

Board of Fire Commissioners
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

May 5, 2022

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

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

Absent: Commissioner Dutton and 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 March 3, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Quagliaroli made the motion to accept with Commissioner Cavanaugh seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Chief's Report:

Chief Thurz reported the following:

- New gear washer and dryers installed at Stations 2 and 4.
- Next fiscal year's budget has been approved. The Department's overall operating budget will be \$1,474 million.
- The truck committee, which Captains' Cody and Kessler co-chair is established. Deputy Chief Motowidlak will moderate the meetings on behalf of the Chief's office. The committee is working through the draft of the RFP.
- Purchase order issued for the electrical work associated with the exhaust system. No date as to when the work will commence.
- Awards dinner held on April 9th at the Villa Louisa in Bolton.
- A swearing in ceremony for three recently promoted officers and eight new members held on April 20th at the Riverfront Community Center.
- Accounting has received the second installment of unit pay for the members. Total fire and training units for the six-month period was \$81.4K, with stipends at \$41.1K.
- On April 21st there was a small shed fire on Mountain Road.
- On April 27th attended the State's Emergency Management Symposium with Emergency Management Director Robert DiBella in Prospect, CT.

- On April 29th attended an all hazards class sponsored by Findlay University at Eastern Connecticut Fire School.
- On May 5th attended an Enbridge's gas line training with Emergency Management Director Robert DiBella.
- As previously noted, there is a committee to look at replacing the Department's current records management system. ESO purchased our current vendor, Firehouse and at the end of the year will no longer provide tech support. The committee has been looking at a variety of vendors.
- On May 24th the State of Connecticut will be having a mock natural disaster drill. A tabletop hurricane, which will involve opening the Town's Emergency Operations Center.
- As a follow up to some questions raised at the March meeting, oil samples continue to be collected on a periodic basis by Vehicle Maintenance during the annual preventative maintenance. The Chief consulted with the Fire Marshal and Town Engineer as to the regulation regarding plantings around the underground cisterns, and installation of a dry hydrant at Quality Name Plate. The Town Engineer will have a member of his staff reach out to residents on the plantings. Engineering will work with the department and property owner of Quality Name Plate as it relates to the installation of a dry hydrant.
- Review of operating expenses
- Commissioner Longo asked for an update on the status of the annual truck inspection reports. Chief Thurz noted that in the past the reports were upload to Firehouse. However, with the changes that have taken place within Firehouse, the Captain currently receive a paper copy of the inspection report. The goal, once a new records management system is in place will be to upload the report into the system, with a notification sent to those that need to review the information. Commissioner Quagliaroli inquired when the new records management system would be in place. Chief Thurz hoped by the fall of 2022.
- Commissioner Longo asked about the progress on the generator replacement for Station 2. Chief Thurz replied that the funds are available through the Town's Emergency Preparedness initiative, and Facilities is responsible to order and install the unit. Commissioner Cofiehl asked if it was a new unit, or a unit that was being repurposed like Station 1. Chief Thurz replied it would be a new unit and probably be located outside the fire station.
- Commissioner Longo inquired if there were any updates on the Station 3 and 4 renovations. Chief Thurz responded that now with the budget approved he met with Dave Sacchitella (Facilities) and Mary Visone (Purchasing) on April 21st to discuss the best approach to

complete the project between in house staff and general contractors. Commissioner Quagliaroli inquired as to the dollar amount allocated for each company. Chief Thurz replied there is no set number per station. Total funds available is \$675K, which reflects \$200K previously fund and \$475K recently approved. Commissioner Longo added that while it is not Chief Thurz's fault, he found it a little disconcerting that after two plus years there has not been a lot of progress. Chief Thurz replied that he stopped the project because there was not enough money to complete the work, but with the budget approved, work will recommence. Commissioner Cavanaugh asked what the renovations are for, which Commissioner Longo replied bathroom and kitchens. Chief Thurz noted that it also includes window replacement, door replacement, the women's locker room at Station 2, door jams and other items that need attention. Commissioner Quagliaroli was under the impression the \$675K was just for Stations 3 and 4. Chief Thurz wanted to note that while its apparent work has stopped, Facilities has been in touch with a variety of contractors to get estimates for the work that needs to be completed. Commissioner Longo inquired if Facilities staff would perform any of the work. Chief Thurz noted that they would do some of the work, such as the ceilings and lighting. Commissioner Cofield inquired about the staffing level and if it was sufficient.

- Commissioner Longo inquired about a conversation that took place at the previous commission meeting relating to the trade in value of the apparatus that would be replaced, and that Chief Thurz eluded to the fact that they were not worth a lot of money, or that they were valued at \$10K or less each. Chief Thurz replied that he was referencing the two older vehicles, which were 1980 vintage based off a conversation he had with a vendor. Commissioner Longo felt that \$30K could reduce the overall purchase price of the new apparatus, but was under the impression that Purchasing or Town Hall did not want to consider this alternative. Chief Thurz noted that while the Request for Proposal is not complete there is a provision for the vendors to provide a trade in value. Furthermore, the last Request for Proposal included a trade in component as well. The Commissioners were satisfied that a trade in component would be incorporated within the Request for Proposal. However, Chief Thurz advised the Commission not to suspect a significant win fall from the vehicles, which they agreed. Commissioner Quagliaroli asked if another department purchased one of the vehicles if the Fire Department would receive any benefit from the sale. Chief Thurz stated any proceeds from the sale of an apparatus would go back to the general fund.

Old Business:

- None

New Business:

- Even though there was nothing on the agenda, Commissioner Longo asked if there was any new business. Commissioner Longo stated he had one other comment, which deviated between old and new business and did not require a vote. In light of the current economic circumstances, and given the significant progress made by the truck committee, Commissioner Longo asked if a commercial truck with four doors was a consideration. The Department has always gone the custom route, and as a concerned taxpayer he wanted to know the difference between custom and commercial, and if the price difference was very little or six figures. He asked if that information could be gather.

Commissioner Cafazzo stated that he was confused, and asked what kind of truck Commissioner Longo was referring to. Commissioner Longo stated a commercial cab and chassis as opposed to a custom for a rescue pumper, pumper, or whatever configuration. Chief Thurz replied the wheelbase would be longer. Commissioner Cafazzo stated that it was near impossible today to find a commercial chassis. Commissioner Cofelli stated that was the problem with the Request for Proposal, and that it will be hard to get a guarantee price. Chief Thurz stated that the committee is aware of the ongoing price increases and told to factor inflationary increases when designing the apparatus. Chief Thurz noted that there are very few commercial fire apparatus built in the area and that the commercial industry is struggling with supply chain issues too. Commissioner Longo noted that there are supply chain issues, but felt that the custom manufacturer might even be worst off. Commissioner Cafazzo added that there is additional cost to outfit a commercial vehicle to serve as a fire apparatus. Chief Thurz noted that commercial cab and chassis is a more practical application for a tanker, not a ladder or rescue pumper. Commissioner Longo raised the issue only to see if it would speed up the delivery of the vehicles. He recognized that there are backups everywhere and was just asking the question.

Committee Report:

- Commissioner Quagliaroli reported that on April 19th the Strategic Planning committee meet. The meeting focused on revamping the per diem duties, per diem worker eligibilities and firefighter retention. Chief Thurz noted that the final version of Standard Operating Guideline for the performance appraisal, and the performance appraisal document itself was sent to the membership for comments and due back in 30 days. Commissioner Cavanaugh asked if there were any comments. Chief Thurz reported no comments received to date, while Commissioner Quagliaroli stated that some who did look at it said that the document is what they expected. Chief Thurz noted that the appraisal document changed from being subjective to more of a numerical grading format in an effort to make the process easier. The next meeting will be May 23rd and will focus on retention.

As for retention, Commissioner Quagliaroli stated that the committee is open to suggestions. Recruitment appears to be fine, attracting three to four people a quarter. However, Chief Thurz reported that some new recruits do not last very long. Commissioner Quagliaroli noted that looking at the data most new members these days last between three to five years, which is the new norm. People are transient, along with lifestyle changes. Commissioner Cafazzo even stated that career fire departments are struggling to attract new members. Commissioner Longo asked about adding financial incentives, which Commissioner Quagliaroli replied that we are trying to stay away from that concept. Chief Thurz stated that it is also important to look at the bigger picture as to where we are going to be three to five years from now as an organization. Fire Departments are now an all hazard organization and there might be other responsibilities pushed onto the organization. Commissioner Quagliaroli concluded that everything is changing and the model before us is certainly not going to be the same in the near future and that we need to be looking at this now.

Other:

- Commissioner Longo raised the issue of attendance at Commission meetings. He felt that if known early that there was not going to be a quorum, a meeting could be postpone for a week. A revised meeting date is easy to repost with the Town Clerk's office. He would

not like to see commission meetings canceled as it reflects on their credibility if done too often. Chief Thurz replied he disagrees with the idea as it effects his schedule, as well as the other Chiefs and the Administrative Assistant. The meetings are schedule a year in advance, and he has it blocked off on his calendar. He asked respectfully that the schedule be adhered too.

Next Regular Meeting: June 2, 2022, at Company 1, 2825 Main Street, 6:30 PM.

Meeting Adjourned: Commissioner Cafazzo made a motion to adjourn, which Commissioner Cofiell seconded and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.



Deborah Torres
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