

Board of Fire Commissioners
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

May 4, 2023

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

Others: Chief Michael Thurz, Assistant Chief David Thurz, Deputy Chief Motowidlak
Deputy Chief Cody, Executive Officer Bernard Dennler, and Town Manager
Jonathan Luiz

Absent: Commissioner Cavanaugh due to a work conflict

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

Public Comment:

None

Approval of Minutes:

Approval of the minutes from the April 6, 2023 Special meeting were tabled as Commissioner Cafazzo and Commissioner Dutton were not in attendance, and Commissioner Cavanaugh was absent.

Introduction of the Town Manager:

Chief Thurz welcomed and introduced Jonathan Luiz, Glastonbury's new Town Manager to the members of the Fire Commission. Commissioner Longo welcomed Mr. Luiz, and on behalf of the commission expressed their concerns about retention and recruitment. He noted that a sub-committee was working on addressing the issue, and remains a work in progress, but is a major point of concern. Mr. Luiz mentioned it had been relayed to him by the Chief, and that every town he has worked for was a volunteer department. Commissioner Dutton added that if it continues in the same direction that the Fire Department's budget would get much bigger.

Commissioner Longo also referenced the increase in apparatus cost, and inquired what his thoughts were in setting funds aside year to year, so when the time comes to purchase a vehicle it would be available? Mr. Luiz replied the community he previously served budgeted for a rescue truck, and after appropriating the funds the committee came back to report the vehicle's cost increased several hundreds of thousands of dollars. He noted that inflation and supply change has had an effect on prices. He went on to state that sometimes it makes sense for a community to put money aside from time to time, but now it comes down to everything being more expensive. If you look at it as a one-off issue, and break it up over two or three years it might work. However, with everything being more expensive there are some that would say it is not worth setting funds aside in half or thirds. In the past few years it seems most are just funding the larger projects in one, or two years increments. It also depends on the replacement schedule for the next 10 to 15 years. Ideally one it taught to put funds aside for the larger items, but it's tough because all capital equipment and projects are so expensive. Sometimes, the message is better when you can put funds aside, but sometimes it's better to say we needed it, we needed it next year, and we can't wait, and we can't break it up over the years. There is no firm answer in how to address the issue. Commissioner Longo agreed that it has been talked about, and no one has come up with a perfect solution either, only that it has been on the Commission's mind.

Chief's Report:

Chief Thurz offered his condolences to Commissioner Dutton for the passing on his sister, Jennifer on behalf of the Chief's office.

Chief Thurz reported the following:

- Wanted to correct a statement made at the previous meeting regarding the promotional lists. Commissioner Quagliaroli inquired if the list had a time limit, which the minutes reflected there wasn't one. However, in reviewing the By-Laws there is a section that states a promotional list is good for one year.
- Captain Ruggiero forwarded a letter from Lieutenant Jamie Feldman, who was on a leave of absence from his position as Lieutenant, that he was stepping down from that position immediately, but remaining a member of the Department. Chief Thurz acknowledged Lieutenant Feldman for his 18 years of leadership at both Stations 3 and 4.
- Promotions that take effect on May 5, 2023.
 - Lieutenant Shawn Curreri to Captain at Station 1.
 - Acting Lieutenant Tyler Cafro to permanent Lieutenant at Station 4 based on the promotional list at the time of his appointment to the acting position, and the recommendation of Captain Ruggiero.
 - Engineer Kevin Piacentini to Lieutenant at Station 1.
 - Commissioner Quagliaroli served as the moderator for the Captain's outside oral board panel, and met with all the candidates for the Station 1 positions. The Commission was asked to approve all three promotions. Commissioner Quagliaroli noted that all did a great job in their interviews. Commissioner Quagliaroli made the motion to accept with Commissioner Cafazzo seconding the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.
- Renovation work at Station 4 has been delayed by approximately two weeks. The delay was attributed to the town's inspection of the rough plumbing, which was scheduled for May 4, 2023. Once that is complete, concrete for the floor can be poured and the block work can begin. Despite the delay, some of the long lead items, such as the lockers are in. Initially, the thought was supply chain could be an issue, but they are in and being stored at the contractor's facility. Station 3's renovation work is anticipated to begin by mid-June. The contractor does not want to decommission another station's bathroom until Station 4 is operational. Commissioner Quagliaroli inquired if the kitchen work could be completed simultaneously? Chief Thurz replied the contractor is working on pricing out the cabinetry, and the appliances have been ordered and already shipped. The appliances are being stored at Facility Maintenance.
- Facilities has installed a new ceiling, new lights and painted the training room at Station 3.
- New LED light fixtures have been installed in Station 2's apparatus bay. The electrician will begin work at Station 1 next week then at Stations 4 and 3. Commissioner

Quagliaroli inquired about the programming of the lights, and stated that there are only two lights that go on overnight. Chief Thurz will follow up with Facilities on the programming. Chief Thurz suggested that Commissioner Quagliaroli meet with Facilities and himself to review the programming of the lights.

- Parts to repair the overhead door at Station 1 are in. Facilities is just waiting for the vendor to schedule an appointment.
- Chief Thurz, Deputy Chief Cody and Captain Kessler met with Jon Schrumm from Northeastern Fire to discuss finalizing the new apparatus bodies. There may be a few change orders that need to be finalized. Deputy Chief Cody mentioned that the meeting went very well, the trucks will be very similar, and the committee worked great together. Chief Thurz is hoping by early next summer they will be in service.
- Department's new records management system is up and running. A work order status was recently implemented, which will track apparatus repairs and notifies those that need to know what is taking place through emails. Vehicle Maintenance is using the program as well, and will be able to provide their comments. Deputy Chief Cody said the system is working well, just finishing the first month, but there is still a lot to convert from Firehouse to FirstDue. The work orders has been a great success ensuring that everyone gets notifications. In addition, the Department of Transportation (DOT) inspections can now be uploaded into the system. Commissioner Dutton asked if the Commissioners would have access? Deputy Chief Cody said he could provide access for them as well. Commissioner Cofiehl asked if the system would automatically send a notification when the yearly preventive maintenance is due? FirstDue is not able to do that at this time, but it will be a future enhancement, and something the Department has asked for. In the meantime, Chief Thurz is tracking the annual DOT inspections in his calendar.
- Second installment of the Unit Pay was paid out. A total of \$113.8K was paid in units, with \$41.8K in stipends, for a total of \$155.6K. The Department did not go over in the unit wage account, with a surplus of approximately \$26K. The unit wage amount will increase to \$10.75 a unit starting on July 1st.
- Tax abatement information has been submitted to the tax collector. Gross amount eligible was \$154K. Most of the tax abatement was attributed to real estate taxes, which also included those that are life or retired members.
- Annual awards dinner was held on April 15th. Approximately 100 attended the event.
- Commissioner Longo had a few questions prior to the meeting which included:
 - If oil samples continue to take place? Chief Thurz replied they are done as part of the annual DOT inspection.
 - Status of the damaged 5" supply line. Chief Thurz was not aware of any damage hose. But noted 100' was removed from Engine 42 as the vehicle was not rated to carry more than 2,000 feet according to the Marion representative.
 - The status of tree trimming associated with the adjacent property? Chief Thurz noted that the department is encroaching on the adjacent property owner's parcel;

a portion of the sidewalk that was installed by the members. The fix was to enter into an agreement between the Town and the property owner. As for the trees and trimming, Chief Thurz noted the trees are a Poplar, which is a weak tree according to the tree warden. Over the years, one member had their vehicle damaged twice, and another member had their car totaled when a tree fell. With the proposed development, the slope of the bank will need to be shored up, and so he is not concerned with some of the trees being eliminated.

- Review of monthly operating expenses.
- Commissioner Longo inquired how many outside vendors does the Department have to pick from regarding apparatus repairs? Chief Thurz replied three, and that the Department plans to go back out to rebid. Commissioner Longo asked if the bids are year to year? Chief Thurz replied no, the current bid has been used for the past three years.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

None

Committee Report:

Strategic Planning Committee:

- Commissioner Quagliaroli noted that the committee met April 24th. The bulk of the discussion pertaining to the performance reviews. First round has been completed with a lot of good feedback. There is some tweaking to the process and form that needs to take place. Moving forward other members will be reviewed. Overall everyone agreed it was a positive experience, with the exception of one or two. They are used to gauge performance and to acknowledge good performance.
- Duty crew program was discussed next. The program is in its fifth-month of a trial run. Program seems to be working fairly well at an individual level, but mostly getting the same people signing up after a few months. Commissioner Quagliaroli did raise the question about its fiscal sustainability on an annual basis, which was discussed and needs to be evaluated.
- Chief Thurz, Deputy Chief Motowidlak and Executive Officer Dennler met with members of Station 1 who had concerns with the duty crew program. Members provided their feedback, and while the alternative solutions did not seem viable, the committee elected to extend the duty crew program until a better alternative was developed.
- Commissioner Longo asked if the point pertaining to fiscally sustainable could be expanded upon? Chief Thurz noted it would need to be looked at going forward as it is predicated on the number of calls, the number of members that participate, and the \$.50 wage increase would need to be factored. The unit wage account of \$210K has been flat for years. In fairness to Mr. Luiz it is something that the Chief needs to further address with the Town Manager. It will also require on-going tracking, as the

Department has never exceeded the \$210K amount. With the increase in the unit wage account by \$.50, the Department may exceed the funds allocated.

- Commissioner Longo inquired if after the conversation with Station 1 members, and the review of the rest of the program is everyone content? Chief Thurz replied not everyone is content. There has been discussion about moving district lines, which Chief Thurz replied is not the solution. The only line that he would recommend be moved is Station 3 coming further west along New London Turnpike to Bidwell Street. Each district is equally spaced out. Station 1 is the smallest district, but the most densely populated. The majority of the incidents fall between 10 PM and 2 AM. Station 1 is averaging three members, while the other stations are averaging more. Furthermore, Station 1 averages more calls. Out of 53 incidents reviewed during the hours of 10 PM and 6 AM, 30 were in Station 1's first due district, 19 of which were a single company response, with the remaining 11 a two-station response. One of the concerns with Station 1's members is they feel they are getting burnt out. During the period examined, every four days Station 1 would be responding to an incident during the overnight hours, while the other stations were averaging every eight or nine days. At Stations 3 and 4 it is the same people signing up each week, so it is not on a rotating basis. While Station 2 continues to operate on a rotating basis. In summation, Station 1 is struggling, Stations 3 and 4 continue to have the same people each week, and Station 2 the rotation is working. The concept is no different than the Per Diem program, which started six years ago. It is something we are trying, and provides reassurance that at least up to four members are responding. We don't want someone responding to a call in the middle of the night by themselves. Executive Officer Dennler noted that the program is stressed. However, the Strategic Planning group agreed, even with the feedback received, to continue to move forward with the program and see how far it can go, despite some of the reluctance to sign up being experienced. Commissioner Quagliaroli, noted that the program is far from perfect, but it's something, and it's all that we have at this time. Commissioner Longo recognized the challenge going in, and that it always was a work in progress, and echoed that it seems to be working, but needs to continue to be tweaked. Commissioner Longo also noted that the pool of people is dwindling, which isn't making it any easier.
- Chief Thurz noted that Executive Officer Dennler, and a committee of officers have put together a training curriculum for seven new members utilizing Hartford County Fire School's former model. The members are receiving training in eight basic principles; ladders, self-contained breathing apparatus, ropes, and will finish with a live fire evolution. The group meets on a Wednesday night at the various stations. The idea behind the program is to give them a little knowledge before attending fire school, and to get them engaged. The members are getting an understanding of what is expected of them. Commissioner Quagliaroli thinks it's a good initiative on two levels; they know what they are getting themselves into, and it fill the time gap between joining and attending Firefighter One. The program gets them involved.
- Commissioner Cofiell inquired if the members who signed up for a dedicated week, and those that didn't, if the same number of members are still coming to calls, or is it less? The numbers don't appear to have changed, and Chief Thurz noted that members do not have to sign up for a full week, a member can pick a day or two. The idea is to make sure members are going to the nuisance calls. While Commissioner

Cofiell agreed with the concept, he questioned if the program is discouraging members from responding? Chief Thurz replied that it might be discouraging some members at Station 1, but not at the other three companies. Chief Thurz deferred to Deputy Chief Cody as the former Captain, who noted that the fire and nuisance alarms attract less people, but when there is an actual fire or motor vehicle accident more show up. Deputy Chief Cody further noted that the membership at Station 1 is really low. When he joined there were 53 members on the roster, now it's down to 19. Chief Thurz also noted something to take into consideration is that the annual requirements are minimal, and the Department still had to send 11 letters to those not eligible for their tax abatement. Commissioner Quagliaroli asked if that excluded support people, which would be about 20%? Chief Thurz replied that it did not include those that were life members.

- Commissioner Longo thanked everyone for the great job the committee did on the personnel evaluations. He recognized that it needed to be tweaked a number of times, and is glad to see it back. He felt it is beneficial on all fronts. Commissioner Quagliaroli noted that it involved developing job descriptions, evaluation sheet and a process. However, this needs to be done one or two more times to get the kinks out. The first round was a test that provided good feedback, and the next round should be even better.
- Fire Marshal's Position:
 - Commissioner Cafazzo did not have any new information. He stated that a recommendation was made. Commissioner Cofiell asked Town Manager Luiz if he would like to say anything, as he and Commissioner Cafazzo were on the committee and hadn't heard a word. Commissioner Cafazzo noted that he wasn't happy with the outcome and the potential reasons. The Commission made a recommendation, did its due diligence and moved it up to the Town Council to decide. Town Manager Luiz stated he believed the Town Council would act on the position at its next meeting (Tuesday, May 9, 2023).

Chief Thurz informed the Commission that he would be out of town on May 5th, and that he would be on vacation the last week of the June.

Meeting Adjourned: Commissioner Cofiell made the motion for adjournment, which was seconded by Commissioner Longo, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:17 PM.

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



Deborah Torres
Recording Secretary

- c: Fire Commission (6)
Fire Chiefs (4)
Fire Captains (4)
Jonathan Luiz, Town Manager
Michael Makuch, Fire Marshal
Gina Consiglio, Purchasing Agent
Robert DiBella, Civil Preparedness