

November 24, 2003

NVFD Special Meeting
17 members present
Called to order 6:34

This petitioned meeting addressed the issue of non-members in regard to fire department functions, specifically Santa riding on the engine to and from the tree lighting.

- Todd Miller:
 - Spoke to the history of department events where non-members were not considered a problem.
 - Referenced various paragraphs in the by-laws.
- John Hutchins:
 - Inquired about the department's insurance policies.
 - Referenced many departmental activities where non-members are utilized.
 - Suggested assistance from the town's attorney.
- President Ludwig:
 - Read the following letter and requested its inclusion in the minutes.

It is the duty of the President to see that this Corporation is operated according to the existing bylaws. It is also the duty of the President to bring to the attention of the membership anything that may impede the operation of the corporation (Article VI, Section 2.2 – Shall act in the best interest of the NVFD as mandated by the membership), which in today's world includes Risk Management and Risk Assessment outside of the realm of emergency situations. If the president sees a potential for any type of loss to the corporation, he must in good conscience make the membership aware of the situation and attempt to remedy that situation.

Several weeks ago I asked Todd that the Santa for the Christmas Tree Lighting Event be a member of the department. After his request for this meeting and further investigation, I would also request that Santa be an active member; i.e. one who has signed the roster for the current year. In that Santa will be actively involved in the event and will be riding on a Department Vehicle, I have found the following:

- A. All NVFD personnel are covered by insurance.
 - a. The Bylaws state who is to be covered – Article IV 'Insurance'
 - b. NVFD Policy for Active & Non-active members of \$20K/\$2500 medical is a minimal policy.
 - c. The Town Policy for Active members of \$1-3 million seems to be adequate.
- B. The example of an accident on November 30, 2002 of a member falling from/on an engine after which the chief directed that the Norfolk Ambulance be dispatched and the member was then transported to Winsted Health Care for evaluation.
- C. The NVFD has approximately 40 active members to choose from that are covered by the higher insurance. To my knowledge, none were asked.
- D. The threat of suing the Department is a very real one as I have already heard it more than once during my short tenure as president.

Although insurance riders added to our existing policies are possible, they will incur extra costs to either the Department or to the taxpayers of this town. It is, therefore, fiscally proper and wise to attempt to ask existing members to support the activities of the Department before going outside of the Department.

It is also the goal of this Presidency to involve all members in all activities, to create a more cohesive group that will ultimately increase membership in the Department. Non member support does have its place but, ultimately acts to decrease overall membership in the Department by creating the attitude of 'why be a member if I can do it anyway' or just having members think: 'No one asked me'.

Involvement in special activities should be considered the 'perks' of an organization that spends the majority of time training and on calls. Active members should be approached before any other to assist, and the thinking that 'this is my activity, I don't want your help' is none productive and must be discontinued as this also tends to create a loss of members from the Department.

I therefore recommend that active members be asked first, to participate as Santa and that the department SOP's be modified to state that all active members be asked first and then non active members to participate in any activity of the NVFD before going outside of the corporation for assistance.

I will also add that I believe it is stretching the intent of Article VIII, Section 3 to call a special meeting based on the desire of one member to use a non member for Santa at the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony when there are active members willing to participate in that position.

Ken Ludwig
President, NVFD

- Chief Osborne:
 - Spoke regarding the fact that both sides of this issue have relevant points.
 - Made a motion to have the department's leadership investigate our insurance coverage questions. Todd seconded the motion and the motion carried.
- Judy Ludwig:
 - Mentioned the Centennial's committee had similar liability concerns regarding non-members.
- Jeff Towle:
 - Asked about Norfolk Ambulance personnel in regard to liability and insurance issues when responding on our apparatus.
- Paul Padua:
 - Voiced concern over decisions that resulted from department business meetings being altered.
- Steve Hutchins:
 - Graciously volunteered to be Santa.
- The Santa delivery fundraiser will be addressed in detail at the December business meeting.

Meeting adjourned @ 7:07PM
Minutes recorded and submitted by Paul Padua