

Kilmer shares reflections on Grand Island fire contract hearing

GUEST EDITORIAL BY GRAND ISLAND COUNCILMAN DAN KILMER

As your councilman, I want to share my takeaways from the Dec. 29 public hearing on the Grand Island Volunteer Fire Co. contract.

Public safety is my top priority, and I hold the highest respect for our dedicated GIFC volunteers. Yet we cannot ignore Grand Island's increasingly high property taxes forcing families, seniors and young people to consider leaving our island simply because they can no longer afford to stay.

Prior to September, Supervisor Marston and councilmen Christian Bahleda and Tom Digati engaged in unofficial, unsanctioned backroom negotiations regarding the fire company contract – conducted secretly, excluding other board members. These talks misled the fire company into

believing a 28% tax increase was already approved.

When the full board convened to initiate official contract negotiations, this caused immediate confusion and strife, clearly shown on video as the fire company's negotiators voiced frustration, saying they had been told the increase was a done deal and was in the supervisor's budget.

During those official negotiations, Councilman Bahleda expressed concern that reopening the process was disrespectful to the fire company.

While we had differing views on approach, Councilman Jose Garcia and I focused on open, transparent discussions and delivered results: slashing the proposed increase from 28% to 15%, then to 8% – more than a threefold reduction. At the hearing, fire company representatives confirmed 8% was sufficient, which I greatly appreciated.

.....
Editor's note: Supervisor Peter Marston told the Dispatch that only two members of the Town Board met a couple of times about the contract. He said that doesn't constitute an illegal act. It would be unlawful if it were MORE than two, but it was only Marston and one other, which he said is within the law. Marston said he met with Digati, and also met separately at a different time with Bahleda.

Correspondence from New York state's Committee on Open Government, dated Oct. 25, 2007, noted, "A meeting of a public body is a gathering of a quorum, a majority of its total membership, for the purpose of conducting public business, collectively, as a body. In the case of a town board consisting of five members, a quorum would be three, and a meeting would involve a gathering of three or more of its members for the purpose of conducting public business

together as a body. I note that it has been held that when two of five members of a public body convene, because two is less than a quorum, the Open Meetings Law does not apply [Mobil Oil Corp. V. City of Syracuse Industrial Development Agency, 224 AD2d 15, motion for leave to appeal denied, 89 NY2d 811 (1997)]."

.....
 Looking ahead, a major opportunity remains: transitioning 911 dispatch to Erie County. All of the towns in Niagara County and all of Monroe County are fully dispatched through a centralized system, a model proven safe and effective for years. This would cut costs by over \$400,000. The price tag for dispatch is about to double due to the New York state mandates that required two dispatchers 24/7. That would be a future savings to the taxpayers in excess of \$800,000 a year. We need to have this discussion –

and the courage to look forward and utilize technology to protect our residents and reduce their tax burden.

I am hopeful that the GIFC will be open to continuing the dispatch discussion openly and in public with Erie County 911 dispatch experts. This represents a significant opportunity to explore a balanced review of pros and cons, allowing the fire company, Town Board, and residents to hear the facts firsthand and judge whether a savings exceeding \$1 million over the three-year contract term makes sense – without ever compromising safety.

Grand Island residents deserve exceptional fire protection and real relief from crushing property taxes. We can – and must – provide both.

Thank you for your trust.

Grand Island

Prevent a winter blood shortage: Give blood or platelets now

American Red Cross Press Release

The American Red Cross is teetering on a blood shortage this winter, which could lead to a disruption in lifesaving care. Donors are urged to make an appointment to give blood or platelets now.

The Red Cross blood supply is under pressure following a busy holiday season when winter weather and packed schedules made it even tougher to ensure hospitals have the blood products needed for critical care. Without immediate action, doctors may have to make difficult decisions about which patients receive blood transfusions and who will need to wait. Donors with types O, A negative and B negative blood are especially needed now.

Don't wait – make an appoint-

ment to give blood or platelets now by visiting RedCrossBlood.org, downloading the Red Cross blood donor app or calling 1-800-RED CROSS.

For the seventh year, the Red Cross and the NFL are partnering in January for National Blood Donor Month to urge individuals to kick off 2026 with a blood donation. As a thank you to donors for helping address the need for blood during the critical post-holiday time, those who come to give Jan. 1-25 will be automatically entered for a chance to win an exciting Super Bowl LX giveaway. The winner and guest will get to enjoy Super Bowl LX in Santa Clara, California, access to day-of in-stadium pregame activities, tickets to the official Super Bowl Experience, round-trip airfare, three-night hotel accommodations (Feb. 6-9), plus a \$1,000 gift card for expenses. For full details, visit RedCrossBlood.org/SuperBowl.



Have events that you would like considered for publication?

Please send notices via email to dispatch@wnypapers.com

Deadline for submissions is 4 p.m. Monday of the week in which you would like your announcement to be published.

The Red Cross and pro football champion and blood donor Saquon Barkley are teaming up to remind donors that the best offense against a winter blood shortage is making and keeping blood donation appointments. The blood supply can drop quickly – now's the time to get in the game and give blood or platelets.

"I gave blood once in college and that was the only time I had ever been asked to give, until the Red Cross reached out this fall," Barkley said. "It was a no-brainer for me to give again. It only takes

about an hour and, once you realize in that short amount of time how much help it can bring, it's a

beautiful thing."

Blood donation opportunities:
 ✓ Jan. 13: 1-6 p.m., Grand Island Firehall, 2275 Baseline Road
 ✓ Jan. 19: 10 a.m. until 2 p.m., Delavan Grider Center, 877 E. Delavan Ave.
 ✓ Jan. 20: 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Youngstown Firehall, 625 Third St.
 ✓ Jan. 28: noon to 5 p.m., Gratiwick Fire Hose Co. No. 6, 110 Ward Road

ERIE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE REPORT

The following Grand Island response activity occurred Thursday, Dec. 18, to Wednesday, Dec. 31, according to the Erie County Sheriff's Office. ECSO deputies responded to 354 calls for the weeks of this report.

During this period, deputies responded to 15 alarm calls (unspecified); four business burglary alarms; four residential burglary alarms; seven welfare checks; 10 domestic/unknown trouble calls; one mental health call; one confused adult call; three fire calls; one warrant served; one order of protection served; and several first aid calls.

The following is a small sampling of the noteworthy incidents on Grand Island.

Thursday, Dec. 18

• **Grand Island Boulevard, fraud** – Complainant reported an unknown party attempted to cash a fake check on their account. Case referred to the ECSO detective bureau for investigation.

Saturday, Dec. 20

• **Fix Road, suspicious incident** – Deputies were dispatched to check a residence that was possibly broken into. The residence was checked by patrol, and all appeared in order. The owner was notified.

Sunday, Dec. 21

• **Whitehaven Road, assist person** – Complainant states he was threatened by a subject on Facebook. The messages were deleted

prior to arriving at the substation. Deputies were unable to determine that threats were made. Complainant to provide further information when it's available.

Monday, Dec. 22

• **Huth Road, burglary, residential** – Deputies were dispatched to a single-family residence that was entered with reported items missing. Scene was turned over to detectives for investigation. Ongoing investigation.

• **Tracey Lane, fraud** – Complainant reportedly fell victim to a scam. Case referred to detective bureau for investigation.

Tuesday, Dec. 23

• **Love Road, noise complaint** – Complainant reported loud music in the area. Patrol spoke to the other offender. The music was turned down for the night. No further incident.

• **Grand Island Boulevard, larceny** – Complainant stated a subject stole items from them. Complainant declined to pursue charges. No further assistance is needed.

Thursday, Dec. 25

• **W. River Road, accident, deer** – Deputies responded to a vehicle that struck a deer in the roadway. The vehicle remained drivable. NITTEC was notified.

Friday, Dec. 26

• **Whitehaven Road, accident,**

deer – Deputies responded to a vehicle that struck a deer in the roadway. The vehicle remained drivable with only minor damage. NITTEC was notified.

Saturday, Dec. 27

• **Grand Island Boulevard, fire, store** – Deputies responded to a local business for a grease fire. Employees were able to put out the flames using a fire extinguisher. The business remained closed temporarily.

Sunday, Dec. 28

• **Grand Island Boulevard, larceny** – Complainant reports at least five pairs of their shoes were stolen from the hallway in between apartments. Police report filed.

Monday, Dec. 29

• **First Street, fraud** – Complainant reports they received a letter from a phone company. The letter stated that money was owed, otherwise the bill would be sent to collections. Complainant states they don't have any accounts with company and they are being scammed. Police report filed.

Wednesday, Dec. 31

• **Baseline Road, accident, PDO** – Deputies responded to a two-vehicle accident with property damage. One vehicle was towed from the scene and the other vehicle remained drivable. NY accident report filed.

Dispatch

Since 1944

EXTRA! EXTRA!
Dispatch subscribers:

Did you know?

You are entitled to:
FREE announcements

- **Engagements (\$50 value)**
- **Weddings (\$50 value)**
- **Birth (\$50 value)**
- **Obituaries (\$125 value)**
- **(No word limit/ photo restriction)**
- **Anniversary (\$50 value)**

Plus:

You also receive

- ✓ **Home delivery**
- ✓ **4 free classified ads, including garage sales!**
- (\$13.50 value per listing)**

Offers apply to existing Dispatch subscribers only