members of the Fire Department have chosen a 20 year plan, and explained some of the other aspects of the program, including that the maximum benefit is \$400.00 per month, or \$4,800.00 per year. It was explained to the Board that to do away with the program, once it is approved by the voters, it would take another voter referendum, and any changes to the program must also go to a referendum, except for increases or decreases in membership, which is just funded by the annual Town Budget with either a tax increase or a budget surplus. The record keeping for the point system and arbitration session at the end of the year was explained, and would be put into place.

Supervisor Balus stated that if the Board agrees to go ahead with the procedure, they would sign the form stating they have elected to proceed with the proposal, and Mr. Ulatowski's company would then prepare all necessary steps. He stated that no public hearing is required, but the Board could hold one if they choose.

Mr. Ulatowski stated that the steps are as follows:

The Board must make a decision.

They would then choose a date and location for the election, which could be held during the General election, or on a separate or Special Election.

The Town Board would have to decide how to notify and post the information on the referendum so that the notice would get out to all registered voters.

The Board then discussed whether the funding for the program, which would be between \$73,603.05 and \$98,564.05 for the initial deposit, would come from the Fire District Tax, or the General Fund. It will be researched as to what is the proper procedure.

There was no further discussion, and on a motion by Phelps, seconded by Bean, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM. Carried, 4 ayes, 1 absent, 0 noes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Town Clerk