

Officials urge defunding troubled Flint Hill fire company

BY RANDY RIELAND

For Foothills Forum

The Rappahannock County Public Safety Committee last week recommended that the Board of Supervisors withdraw financial support from the troubled Flint Hill Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company.

The vote last week was the latest and most drastic step in the county's prolonged efforts to address concerns about the company's ability to meet the terms of its service agreement with the county. Flint Hill receives quarterly payments of about \$25,000 from the county to cover operational costs.

But the company's rescue squad has not been able to respond to calls since last March when its certification with the Virginia Department of Emergency Services was not renewed.

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And, in November, its fire department was placed on dual dispatch, meaning another volunteer fire company is simultaneously dispatched to calls in the Flint Hill region. This, according to Emergency Services Coordinator Sean Polster, was due to “poor response performance and inability to respond on fire and rescue incidents.”

Several members of the committee expressed regret about the decision, but also frustration at what they saw as the inability of the fire and rescue company to set a clear path for resolving the problems and administrative failings that have plagued it for almost a decade.

“It’s like we’re beating a dead horse in the head,” said Rappahannock County Sheriff Connie Compton. “We have been dealing with this for probably eight, nine years now, and it’s always the same thing. This board needs to make a decision on whether we’re going to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors or we’re going to be talking about this for another five years.”

Polster acknowledged that he struggled with recommending a funding freeze. But he, like Compton, indicated that the committee’s patience had run thin. “We keep rehashing this,” he said. “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. And we’re getting the same result every time. I don’t know that there’s leadership in place to make the changes needed.”

A TARNISHED RECORD

Before the vote, Polster read a seven-page document that, in part, detailed the 68-year-old company’s much-tarnished record in recent years. That

history includes a consulting firm’s 2015 warning that the fire and rescue squad was in “desperate shape” due to a “significant lack of personnel.” Multiple audits found a “deficiency in internal control” and a 2020 letter from the Rappahannock County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association concluded that the Flint Hill company “appears to lack standards of behavior and operations” and has demonstrated “failure to enforce their existing standards.” The document also noted low response rates by the company’s volunteers and a series of incidents reflecting policy violations and questionable decision making.

It did not, however, reference an ongoing Virginia State Police investigation into complaints made against the fire and rescue company. In a recent letter to Polster, the special agent in charge of the probe cited “sloppy” record-keeping and “non-approved expenditures,” but added that “bad business, bad internal controls do not necessarily make a criminal case.” That investigation isn’t expected to be completed until March, according to the agent.

At last week’s meeting, members of the Public Safety Committee were presented with another letter, this one from Flint Hill Volunteer Fire and Rescue Chief Mike Williams. It was both an apology for past “poor judgment” and a defense that some of the mistakes were made by members no longer in the company. Williams also acknowledged a need for more training, particularly in administration.

“Do I need to be a stronger leader and not try to be everybody’s friend? Absolutely!” he wrote. “I can only promise that I will do what I need to do to make us shine again.”

He also proposed that the Flint Hill company enter into a two-year

program in which it would operate its emergency services under the county’s license, and have county officials oversee administrative tasks. That’s an option offered by the county earlier in the year that Flint Hill’s officers didn’t accept. Polster said he’s heard that that’s at least in part over concerns of a county takeover of their company.

“We’re here at your mercy,” said Flint Hill company member Norma Settle, who read Williams’ letter to the committee. “We owe it to the people of Flint Hill.”

LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS

It was a strikingly different message from the company than the one delivered to the Public Safety Committee just weeks earlier. Then, Williams had intimated that Polster and County Administrator Garrey Curry had influenced the decision by Dr. Michael Jenks, the company’s medical director, to not approve Flint Hill’s license recertification – a notion both committee members denied.

Polster went on to quote from a letter Jenks had sent to the Flint Hill chief last March. “I absolutely will not allow Flint Hill to resume operations under my direction until I am confident that those operations will be in accordance with all regulations, and patient care will consistently be high quality,” Jenks wrote.

Also, at the Dec. 14 meeting, Karen Williams, the Flint Hill company’s president, criticized Wakefield Supervisor and Chair Debbie Donehey, also a member of the Public Safety Committee, contending she had not been supportive enough.

Donehey responded: “I spent two months helping with an audit of your books. I don’t appreciate being cited as someone who hasn’t been trying to help you. I have met with you and come to

your meetings and come to association meetings. So please don’t tell the public that I don’t support you.”

Despite the more conciliatory tone at the more recent meeting, members of the Public Safety Committee apparently were not convinced that the fire and rescue company is ready or able to do what’s necessary to become fully operational again. Curry noted that it still has the option of partnering with one of the other volunteer fire and rescue companies in the county. But both he and Donehey questioned whether Flint Hill has strong enough leadership to regain its footing on its own.

“I just don’t know that I have the faith that there’s the culture in place to foster the environment to grow forward,” said Curry. “And that is totally opposed to my top goal of making the volunteer companies successful.”

In other business, the committee voted to extend by three months a pilot program in which a paid paramedic is stationed at the Sperryville Volunteer Rescue station two days a week. But it left up to the Board of Supervisors the decision on whether that arrangement can be expanded to three days a week, and how the cost would be covered. The Sperryville company has proposed that the county pay 80% of the cost while it would cover the other 20%. Currently, Sperryville is paying the full cost.

The shaping of a hybrid volunteer/paid emergency services system figures to be one of the larger challenges facing the county this year. To that end, the committee also voted to seek a \$25,000 grant from the PATH Foundation to help cover the cost of hiring a management consulting firm The Clearing. It would oversee the development of a strategic plan for effectively blending career paramedics with the volunteer companies.

Supervisors name new board for troubled fire company

Majority express
urgency to act: 'We're
responsible if people die'

BY JULIA SHANAHAN
Rappahannock News staff

The Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors last week voted 3-2 to appoint a Board of Directors to the Flint Hill Volunteer Fire Company, effectively removing its current leadership following years of tumultuous relations between the company and county.

The move was done to eschew a recommendation from a lower body to defund and dismantle the fire company, and instead work to rebuild and reform an organization mired in dysfunction.

The list of appointees, which includes a new fire chief and four di-

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rectors, was compiled by Chair and Wakefield Supervisor Debbie Donehey, whose district includes the fire company. Donehey said the appointees were chosen after “diligent” outreach across her district. The appointees are: Chief David Jarrell, Directors Dave Bailey, Tim Bills, Patrick O’Malley and Dr. Hugh Hill.

Hampton Supervisor Keir Whitson, Stonewall-Hawthorne Supervisor Van Carney and Donehey voted in favor of the resolution, while Piedmont Supervisor Christine Smith and Jackson Supervisor Ron Frazier voted in opposition.

“My citizens, when I walk around and talk to people in the Wakefield district, want something to change, and to do the same thing over and over again for three, four, five years ... is not going to change anything,” Donehey said. “We are going to have an accident that we will not be able to resolve.”

When choosing appointees, Donehey said she was looking at residents with fire and rescue experience, awareness of the issues at the company, and the ability within the board to gain back the medical license to run calls.

Donehey’s resolution is the most significant action the county has taken in recent years to address ongoing issues at the Flint Hill Volunteer Fire Company. Earlier this month, the county’s Public Safety Committee recommended that the Board of Supervisors dissolve the company in an effort to address concerns about its ability to meet the terms of its service agreement with the county. Supervisors agreed that dissolving the fire company would be a disservice to the county.

Newly-hired Chief David Jerrell served for about two years at the Sperryville Volunteer Fire Company and on the Fire Levy Board in 2019 and 2020. Jerrell previously volunteered at the Occoquan-Woodbridge-Lorton Volunteer Fire Department in Prince William County, where he held a series of certifications and ended his tenure serving as a fire captain.

Donehey reached out to Jerrell to come on board the new leadership at the Flint Hill company, and Jerrell said he “knew there was a community in need.”

“I think I need to come out of re-



Supervisors Ron Frazier and Van Carney debate the Flint Hill fire company situation during last week’s meeting.



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tirement to help stabilize this program, and so as a result of that, I ended up writing what I call a revitalization plan,” Jerrell. His plan is set to take place over the next 60 days, and in the meantime, the company is still running calls on dual dispatch.

The company’s rescue squad has not been able to respond to calls since last March when its certification with the Virginia Department of Emergency Services was not renewed. In November, its fire department was placed on dual dispatch, meaning another volunteer fire company is simultaneously dispatched to calls in the Flint Hill region. This, according to Emergency Services Coordinator Sean Polster, was due to “poor response performance and inability to respond on fire and rescue incidents.”

The new leadership appointed last week will serve a one-year term and be responsible for the rules set forth in the resolution. Within 60 days, the Board of Directors must submit a “revitalization plan” to the county that includes a detailed analysis of the staffing structure and certification

statuses; safety compliance policies; a financial management plan; a plan to restore EMS services; and an analysis of the company membership’s ability to provide fire and rescue services using only volunteer firefighters.

The county initially considered conducting a forensic audit on the Flint Hill company at the suggestion of the Virginia State Police. Assistant County Administrator Bonnie Jewell reached out to three audit firms, and said all three noted that a forensic audit would cost between \$15,000 and \$25,000 and are typically done with an end goal of prosecution, which the county did not want to pursue.

There is currently an ongoing investigation by the Virginia State Police on the Flint Hill company for financial management concerns raised as a result of questionable requests for county funds.

Smith and Frazier voted against the resolution because they weren’t presented with the list of appointees until Wednesday evening and did not have an opportunity to meet the appointees or ask them questions, they said. Donehey said she spent weeks putting the final list together, and the members who voted in favor of the resolution said they trusted Donehey’s due diligence. The appointees were not present at Thursday’s meeting.

Smith initially put forward a motion to send the resolution to the Fire

Levy Board and Public Safety Committee for review, and then regroup in 60 days to evaluate potential next steps. That motion was struck down 3-2, with Whitson, Donehey and Carney voting against it, and Smith and Frazier voting in favor.

“We have no idea what the fiscal impact might be,” Frazier said. “And yet we’re putting five people in positions ... and we’re tasking them with the requirement to come up with a fiscal impact statement.”

The three-person majority expressed an urgency to address the prolonged issues at the company and did not want to wait to take action. Carney said, “we’re responsible if people die,” referring to the elected officials, and it’s up to the Board of Supervisors “to do the heavy lifting.”

Whitson, who had a near-fatal heart attack in Wisconsin last July and only recently returned to in-person meetings, said he believes in the importance of having a reliable fire and rescue company. He became emotional when recounting his heart attack, and said the three-minute response time from the local fire and rescue company saved his life.

“It’s our job, I believe it’s what I signed up for, and that’s to do everything possible to protect human health and safety, and to that end, in this chain of survival, if there’s a weak link ... I really see that as a problem,” Whitson said.

Flint Hill fire company flare-up going to court



Ousted department leaders
sue county, alleging ‘attempted
hijacking’ by ‘usurpers’

BY BEN PETERS
Rappahannock News staff

The ousted former leadership of the Flint Hill Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company filed a lawsuit on Monday against the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors and the current fire company’s leaders seeking to reverse what they allege was an “attempted hijacking” of power after officials removed them from office and appointed new leaders.

The suit, filed in Rappahannock Circuit Court, alleges the Supervisors illegally removed the fire company’s former board of directors in January and unlawfully replaced them with new leaders – Chief David E. Jarrell, President David E. Bailey, Timothy F. Bills, Patrick F O’Malley and Hugh F. Hill – who weren’t elected by the company.

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It seeks to prevent the new leadership from maintaining authority over the fire company or its finances and to restore power to the former directors. "Until this case is decided there is no equitable reason why the illegitimate usurpers should be permitted to exercise powers of a director," the suit says.

The petitioners, Karen A. Williams, Michael R. Williams, Sherry Hammill-Huff, Bruce D. Williams, Samuel G. Foreback, Charles T. Baker, Patsy L. Baker, and Norma J. Settle, are represented by local attorney David Konick, a former Board of Supervisors candidate and county official.

"The ends do not justify the illegal means that were used here," Konick said in a statement. "Whatever their motivations may have been, what the Supervisors did on Jan. 26 is one of the most outrageous acts of disrespect for all County volunteers who have selflessly and tirelessly devoted countless hours to community service. The Petitioners have a combined total of 235 YEARS of service and do not deserve to be treated the way they were. This will only accelerate the demise of our volunteer system at great cost to all County taxpayers."

The petitioners requested that their case be heard in court as soon as Monday, Feb. 13.

ATTORNEY DAVID KONICK:

"The Petitioners have a combined total of 235 YEARS of service and do not deserve to be treated the way they were."

The county is being represented in the case by an attorney from its insurance provider, VACorp, according to Wakefield Supervisor and Chair Debbie Donehey, who represents the Flint Hill area and helped recruit the new leadership team. County officials were not immediately able to provide the name of their legal counsel.

"I look forward to celebrating with our citizens the day the EMS License of Company 4 is reinstated allowing both fire and rescue to run professionally and reliably from that station," she said in a statement. County Attorney Art Goff did not return a request for comment.

The suit arrived the same day the Supervisors unanimously approved allowing the company to temporarily operate under the county's EMS license until the company can operate independently. Because the station has been without an EMS license for about 10 months, the company was at risk of losing more than \$100,000 in equipment to the state at the end of this week for not being in compliance with EMS agency license stipulations.

The fire company has been the subject of external scrutiny and organizational challenges for years. A 2020 letter from the Rappahannock County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association concluded that the company lacked standards and called into question leaders' decision making.

The company's rescue squad has not been able to respond to calls since last March when its certification with the Virginia Department of Emergency Services was not renewed. In November, its fire department was placed on dual dispatch, meaning another volunteer fire company is simultaneously dispatched to calls in the Flint Hill region, due to its poor performance and response times. In 2015, a consulting firm warned the company was in "desperate shape" because of a "significant lack of personnel."

There is also an ongoing investigation by the Virginia State Police into the Flint Hill company for financial management concerns raised as a result of questionable requests for county funds.

The suit conceded that the company "admittedly had some difficulties meeting certain performance goals and certification requirements" because of short staff, but maintained that those failures didn't justify the leaders' removal by the Supervisors.

In appointing new leadership, the Supervisors broke with a recommendation from the Rappahannock County Public Safety Committee to dissolve the fire company, arguing that dismantling it would be a disservice to the community.

Shortly after the resolution was passed at a special-called meeting on Jan. 26, the suit alleges, newly appointed Chief Jarrell, Emergency Services Coordinator Sean Polster and Rappahannock County Sheriff Connie Compton "seized" control of the company's firehouse, changed entry codes and posted notices saying the station was closed. The suit alleges the officials did not have the authority to step foot on the company's property.

"I did not seize that station, nor did I change any locks, codes, or post any signs," Compton said in a statement. "We were there to keep the peace." Polster did not return a request for comment.

In an email sent Jan. 26, used as evidence in the suit, Jarrell told each of the ousted members that they "secured" the station to protect the premises and the company's equipment. Jarrell declined to comment for this report on behalf of both himself and the company, citing pending litigation.

He assured in the email there are "no hidden agendas or plans" associated with his leadership and told former leaders they were prohibited from making financial transactions on behalf of the company.

In another email sent Jan. 27, Jarrell asked that former leaders return company property, including credit and debit cards and blank checks. He offered for the leaders to come to the station over the weekend for "escorted access" to return property and collect personal belongings left inside.

He also encouraged the former leaders to apply for membership to the company. "There will be no throwing rocks (meaning no bad mouthing each other) in the fire house," Jarrell wrote. "Where I grew up in the Fire Department, we were like family. We depended on each other and placed our lives in each others hands on 9-1-1 calls. I fully expect the same at Co4. So bring a positive attitude and be a part of what is sure to become one of the best Volunteer Fire Company in Rappahannock County!"

'We're out there beating the pavement'

New fire chief outlines revitalization plan for troubled company

BY JULIA SHANAHAN | *Rappahannock News staff*
and RANDY RIELAND | *For Foothills Forum*

The Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors on Monday unanimously approved allowing the Flint Hill Volunteer Fire Company to temporarily operate under the county's EMS license until the company can operate independently.

Because the station has been without an EMS license for about 10 months, the company was at risk

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of losing more than \$100,000 in equipment to the state at the end of this week for not being in compliance with EMS agency license stipulations.

Newly-appointed fire chief David Jarrell gave a presentation to the Supervisors, outlining his “revitalization plan” for a fire company that has had a tumultuous relationship with the county since 2015. The ousted leadership who Jarrell was appointed to replace sued the county the same day, alleging an illegal takeover of the department by the new chief and Supervisors.

Residents will now see ambulances responding to EMS 9-1-1 dispatch calls out of the Flint Hill company for the first time in almost a year. County Administrator Garrey Curry said this process was offered to the former leadership over many months, but was turned down multiple times until “the eleventh hour.”

Jarrell also requested that the county allow them to relocate an Advanced Life Support (ALS) chase vehicle and paramedic from the Town of Washington to Flint Hill from the hours of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and when not on dispatched 9-1-1 calls.

This should have no impact on responsiveness in other areas of the county, he said, citing a conversation with Emergency Services Coordinator Sean Polster. Piedmont Supervisor Christine Smith requested that Polster share data with the Supervisors on where the ambulance is stationed throughout the day in order to monitor response times.

Jarrell outlined three ways they plan to approach these issues to eventually allow the company to run independently:

- ▶ Officers at the Flint Hill company will work closely to review what failed causing the Agency Licence to be revoked.

- ▶ New and revised standard operating procedures and other mechanisms will be put in place to ensure compliance with EMS and state guidelines.

- ▶ Routine training scenarios will be conducted to ensure requirements and awareness, and internal compliance audits will be conducted by EMS officers.

Jarrell said they have received 26 applications from community members willing to volunteer in various roles — a stark change for a company that previously struggled to staff the station. While Jarrell asked existing members to reapply, he told the Supervisors that no one was removed from their position, including life members.

“We’re in a world where volunteerism has dropped dramatically,” he said in an interview. “But we’re out there beating the pavement, talking to people to encourage them to join.”

New EMTs will be temporarily placed in other jurisdictions around the county as they learn how to run calls. Dr. Hugh Hill, an emergency

physician and Johns Hopkins professor, is also a member of the new board of directors, and is expected to work closely with EMTs and paramedics.

A fire-fighting history

As the new year began, Jarrell considered himself retired. He figured he’d be spending most of his time raising an endangered breed of Scottish ducks on his Sperryville farm.

That all changed a few days later following a conversation with Wakefield Supervisor and Chair Debbie Donehey and Polster about the alarming plight of the company. The Flint Hill company’s rescue squad hasn’t been able to respond to calls since last March after its certification with the Virginia Department of Emergency Services was not renewed.

Now, Jarrell will spend 2023 serving as the appointed fire chief at the company, along with four other communi-

ty members who were asked to serve on a new board of directors created by Donehey, whose Wakefield District includes Flint Hill.

Donehey’s resolution is the most significant action the county has taken in recent years to address ongoing issues at the Flint Hill Volunteer Fire Company. The county’s Public Safety Committee recommended that the Board of Supervisors withdraw its financial support for the company in an effort to address concerns about its ability to meet the terms of its service agreement with the county. Supervisors agreed that dissolving the fire company would be a disservice to the county.

Last month, the body voted 3-2 to appoint the new board, which also includes Dave Bailey, Patrick O’Malley, Tim Bills and Hill.

Smith and Jackson Supervisor Ron Frazier voted against appointing the new five-member board because they were not aware of who the appointees were until the night before the meeting, and said they did not have time to vet the individuals or ask questions.

The other three members of the body, including Donehey, Hampton Supervisor Keir Whitson and Stone-

wall-Hawthorne Supervisor Van Carney voted in support of Donehey’s resolution, emphasizing the urgency of reforming the Flint Hill company, calling it “life or death.”

Jarrell comes to the position with a long history as a volunteer firefighter. Shortly after moving to Rappahannock in 2018, he joined the Sperryville Volunteer Fire Department and became captain of the company’s ladder truck.

Prior to that, while working for the federal government and living in Prince William County, he was a captain in the Occoquan-Woodbridge-Lorton Volunteer Fire Department.

He also is particularly familiar with the administrative issues that have plagued the Flint Hill company in recent years. While serving on the county’s Fire Levy Board, Jarrell became aware of what he termed “anomalies” in Flint Hill’s expense reimbursement submissions to the county.

“A community in need”

Jarrell acknowledged that “revitalizing” the Flint Hill company will be a challenge that likely will take some time. “But there’s a community in need here,” he said. “The need is good, sound leadership that can help this company recover from whatever variables have created this plight and stabilize the membership to the point where we can be responsive to this community.”

“Because 10 minutes matters on a bad auto accident or a house fire or trauma to a person here,” he added. “If we can inspire more people to join the company, that’s exactly what we want to be able to do.”

The other members of the new Board of Directors said they joined for similar reasons.

Bailey, a former vehicle fleet manager for the U.S. Navy, is the company’s new president, and he said he stepped up to help because he has a “vested interest” in the Flint Hill community. Bailey currently serves on the board of the educational nonprofit Headwaters Foundation, and his wife previously volunteered at the Flint Hill fire company as an EMS lieutenant and secretary.

“This is our retirement community — this is where we want to age in place,” said Bailey, who moved to Rappahannock County in 2018. “And obviously, having a strong and vibrant EMS and fire support here at the station is important for that ... I have 30 years in the Navy, both active and reserves, and I think being drawn to serving the community is something that becomes ingrained in you at some point.”

O’Malley, another new member on the board of directors, began volunteering at the company after he moved to Rappahannock in 2021, saying he didn’t realize it was a troubled company when he joined. He said his background is in financial restructuring, so he decided to step up and help in a larger role.

O’Malley said he was born and raised in Virginia, and moving to Rappahannock County with his wife from Page County two years ago was a “dream come true.”

“My hope is that we’re able to rally the company and our whole community — anybody who is willing to help with their time and their skills around Dave Jarrell’s experience and leadership,” O’Malley said.

For Jarrell, the decision to take on the chief’s role, while daunting, is one that he felt he needed to make.

“I really took a deep look at myself and said, ‘What am I willing to sacrifice for this?’ And I thought about my kids and grandkids and how I want to show them that giving back to the community is a good thing,” he said.



Newly-appointed fire chief David Jarrell: “We’re in a world where volunteerism has dropped dramatically. But we’re out there beating the pavement, talking to people to encourage them to join.”

BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER

He said he spent close to two months working closely with the company’s officers and reviewing Flint Hill’s books. “I got a lot of visibility on what they were doing on the expenses side of things,” Jarrell said. “It was determined that a significant amount of money was not eligible for reimbursement by the county.”

The fire company is currently being investigated by the Virginia State Police for mismanaging public funds.

Former company President Karen Williams attended a January Board of Supervisors meeting, defending their leadership, saying the company responded to about 90% of calls received in December. She also said the company was open to more help and guidance from the county, despite the company declining the county’s help in the past, and that the individuals responsible for some of the issues cited by the county are no longer with the company.

Messy Flint Hill fire dispute heads to court

▶ **Lawyer:** Supervisor, fellow fire company, plaintiffs' attorney undermining county's efforts to revive station

▶ **Frazier:** 'Appalled at the attacks'; denies collusion

▶ **On the ground:** 'Very difficult set of circumstances'

BY JULIA SHANAHAN
Rappahannock News staff

An attorney representing the new leadership at the Flint Hill Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company (FHVFC) is

alleging that a member of the Board of Supervisors is working to undermine the county's efforts to address ongoing turmoil within the fire company.

A January Board of Supervisors

decision to remove the former leadership at the FHVFC and appoint a new board of directors spawned a months-long lawsuit, which has prevented the new leadership from operating at full

capacity as a fire company.

The Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors in January voted 3-2 to

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appoint a new board of directors after the company lost its EMS license last year and refused assistance from the county. Local attorney David Konick is now representing the ousted leadership and filed the suit against the county and current leadership in February in an effort to reverse what Konick alleged was an “attempted hijacking” of power.

The suit is seeking to prevent the new leadership from maintaining authority over the fire company and its finances, while also seeking to reinstate the former directors: Karen A. Williams, Michael R. Williams, Sherry Hamill-Huff, Bruce D. Williams, Samuel G. Foreback, Charles T. Baker, Patsy L. Baker, and Norma J. Settle.

This Friday, June 16, a Virginia Circuit Court judge will determine if the county had the legal authority to remove the former leadership. In the meantime, Whitson Robinson, a Warrenton-based attorney representing the company’s new leadership, alleged Jackson Supervisor Ron Frazier and members of the Amissville Volunteer Fire Company are supporting the former directors and thwarting the county’s ability to provide necessary public safety services.

“It’s all about ego,” Robinson said in an interview. “And a lot of this has been directed from the Amissville fire department, because they believe that the county is going to ultimately take over the fire and rescue departments with paid staff, and that is simply not the case.”

Robinson filed a public records request in May, requesting Frazier turn over all emails and text messages between himself and the former FHVFC leadership, Konick, Amissville fire chief JB Carter, Piedmont Supervisor Christine Smith, and other fire and rescue volunteers in the county. Because Frazier did not turn over all of his correspondence, Robinson said he plans to file a lawsuit against Frazier for the remaining information. Robinson declined to share the information he obtained from the messages that Frazier did turn over.

Frazier and Smith both voted against the January resolution that



FILE PHOTO BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER

Current Flint Hill fire chief David Jarrell said there are about 40 volunteer applications held up by the lawsuit. As a result, Jarrell runs most calls on his own.

appointed the new board of directors, which was chosen by Wakefield Supervisor and Chair Debbie Donehey who represents the Flint Hill area.

Frazier and Smith both deny colluding with the Amissville fire company. Amissville fire chief JB Carter did not return a request for comment for this report.

“The above referenced ‘FOIA request’ emails from Mr. Robinson degenerated into what appears to be attempts by him to impugn, fabrications and projections, all of which are a figment of his imagination,” Frazier wrote in an email to the Rappahannock News. “His accusations are simply a diversion, trying to take attention away from what is happening in Flint Hill. I am appalled at the attacks that are made against the County volunteers, (Flint Hill and Amissville) both by the County Government and Mr. Robinson.”

Konick also denied Robinson’s allegations, saying he has not consulted with members of the Amissville fire company since the January resolution took effect.

“Obviously, since [Frazier is] a member of the Board that is the principal respondent in the litigation, I am ethically prohibited from communicating with him about the matter, and I have not done so. The reverse is also true,” Konick wrote in an email to the Rappa-

hannock News. “Nor has Mr. Frazier, to my knowledge, communicated with any of my clients about the ongoing litigation or vice-versa. My clients were all advised on the first day not to discuss the case with ANYONE, and to refer all inquiries to counsel. Mr. Robinson persists in alleging things he ought to know are absolutely untrue for purely PR purposes.”

What is this lawsuit about?

Konick has made several notable filings in this lawsuit. The first filing disputes the legality of the Board of Supervisors replacing the company’s previous leadership with a new board of directors. The second filing accuses the new FHVFC leadership of violating the company’s bylaws and the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Konick also filed an order in February that prevented the new leadership from holding member meetings and processing volunteer applications. While the petitioners argued that the new leadership should not be able to meet because they believe their membership is illegitimate, Judge James Plowman said in April that allowing them to do so is a matter of public safety, and that he “can’t tie the hands of the company.”

On June 9, Plowman signed an order striking a paragraph in the preceding document that prohibited the new leadership from meeting. Members of the defense said they were not aware the filing was made.

“This consent order specifically puts the residents and the businesses in Flint Hill in Rappahannock County at risk unnecessarily, and it’s a big deal,” said David Jarrell, the newly-appointed Flint Hill fire chief.

Konick is making two primary legal arguments:

- ▶ The Flint Hill Volunteer Fire Company is not, by definition in state code, a “fire company.” Meaning, state code that regulates fire companies does not apply to Company 4.

- ▶ Because Company 4 is not technically a “fire company” under Title 27, according to Konick, the Board of Supervisors did not have the authority to

appoint a new leadership.

“That’s the legal strategy that they have — is to say, ‘Title 27 doesn’t apply to us because we’re just simply a company. We’re just simply a garden club. So Title 27 doesn’t apply to us.’ And it was Title 27 that allowed the Board of Supervisors to remove the directors,” Robinson said.

A judge will determine on Friday whether or not Company 4 qualifies as a fire company and if the county was in their legal rights to make new appointments. In past court hearings, Konick has challenged the legitimacy of the formation of the company in 1954. Attorneys representing the Board of Supervisors, who declined to comment for this report, have argued that a fire company can be a nonstock corporation and still be considered a fire company.

Attorneys for the defense have argued that this case could have “devastating implications” on the volunteer fire and rescue companies not only in Rappahannock County, but statewide, if a judge rules in favor of the petitioners.

Under state code and common law, which is law based on court precedent rather than statutes, fire and rescue volunteers benefit from certain protections — for example, if a volunteer gets injured while fighting a fire, they can receive compensation from the state under common law. Title 27, however, offers protection for volunteers if they get injured traveling to and from calls, which common law does not cover. Title 27 is what Konick and the petitioners are looking to challenge.

“Because they’re now saying, ‘We’re not associated with Title 27, so therefore, we don’t get any of the benefits of sovereign immunity, and our members don’t get any benefits if they’re injured or killed.’ They’re cutting their nose off to spite their face. It’s all about ego,” Robinson said.

However, Konick claims that a judge ruling in favor of the county could mean “the end of the volunteer system in Rappahannock County and the beginning of huge tax increases that go along with an all-paid fire and rescue regime that the County Administrator and three Supervisors are pushing.”

“The impact of a decision that upholds the Board of Supervisors’ January 26th Resolution would be that none of the independent volunteer fire and rescue squads in the County will be ‘independent’ any more,” Konick wrote. “Their officers and directors will all be subject to removal at the whim of the Board of Supervisors, and each department will be subject to dissolution and confiscation of all their assets.”

Hampton Supervisor Keir Whitson and Donehey both denied the claim that the county is looking to install an “all-paid fire regime.” The Sperryville and Chester Gap volunteer fire companies are the only two companies with part-time paid staff, along with members at the Rappahannock County Fire and Rescue Department.

“The ship for a good solution sailed on January 26th,” Smith wrote in a statement to the Rappahannock News. “Please note, this is not a commentary on the individuals who were appointed by the Board. I simply believe we should respect and work with our volunteers... Regardless of the outcome on Friday, I do not believe we

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➔ should treat longtime, dedicated volunteers the way the members of the FHVFD were treated. ...In truth, our volunteers are the salt of the earth.”

Whitson, who voted in favor of the proposal, said the fire company had become a liability and was no longer a trusted emergency-services provider for the community.

“One of my primary obligations as a county supervisor is to do everything in my ability to protect the health and safety of our citizens,” Whitson wrote in a statement. “Any reasonable person in my position would have done the same thing and replaced the leadership team at Company 4. We owe the residents of the Flint Hill area the basic right to have first responders show up quickly when they call for help.”

How did we get here?

The Rappahannock County Public Safety Committee recommended in December 2022 that the Board of Supervisors withdraw financial support from the troubled Flint Hill Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company.

The company’s rescue squad was not able to respond to calls since March 2022 when its certification with the Virginia Department of Emergency Services was not renewed. In November, its fire department was placed on dual dispatch, meaning another volunteer fire company is simultaneously dispatched to calls in the Flint Hill region. This, according to Emergency Services Coordinator Sean Polster at the time, was due to “poor response performance and inability to respond on fire and rescue incidents.”

“It’s like we’re beating a dead horse in the head,” said Rappahannock County Sheriff Connie Compton in January. “We have been dealing with this for probably eight, nine years now, and it’s always the same thing. This board needs to make a decision on whether we’re going to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors or we’re going to be talking about this for another five years.”

Before the vote on the Public Safety Committee, Polster read a seven-page document that, in part, detailed the 68-year-old company’s much-tarnished record in recent years. That history includes a consulting firm’s 2015 warning that the fire and rescue squad was in “desperate shape” due to a “significant lack of personnel.”

Multiple audits found a “deficiency in internal control” and a 2020 letter from the Rappahannock County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association concluded that the Flint Hill company “appears to lack standards of behavior and operations” and has demonstrated “failure to enforce their existing standards.” The document also noted low response rates by the company’s volunteers and a series of incidents reflecting policy violations and questionable decision making.

At the Dec. 14 Public Safety Committee meeting, former Flint Hill fire chief Michael Williams had intimated that Polster and County Administrator Garrey Curry had influenced the decision by Dr. Michael Jenks, the company’s medical director who serves multiple counties, to not approve Flint Hill’s license recertification – a notion both



A judge will determine on Friday whether or not Company 4 qualifies as a fire company and if the county was in their legal rights to make new appointments.

committee members denied.

Polster went on to quote from a letter Jenks had sent to the Flint Hill chief last March. “I absolutely will not allow Flint Hill to resume operations under my direction until I am confident that those operations will be in accordance with all regulations, and patient care will consistently be high quality,” Jenks wrote.

Also, at the Dec. 14 meeting, Karen Williams, the Flint Hill company’s former president, criticized Donehey, also a member of the Public Safety Committee, contending she had not been supportive enough.

Donehey responded at the time: “I spent two months helping with an audit of your books. I don’t appreciate being cited as someone who hasn’t been trying to help you. I have met with you and come to your meetings and come to association meetings. So please don’t tell the public that I don’t support you.”

This led Donehey to conduct her own search for a new board of directors in an effort to avoid dissolving the fire company entirely. Donehey declined to comment for this report until a ruling is made on Friday.

Stonewall-Hawthorne Supervisor Van Carney, who voted staunchly in favor of Donehey’s proposal, is currently out of the country and did return a request for comment for this report. Curry, who is on vacation, also did not return a request for comment.

‘We’re at bare minimum’

While the lawsuit is pending, Flint Hill fire chief David Jarrell said there are about 40 volunteer applications that they are not able to process for several months because of the consent order. As a result, Jarrell runs most calls on his own.

“We can run calls, but outside of running calls, we cannot do anything,” Jarrell said of the consent order filed in February. “We cannot buy anything outside of emergency operations and basically pay the day-to-day bills. A very small, but ancillary kind of issue to that is typically, you give your members a t-shirt to wear that says, ‘hey, I’m working for the fire department.’ We’re not even doing that, because we don’t want to violate some weird implication of consent violation. So we’re going out

there in our day-to-day clothes if we’re not wearing emergency response gear for, say, a house fire or something like that.”

Shortly after the new board of directors was appointed, Jarrell requested to operate under the county’s EMS license, which was unanimously approved. The Flint Hill fire company has since been running calls and using an ambulance that was previously offline. The county offered the same solution to the former leadership, but they denied the assistance.

When the county appointed a new board of directors, they did not strip the former leadership of their membership to the fire company. Jarrell said since Jan. 26, the former leadership has assisted on one call out of the 125 calls FHVFC has been dispatched to.

Jarrell added that there have been instances where the former leadership has shown up to the scene of an emergency and just observed the work being done without offering to help. He said this happened while he was responding to a May house fire in Chester Gap that completely destroyed the structure.

“They stood there and watched us fight these fires and didn’t offer to help, didn’t lend a hand, didn’t do anything except sit there and watch us,” Jarrell said. “So when I hear them say, ‘Well, this is about us doing our jobs,’ they haven’t done their job since this thing started.”

Konick said that the former leadership has tried to respond to calls on

numerous occasions, but Jarrell does not wait for them at the station before leaving in an emergency vehicle.

Jarrell said the members use an app to receive dispatches from the sheriff’s office and to communicate with the other members if they plan to go to the fire station or directly to the scene of an emergency. He said the former leadership has never communicated their intentions to respond to an emergency.

Despite being short staffed and operating at “bare minimum,” Jarrell said residents of Flint Hill can be assured that when they dial 9-1-1, an emergency responder will show up in a timely manner. The Flint Hill company is still under dual-dispatch, which means another fire company is simultaneously dispatched alongside the FHVFC.

“I think people in Flint Hill and Huntly areas need to know that we’re working very hard to provide emergency response services in a very, very difficult set of circumstances, meaning we’re constrained to doing our job fully,” Jarrell said. “But we’ve found ways to be creative and still deliver the services that they need. And I think the community needs to know that we are there for them. We’re committed to this. Some of us have essentially put our personal lives on hold to serve this community.”

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Judge dismisses Flint Hill fire lawsuit

▶ ‘Fire company ought to answer to the people,’ judge finds

▶ Company 4 resumes normal operations, starts processing volunteer applications

BY JULIA SHANAHAN
Rappahannock News staff

A Rappahannock County Circuit Court judge last Friday dismissed a petition filed on behalf of the ousted board of directors at the Flint Hill Volunteer Fire Company (FHVFC) and ruled that the Board of Supervisors acted within their legal rights to appoint new leadership.

FHVFC chief David Jarrell, who was appointed by Wakefield Supervisor Debbie Donehey, said that Company 4 is now able to resume normal business after being restricted by the lawsuit for the last several months.

A January Board of Supervisors

FLINT HILL

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decision to remove the former leadership at the FHVFC and appoint a new board of directors spawned a months-long lawsuit. The suit sought to prevent the new leadership from maintaining authority over the fire company and its finances, while also seeking to reinstate the former directors: Karen A. Williams, Michael R. Williams, Sherry Hamill-Huff, Bruce D. Williams, Samuel G. Foreback, Charles T. Baker, Patsy L. Baker, and Norma J. Settle.

Filings made by local attorney David Konick prevented the new leaders at Company 4 from holding membership meetings, spending money on day-to-day expenses and processing volunteer applications.

Now, Jarrell is working to process

about 40 applications and is planning on holding their first membership meeting on July 5. He said he also plans on holding town halls and social events at the Flint Hill firehouse this summer to reassure residents that they're well-served by local emergency services.

"I went to the firehouse early this morning, opened up all the fire bay doors, drove the fire trucks outside and turned them on and let them run, tested the lights and did all the things that you would typically do to check a piece of equipment," Jarrell said. "And really what I'm doing is letting people know that we are still here today, in spite of the lawsuit that we experienced over the last five months."

After hearing arguments from attorneys representing the Board of Supervisors, the new board of directors and the ousted leaders, Judge Douglas Fleming ruled that under state defini-

tions, FHVFC fits the criteria of a "fire company," therefore, giving county officials the legal authority to appoint new officers.

Konick, who represented the ousted leaders, made two primary legal arguments — the Flint Hill company is not, by definition in state code, a "fire company," in Konick's opinion. Meaning, state code that regulates fire companies does not apply to Company 4. Because Company 4 is not technically a "fire company" under Title 27, according to Konick, the Board of Supervisors did not have the authority to appoint a new leadership.

Fleming on Friday said it's "common sense" that FHVFC is a fire company, saying it meets the standards outlined in state code. He said state code also gives a local governing body "unfettered authority" to appoint or remove officers at a volunteer fire com-

pany. He added that a "fire company ought to answer to the people," and that the "voting public" of Rappahannock County should have a say in operations, calling it part of the "democratic method."

Hampton Supervisor Keir Whitson said after the ruling that there was "nobody involved here who felt good about the way things transpired." He said it's the goal of the Board of Supervisors to ensure citizens have adequate access to fire and rescue services, and after years of a declining standard of service at FHVFC, he said the Supervisors decided to "invoke their legal authority."

Donehey, who drafted the resolution that appointed the new directors, concurred with Whitson's statement.

Konick declined to make a statement after the ruling and did not return a request for comment.

Company 4 votes, still awaits new fire chief

Some members vote against new volunteers

BY JULIA SHANAHAN
Rappahannock News staff

The Flint Hill Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company approved a dozen new members on Tuesday but will continue operating without a fire chief until the Board of Supervisors appoints a leader.

The former county-appointed chief of Company 4, David Jarrell, resigned earlier this month after leading the troubled company for about six months. The supervisors appointed Jarrell in a 3-2 vote in January after Chair and Wakefield Supervisor Debbie Donehey introduced a resolution to replace the former leadership.

The company members were not able to nominate or vote on a chief because of the January resolution, according to Donehey and the company's board of directors. The supervisors will consider nominees at their next regular meeting in September, Donehey said.

Jarrell did not give a reason for his departure, and company president Dave Bailey said he didn't want to "get

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into details” at the membership meeting.

Donehey is one of the 12 new volunteers at the company as of Tuesday night. The votes to admit new members were done anonymously, and out of 15 company members present who were eligible to vote, six members voted against Donehey’s membership. The officers tallied the votes and shared the anonymous results with the Rappahannock News.

Each of the 12 applicants had at least two members vote against admitting them to the company. “It’s pretty shocking,” said Tim Bills, one of the company’s officers, of the fact that some members voted against admitting new volunteers. Company 4 has struggled for years with recruiting volunteers, but after the new directors were appointed, about 40 residents submitted applications.

Bailey said most of the new volunteers are interested in administrative positions, but some are willing to begin training so they can respond to emergency calls. Member Sam Foreback, one of the former leaders removed by the county, said that the company is more in need of volunteers in operational positions rather than administrative.

‘MINOR INCIDENT’ WITH NEW RECRUITS DAMAGES FIRE TRUCK

Patrick O’Malley, one of the com-



BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER

Flint Hill fire company president Dave Bailey address interim Deputy Emergency Management Services Coordinator Darren Stevens at the Company 4 membership meeting Tuesday night.

pany directors, said at the meeting there was a “minor incident” last week when they were training new members to drive one of the fire trucks (E1404). While he didn’t give the exact details of the incident, he said the side of the truck hit a guardrail and the incident was reported to the Sheriff’s Office.

He said the trainees were affiliated with the Rappahannock County Fire Department and were covered under the county’s insurance. Norma Settle, one of the former leaders ousted by the county, accused the directors of allowing an unqualified person to drive the truck, and asked if that was why they

chose to not file an insurance claim.

O’Malley said the recruits were qualified to be driving, and because the cost of the damages is under \$1,500, the company is not required to file an insurance claim. He added that the truck was never taken out of service.

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PHOTOS BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER



Above left: Bruce Williams, a legacy Flint Hill fire member and former chief, attended the membership meeting Tuesday night.

Above right: Chair and Wakefield Supervisor Debbie Donehey was voted in as a member of the Flint Hill Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company on Tuesday. Six members voted against her membership, and nine voted in favor.

Left: The leaders who were removed by the Board of Supervisors in January attended the Tuesday meeting. Left to right: Sam Foreback, Norma Settle, Mike Williams, Bruce Williams and Karen Williams.

TO WATCH a video of Tuesday night's Company 4 meeting, scan the QR code to the right or go to rappnews.link/company4



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Supervisors appoint new Flint Hill chief after heated exchange

BY JULIA SHANAHAN
Rappahannock News staff

The Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors voted 3-1 on Monday to appoint veteran fire volunteer Sean Knick as chief of the Flint Hill Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company.

At the special-called meeting, Chair and Wakefield Supervisor Debbie Donehey, Hampton Supervisor Keir Whitson and Stonewall-Hawthorne Supervisor Van Carney voted in favor of the resolution to appoint Knick, assistant chief of Washington Volunteer Fire and Rescue and former president of the Rappahannock County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association. Jackson Supervisor Ron Frazier voted against the resolution, and Piedmont Supervisor

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FILE PHOTO BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER

New Company 4 chief Sean Knick

SUPERVISORS

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Christine Smith was absent.

Frazier accused Donehey of conspiring with Whitson and Carney outside of public meetings to make decisions on votes. He said he didn't know about Knick's nomination until after the resolution was drafted and posted online last week, and alleged that the majority had more information than he did about the process.

Frazier has claimed many times over the last several years that other board members conspire with each other outside of meetings.

"You've already made this decision without even talking to me," Frazier said of the resolution Donehey drafted. "You don't care what I'm gonna say, and you don't care what Miss Smith may have said."

The majority denied the allegations, and Carney said he learned of Knick's nomination the same time Frazier did, when it was uploaded to Boarddocs last week, the county's website for public meeting agendas.

"There's nothing unilateral going on," Carney said. "That implies ... if [Donehey] decides something, I accept it, and that's just not true. It is not true. And I don't appreciate it."

The former county-appointed chief of Company 4, David Jarrell, resigned last month after leading the troubled company for about six months. The su-

pervisors appointed Jarrell in a 3-2 vote in January after Donehey introduced a resolution to replace the former leadership. That January resolution has continued to be a divisive issue among the Board of Supervisors. Frazier and Smith have been publicly skeptical of the new board of directors at Company 4 with pointed questions during the company's routine, monthly update.

The company members were not able to nominate or vote on a chief because of the January resolution, which states that a county-appointed chief will serve the company until the end of this year.

LISTEN

To hear the Supervisors' contentious exchange about the fire chief appointment, go to rappnews.link/4xj or scan the QR code with your smartphone.



Donehey said the Company 4 directors held informal interviews with a couple of people interested in the chief position, and recommended that the county appoint Knick. Donehey drafted a resolution to appoint Knick, which was uploaded to the county website last week.

Knick said in an interview with the Rappahannock News that residents in Flint Hill approached him about the vacant fire chief position, and he had an informal conversation with the new

board of directors about his leadership style. He said he thought it was "crucial" to attend several training sessions with the Company 4 members in case he was chosen to fill the role as chief.

"We have a company that, number one, under leadership that we removed in January, many of those people are in this room right now, had lost their EMS license," Whitson said. "Number two, were under a state police investigation for admitted gross financial mismanagement."

Former Company 4 leaders in the room, and Frazier, interrupted Whitson after he mentioned the state police investigation. Frazier, yelling, said, "you're not gonna use that again," and continued to yell over Whitson, saying, "don't point your fingers at me!"

"You're absolutely out of control," Whitson replied.

Donehey interrupted the heated exchange to call a vote, and the 10-minute discussion adjourned shortly after.

"Supervisor Donehey unilaterally decided how the first five directors were picked and who they were and did the very same thing this time," Frazier wrote in a statement to the Rappahannock News. "...She didn't use the normal procedure the Board has for appointments nor has the Board created a specific one, as required by the Code of Virginia for establishing the officers for Fire Companies."

In an interview, Donehey said, "When Mr. Frazier gets frustrated, everything becomes a conspiracy."

A NEW FIRE CHIEF

Knick said he's been involved with fire and rescue operations since he was 16 years old, and he's a certified interior firefighter and a trained EMT.

The Flint Hill fire company had been operating without a fire chief for about two months, until Knick was appointed 3-1 on Monday.

At the Board of Supervisors' regular meeting last Wednesday, a routine update on the affairs at Company 4 by Dr. Hugh Hill became heated when Piedmont Supervisor Christine Smith repeatedly asked why Jarrell resigned. Smith, who voted against the January resolution, said she wanted to know Jarrell's reasons for resigning to avoid making the same "mistake" when choosing another chief.

"We did make a mistake, because we put all our eggs in one basket," Smith said last Wednesday. "...If there are things that happened in the course of our first appointment that we should avoid making our second appointment, why can't I know those things?"

Stonewall-Hawthorne Supervisor Van Carney challenged Smith's claims, saying Jarrell is not obligated to share his reasons for resigning if the reasons are personal.

"I think that this line of questioning, while I think is legitimate, I do not appreciate the tone in the sense that this is not an inquisition," Carney said. "...he's an individual citizen. He can quit. He ➔

➔ can walk away.”

Hill, one of the newly-appointed Company 4 directors, said he has “speculated” on Jarrell’s reasons for leaving, saying Jarrell didn’t have a lot of support and was one of the only members running calls.

Jarrell and the board of directors were appointed after the company lost its EMS license last year and refused assistance from the county. This led to a lawsuit filed on behalf of the ousted leaders against the Board of Supervisors, calling it an “attempted hijacking,” which was dismissed

by a Circuit Court judge in June. The lawsuit prevented the new board from processing volunteer applications.

“If there was a mistake in the process once he came on board, it was that we pushed to get up and running too quickly before we had more support for him,” Hill told the supervisors.

Knick said that his main focus as chief is to “build a new department” and continue onboarding new volunteers so he can delegate tasks when it comes to responding to calls.

“Running calls is at the top of the

list, but with trained individuals who are able to do that,” Knick said. “But we need to get these new individuals that have an interest that have become members, get them trained up, get them released, and get this department growing.”

Company 4 is still under a dual-dispatch policy, meaning another nearby fire company will be simultaneously dispatched alongside Flint Hill when responding to emergencies. Knick said that will help the company through the member-recruitment period.

Ousted Flint Hill fire leader Sam Foreback, who is running for a seat on the Board of Supervisors, spoke during public comment last Wednesday, saying he didn’t understand how they can vote in new members but not elect their own chief. He also criticized the new directors’ call and response times.

Goff reminded the supervisors that a June ruling by a Circuit Court judge determined that county officials do have the right to appoint members to the company, because it’s a matter of public safety.

Social media-fueled allegations swirl over county relationship with Flint Hill fire company

BY JULIA SHANAHAN
Rappahannock News staff

After private text messages between county officials were made public on Facebook, allegations began swirling about the county's relationship with the Flint Hill Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company and its efforts to appoint new leadership.

The text messages were obtained by local attorney David Konick through a subpoena and were evidence in a lawsuit Konick filed against the Board of Super-

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From Page 1

visors last spring after the supervisors voted to oust the former leadership at Company 4.

The 19-page document was only recently circulated in the private “Rapp Unhinged” Facebook group last week, and contains text message conversations between County Administrator Garrey Curry and former Emergency Services Coordinator Sean Polster dating back to February 2022.

Amissville resident and Fire Levy Board member Page Glennie posted a link to the text messages and in an

Evidence of a plan to take over Company 4? County administrator refutes claims as “imagination...run wild”

accompanying commentary titled, “The Smoking Gun,” claimed the messages proved that “county officials were working behind the scenes to undermine Company 4.”

Glennie also shared his post on the Rappnet listserv, and the Mad-Rapp Recorder published it as an “op-ed” on Monday.

Glennie claims that the county refused to provide paid staff to Company 4 (there are two fire companies

in the county with paid staff), as shown in Curry’s messages to Polster, and that Curry worked to secure the Company 4 ambulance for the Rappahannock County Fire and Rescue Department (RCFRD), which does not currently own a transport vehicle.

Glennie went on to claim that because the RCFRD is using the Company 4 ambulance under the county’s EMS license, the county is eligible to receive reimbursement on the cost of transporting a patient to a hospital. Glennie wrote, “This also explains why Mr. Curry has been planning to build a garage that can house an ambulance.”

Curry responded to the allegations in a statement sought by the Rappahannock News, writing, “I appreciate that Mr. Glennie’s imagination has run wild with all sorts of inferences. While the words in the text messages speak for themselves, context is helpful owing to them not typically being in full sentences.”

Curry said that through an agreement with the volunteer companies, the county will not bill for services provided by county paramedics on a volunteer company’s ambulance through an EMS Cost Recovery Program. “AND we told the companies that they could bill for the services of RCFRD paramedics (and keep the funds),” Curry wrote.

He wrote that “Company 4 did state a few times that they needed [paid] staff and wanted the taxpayers to pay for them. I would not allow that to happen because... There was no possible way that the leadership

MORE INFORMATION

For a link to the text message excerpts posted on social media and County Administrator

Garrey Curry’s full response to them, see this story online by scanning the QR code or going to rappnews.link/to1



in place could manage their own staff.”

Curry wrote that hiring paid staff at Company 4 “would mean embedding county staff into a toxic environment that had recently led to what was nearly a fist fight at the station that required the Sheriff’s Office to respond.”

In response to the county approving a project for a garage, Curry wrote, “The garage approved by the Board of Supervisors is a shared facility for RCFRD to house the quick response vehicle (chase buggy) that is now stored under a tent like structure to keep the weather off of the vehicle... There is no intention for it to house an ambulance.”

After the text messages were posted on Facebook, rumors began circulating in the comment section about a “county takeover” of Company 4, which county officials have denied in the past.

Glennie said that Curry’s comments do not change his thoughts on his allegations.



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