

FIRE SUPPLEMENTAL PAY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 4, 2023

A regular meeting of the Municipal Fire Fighters Supplemental Pay Board of Review, August 4, 2023 at Crowne Plaza Executive Suites located at 4728 Constitution Ave., Baton Rouge, LA, 70808.

Brien Ruiz called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL:

The following members and staff present:

Board Members

Brien Ruiz
Richard Parker Jr.
Ronnie Schillace
Dwayne Thevis
Charles Williams

Staff

Natalya Besse
Candy Diez
Susanne Tessier
Marlon C. Battley, Esq.

Visitors

An open meeting at the Louisiana State Firemen's Association Conference.

LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDIT: ACT 320 (SB 33) 2023 Regular Session

Natalya Besse brought to the board's attention the upcoming legislative audit, according to Act 320, 2023 Regular Session.

Richard Parker Jr. made a motion to add a new application to the agenda. Charles Williams seconded the motion and the motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ronnie Schillace made a motion to approve minutes for May 9, 2023 meeting.
Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

APPEALS:

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

Marrero Ragusa Volunteer Fire Company #3 overpayment.

Natalya Besse reminded the board of the circumstances in which two firefighters from Marrero Ragusa Volunteer Fire Company #3 were inadvertently overpaid. According to the established repayment plan, firefighter Joseph Andre Willhoft Jr. paid the overpayment in full. Joshua Alexander Paolini, following the installment plan, had to pay 50% of the overpaid amount immediately, and in July, the supplemental pay staff started collecting the remaining balance by withholding 50% of the monthly pay. As of that day, August 4, 2023, firefighter Paolini had not paid the first half of the agreed upon amount.

Brien Ruiz requested that Capt. James Boheman appear before the board. Marlon C. Battley, Esq., swore Capt. James Boheman.

Capt. James Boheman said that due to personal circumstances, firefighter Paolini has difficulties coming up with the \$2,040. The captain recommended the firefighter reach out to the office to discuss the possible repayment arrangement.

Natalya Besse reminded everyone that the supplemental pay staff is only allowed to communicate with the municipality and not individual recipients.

Candy Diez advised that the decision must come from the board.

Brien Ruiz asked if the staff could collect the entire owed amount by withholding 50% from the monthly pay.

Natalya Besse said that is an option. The firefighter Paolini needs to be aware that if he decides to relocate to another municipality, that collection will follow him to his new place of employment.

Dusty Breaux – St George FD (Fire Communication Officer).

Ronnie Schillace, after reviewing the application, made a motion to approve the application; Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

New Orleans FD

Brien Ruiz requested New Orleans FD Chief Thomas Elbert appear before the board. Marlon C. Battley, Esq., swore Chief Thomas Elbert.

Delilah M. Pollard - New Orleans FD (911 Liaison Officer)

Chief Thomas Elbert answered Brien Ruiz's question, confirming Delilah M. Pollard responds to the scene. Ronnie Schillace confirmed that the applicant is Firefighter 1 certified and works 46 hours a week.

Richard Parker Jr. made a motion to approve the application. Dwayne Thevis seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Devra Goldstein – New Orleans FD (Fire Prevention Plan Examiner)

Chief Thomas Elbert answered Brien Ruiz's question, confirming that Devra Goldstein is a fire investigator and she is certified.

Ronnie Schillace made a motion to approve the application. Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Thomas Palisi – New Orleans FD (Fire Prevention Inspector); LWOP- Five days in June

Chief Thomas Elbert answered Brien Ruiz's question, confirming that Thomas Palisi is a fire investigator, responds to fire, and is Firefighter 1 certified.

Candy Diez informed the board that if the application gets approved, 5 days will be subtracted from the back pay amount due to the applicant being on leave without pay for 5 days in June.

After reviewing applicants' back pay, Ronnie Schillace made a statement, encouraging municipalities to submit applications in advance prior to the eligibility effective date.

Ronnie Schillace made a motion to approve the application. Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Rashi Reed – New Orleans FD (Fire Prevention Inspector)

Chief Thomas Elbert answered Brien Ruiz's question, confirming that Rashi Reed is a fire investigator, responds to fire, and is Firefighter 1 certified. Currently Rashi Reed is not with the department, he started his employment in October 2021 and separated from the department in March 2023. He is still owed back pay.

Richard Parker Jr. made a motion to approve the application. Dwayne Thevis seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

NEW DEPARTMENTS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Bien Ruiz introduced the new back pay policy the board intends to implement before discussing new business. Only two years will be covered by back pay.

Natalya Besse confirmed that back pay will go only 2 years back from the date the application was received by the supplemental pay office.

Dwayne Thevis made a motion to implement the policy; Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Marrero Ragusa FD

Marlon C. Battley, Esq., swore Capt. James Boheman.

Capt. James Boheman informed the board that the municipality had submitted an application for Leo Ford; since then, the applicant has submitted a resignation from the municipality effective August 11, 2023. Capt. Boheman wanted to make sure the applicant would receive his back pay.

Candy confirmed that supplemental pay will be paid through the last day of the applicant's being on the municipality's payroll

Mark P. Gremillion, Jr - St George FD (Paramedic)

Brien Ruiz invited Chief Gerard Tarleton to testify.

Marlon C. Battley, Esq., swore Chief Tarleton.

The Chief informed the board that the applicant responds to fires and is Firefighter 1 certified.

Richard Parker Jr. confirmed that the applicant is a firefighter-paramedic.

Ronnie Schillace made a motion to approve the application. Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Kenneth W. Guillory – Alexandria FD (Fire Communication Officer)

Ronnie Schillace made a motion to approve the application. Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Lee Roy Brown III – East Bank Consolidated JPDF (Fire Investigator I)

Richard Parker Jr. confirmed that fire investigators respond to fires.

Dwayne Thevis made a motion to approve the application. Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Charles Hudson – East Bank Consolidated JPDF (Fire Administrative Assistant to the Fire Chief)

Brien Ruiz invited Charles Hudson to appear before the board.

Marlon C. Battley, Esq., swore Charles Hudson. Richard Parker Jr. confirmed that he is required to respond to a fire.

Dwayne Thevis confirmed that he has bunker gear.

Richard Parker Jr. made a motion to approve the application. Dwayne Thevis seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Nicholas S Parker – St Tammany FD #4 PAF forms – Formal Training periods

Candy Diez introduced the application packet. The board needs to determine the eligibility effective date. There are three PAFs. One form gives the effective date of action as 4/27/2021, when the applicant began formal training. The second form is dated 9/8/2021, when the applicant "failed his formal training period as he was unable and unwilling to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position to which he had been appointed." The third form is dated 11/23/2021, when the applicant received his Firefighter 1 certificate and became an employee.

Charles Williams made a motion to set 11/23/21 as Nicholas Parker's eligibility effective date. Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Richard Parker Jr. presented a new applicant for Daniel Blaine. The applicant previously worked for the St. John the Baptist Fire Department for many years before transferring to the Jefferson Parish Department of Fire Services. He resigned after about 5 months of working for the new municipality; his application was submitted to the supplemental pay office. Following the resignation, the Jefferson Parish Department of Fire Services withdrew the application, not realizing that the applicant was still eligible for supplemental pay for the time he worked for them. The application was sent back to the Supplemental office for back pay processing.

MILITARY LEAVE:

Joshua Knight – **Zachary FD**

Brien Ruiz said he reviewed the military order. The order had the clause: training "with ...[recipient's]... consent" which indicates that Joshua Knight volunteered to go to that training and was not considered to be on active duty.

Dwayne Thevis made a motion to deny Joshua Knight supplemental pay during his military training time. Ronnie Schillace seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

RETROACTIVE PAY:

Alfred D. Vernon – **Husser Vol FD**

Candy Diez presented an application that was submitted to the office very late. Alfred Vernon's employment date is 12/3/2012. He received his Firefighter 1 certificate in July 2016. The letter from the chief, Dale Vernon, was done in June 2023. The board questioned whether the chief was the applicant.

Ronnie Schillace recalls an application from the past for the same name that was denied because he was a state employee.

The board wants to know what his title is, whether it is firefighter or chief, and how far back he expects to receive his supplemental pay.

Ronnie Schillace made a motion to request Alfred D. Vernon appear before the board at the next board meeting in November 2023. Dwayne Thevis seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

FIREFIGHTER 1 CERTIFICATION: FETA, Edd Ricken

Marlon C. Battley, Esq., swore Edd Ricken.

Edd Ricken is the deputy superintendent of training and operations at FETA. In the last couple of months, FETA is experiencing system issues that does not allow them to print certificates. FETA is working on resolving the issue. At that moment, FETA produced certificates going back to June 2023. FETA proposed to provide a letter of certificate with the list of all courses in lieu of an original certificate.

Edd Ricken said that within a couple of weeks, FETA should be able to catch up on all outstanding certificates.

Richard Parker Jr. brought to the board's attention that a few months ago, the board decided to allow a letter of certificate in lieu of the original certificate. That could be the solution to the current predicament.

Natalya Besse reminded the board that the previous decision was solely based on the fact that the certificate was issued so long ago that FETA is unable to produce a duplicate of it. To be eligible for supplemental pay, the statute states that a Firefighter 1 certificate must be presented. The statute must be revised if the board is willing to accept a letter of certification.

Ronnie Schillace confirmed with Edd Ricken that FETA should be able to catch up with all outstanding certificates within 30 days. If this issue is not resolved by the next meeting, it can be brought up again. A copy of the original certificate is required until then.

PRESENTATION OF MOST RECENT BUDGET PROJECTIONS

Natalya Besse informed the board of the budget amount for FY24.

NEW APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL

Ronnie Schillace, reviewing the routinely approved application list, questioned the application from Husser Vol. FD for Dustin E. McDonald. The board had some questions for the municipality.

Ronnie Schillace made a motion to remove Dustin E. McDonald' application from the approval process until the next meeting. Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Brien Ruiz made a motion to request Dustin E. McDonald appear at the next board meeting. Richard Parker Jr. seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Richard Parker Jr. made a motion to approve 66 applications. Ronnie Schillace seconded it and the motion passed.

SET TIME & DATE OF NEXT MEETING

November 7, 2023 @ 10:00 a.m.

ADJOURN

Ronnie Schillace made a motion to adjourn. Richard Parker Jr. seconded and the motion passed.