

Board of Fire Commissioners
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

November 3, 2022

Present: Commissioner Longo, Commissioner Dutton, Commissioner Quagliaroli,
Commissioner Caffazo, Commissioner Cavanaugh, and Commissioner Cofell

Others: Chief Michael Thurz, Deputy Chief Motowidlak and Deputy Chief Dennler

Absent: Assistant Chief David Thurz

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 June 2, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Cafazzo made the motion to accept with Commissioner Cofell seconding the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Longo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 1, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Cafazzo made the motion to accept with Commissioner Cofell seconding the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Longo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 6, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Quagliaroli made the motion to accept with Commissioner Cofell seconding the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Chief's Report:

Chief Thurz reported the following:

- The due date for the Request for Proposals regarding the fire stations renovations has been extended until November 17, 2022. The extension is based on several questions being submitted by the various contractors, and the additional time needed by Facilities staff to respond to those questions.
- New energy efficient LED lights continue to be installed in each fire station. However, the lighting in the apparatus bay is on hold because the proposed fixture installed at Station 2 is not bright enough. The lighting consultant is looking for a different type of fixture that will produce more down light. New lights are being installed in other sections of the fire stations, but uncertain if every single room will receive new fixtures. The work is being done by an outside contractor, and funded through the Town's energy efficient program.
- Fire Prevention tours were completed in October with a few more scheduled for November.
- The Department participated at the Apple Harvest Fair with the kid's safety trailer. The Chamber of Commerce has asked that the Department participate next year too.

- The Department held a Fire Prevention Open House on October 18th at Station 1. Public attendance was very low. The thought for next year would be to hold the event on a weekend in late September, early October with an outdoor activity theme. Commissioner Cofiell inquired if the schools allowed the Department to put anything in their newsletters? Chief Thurz replied he did not ask the schools as this was not permitted in the past. However, the Department did put something on social media through its Facebook page.
- The Fire Department conducted fire behavior training using thermal imaging cameras on October 22nd. The training was conducted by Flash Fire Industries.
- The officers will be receiving training on the new Fast Boards, which is a tool used by a rapid intervention team in evacuating a trapped or disabled firefighter. Jason Rivera from Fast Rescue Solutions will be conducting a train the trainer session for the officers on November 7th.
- Deputy Chief Dennler noted the train the trainer for the new lunar equipment will be completed by MSA on November 8th and 9th. On November 21st the officers will be trained on the use of the iPads with the new accountability system.
- Review of operating expenses.
- Chief Thurz advised the Commission that \$35,000 has been appropriated by the Board of Finance for the removal of the remaining foam in the apparatus tanks. Chief Thurz is work to get quotes from third-party contractors for the remove and dispose of the remaining foam. While this was an initiative implemented by the State of Connecticut, it has run out of funding to complete the program. The hope is that additional funds will be appropriated this upcoming legislative session. Once the work is completed the town, the hope would be able to submit the invoice for reimbursement.

Review of Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24:

- Commissioner Longo noted that Commissioner Cavanaugh and he met with Chief Thurz to discuss the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24. Chief Thurz provided each commission member with a draft packet of the Capital Improvement, Capital Outlay and operating budget documents. Chief Thurz noted that the budget still remains in a draft format, and there will be further reiterations over the coming months with a final approval in March 2023. Chief Thurz went on to explain that while the budget process has started he expects there to be minimal increases. The commission was provided with a timeframe as to how each component of the budget will be reviewed, with Capital Improvements discussed in January followed by Capital Outlay and operating in February.

Chief Thurz recommended that he continues to meet with Commissioners Longo and Cavanaugh during the budget process to keep them informed as to what transpires. Chief Thurz also noted that based on Commissioners Longo and Cavanaugh's recommendation

he has changed the priority in apparatus replacement. A new engine tanker would be a higher priority than replacing the tanker.

Commissioner Cofiell inquired how much ARPA money was remaining? Chief Thurz stated he did not know exactly the amount of availability, or what other initiatives still need to be funded.

Old Business:

- Commissioner Cafazzo mentioned that Commissioner Cofiell and he met with Town Manager Richard Johnson and Human Resource Director Sherri Tanguay to discuss the interview process for the Fire Marshal's position. Both Commissioners found the meeting to be positive, and were asked to develop questions for the interview process. Commissioner Cafazzo asked other Commission members to develop some interview questions they might want asked. Commissioner Cafazzo noted that once the candidate list is narrowed that Commissioner Cofiell and he would meet with the finalists for follow up questions. What still needs to be determined is if the Commission would interview the finalist separate from the Town Manager, or together. Commissioner Cofiell noted there has not been a closing date established for the position. Commissioner Cafazzo also stated the candidate needs more than just certification, but is able to interact well with the public and have good customer service skills.

New Business:

- None

Committee Report:

- Commissioner Quagliaroli reported that at the last Strategic Planning Committee meeting members discussed two topics, implementation of a platoon system/duty crew and future full-time staffing needs. The intent of the platoon system/duty crew is to generate a better turnout for overnight calls with minimal compensation. This would be a voluntary program, trialed for 60-days based on a standard operating guideline created by the committee. As for the implementation of full-time staffing the committee is working on putting the data together. The conversation is still in the beginning stages. The committee will report its findings to the commission at a later date.
- Commissioner Cofiell inquired if there was a study done on the financial impact in implementing the duty crew program? Chief Thurz stated there was not, but that each officer would be required to cover 12 weeks a year, which equates to \$960.00 per officer. The hope is to also get at least two to three other members per station to sign up each week. The other factor as to why a financial study was not completed was that the call volume has remained consistent at around 900 incidents per year, with fewer members responding to calls. Over the last couple of years, the unit wage account has not even come close to being exceeded. The concept of a duty crew is just being trialed to see if it will increase attendance. The committee is not even sure how the duty crew concept will be received by the membership.

- Commissioner Cafazzo brought up providing housing as another alternative to attracting younger members. Chief Thurz replied while the thought of doing this has been discussed in the past it comes with other challenges too.
- Commissioner Longo inquired if there has been any discussion regarding the financial impact of hiring full-time staff? Chief Thurz replied before we get to that point the committee has a lot of work to determine what will work best for the Department. The committee needs to do a lot of work before it can come before the Commission with a recommendation. The recommendation will be data driven in order to determine the right model before we can really understand the financial impact.
- Commissioner Cafazzo stated that at least this is a proactive approach as opposed to being reactive. Chief Thurz replied the process will take time to implement using a crawl, walk run analogy. Our community is seeing a number of changes that will also play into the future of the Department.
- Commissioner Dutton asked if the qualifications to be an interior firefighter for a volunteer department is different than a career department, and if not, should our members be compensated the equivalent to a career person. Commissioner Cafazzo noted that was not the answer, while Commissioner Cavanaugh stated that the unit pay should be evaluated. Commissioner Cofiehl and Quagliaroli both stated that allocating more money to the problem is not the answer.

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

Meeting Adjourned: Commissioner Cavanaugh made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Commissioner Cofiehl. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 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