

Board of Fire Commissioners

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 4, 2021

Present: Commissioner Longo, Commissioner Cafazzo, Commissioner Dutton, Commissioner Quagliaroli and Commissioner Higgins in person. Commissioner Spencer by Zoom.

Others: Chief Michael Thurz, Assistant Chief David Thurz, Deputy Chief Dennler in person. Matthew King with Information Technology and Lt. Paul Kehoe by Zoom.

Absent: Deputy Chief Motowidlak

Commissioner Longo called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

Approval of Minutes: Commissioner Longo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 4, 2021 meeting. Commissioner Spencer made a motion to accept the minutes with Commissioner Higgins seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Chief's Report: Chief Thurz reported the following:

- Recommend Brendan Sullivan (Company 1) and Kevin Donovan (Company 4) for permanent membership based on their respective Captains' recommendations. Commissioner Dutton made a motion to accept both members with Commissioner Cafazzo seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- The Connecticut Firefighters Association will be inducting Firefighter Edward "Jake" Urbansky into its "Hall of Fame". A dinner to recognize Firefighter Urbansky will be held on September 23, 2021 at The Aqua Turf. Firefighter Urbansky is the first Glastonbury firefighter to be inducted into the "Hall of Fame".
- The new self-contained breathing apparatus are in service as of February 6, 2021. Commissioner Dutton wanted to commend all those that were involved in the transition. Commissioner Longo echoed Commissioner Dutton's comment.
- Revised renovation costs for just the restrooms modifications at Stations 3 and 4 remain over budget by \$64,000. Chief Thurz has discussed the revised costs with both Facilities and the Town Manager. Next step will be to develop a plan in how to get the required work completed at both stations, as well as other items that remain open. Facilities is also obtaining separate quotes for the proposed kitchen improvements. Chief Thurz anticipates that the cost for the kitchen improvements will be significantly less than previously quoted. As of now, the renovation work remains on hold. Commissioner

Longo inquired if Facilities staff could perform some of the work, which Chief Thurz replied no. Facilities staff only completed the ceiling and light replacement at the other stations.

- The proposed FY'21-22 budget is entering its final month. The Town Council will vote on the budget at the end of the month.
- The Department is a recipient of two separate grants, totaling \$17,000 from the Hartford Foundation of Public Given, through the Sistarò Fund. The funds will be used towards the purchase of the gear washers and dryers for Stations 2 and 4.
- An "Assistance to Fire Act Grant, totaling \$165,000 for a "Source Captured Exhaust Extrication System" was submitted last month. The Town's cost share, if awarded would be 10% or \$16,500. Commissioner Longo inquired when FEMA would award the grants. Chief Thurz replied he did not know.
- As a follow up to Commissioner Longo's questions regarding vaccinations and oil samples from the previous meeting. The Department is no longer able to assist any member wishing to get a vaccine through the sponsor hospital. As for obtaining oil samples on the apparatus, Vehicle Maintenance now has the fitting to conduct the test.
- As a follow up to Commissioner Quagliaroli's question regarding DOT inspections last month, Chief Thurz spoke with the fleet superintendent. While some apparatus do not have current inspection stickers, they were completed. The inspection reports are in the files at Vehicle Maintenance. Vehicle Maintenance is aware that some apparatus are behind schedule and between Deputy Chief Motowidlak and Chief Thurz, they will work in resolving this matter.
- ESO, the vendor who currently owns Firehouse, the Department's record management system, it will discontinue support at the end of the year. The Department has utilized Firehouse since 2002. The Department will need to begin investigation other software vendors or enter into an agreement with ESO and convert to their platform. The cost to implement at this time is unknown, but estimated to be as much as \$30,000.
- The Fire Chief's position is becoming more demanding, and continuing on a part-time basis, while working a full-time job is becoming a challenge. I have briefed the Town Manager on the increasing demands to the position, where the Department is going, and future needs. There are also some other areas responsibilities that revolve around risk management that a full-time Fire Chief could perform. The Fire Chief's position entails a host of administrative responsibilities. Some of which, I cannot complete given my current situation. While I did share my thoughts with Commissioner Longo in the past, I did not bring this to the Commission attention because it was my personal decision to speak to the Town Manager, as my direct supervisor. At this time, I do not know what my intentions are going forward.

Commissioner Dutton opened the discussion, expressing his frustration that Commission was not advised prior to Chief Thurz's decision to address the matter with the Town Manager. Commissioner Dutton noted that the Fire Commission is technically in charge of the Fire Department, while the Town Manager is in charge of the employee.

Commissioner Longo agreed with Commissioner Dutton's comment. He felt that the Commission should have been involved in the decision process, and informed Chief Thurz of his feeling after the matter.

Commissioner Quagliaroli inquired if the decision to go from part-time to full-time was just a decision between the Town Manager and the Fire Chief, and questioned if there was going to be any input at the Commission's level.

Chief Thurz commented that decision to discuss the matter with the Town Manager from his prospective was personal, and not appropriate for discussion in a public forum. As far as input from the Commission, Chief Thurz was not in a position to answer the question.

Because of the personal nature of the matter, and not an agenda item Commissioner Dutton did not feel it was appropriate to discuss the matter further. However, the Commission should establish a special meeting at another time to discuss the matter further.

Commissioner Longo asked if the Fire Chief was to go full-time, was the Town going to utilize the normal course of posting the position and conducting interviews.

Commissioner Cafazzo noted that in the past the Commission has relied on the Chief to speak directly with the Town Manager on their behalf, now the Commission is saying that the Chief should not speak with the Town Manager. If that is the case then the Commission, in particularly the Chairman should be having conversations with the Town Manager.

Commissioner Longo questioned the process of going to a full-time Chief, and that it should be coming from the Chair of the Fire Commission, not the Fire Chief.

Commissioner Dutton stated that the dialog on the matter should not continue any further, as he was not sure if it was appropriate, and that he had a number of questions and comments that he still wanted to discuss.

Chief Thurz replied that the Commission can talk about the position itself, but if there were to be any dialogue about a particular individual that it should be done in executive session, with that individual present.

Commissioner Longo asked if the Commission should have a meeting with the Town Manager in order to discuss this matter further.

Commissioner Spencer stated that he was not in favor of sharing the Chief with any other function of the Town. He further stated that in the past, when he was Chair of the Fire Commission, he would have meetings with the Town Manager. He further stated that he feels members of the Council think it is important for the Commission, in particular the Chair and Vice Chair to interact routinely with the Town Manager.

Chief Thurz reiterated that the other duties he spoke about revolved around risk management and that the fire service is in the risk business. He asked to table his comment regarding the Fire Chief's position and other functions for now.

- Review of monthly operating expenses:

Old Business:

- Commissioner Longo inquired on the construction status of the pavilion at the Training Facility. Assistant Chief Thurz reported that the project is coming along. In the coming week the roof will be shingled. Commissioner Longo asked if there would be landscaping around the pavilion, which Assistant Chief Thurz replied no. Commissioner Dutton inquired if there would be electricity or lights, which Assistant Chief Thurz stated not at this time.

Committee Report:

- Commissioner Quagliaroli provided an overview of the latest strategic committee meeting, held on February 23, 2021. The discussion focused on performance evaluations and developing job descriptions for the various positions within the department. Commissioner Longo inquired if Human Resources needed to be involved in reviewing the performance review. Chief Thurz stated before performance reviews that revised job descriptions needed to be completed. The timeframe to implement performance reviews is a year away. Commissioner Longo inquired about the frequencies of the reviews, which Commissioner Quagliaroli stated once a year around the end of the unit year timeframe. The group's next meeting will continue to focus on job descriptions.

New Business:

- Commissioner Dutton made a motion to hold a "Special" meeting on March 15, 2021, 6:30 PM at Station 1 to discuss the Fire Chief's position. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Quagliaroli. The motion passed unanimously.

Correspondences:

- None

Next Regular Meeting: April 1, 2021, 6:30 PM via Zoom.

Meeting Adjourned: Commissioner Dutton made a motion to adjourn, which Commissioner Longo seconded and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:24 PM.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael P. Thurz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Michael Thurz
Fire Chief

- c: Fire Commission (6)
- Fire Chiefs (4)
- Fire Captains (4)
- Richard J. Johnson, Town Manager
- Chris Siwy, Fire Marshal
- Mary Visone, Purchasing Agent
- Robert DiBella, Civil Preparedness