

Board of Fire Commissioners
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

July 7, 2022

Present: Commissioner Longo, Commissioner Dutton, Commissioner Quagliaroli
Commissioner Cofiell, and Commissioner Cavanaugh

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

Absent: Commissioner Cafazzo 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 May 5, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Cofiell made the motion to accept with a second from Commissioner Cavanaugh. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of June 2, 2022 minutes was tabled as there were not enough members present to vote since both Commissioners Longo and Cavanaugh were absent from that meeting.

Public Comment: None

Chief's Report:

Chief Thurz reported the following:

- The Chief will be on vacation from August 2nd to August 8th.
- Extended an invitation to the Commissioners to be his guests at the Connecticut Fire Chiefs dinner in Portland on July 19th.
- Lieutenant Jamie Feldman has requested up to a one-year leave of absence from his position as Lieutenant for personal reasons. However, will remain active in the department when time permits. Firefighter Tyler Cafro will serve as Acting Lieutenant until further notice.
- Review of June operating expenses. Commissioner Dutton asked if the Commissioners could receive a copy of the year-end expenditures for all the vehicles. He was interested in seeing the vehicles with the highest repair cost. Chief Thurz noted that Engine 61 would have the highest expenses for the past year and would prepare something.
- Building project updates included:
 - Bi-weekly meeting with Facilities staff to review renovation work at the fire stations.
 - Replacement of interior lighting that are not considered energy efficient, funded through the Town's "Energy Efficient Program".
 - Bids for Station 2's new generator due on July 14, 2022.
 - Vehicle exhaust system work is scheduled to begin on July 18th.

- Overhead Door has been contacted to look at repairing the door at Station 1. If the Department were to consider changing the design of the overhead doors that might need to be presented to Town Planning and Zoning or the Architectural Design Review Committee for approval.
- The Request for Proposal (RFP) for the two rescue pumpers is nearing completion. The intent is for the Purchasing Agent to publicize the request within the next week. Commissioner Dutton asked if Commissioners could have a copy to review. Chief Thurz noted he would email each Commissioner a draft copy of the proposal.

Old Business:

- Commissioner Longo noted that while not on the agenda he asked the Chief if the conversation could be continued on the pending apparatus purchase. Chief Thurz noted that there is no new information other than the RFP is nearing completion and that it will be publicized for 30 days and then those proposals submitted would be reviewed. Commissioner Longo inquired about Commissioner Dutton's previous question in getting a copy of the RFP. Chief Thurz noted that the RFP is generic, and at the previous meeting it was discussed that after the proposals were received, those found favorable would be shared with the Commission. However, a draft copy of the RFP will be sent to the Commissioners by email.
- Commissioner Longo noted that at a previous meeting (May 5, 2022) he requested information on the cost difference between commercial and custom chassis. While he was not present at the last Commission meeting, he disagreed with some of the information presented. Commissioner Longo noted the following items:
 - There are supply chain issue everywhere.
 - There really isn't a difference between a commercial and a custom cab and chassis as many of the components are the same, from the engine, transmission and rear-ends.
 - He agrees that there is a difference in the wheelbase, but there used to be a way around that issue by setting back the axle. However, he wasn't sure if that still applies in today's manufacturing industry. Furthermore, he doesn't see it as critical, especially in Station 1's area, but could be in Station 3's area.
 - He understands the safety issue and agrees its important, but the minutes from the previous meeting read that commercial vehicles are not as safe. A number of commercial manufacturers are required to follow testing procedures and federal mandates. There are a number of commercial vehicles on the road today that are subject to liability day in and day out and doesn't want anyone to think commercial vehicles are not safe. While custom offers more safety features, commercial vehicles are safe.
 - As for warranties, questions if the Department isn't dealing with multiple warranties based on the various components, e.g. engine, transmission, rear-end from the truck manufacturer, while there are other warranties for the pump, body and everything else that is involved.
 - The wiring and the load management system also applies to various types of commercial trucks. If a vehicle doesn't offer some type of wiring harnesses you take a basic hot wire to a junction block and install relays and fuses.
 - Rust protection is a nice additive, but maybe this is a marketing ploy from one certain manufacturer. Apparatus are not being replaced for rotted out frames, that

is not the issue. Whoever provided the information is just using it as a sales technique. Apparatus used in the winter time get rinsed off right away. If they don't, then the engineers or per diems will do it. Apparatus are in a controlled environment, and not in the elements for any length of time.

- Commissioner Longo noted that the point he was trying to make is that with a potential savings of up to \$100K, a commercial cab and chassis should be included in the RFP. Commissioner Longo didn't feel any of the points were such a disadvantage that a commercial cab and chassis should be excluded. He did not know of one thing that could put out a fire, carry a pump and water that a commercial cab and chassis wouldn't be able to do compared to a more expensive truck. If the price difference is significant enough, the Commission would be remiss if it did not try to save the \$100K, times two. Commissioner Longo noted that his comments were just his opinion, but the Commission owes it to the taxpayers if we can save money.
- Commissioner Dutton noted that he does not have the knowledge that is required for trucks. Commissioner Longo noted that he is not an expert, and these were just his thoughts and opinions as having been presented on various truck committees in the past. He further added he believes custom is more expensive to own and maintain, that there are special parts which are difficult to obtain, and that the labor rate to fix he believed to be worse than commercial.
- Commissioner Cavanaugh inquired what most fire trucks were around the area, commercial or custom? Commissioners Quagliaroli, Longo and Cofiell each replied that they are mostly custom. However, Commissioner Cofiell noted that it also depended on what town you were in. There are some small towns that have commercial, but there are different factors that need to be taken into consideration. Commissioner Cofiell also stated he hoped the truck committee looked at both options and to do the things needed with the cab, and setting it up so it would be conducive to either a commercial or custom. Deputy Chief Dennler responded that the committee looked at both options, and followed the direction of the previous committee chaired by Commissioner Cofiell, which very thoroughly looked at the commercial versus custom options. Deputy Chief Dennler also acknowledged Commissioner Longo's point that Freightliner and other commercial manufacturers do make a safe cab, but when you research the matter further, today's custom cab and chassis for the fire service are made more rugged and safer than a commercial vehicle. For the fire service the third largest death rate across the nation is side impact crashes. Custom manufacturers have now developed programs to address side impact crashes, front crashes, roll over bars, all those things that are not available with a commercial cab. The committee worked diligently on the cab, while trying to utilize the cab space for EMS equipment, electric tools, and to get all the equipment from the rescue trucks while also developing a pumper.
- Commissioner Quagliaroli asked Chief Thurz how he came up with the \$100K per truck? Chief Thurz replied it was based on conversations with some of the manufacturers. Chief Thurz noted that the Commission had asked him to get the information, and that he contacted some of the vendors that previously met with the truck committee. Chief Thurz also wanted to recognize the work that the truck committee had put into this project so far. While not involved with the meetings, Chief Thurz noted that Deputy Chiefs Dennler and Motowidlak attended the majority of the meetings, which were chaired by the two Captains

and consisted of roughly nine or 10 meetings, equating to 30 hours per member. Chief Thurz then discussed the various components individually:

- Airbags – yes commercial vehicles offer airbags, but fire apparatus manufacturers offer additional airbags. The driver and officer seats have side impact airbags. These features are not offered in a commercial vehicle. Most fire trucks accidents are side impact or rollover. Airbags are sized by the cab seating. Sensors are put in the seating that you don't find in a commercial cab.
- Cab construction - most commercial cabs are single walled constructed, whereas the fire apparatus manufacturer offers double or even triple walls with their metals, which adds to the vehicle's cost.
- Front impact safety and roof crush protection is added into fire truck manufacturing, which is not found in a commercial vehicle.
- The engine in a fire apparatus is mounted forward of the front axle and is lower, which allows for protection from frontal impact and a lower center of gravity.
- The frame rail is doubled. The Department does worry about corrosion from the materials being put on the roadways even after rinsing the vehicle. With the last purchase one thing that was specified was ensuring some type of corrosion protection on the apparatus. Even the fuel tank was specified as stainless steel because of corrosion concerns. This type of protection is not offered in a commercial vehicle.
- When looking at the fire service industry the custom manufacturer is building a truck for one single application, whereas the commercial arena is building vehicles for multiple applications.
- The fire pump on scene can be idling for a long period of time.
- Recognize that Cummins needs to follow the emission standards regardless if it's a commercial or custom vehicle.
- Crew cab area can accommodate between two to six people. The dash area is designed specifically for the fire service, where in a commercial vehicle you need to make modifications. Seats in a commercial vehicle need to be removed and replaced in order to accommodate the air packs, which is another upcharge.
- The windshield offers superior visibility, where a commercial has a nose that you have to overlook.
- Wiring – there are somethings electrical that are not available in a commercial vehicle, where in a custom the manufacturer is able to accommodate the body and pump. The wiring is also department dependent.
- Cost of ownership – it is a little bit different and there are warranty issues we may not know about. For example, if something goes wrong with a truck, and using Pierce as an example, they take full ownership of the vehicle, where if it was a commercial vehicle Pierce may not take responsibility because it could be a Freightliner or Navistar issue. So those are some tradeoffs, and in the fire service there are different warranties with a commercial vehicle.

- To answer the question if the committee considered a commercial cab and chassis in the RFP, the answer was no, but it was talked about. The thought process was to go with a custom apparatus. On average there are 5,000 fire trucks built every year, 600 are commercial, which is less than 12%. A commercial application is perfect for a tanker, as you are not carrying a lot of people or equipment, you're carrying water. The last truck the Department replaced went from a commercial to a custom. To Deputy Chief Dennler's point, the committee is looking to maximize cabinetry and a lot of this is built into the custom vehicle. The committee eliminated a seat in order to have different cabinetry in the cab. The Department is also looking to go with e-draulic and battery-operated tools.
- Deputy Chief Dennler said the two big issues were safety and how to utilize and design a vehicle that fits the needs for everybody in town within the two companies. They worked diligently to come up with one specific unit so that when the bid went out for two trucks they were the same. Second was to utilize the cab component, which is huge. From the cab back, it is essentially the tank and compartments. The design of the cab was the biggest issue in how to carry all of the equipment and utilize it effectively.
- Some additional information that was provided to Chief Thurz from the manufacturer included:
 - Steering cramp angle up to 56 degree on the front axle with the wheel behind gives a better turning radius this is not available on a commercial.
 - Air ride suspension is not available in commercial, despite Commissioner Longo stating that it is available.
 - Standard axle ratio designed to maximize acceleration is a special order.
 - Emission standards designed not to shut the truck down during a pumping evolution. This is something that needs to be special order in a commercial application where it is already built into the custom.
- Chief Thurz noted that when you talk about the cost going up, these are the items that are built into the vehicle. The apparatus is a pumper, no different than what we already have with the exception the cab is designed to provide more cabinetry. So, after the committee went through their research they decided to go the custom route.
- Chief Thurz reiterated that in his previous conversation with Commissioner Longo there is about a 24-month window for a commercial vehicle to be delivered because they are building for multiple industries. Marion, Spartan, Rev Group and Pierce only build fire trucks, so they already have material in stock. Chief Thurz clarified that he did not say there wouldn't be supply chain issues, but was trying to convey that delivery of a commercial cab and chassis from what the manufacturers are saying would take them longer to source opposed to a custom because they are already equipped. In addition, when the budget was appropriated it wasn't about saving money and giving back to the town, it was about what will it cost to get our members a good safe fire truck for them to ride it. If you take the \$100K savings and divide that over 20 years it's around \$3,800 a year for the safety of the members.
- Commissioner Longo appreciated all of the information provided, and by no means did he want to discredit any of the work done by the truck committee. He has served on truck committees and knows the time and effort it entails. Commissioner Longo felt that the commercial cab and chassis the Department currently have in service have a pretty good

track record and have served the town extremely well. He also felt that they may be far less expensive to maintain than some of the other vehicles. Commissioner Cavanaugh responded that he agrees, but the biggest issue he has is safety. The custom vehicle offers the side airbags, and you cannot put a price on somebody's safety. Commissioner Longo said that was not his intent, and that he just wanted it to be included. Chief Thurz responded that the Department is doing an RFP and struggles in how to structure the document to include a commercial cab and chassis because it takes a different direction. Deputy Chief Dennler replied the committee would need to start over, which would delay the process. Commissioner Longo stated he doesn't want to delay the process. Deputy Chief Dennler stated that he was not trying to be difficult, but wanted to note the committee would need to start over. Chief Thurz replied that the RFP is not written for a commercial vehicle in mind. Chief Thurz further stated he is not saying a commercial vehicle doesn't have an application in the fire service. The Department maintains three, but they are two seat vehicles and serve a different function as either a tanker or rescue truck. Commissioner Quagliaroli agreed with Chief Thurz that those are ideal applications. Commissioner Cofiehl noted that there are smaller size communities that use commercial vehicles and are just hoping someone is around to drive the vehicle. Commissioner Cofiehl noted that the Department is getting close to this situation as well. Deputy Chief Dennler asked Commissioner Cofiehl when he chaired the committee for Station 4 what he found to be the difference. Commissioner Cofiehl reported that they looked at both commercial and custom and had two mandates, a six-person cab and a shorter wheelbase for the four-wheel drive application, which the custom was the best way to approach the situation. Chief Thurz noted that wheelbase was a factor in the design of apparatus, and that they eliminated a seat, and could consider the same cab as the vehicle recently purchased. However, there are other features like accessing the cabinets in the cab from both the interior and exterior. Accessing cab cabinets from the exterior is not available in a commercial application. Commissioner Longo noted that he just wanted to have the conversation based on the price difference. Chief Thurz reiterated that the \$100K adds additional features that are not available in a commercial vehicle.

- Chief Thurz said that when the Commission receives the RFP they should note there are options built into the document. When the committee was established younger members were asked to participate in the process, as they are the future. The goal is to get them to understanding the process and the pricing involved. When all the proposals are submitted the two chairs and a few others will review and score them. Then there will be interviews with the different vendors, and the committee will make a recommendation as to what will be the best vehicle not only for the membership, but the Town of Glastonbury and able to serve our needs for the next 20-25 years. Chief Thurz asked the Commission if they were good with the RFP that has been prepared, noting a draft copy would be provided to each of the Commissioners. There were no objections from the Commission members.

New Business:

- None

Committee Report:

- On June 20, 2022 the Strategic Planning Committee met with six members from Companies 1, 2 and 4, and asked them what it was going to take to get them more engaged in the Department. These individuals were younger members who have been with the Department for less than 10 years. Some of their comments included the following:

- Have a lot going on in their lives besides the fire department including a side business.
 - There were less distractions 25 to 30 years ago, and that there is so much going on in today's society.
 - There needs to be "a carrot" to entice people.
 - Increased training demands take away from family time by giving up nights and weekends.
 - Other incentive tools were discussed, in particular a pension program, along with pay per call rate. However, there were stipulations tied to this type of incentive. One department requires their members to make a minimum of 25% of the calls and 50% of their drills. However, they offer on-line training as well. Glastonbury's requirements are significantly less, with only 40 units or hours and 12 training drills every year.
 - A member noted that they don't wake up to the pager and relies more on the telephone (I am Responding application).
 - Another member stated that he tends to sleep through the calls. However, enjoys being involved when he is available, but also has a lot of stuff going on in his life.
 - There was discussion about implementing a platoon system. Some seemed to favor the idea.
- The goal was to stay away from a monetary system, which Commissioner Quagliaroli stated was the consensus of the members invited to the meeting, as they wouldn't get up for more money.
 - There was further discussion about the platoon system with a compensation component if a member signed up for a specific week. While most felt that could be one of those carrots to attract more responders, the Strategic Planning Committee would need to establish the guidelines and develop a specific plan.
 - A member noted that he didn't make all his drill last year and recommended offering more drills each month. This idea would put more demands on the members.
 - There was additional conversation pertaining to the tax abatement, which is currently tiered based on an individual's years of service; a benefit if you own property or a vehicle. Whereas a pension program would benefit those members who don't live in town, or those that served the department, become vested and move out of the area.
 - There was talk about converting a section of each fire station into sleeping quarters for the younger members who still live at home. This is an alternative that some fire departments across the country have implemented. For example, Blue Hills Fire Department in Bloomfield purchased a residence next to their station. While the concept had been considered, it also presents some challenges with limited space and co-habitation requirements.
 - Other ideas that were discussed among the participants included:
 - Staggered incentives based on a call volume percentage
 - Transfer station or pool passes, but this is not free as it takes revenue away from the town.
 - Gift cards

- Access to the town's healthcare provider
 - Cell phones
-
- There was discussion pertaining to the use of social media to help attract new members. Most felt that it had to be something quick to grab an individual's immediate attention.
 - There was additional conversation about looking into an on-line training platform that could be tied into a new records management system. The downside is the training is completed at home or outside the firehouse and you are not interacting with the other members.
 - A take-a-way from the meeting is that generations are changing, and individuals have a lot going on. Those that participated in the meeting were asked to talk with their friends and families about becoming a member.
 - Chief Thurz noted that the trend of fewer volunteers is alarming, and is an initiative he would like to see the Commission get involved with in figuring out where are we going to be as a department three to five years down the road. It is getting difficult to retain members, and this is not just a Glastonbury problem, it's an issue nationwide. We train for those high risk, low frequency events, which gets members engaged, but there are so few calls of this type; we mostly handle calls for service.
 - Commissioner Cofiell asked if we looked at the different age groups. For example, those in the 30 to 45 age group brackets with kids, do we look into things like a pool pass or athletic things for that group. The idea would be to give a variety of incentives for the different age groups. However, the Department needs bodies in all the age groups to come to calls. Commissioner Quagliaroli responded by saying that the group which is 45 and older is not the problem when it comes to responding to calls or drills. So, we really don't need incentives for them, it is those 30 and under that sign up and come on and only go to 18 calls a year.
 - Commissioner Dutton asked if there was a way to encourage people to hang around the firehouse more. Perhaps do something that would entice them to socially want to come around. Commissioner Quagliaroli responded that most of those things still exist in the firehouse, with the exception of the alcohol, which was permitted in the building years ago. The social club aspects still exist, but no one wants to hang out because they have more distractions or better things to do. Commissioner Cofiell said that the pandemic and Covid have exasperated the problem. Commissioner Quagliaroli stated it hadn't helped, but that it was an issue before the pandemic.
 - Commissioner Cofiell asked what percentage of the tax abatement is actually applied to the total available abatement? Chief Thurz did not have that number readily available, but noted that not all firefighters utilized the full potential of the abatement, especially when it is applied towards their motor vehicle tax, or their vehicle is registered to another family member or don't own real estate.
 - Commissioner Quagliaroli said the one thing he took away from the meeting was that there is no obvious answer that has been overlooked.
 - Chief Thurz mentioned that in 1993 when there was discussion about a possible pension he wasn't in favor of it. Today he wished it was in place.

- Commission Dutton asked if there was a way to partner with a local college and perhaps offer tuition reimbursement for those that are not eligible for the tax abatement because they reside outside of the town. Chief Thurz replied that the tax abatement does not involve the budget and if such an initiative was implemented funding would need to be appropriated. Commissioner Dutton thought perhaps talking with Goodwin or Manchester Community Colleges and make some sort of arrangement with the schools might work. Chief Thurz noted that it's a cost that would need to be budgeted and wasn't sure if it would entice someone to want to be a member.
- Commissioner Longo asked if Chief Thurz knew of any town that offered a pension program. Chief Thurz replied that Rocky Hill provided a pension, but was started many years ago with a vesting period. The other issue is the funding of a pension plan, it needs to be a budgeted item. This issue came up in 1993 and the question then was do you do a pension program and forgo the annual stipend. At that time members preferred the annual stipend, and that is probably still the feeling today.
- Assistant Chief Thurz reiterated Commissioner Quagliaroli's comment that there hasn't been anything overlooked. The younger generation set their calendars as to when drills are held, but what the Department needs is having members come to calls. Implementing a platoon system where individuals sign up for a week might guarantee a better turnout, which some found to be appealing. Commissioner Cavanaugh stated that members may feel forced to sign up and be on-call. Chief Thurz noted there may need to be some form of compensation to agree to sign up and be available. A platoon system would need to have some form of structure before being implemented.
- Commissioner Cavanaugh asked about the cadet program. While it has some benefits to entice cadets in becoming firefighters, most leave for a career job and don't return to Glastonbury. The last set of cadets to join the Department was five years ago. Commissioner Quagliaroli noted that this is an on-going issue that needs to be worked on.
- Commissioner Longo commented that perhaps a pension program could be discussed in the near future. The goal would be to make sure it is adequately funded as opposed to a full-time department. Chief Thurz noted that a pension plan doesn't benefit today's older members. The other issue would be a minimum vesting period of 11 years, when most new members on average provide only three to five years of service. Commissioner Quagliaroli noted that the younger personnel don't think long-term so it's hard to say if a pension program would be beneficial.
- Chief Thurz noted that the department needs to start looking at the future and what the next three to five years will look like. We may need to start making provisions for a small combination department. We need to be proactive as opposed to reactive. In the past we worried about the day time response, now it's the night time response as well. Chief Thurz referenced a recent fire that Glastonbury responded mutual aid where that department only had 10 members on scene and another mutual aid department responded with only three. However, that fire was during a holiday weekend so perhaps that contributed to the low turnout. Commissioner Quagliaroli noted that the Department's roster is dwindling downhill year after year. People are not volunteering anymore. Deputy Chief Denner noted that there is a recruitment meeting next week. Those that join are given an overview

of what is expected of them and within six months they show a lack of interested. Attracting new members is a problem nationwide. Commissioner Quagliaroli noted that recruitment is not the only problem it's retention. Deputy Chief Dennler stated that during the interview candidates seem energetic, but when it comes time for follow through with physicals and paperwork it's difficult to get them to comply.

- Commissioner Longo inquired what other towns are successful with recruitment and what are they doing for their membership and if we could get any information from them, for example a Farmington? Chief Thurz replied that there are no other towns that are having success with their recruitment drives. Farmington is a combination department, as well as Colchester and East Haddam having some form of paid staff. Assistant Chief Thurz noted that the Town of Hebron now has paid staffing during the overnight. Commissioner Quagliaroli noted that it's time to begin looking at this issue. While the per diem program has worked it has run its course. The Commission should establish a sub-committee to look into this issue further.

Next Regular Meeting: August 4, 2022, at Company 1, 2825 Main Street, 6:30 PM.

Meeting Adjourned: Commissioner Quagliaroli made a motion to adjourn, which Commissioner Cofiell seconded and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:06 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