

BOX

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FOLDER

95

**Fire Dept.-Motorized Fire
Engines**

1911-1912



**FIRE DEPARTMENT
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

July 19, 1911.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor,
City of New York.

S i r : -

I have yours of July 17, 1911 saying that you do not wish the policy of using automobile engines in the Fire Department abandoned. I have never thought of abandoning automobile engines. I think I was among the first to urge the automobile policy upon Commissioner Waldo.

Upon my request the Corporate Stock Budget Committee has allowed \$675,000. for apparatus, all of which is to be expended as soon as possible for automobile apparatus. There are at present 29 pieces of automobile apparatus in operation. Fourteen are under contract including one combination pumping engine and hose wagon and two gasoline propelled and pumping engines. This sum of \$675,000. will introduce during 1912, upwards of one hundred new pieces. So, during the year 1912, the Fire Department should have upwards of one hundred and fifty pieces of automobile apparatus, including engines, in service, which, I think, will be the largest number any city will have.

Commissioner Waldo bought one automobile engine, which is in the service now with Engine Company No.58, and

AUTO FIRE
ENGINES

Hon. William J. Gaynor.

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July 19, 1911.

had ordered three more of the same type. Upon report of Acting Chief of Department Kenlon that this engine had been out of commission twenty percent of the time, I thought it best not to order any more of that type until the one in service had gone through the heavy winter weather. As to automobile fire engines, I think we should be sure that they are able to get to fires and that they will of a certainty pump water after getting there.

I think you will agree with me that no type of automobile engine should be brought into the Fire Department until it has passed through the experimental stages in the hands of the manufacturers.

The engine in service with Company No. 58, is simply an old fashioned steam pumping engine on an automobile chassis. I have always been of the opinion that such a construction involves too much machinery on four wheels, and I think my opinion has been borne out by the troubles we have had with this particular engine.

The best informed men in the Fire Department are inclined to favor instead of this type an automobile tractor upon which the fifth wheel of existing steam engines can be placed. Under this construction, when the tractor gets out of order the horse gear can be put back and the steam pumping engine can be thus saved for service. On the other hand, the simplest accident to the No. 58 type of engine will cause the whole apparatus to go out of service.

Hon. William J. Gaynor.

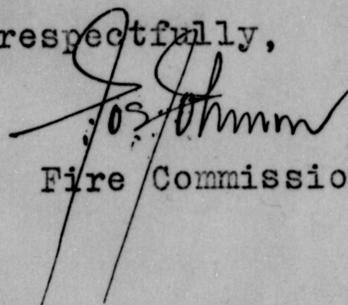
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July 19, 1911.

With its minimum mileage and wear and tear, and excellent care, the Fire Department is the ideal service for all sorts of automobile apparatus, and I am trying to introduce it as fast as I can get the money.

Pending the procurement of this contemplated automobile apparatus it may be necessary to buy a small number of horses, because, as yet, the automobile apparatus has not come in fast enough to supply the places of horses dead or disabled.

Very respectfully,


Fire Commissioner.

D.

July 19/11

Re. to July 17/11

Repson Mayors
Letter re. to future
of Auto's in DEph



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**FIRE DEPARTMENT
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

July 24, 1911.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor,
City of New York.

S i r : -

I asked Mr. E. A. Wilkinson, of the Nott Fire Engine Company, to call at Headquarters this morning, because it was he I suspected as having sought to create an impression in your mind that I was seeking to discredit automobile engines in favor of horses and horse dealers. He produced a copy of the letter which he had written to you, containing the intimation which I have mentioned.

The facts are simply that Mr. Wilkinson is unable to sell the New York Fire Department any more of the type of the old fashioned steam engine mounted on an automobile chassis, because I had decided against it upon information furnished by the best technical men in the department.

He had asked me to write a letter to the Chicago fire authorities which would enable him to combat my criticisms which, it appears, had reached Chicago and prevented the sale of a similar engine there. This I declined to do. I think it outrageous that he should have permitted his disappointment to take the form of criticizing my motives in this matter, and I so informed him.

However, I have laid his troubles before a Board

Hon. William J. Gaynor.

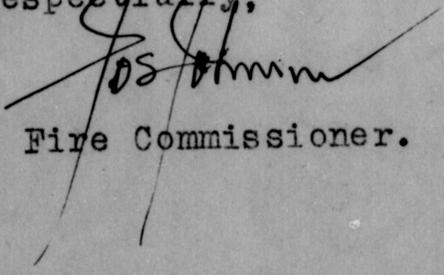
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July 24, 1911.

which I have just appointed to select automobile apparatus, consisting of Deputy Fire Commissioner Philip P. Farley, Acting Chief John Kenlon, Battalion Chief John P. Howe, and Captain Charles S. Demarest of the Manhattan Repair Shops. I have requested them to act justly toward Mr. Wilkinson, notwithstanding his utterly unreasonable and unfair conduct.

Brooklyn will need about thirty fire horses very soon, specifications for which will be advertised and contract for which will go to the lowest bidder. But, as I told Mr. Wilkinson, the horse affairs of the Fire Department are no business of fire apparatus manufacturers.

Very respectfully,


Fire Commissioner.

D.

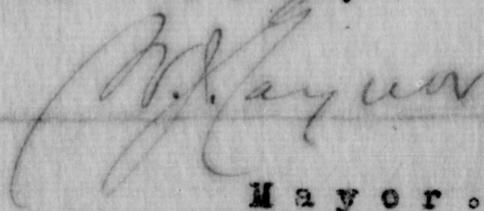
July 24/1911
Rep on Mayors
letter re to E. N.
Walterson of the
Auto Engine Co

August 30, 1911.e

S i r :

Your favor of August 25th, informing me that the streets, especially in the central portions of the city, are so filled with dangerous holes and out of repair that the new automobile engines and trucks of the Fire Department can not be introduced and used without being damaged and broken, is at hand. I can do no more than call the attention of the Borough Presidents to the matter, unless I recommend to the Legislature that the repair of the streets be placed in charge of a city Department of Streets to be created. I agree with you that the condition of the streets in some parts of the city is deplorable.

Very truly yours,


M a y o r .

Joseph Johnson, Esq.,
Fire Commissioner.



FIRE DEPARTMENT
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

C O P Y.

August 15th, 1912.

International Power Company,
165 Broadway,
New York City.

S i r s:-

I have yours of August 15th, 1912, by William R. Sheldon, Assistant Treasurer, protesting against award of twenty-eight second size steam fire engines, propelled by tractors, to the American-La France Fire Engine Company.

You complaint that there was only one bid, yet you did not yourself enter the competition.

You bid on these same specifications before against which you now protest as being exclusive. Your previous bid was \$9100. which was thrown out. It was \$200. more than the appropriation per engine. The present bid is \$210. less than yours.

The deposit made by the American-La France Company is correct.

The specifications upon which you previously bid and against which you now protest, were approved by the Comptroller and the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, without which approval they could not have been advertised.

The type of motor which you criticise has been in experimental use in the Fire Department and has done most satisfactory work in the second busient fire company in Greater New York.

I myself regret that there was not more competition and I urged other manufacturers to bid.

As for your company, I think it should be the last to protest insomuch as the price per engine would have made it impossible to make the award to you for the simple reason that the appropriation would not have covered it. I note, too, that when you were the sole bidder you made no complaint.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) Jos. Johnson,

Fire Commissioner.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE MAYOR:

Report of Fire Commissioner Johnson on the protest of the International Power Co. against the award of a contract for automobile fire apparatus to a competitor (the La France Company).

The award was made formally on Friday last, but the Commissioner has arranged with the Finance Department to hold the matter over pending the consideration of the protest.

He says the specifications for these machines were prepared by the Apparatus Board of the Department after long and careful investigation, and that the engineers of the Finance Department approved of the specifications. The Commissioner says that when bids were first advertised for, the International Power Company was the only bidder, tendering an inefficient and unreliable wheel tractor at an excessive price. Their bid was rejected. On a second advertisement, the La France Company was the sole bidder, neither the International Power Company nor any other manufacturer putting in a bid, which would have established competition, and the bid of the La France Company was accepted because their bid was in proper form and met all the requirements of the specifications.

The Commissioner says that the statement that the specifications were modified to exclude competition is false; they have not been changed one iota. The International people, he says, at a higher price of \$210 per engine than the present award, proposed, when they bid, to furnish a type of engine which has been tried out in the Department and found unsuitable for the work. He says their protest is made in bad

faith, and thinks that the judgment of the Apparatus Board should more than offset the opinion of the protestants. He believes that the award should stand as it is made. He hastened to make the award because the houses into which the apparatus is to be placed are near completion.



FIRE DEPARTMENT
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

August 19th, 1912.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor, City of New York.

S i r:-

I hand you herewith copy of letter dated August 15th, sent in reply to the protest of the same date of the International Power Co. as to award of contract for 28 second size steam fire engines to the American-La France Fire Engine Co. I awarded this contract Friday. I was not here Saturday when your letter came, but this morning I called up the Comptroller's office and they have agreed to hold up the award until hearing further from me. Whether the La France Company will release us or not, I do not know. I think the award should stand.

The specifications advertised were prepared by an Apparatus Board consisting of Chief Kenlon, Chief of Construction Demarest, Deputy Commissioner Farley and Battalion Chief Crawley. They studied the situation for six months, and I sent them to the National Convention of Fire Chiefs in Milwaukee last year, where they saw everything that had been made in America.

The engineers of the Comptroller's office, after a thorough investigation, approved of these specifications and they have been approved by the Board of Estimate.

Competition in fire engines for the New York

service is very limited, the possible bidders being the American-La France Fire Engine Co., The Nott Co., The Ahrens Co. and the Amoskeag Co., controlled by the International Power Co., the present protestants. First, I advertised a test bid for two pieces under the specifications. When the bids were opened, the only bid was by the International Power Co. at \$9,100. each, which I regarded as excessive and threw out. They bid on a four wheel tractor which has in practice in the Department proved inefficient and unreliable and high priced. They proposed furnishing an Amoskeag engine which we regard as an obsolete type. When readvertising the identical specifications without change, the American-La France was the only bidder, notwithstanding the Nott and Ahrens were invited to bid. The International Power Co. did not bid in the last instance. They could have established competition by bidding. They were the sole bidders in the first letting, now they are protesting against my awarding to a sole and lower bidder.

The other statements made by the International Power Co. are simply false. We have been conducting experiments with the tractor we purpose getting in 58 Engine, the second busiest company in the City, and this tractor has carried the engine out on 475 runs in six months without a break down. In addition thereto, it ran in a test through the slush, snow and ice immediately after the Equitable fire for more than one hundred miles. In my opinion it is the best tractor we can get.

The statement that specifications have been modified to exclude competition is altogether false. They could not have been modified except by the Comptroller's office and the Board of

Estimate. They have not been changed one iota.

We have been experiencing very great difficulty in determining upon the type of motor drawn pumping engine to be used in the Fire Department. The attempt up to date to devise an efficient gasoline propelled and pumping engine has been a failure. Two contracts were let about two years ago for this type of engine, and the manufacturers each spent twice as much as the contract price in trying to perfect them for our heavy requirements. They submitted the machines for test and we were compelled to reject them, which rejection was made without protest on the part of the manufacturers. An attempt was also made to tractor a steam fire engine by retaining the horse drawn wheels and making the gasoline motor an integral part of the machine. This machine was built by the Nott Co., and was tried out and proved a total failure. We were therefore forced to the conclusion that the only solution was to retain the steam for pumping and to secure a tractor upon which the fifth wheel of the engine could rest, said tractor being interchangeable and detachable.

The protest of the International Power Co. is made in bad faith, because they themselves bid upon the same general type and at a price \$210. higher per engine than the present award, but instead of offering to furnish a modern steam fire engine, they proposed to furnish one from the Amoskeag factory, which has never made an engine of the type called for in the specification and a four wheel tractor more expensive, more complicated and in our opinion not as efficient as the one which we now seek.

Speaking generally as to competition in the present experimental stage of auto driven fire apparatus, it is highly

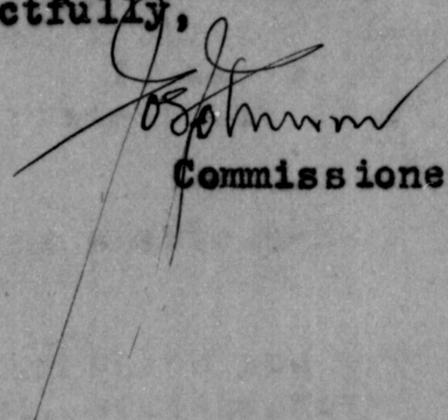
Hon. Wm. J. Gaynor,

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desirable to have all of each type of apparatus furnished if possible by one maker so that they can be standardized and made easier to repair. I think it would be foolish to have half a dozen different small makers furnishing these pieces. As a matter of fact, realizing the danger of awarding the expenditure of a large sum of money in an experimental stage, we have proceeded with the utmost care and pains. I think we can place the judgment of the Apparatus Board against the opinion of the protestants, and I believe the award should stand as I have made it. I hastened to make the award because the houses into which these apparatus are going are nearing completion.

I shall thank you for an early reply.

Respectfully,



Commissioner.

Enclosure.