

Board of Fire Commissioners
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 2, 2023

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

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

Absent: Commissioner Dutton

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

Public Comment: None

Approval of Minutes: Commissioner Longo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 5, 2023 meeting. Commissioner Cofield made the motion to accept with Commissioner Longo seconding the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chief's Report:

Chief Thurz asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of Chief Emeritus Accornero and former Company 3-member Lance Weir.

Chief Thurz reported the following:

- Resignations from Michael Draghi and Noah Ramondetta with Company 4 have been received.
- The appointment of John Tibbetts to the position of Lieutenant at Station 2, which was effective February 3rd. Lieutenant Tibbetts' appointment was based on an outside oral panel, Chief's interview, which Commissioner Caffazo participated in both, as well as feedback from the Company Captain.
- A correction on the replacement of the overhead doors at Station 1. The cost to replace the three front doors is \$54K, not \$18K as previously reported. Facilities has contracted with Overhead Door to replace the damaged panels in front of Engine 11.
- There are a number of building projects and maintenance items that still remain outstanding. The delay is based on on-going supply chain issues or items being moved down on the priority list.
- The Captains of Stations 3 and 4 have been provided color samples for their bathrooms, which were due by February 3rd. The Captains will also be meeting with the Facilities Director to discuss the possibility of installing epoxy floors in the bathrooms. That meeting is scheduled for February 7th. The project's longest lead time will be the bathrooms lockers, which is anticipated to take four months to deliver.

- No update on the replacement of the lighting fixtures in the apparatus bays. Facilities continues to work with the lighting contractor on the alternative fixture.
- The replacement panel for the overhead door at Station 3 will be changed from the brown to white. Facilities is just waiting for the panel to be delivered.
- Commissioner Quagliaroli asked if the lighting fixture proposed is out of stock? Chief Thurz replied it was a pricing issue that Facilities is still discussing with the vendor.
- The issue with Engine 32's brakes was determined not to be a mechanical issue. The brake work has since been completed and the truck is back in service.
- The apparatus committee met on January 30th to begin the pre-construction meeting. The committee members have been asked to go back and review the cab configuration for the electrical switches, as well as the cabinetry layout. The design of the apparatus remains a work in progress, and another meeting will be scheduled to discuss layouts for shelving, drawers and cabinets. Minimal changes have been made to date, and do not anticipate any major change orders.
- The meeting with the Insurance Services Office (ISO) representative was held on January 18th. There are no further updates to report other than the department's rating may take up to six months to be known. The biggest take away from the meeting was the importance of having a good driver training program that everyone participates in annually.
- At the Capital Improvement Program workshop in January the \$100K for extrication tools remained in the budget, along with the \$350K for the fire training facility upgrade.
- A grant, through the Assistance to Fire Act Grant, to replace 70 of the 105 portables and 23 of the 75 mobile radios will be submitted in the coming days. Total project cost is estimated at \$297K, of which \$267K would be reimbursed by FEMA if awarded. The grant does not cover the replacement of all the radios because the eligibility for funding is determined based on the number of apparatus and seated riding positions.
- Commissioners were provided with a draft copy and a review of the proposed FY'2023-24 operating budget. The document included the proposed revenue and expenses, along with an overview of the Department's missions, responsibilities, successes and accomplishments, and future goals and initiatives.
- Commissioner Cofell inquired if the Department would have access to the funds collected through the Limited Access Highway program? Chief Thurz stated maybe there might be access to those funds if there was a project that needed additional funding support. Chief Thurz also believes that the program may be eliminated by the State, as there are a number of fire departments across the state not benefiting from the program.
- Commissioner Cafazzo inquired why there were custodial charges when the work could be completed by the per diem members. Chief Thurz mentioned that per diem members, along

with each station's internal custodian and a facility staff member are currently cleaning the fire stations. The fire stations are utilized daily by all different town agencies and it is difficult to keep up with the cleaning. If, and when the Department looks to hire more permanent staff, the funds for the custodial positions could be used to offset the cost for those positions.

- Review of operating expenses. Chief Thurz noted that the training budget has been fully expended. Cost of training has increased substantially. Currently there are six members enrolled in a Fire Officer I class at a cost of \$500 per student. The cost for Firefighter I training is approximately \$1,250 per student. In addition, the Department has contracted with outside vendors to provide additional training that averages about \$4,500 per class.
- Commissioner Longo had an inquiry about the ISO and the comment about driver training, and when they looked at the written reports why it wasn't enough? Chief Thurz explained that the ISO was looking for a formal driver training program that was adopted by the department. Such program would include the Department of Transportation's pre-trip and vehicle inspections, as well as emergency vehicle operation class.

Old Business:

- None

New Business:

- Commissioner Cavanaugh wanted to start discussion about the implementation of officer term limits. The idea is to make sure individuals are not stuck in the same position for longer than they should be. The thought would be to provide other members with the opportunity to grow within the organization, by incorporating a four or five-year term limit. Commissioner Cafazzo said that it does give officers more motivation to stay involved, otherwise they know they can just do the bare minimum without being demoted. Chief Thurz replied that the Department recently implemented performance evaluations, which should help elevate that concern. Deputy Chief Dennler said the current evaluation process is going well, but needs some minor changes. The new evaluation process shows the individual's their strengths, weaknesses, and what they need to improve upon. There was discussion in how the evaluations serve as a base line, and can be used as a tool to correct weaknesses. If a member does not improve their performance, after additional training was offered, then the member would be asked to step down. Commissioner Longo asked if the evaluations should continue to move forward and revisit at a later date? Commissioner Quagliaroli replied that the Strategic Planning Committee started with the Captains and Lieutenants and once it had been tweaked it would be rolled out to other positions. The consensus among the Commission was to move forward with the current evaluation plan as presented.

Committee Report:

- Commissioner Quagliaroli reported the last Strategic Planning Committee meeting was spent on recruitment and retention issues, along with the future need to have some kind of part time/full time employee(s). The Committee has looked at other programs across the country and state to see what other departments have done and if it would fit into our model.

It is an ongoing process that will take some more time to see what will work for us, and that a final recommendation would be made back to the Commission at some point.

- Commissioners Cofiell and Cafazzo mentioned there was nothing new to report on pertaining to the hiring of a new Fire Marshal. Commissioner Cafazzo noted that they will be meeting with the top three candidates on February 9th. Commissioner Cafazzo felt the next round of interviews would be more of having a conversation with the candidates. However, Commissioner Cafazzo restated that if anyone had any specific questions they wanted asked to let either Commissioner Cofiell or him know.

Next Regular Meeting: March 3, 2023 at Company 1, 2825 Main Street, 6:30 PM.

Meeting Adjourned: Commissioner Cafazzo made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Commissioner Cofiell. The meeting adjourned at 7:16 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