

Board of Fire Commissioners
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

January 6, 2022

Present: Commissioner Longo, Commissioner Dutton, Commissioner Quagliaroli,
Commissioner Cafazzo, Commissioner Cavanaugh and Commissioner Cofield

Others: Chief Michael Thurz, Assistant Chief David Thurz, Deputy Chief Motowidlak
and Deputy Chief Bernard Dennler

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 December 2, 2021 meeting. Commissioner Dutton made the motion to accept, with Commissioner Cavanaugh seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Chief's Report: Chief Thurz reported on the following items:

- Department submitted an Assistance to Fire Act Grant application for \$47,800 to FEMA. The application is to replace the Department's Four Gas, Five Gas and Hydrogen Cyanide meters, as well as incorporate an accountability system with the self-contained breathing apparatus.
- The Department's swearing in ceremony scheduled, for January 19th at the Riverfront Community Center, is postponed due to the uptick in Covid cases within the community.
- Annual flow testing of the self-contained breathing apparatus took place on December 14th and 15th. All self-contained breathing apparatus passed.
- Commissioner Cofield inquired if the Department has seen an uptick in Covid cases within the membership. Chief Thurz replied that one member tested positive and one suspects they have Covid. Chief Thurz noted the mask mandate was re-instated. Commissioner Cofield asked if there is a contingency plan, or a specific percentage of members with Covid that would change dispatching protocols. Chief Thurz replied not at this time, but would consider if a significant spike were to occur.
- Commissioner Longo asked for an updated on the vehicle exhaust system for the fire stations. Chief Thurz noted three quotes received ranging from \$187K to \$194K. The majority of the cost is cover by the \$150K FEMA grant, with the Fire Department responsible for the balance. Chief Thurz is waiting FEMA's approval of the required environmental documentation submitted. Once approved, either a request for proposal or a vendor selected from a cooperative contract list. Each vendor provide a list of references, which Chief Thurz will call before making a final vendor selection. Commissioner Longo inquired about the additional monies, and access to those funds. Chief Thurz replied that either through a special appropriation, similar to the purchase of

the self-contained breathing apparatus, or through next year's Capital Improvement Program.

- Review of operating expenses
 - Commissioner Longo inquired if the cut off and chain saws were new additions or replacements. Chief Thurz replied that they were replacement.
 - Commissioner Dutton inquired if they were gas or battery operated, and if battery was even considered. Chief Thurz replied they were gas operated. While battery operated saws are available it was not considered.
 - Commissioner Longo inquired as to the status of the renovation work at Stations 3 and 4. Chief Thurz noted that \$475K is a request in next year's Capital Improvement Program to perform the work at Stations 3 and 4, as well as complete the remaining work at Stations 1 and 2. No additional work has taken place at this time.

Old Business

a) Apparatus Mechanic

- Chief Thurz provide an overview of the Department's Vehicle Maintenance budget. The current fiscal year's budget is \$79.3K, which consists of three categories: Outside Repairs - \$39.7K, Parts and Tires - \$26.5K and Fuel - \$13.1K.
- Chief Thurz noted that Westfield and Rocky Hill Fire Departments currently have full-time staff that serve as mechanics. Rocky Hill's vehicle maintenance budget is \$280K+/-, and employees a full-time and part-time mechanic. While both mechanics are Emergency Vehicle Technician certified, they are not active firefighters. The part-time mechanic also serves as a custodian for the fire stations.
- Rocky Hill currently allocates approximately \$202.2K towards salaries and benefits for the two positions, which equates to two and a half times more than Glastonbury's overall vehicle maintenance budget. In addition to working on vehicles, both individuals are responsible to maintain the self-contained breathing apparatus, and perform routine maintenance on the ambulance association's vehicles since they share a facility.
- Chief Thurz concluded that Vehicle Maintenance has four mechanics on staff who are able to work on Glastonbury's fire apparatus. For the most part any repair to an apparatus has been in a timely manner. There will be an occasion when a repair takes longer due to parts not readily being available. Furthermore, if the Commission wants to pursue a full-time dedicated mechanic that decision would need to come from a higher level.

- Commissioner Dutton asked if Vehicle Maintenance was back charging for the work completed, and the amount of time allocated to fixing the fire apparatus. Chief Thurz replied that labor is not charged, and on average five to ten hours a month is allocated to fire apparatus repairs. Commissioner Dutton further asked what things Vehicle Maintenance cannot work on regarding the fire apparatus. Deputy Chief Motowidlak replied because fire apparatus are emergency vehicles, brakes and major pump repairs are outsource to a third party, along with a Department of Transportation vehicle inspection. Chief Thurz also noted that each year the budget for outside repair increases to take into consideration rising labor and part costs.
- Commissioner Longo asked if getting an individual certified as an Emergency Vehicle Technician is feasible. Commissioner Cafazzo noted that it might be a contractual issue within the bargaining unit. Commissioner Dutton inquired as to the number of courses, or hours required of an Emergency Vehicle Technician, which Assistant Chief Thurz replied was 120 hours. Chief Thurz further stated that getting an individual certified within Vehicle Maintenance needs to be coordinated with the Fleet Manager, and not a decision of the Fire Department. Commissioner Dutton inquired if Chief Thurz had any discussion on the matter with the Fleet Manager, which he replied it has been.
- Commissioner Longo polled the other board members if the concept was worth pursuing further. While Commissioners Cofiell and Quagliaroli were in favor, Commissioner Cavanaugh did not see it being worthwhile given the overall cost. Commissioner Cafazzo noted that going to dedicate repair facility that specializes in fire apparatus seemed to be a better alternative. A trained technician on fire apparatus would be able to troubleshoot an issue faster. Chief Thurz reminded the board members that adding personnel is a decision at the Town Manager level, not the Fire Commission. Commissioner Dutton's recommendation was not to pursue the matter further as it did not seem financially feasible. However, if the need arises to reconsider it in the future.
- Both Assistant Chief Thurz and Deputy Chief Motowidlak noted that a designed work location, tools, lifting equipment and other investments are other factors to take into consideration. Furthermore, Vehicle Maintenance already has someone on staff who focusses on the apparatus, and overall the fleet is in good condition.
- Commissioner Quagliaroli felt that the cost for some of the work completed in a Department of Transportation inspection appeared to be high, in particular oil changes. Commissioner Quagliaroli suggested Vehicle Maintenance staff perform this work instead. Chief Thurz noted that a couple of years ago that the Fleet Manager issued a request for proposal for fire apparatus work. The Fleet Manager than vetted all of the proposals and associated cost. Chief Thurz has since spoken with the Fleet Manager about issuing a new request for proposal

given some changes in the industry, and will make note to ask about the total cost in performing an oil change.

- Commissioner Longo agreed with Commissioner Dutton that it did not appear feasible to move forward with the concept. Commissioner Longo suggested that the idea be tabled, and if need be revisited in the future. Chief Thurz noted that if fire apparatus repairs becomes an issue that the board would be informed.

b) Ultra High Pressure pump demonstration

- Chief Thurz provided the Commission with his thoughts on Ultra high-pressure as a firefighting tool. He noted that high pressure is an application, but as a first line attack in today's structure fire it is not realistic. Today's fires contain large quantities of petroleum-based products and synthetics that burn faster and hotter versus traditional, more natural materials such as wood and cotton. Today's home contents are largely synthetic materials – carpets, plastics, composites with an exponentially higher rate of heat release than more traditional, wood-based materials of the past. While fires of the past were fuel by wood and cotton products that burn at 8,000 British Thermal Units per pound, today's modern day furnishing burns between 12,000 and 20,000 British Thermal Units per pound. With today's fire behavior, flashover is essentially occurring when the fire department arrives on scene, which requires large volume of water to cool the temperatures.
- Chief Thurz noted that the application of high pressure would be ideal for brush fires. If the forestry units were ever replaced a high-pressure skid unit could be considered to replace the existing equipment. Commissioner Cofelli noted that high-pressure concept is another tool in the toolbox, like a pressurized water can. The decision to investigate the concept further is really up to a truck committee. Commissioner Cafazzo agreed that the decision is operational, and not a decision for the board to make.

New Business

a) NONE

- Chief Thurz reminded board members that since the meetings are public, discussion items must be on the agenda. He asked board members if they had a topic they wished to bring up for discussion to advise Commissioner Longo the Monday before the scheduled meeting so it becomes an agenda item.

Committee Reports

a) Planning Committee Update

- Commissioner Quagliaroli provided the board members with an update of the last meeting held on December 20, 2021. The majority of the job descriptions were

completed and approved. All Department members had the opportunity to review and provide their feedback. Committee members reviewed the proposed Performance Appraisal, as well as given a draft of the Assistant Chief's job description.

Next Regular Meeting: February 3, 2022, at Company 1, 2825 Main Street, 6:30 PM.

Meeting Adjourned: Commissioner Cavanaugh made a motion to adjourn, which Commissioner Cofiell seconded and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:26 PM.



Michael Thurz
Recording Secretary

- 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