

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
Minutes of Village of South Amherst Meeting
August 31, 2023
APPEAL HEARING FOR ANDREW LAWRIE

Call to order:

7:00 P.M. – The council meeting was called to order by Mayor David Leshinski and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The roll was called:

Councilmember Michele Jeffers	P
Councilmember Scott Jones	P
Councilmember Becky Siesky	A
Councilmember Jeri Leigh Siss	A
Councilmember David Troike	P
President Pro Tempore Jeanne Maschari	P

Ex officio members:

Fiscal Officer Michelle Henke	P
Records Clerk Laurie Beran	A
Law Director Matthew Mishak	P

(EA – excused absences)

VISITORS

Rob & Sarah Abfall 48264 Telegraph Rd. Amherst

MAYOR’S OPENING STATEMENT

The purpose of this hearing is to fulfill the appeal request of Andrew Lawrie, former Lieutenant with South Amherst Fire Department, due to his termination on August 20, 2023, at the recommendation of the SAFD Judiciary Board hearing.

Council members in attendance have received and reviewed all documentation presented at the SAFD Judiciary Board hearing. This appeal hearing will allow the Interim Fire Chief, John Crawford, and Former Lieutenant, Andrew Lawrie, to speak to the previously presented evidence. Each person shall have a maximum of five (5) minutes to speak uninterrupted.

Should a decision be voted by Council, the decision will be final.

INTERIM CHIEF, JOHN CRAWFORD

Chief Crawford provided a statement outlining former Lt. Andrew Lawrie’s behavior of insubordination and challenge to authority resulting in his dismissal from the department.

FORMER LIEUTENANT, ANDREW LAWRIE

Andrew Lawrie provided a statement explaining the lack of information provided prior to his appearance before the SAFD Judiciary Board. The notice of suspension provided to Mr. Lawrie was for violating an order by the Interim Chief to discontinue negative discussion regarding another firefighter.

QUESTION SESSION BY COUNCIL

Question format was agreed to be a round robin format.

Councilmember Maschari asked for information about a training incident that occurred in November 2022 on extrication. Chief Crawford explained he offered an alternative schedule so that training took place in daylight, he denies Mr. Lawrie’s claim that he was told the training could not take place as originally planned.

Councilmember Scott Jones, no question

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
Minutes of Village of South Amherst Meeting

Councilmember David Troike, no question

Councilmember Michele Jeffers asked Chief Crawford how Mr. Lawrie was notified of the suspension, expressed belief it was by email. She also asked for confirmation that it was due to comments made regarding FF Becker. Chief Crawford responded that on June 20, 2023, Mr. Lawrie was told to stop complaining about FF Becker. Councilmember Jeffers asked if there was documentation and Chief Crawford replied that documentation was made by Capt. Abfall and Capt. Crawford.

Councilmember Maschari discussed documentation provided for a fire call in Henrietta Township. She asked for clarification on which truck arrived on scene first and the officer in charge. Chief Crawford confirmed that the officer in charge first was Mr. Lawrie. Chief Crawford felt PPE procedure was not followed but further discussion, including Mr. Lawrie, revealed PPE may be at the discretion of the incident commander.

Councilmember Jones asked Chief Crawford if he recalled making the statement "I thought this would go away", meaning the Mr. Lawrie suspension/termination situation. Chief Crawford could not recall making the statement.

Councilmember Jeffers asked questions of the members of the SAFD Judiciary Board. Chief Crawford confirmed the members were FF John Bloom, FF Kyle Kudela, Lt. Ron Zaleha, and Capt. Steve Crawford. She asked if the same members were present at the hearing and termination hearing. Councilmember Maschari explained the process discussed, during a previous safety committee meeting, regarding the roles and possible members of the review board with Chief Crawford. The board members were to be the same for all situational/personnel reviews.

Councilmember Maschari asked for discussion pertaining to photos taken on scenes since Chief Crawford stated firefighters are not permitted to use phones according to the SOP's. Councilmember Maschari quoted SOP 706 (???) citing pictures may be taken for non-incident and incident events with reasons listed.

Councilmember Jones, no question

Councilmember Troike acknowledged longstanding disagreements between Mr. Becker and Mr. Lawrie without much documentation recording specific events. Chief Crawford explained that supporting documentation for the termination of Mr. Becker was not found therefore his termination could not stand.

Councilmember Jeffers discussed Mr. Lawrie's suspension letter containing one item, but the additional items brought to light in the hearing were not documented with Mr. Lawrie. She also asked if signatures were required of parties in documents related to performance or incidents. Chief Crawford explained that all documentation he created went up the chain of command in the department.

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
Minutes of Village of South Amherst Meeting

Councilmember Maschari asked Mr. Lawrie why passwords were not provided as asked. Mr. Lawrie explained all passwords are the same and that he told this to Chief Crawford. Mr. Lawrie detailed the computers in use at the fire station:

Chief Laptop, Dennis Hevener/John Crawford

Asst. Chief Laptop

Laptop, Admin use

Laptop, TV monitors

IAMResponding patched to 911

Councilmember Jones asked Mr. Lawrie for written disciplinary action and his response was nothing since Chief Schmitz. Mr. Lawrie was also asked if duty expectations were discussed, and his response was "No". Chief Crawford explained that his questions to Mr. Lawrie were mostly around passwords.

Councilmember Troike, no question

Councilmember Jeffers, pass

Councilmember Maschari confirmed Mr. Lawrie started with the department in 2016. She asked Mr. Lawrie what his role in the entire situation was, and did he accept responsibility for his actions. He explained he was not perfect and had made mistakes, but his intention was to serve. He said clear communication was an opportunity going forward.

Councilmember Jones explained the workplace challenge of people that have issues with each other, and the role leadership plays in the situation.

Councilmember Jeffers, no question

Councilmember Maschari explained the need for thorough documentation, especially of disciplinary incidents.

Councilmember Troike motioned to enter Executive Session, 7:52 PM, seconded by Councilmember Jeffers.

Returned from Executive Session 8:31 PM

Councilmember Maschari telephoned Chief Crawford that a decision was going to be made and announced, he declined to attend.

Mayor asked for Roll Call:

Councilmember Maschari, Reinstate

Councilmember Jones, Reinstate

Councilmember Troike, Reinstate

Councilmember Jeffers, Reinstate

Councilmember Maschari motioned to reinstate Andrew Lawrie as Lieutenant, 30 days after the appointment of Fire Chief and compensate Mr. Lawrie his Lieutenant salary until his return,

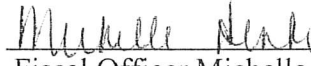
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
Minutes of Village of South Amherst Meeting

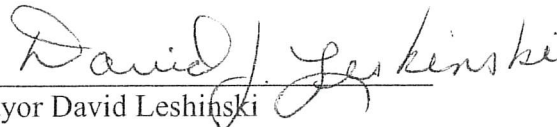
seconded by Councilmember Troike. The Administrative Assistant position in the department has been eliminated. All parties will receive notification in writing.

No further discussion was had.

ADJOURNMENT Time 8:36 PM Councilmember Jones moved to adjourn. Councilmember Maschari second.

Respectfully submitted,


Fiscal Officer Michelle Henke


Mayor David Leshinski