**Joint Public Hearing Leeds Fire Protection Contract**

**Catskill Town Hall**

**October 27, 2021 6:00 pm**

Attendance: Dale Finch, Supervisor Robert Butler, Supervisor, TOA

 Jared Giordiano, Councilman Mary Brandow, Councilwoman, TOA

 Patrick McCulloch, Councilman Michael Ragaini, Councilman, TOA

Supervisor Finch opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. He asked the clerk to read the notice:

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a public hearing will be held jointly by the Town of Athens and the Town of Catskill Boards, Greene County, New York, pursuant to the provisions of Section 184 of Town Law of the State of New York at Catskill Town Hall, 439 Main Street, Catskill, NY on Wednesday, October 27, 2021 at 6:00 PM for the purpose of contracting with Leeds Hose Company No. 1 for fire protection to be furnished by said Fire Department to the protection district established in said Town of Athens and Town of Catskill upon the following terms to wit: A. The Fire Department shall answer and attend all calls in said Town of Athens and Town of Catskill; B. For such service said District shall receive and the Towns shall pay as follows: Year 2022 Catskill $146,182 Athens $48,728, Year 2023 Catskill $153,161 Athens $51,054, Year 2024 Catskill $160,819 Athens $53,607, Year 2025 Catskill $168,860 Athens $56,287, Year 2026 Catskill $177,303 Athens $59,101; C. The said District shall procure sufficient insurance and will cause the policy to be endorsed in such manner as to protect the Towns and Fire Protection District; D. This contract shall remain in effect for five (5) years; E. Such other incidental terms as may be necessary or proper in connection with such contracting. All persons interested in this matter shall be heard at the aforementioned time and place. By Order of the Catskill Town Board, Elizabeth Izzo, Catskill Town Clerk

Supervisor Finch would like to work on the contract and come up with a number everyone is happy with. Councilman McCulloch would like a four year contract instead of five. Supervisor Finch agreed with a shorter term and to readjust accordingly. It would allow time to receive annual budgets like those from Kiskatom Fire District and Palenville Fire District. Councilman Giordiano stated we have a three year contract with Catskill. Supervisor Butler had no problem with a three year contract. All were in consensus with a three year contract.

Supervisor Finch questioned the dollar amount of the contract. He stated our board at our budget meeting used an 8% increase; Catskill’s share $117,609 for year 2022. Don Pierro, the Town of Athens bookkeeper/finance, stated the number will not work. He provided six years of budgets. Leeds has self-imposed spending controls and the taxpayers have had level funding. They need the 146 from Catskill and the number from Athens to survive. The increases after that are small. Discussion regarding debt service, reserve and the sharp increase in the amount requested. He stated the responsibility lies with the Towns of Athens and Catskill Boards.

Councilman McCulloch asked where the five chiefs of the Leeds Fire Company were. Mr. Pierro stated he is an expert at this and he is not part of Leeds Fire, but Supervisor Butler gave him permission to help them. Councilman Giordiano stated he will not go over 8%. Supervisor Butler made a point of Councilman McCulloch’s statement which indicates the problem they face. Where is Leeds management? The numbers should be higher and asked what the fund balance is. Mr. Pierro stated $52,000 reserve for next fire engine. Discussion about how to use the fund balance to reduce the amount requested, the amount of worker’s compensation being reduced, the cost of physicals for the firefighters and enough money to operate were spoken about as the goal was to come to a consensus for the 2022 budget.

After more discussion, the 2022 contracted amount is $166,911 with the Town of Catskill being $125,183 and the Town of Athens amount $41,738. Mr. Pierro would like the Town’s Assessors communicate to discuss the percentages as it may change. Supervisor Butler asked to spread out the difference between years 2021 through 2024 over three years to eliminate a huge increase this year. Supervisor Finch stated we need a number to get this settled. Councilman McCulloch stated to have a one year contract as the Fire Chiefs just heard about this meeting. Mr. Pierro stated he is unsure if that would work and also if he would be present next year for them. He stated he spoke to Councilwoman Brandow and no one looked at the $36,209 number. Councilman Giordiano stated the fire company never came to the board and asked for more money.

Supervisor Finch stated we need to keep the doors open. Supervisor Butler agreed with Councilman McCulloch on a one year contract. This will give time to have questions investigated and asked if the number is reasonable and if so, can it be taken over by existing fire departments too. Further discussion about the contract fee. Supervisor Finch stated they need to be operational and on a good fiscal path. Mr. Pierro reinforced his point on the percentage division of the contract between the two towns and there may be a different number. Supervisor Finch stated we are at the eleventh hour. The contract will be for one year. Supervisor Butler stated we can look not just at this contract but for everything regarding duplication of services. Councilwoman Brandow stated having a one year contract and dropping $28,000 is a good thing but is unsure how much further cuts can be made for next year.

All were in agreement with a one year contract which will allow more time to see where we are going. Everyone was in agreement with the monetary amount of $166,110 total. Mr. Pierro stated moving forward the town should stick with an 8% increase. Supervisor Finch stated he is not entertaining that today but will get together and work on it next summer.

With no further discussion a motion to end the public hearing was made by Councilman Giordiano second by Councilwoman Brandow. Meeting ended 6:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Izzo, Town Clerk