

Board of Fire Commissioners
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

December 7, 2023

Present: Commissioner Longo, Commissioner Bemer, Commissioner Cavanaugh and Commissioner Cofield

Absent: Commissioners Cafazzo and Dutton

Others: Chief Michael Thurz, Assistant Chief David Thurz, Deputy Chief Motowidlak, Executive Officer Bernard Dennler, Fire Marshal/Deputy Chief Michael Makuch and Firefighter Edward Urbansky Jr.

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

Commissioner Longo welcomed and congratulated Steven Bemer as the newest member of the Fire Commission. Commissioner Longo presented Commissioner Bemer with his Commissioner's badge.

Public Comment:

Firefighter Edward Urbansky, Jr., a 57-year member and past Fire Commissioner spoke about the fire station renovations, in particular the work at Station 4. Firefighter Urbansky expressed how he had been asked to host a State's Firefighters Memorial meeting in March but wasn't able due to the renovations. Five months later he was asked to host another memorial meeting, but still wasn't able because the renovations were not completed, which he was embarrassed. During Easter Plants sales the public was told there were no public restrooms available, which was also embarrassing. He went on to state how over the past weekend members had to move everything out of the social club room so the floor could be polished, even though the kitchen wasn't finished and appliances hadn't been delivered. Urbansky mentioned Station 3's renovations were almost completed, and the work at that station started months after Station 4. Urbansky felt that if this was any other town project the work would have been completed in a timely manner. Urbansky noted how he has heard all the reasons and excuses as to why these projects are not being done in the department. When he looked around the room he saw elected officials and appointed officials who are responsible for the operation of the Glastonbury Fire Department by the Town Charter and by-laws. In conclusion, Urbansky stated he has always been proud to be a member of the Glastonbury Fire Department, but very sad to see how things are going, and how poor the moral has become. Status quo is not working, we need a new plan. Don't you think it is time that all of us work together to make this department a better one? As one of my friends, who is a past Chief would say, talk is cheap and actions speak louder than words. Thank you very much for your time, I said my peace and feel better.

Commissioner Longo thanked Firefighter Urbansky for his comments and replied that being a former commissioner he would understand the Commission could not respond, but felt obligated to say a couple of things. Commissioner Longo replied that the comments were dually noted and aware of the ongoing construction problems. Everyone at this table will agree we talk about this subject every month. Firefighter Urbansky replied he didn't need to be told a thing, he was happy that he came and said his peace.

Approval of Minutes:

Approval of the minutes for the November 2, 2023 meeting were tabled as there were not enough Commissioners from the last meeting present to approve. Commissioner Cavanaugh was not in attendance at the last meeting.

Fire Marshal Update:

Fire Marshal/Deputy Chief Makuch reported he has been six months in the position and is getting to know the town, its community risk profile, and the effectiveness of the office. He stated the office has done excellent work to date. The community risk profile overall needs to be improved, as the community is growing, the hazards are increasing and the office needs to keep up with the changes. The Fire Marshal has been working with the Fire Chief, and his direct supervisor in Community Development on getting more staffing based on the need to have more inspections completed, identifying high risk properties and the challenges. The inspection rate overall is low, and the office is still identifying properties that require inspections. The Fire Marshal's office is working on developing an electronic inspection tools through the First Due software purchased by the Fire Department. The goal is to be completely electronic by the end of the month. By going to an electronic format this will create more efficiency in writing reports, sending them out, and reviewing the data.

Commissioner Longo inquired if the Fire Marshal had preliminary budget discussions with the Town Manager and Finance Board, and wanted to clarify that more inspections needed to be taking place? Commissioner Longo questioned if this was due to the lack of staffing, and curious if there is hope to increase the current staff, but understands budget preparation is still preliminary?

Fire Marshal Makuch replied there are approximately 2,000 inspectable properties on various cycles from four years to three, two, and every year. Of the total number this results in an eight-year cycle. In a worst-case scenario, there could be a year in which 1,200 to 1,300 properties will need to be inspected. The goal is to complete around 1,000 inspections a year, which could spread out the peaks and valleys, while doing a respectable job for the community in managing the risk. This is currently not possible with two and half employees in the Fire Marshal's office. There have been lengthy discussions with the Community Development Director, Shelley Caltagirone, who is in agreement with increasing staffing. There have been discussions with the Town Manager about attempting to add funds to this fiscal year's budget to hire more part time staff because the process is quicker, which will allow to pick up the inspection speed. Furthermore, more inspections will be completed once the software is figured out, which will make things more efficient. The goal will be to complete an inspection on a portable tablet device and at the end of the inspection the report can be emailed to a property owner while still on site, instead of coming back to the office, spending a couple of hours typing out a report and then emailing it to the property owner. In the draft budget there is a provision for more permanent staffing starting next July 1st. Therefore, the request is a combination of getting temporary or part-time staffing now with more permanent staffing in the future. As of success of getting more staffing, the reception with the Town Manager has been positive.

Commissioner Longo thanked Fire Marshal Makuch, and understood that it will be an educational budget year with a lot of new faces in town hall and not sure what the thinking will be. Commissioner Longo noted that he didn't want to put Fire Marshal Makuch on the spot, but was looking to understand his feelings on the idea.

Chief's Report:

Chief Thurz reported the following:

- Building renovation are nearing completion. The Chief has met with the contractor and Facilities director, and expressed his frustration with the overall status of the project. The reason why Station 3 had its appliances installed is because they were having a kid's Christmas party, and the rush was to get it done so they didn't have to go outside the station. All of the appliances have been delivered to Station 4. However, there was some going back and forth regarding the kitchen tile at Station 4. Initially it didn't look like the correct tile was installed, but it was. The reason was the kitchen floor had never been waxed since initially being installed several years ago, and there was a discrepancy in its appearance. The appliances at Station 4 are scheduled to be up and running tomorrow.
- Nine months is well beyond the scope of what was anticipated for this project. A punch list was created with the two captains, outlining the work that still needed to be completed by the contractor and Town of Glastonbury. A drop-dead date has been requested from the contractor as to when all the work will be completed at both stations. Some of the items on the punch list have already been completed. The contractor was also made aware that some work was not acceptable, which was acknowledge, but done to get ready for the kid's Christmas party at Station 3. The contractor knows they need to go back and make corrections. Lastly, before everything is signed off the architect needs to perform a punch-list inspection as well. This has been a frustrating process, but we are nearing the finish line. Hopefully everything should be complete within the next six weeks.
- Installation of a new generator for Station 2 will begin next week. A new pad has been set.
- Material for the renovation work at the training facility has been received, with the last shipment received today. Two of the three contractors who submitted proposals have been interviewed. The hope is the Purchasing Agent will award the contract in the coming weeks, with work to commence shortly thereafter. The goal is to be completed by the end of March so training can resume.
- Department held its annual meeting on November 5th. Commissioner Cafazzo was thank for attending the meeting. There were 38 members in attendance. Commissioner Cavanaugh inquired if the 38 were from all the companies? Chief Thurz replied yes.
- Review of operating expenses.
- Commissioner Cavanaugh inquired if the department receives any payment for the class it hosted last month at the training facility, which was attended by a number of outside firefighters? Chief Thurz replied no. Commissioner Cavanaugh asked if the department gets anything? Chief Thurz replied yes, the department will receive free training. Commissioner Cavanaugh asked if the department sent anyone? Chief Thurz replied no, as there was no interest. However, there will be additional training at a later date. Commissioner Cavanaugh clarified that we offered, but no one participated. Chief Thurz replied we were offered four free seats. However, this same training was also held back in either June or July where members attended for free. Chief Thurz further explained the

department has partnered with Flash Fire and CT Custom Fire to utilize the training facility and the department get access to their instructors. Commissioner Cavanaugh inquired what classes they plan to do next? Chief Thurz hopes if the Nye Road building becomes available that there will be rapid intervention and/or long hose stretches training. Commissioner Cavanaugh asked if the training would be something new for the members? Commissioner Cavanaugh didn't know if we received revenue for the use of the facility, but as long as the department gets something in the long run he was fine with the idea.

- A third quarter report is being prepared for the Town Council. The report will not be as in depth as the initial report, but will focus on the department's statistics from July 1st to September 30th. Chief Thurz is submitting the report to the Town Manager tomorrow for the Town Council packet. Commissioner Cavanaugh asked if the Commission could see the report prior to being submitted to the Town Council? Commissioner Cavanaugh was concerned that the report would be out prior to the Commission having a chance to review. Chief Thurz replied he would email it to everyone once it was completed. Commissioner Cavanaugh was the only member who requested a copy of the report.
- Commission members, with the exception of Commissioner Longo, are required to watch the Town's ethics video and submit the acknowledgement form to the Town Clerk's office. Commissioner Longo would forward the forms to Commissioners Cafazzo and Dutton.
- Commissioner Cofield asked if there were any updates on the new apparatus. Chief Thurz replied that the cab and chassis will hopefully be done by the end of January. The apparatus are scheduled to be delivered by late summer or early fall.
- Commissioner Longo was provided with next year's commission meeting scheduled. The only date excluded from the schedule was the July 4th meeting, which was a holiday.

Old Business:

Budget Fiscal Year 2024-2025

- Chief Thurz advised the Commission that the budget process remains very fluid, and that it just started and will go until the end of March. Chief Thurz provided Commission members with a draft of the budget documents. Commissioner Longo reported that Commissioner Cavanaugh and himself met with Chief Thurz a week ago to go over some preliminary ideas about the budget and priority items, knowing that there hadn't been a meeting with the Town Manager and that it was a very rough draft. The budget has already changed from their last meeting.
- Chief Thurz's review of the proposed budget included an overview of the Department's missions, responsibilities, successes and accomplishments, and future goals and initiatives. The document also included performance measures, average response times, number of firefighters, training hours, workplace incidents (injuries) and activity indicators, e.g. number of responses.
- Chief Thurz highlighted the proposed Capital Improvement Projects. The priority for this year will be the replacement of portable and mobile radios. Chief Thurz noted that he

wrote a grant to replace the radios last year, but received word that it was not awarded. Chief Thurz is proposing to replace 80 portable radios and 45 mobile radios for a total cost of \$650,000.

- Commissioner Cofield inquired if the Police Department has been making infrastructure improvements as well to help with the overall coverage, or were they just purchasing radios for themselves? Chief Thurz replied they have been making infrastructure improvements, which includes improvement to the repeater sites at Apple Hill, the Rocky Hill site, police station and Birch Mountain. There is also provisions being made to add a generator to the Apple Hill site.
- Commissioner Bemer inquired if the department is applying for state and federal grants, or just state? Chief Thurz replied federal. Commissioner Bemer then asked if the department is advised why a grant wasn't awarded? Chief Thurz replied no, but this year that has changed. There is a meeting scheduled to review last year's grant application. Chief Thurz was told that our radio equipment was not old enough.
- The next three Capital Improvement Projects priorities was apparatus replacement, two engine tankers and a ladder truck. In addition to the radios, this year's budget included the replacement of Engine 42 for \$1,240,000, but that is subject to change. Apparatus is now taking two to three years for delivery. The second apparatus to be replaced would be Tanker 34 with a second engine tank, which would downsize the overall fleet by one, followed by replacing a ladder truck.
- The final Capital Improvement Project is to enhance the façade at Station 1 to something more modernistic that would match the current streetscape. In total, there is \$6 million of proposed infrastructure improvements. At the subcommittee meeting there was discussion about including the radio and façade projects in this year's budget. The idea was discussed with the Town Manager, and he still needs to review all of the proposed projects before making a final recommendation.
- Commissioner Longo had a couple of thoughts after the subcommittee meeting. The first was delaying the replacement of the ladder truck. He noted the cost is high, which might be concerning to some. While he doesn't dispute the cost, perhaps the replacement could be prolonged a little further out. Commissioner Longo felt that if repairs were needed to the power plant or ladder this might be more cost effective since its use is not significant. As for the façade, he knows this has been a long-term initiative and something that is needed, but perhaps this should wait until the parcel adjacent to the station is developed, as well as the parcels north of the station. Chief Thurz replied that if the ladder truck is moved out three more years the cost would be around \$3.1 million. Furthermore, if it takes three years to build a ladder truck, and it's forecasted to be replaced in 2027 the department wouldn't take delivery until 2030. As for the façade, any design would need to be approved by the Architectural and Site Design Review Committee (ASDRC) and Town Planning and Zoning (TPZ) regardless as to what is developed on the adjacent parcel.
- Chief Thurz then discussed the proposed operating budget. Chief Thurz broke the operating budget into three categories. The first being Total Personal Services, which reflected a 45% increase. The biggest change was reflected in the Unit wage account to assist with membership retention through the creation of a different pay structure. This

was discussed as part of the Strategic Planning Committee, and the proposal still needs to be reviewed and approved to make sure the logistics are acceptable. The proposals is to increase the Unit wage account from \$210,000 to \$453,000. There is also a 2.25% increase for all the stipend positions, as well as a proposed \$4.00 an hour increase in the per diem program. The per diem program started at \$20.00 an hour, last year it was increased by \$1.00 to \$21.00, and this year's proposed increase would make it consistent with the tentative increase to the unit program.

- A fifth Captain's position is being proposed to serve as the department's Health and Safety officer, following the recent Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) consultation. This equates to a \$4,100 increase in officer's stipends.
- Under Total Supplies, the proposed increase is estimated at \$18,750 or 19%. Of that, \$15,000 is allocated for training to accommodate the increased cost at the regional schools, which remains flat funded by the State of Connecticut. In addition, the department will look to bring in more outside training, which is why the partnership with the group that recently utilized the training facility, but at a discount. There is also a desire to encourage member to attend national conferences and seminars. Commissioner Cafazzo mentioned at last month's meeting about the VCOS (Volunteer Combination Officer Section of the International Fire Chiefs Association), as well as FDIC (Fire Department Instructors Conference), or FRI (Fire/Rescue International). The balance of the increase is in consumables, such as station gear and fireground tools.
- Total Services and Charges reflects a \$105,000 increase. The majority of this increase is in professional services, which reflects \$65,000 for a third-party study of the department. This was a recommendation from the Strategic Planning Committee. The other large increase is \$14,000 for the annual subscription fee associated with the records management system. Last year this expenditure was under Capital Outlay as part of the overall cost to transition to a new records management system. The balance of the increase is in vehicle maintenance for outside labor and parts. All other increases remain minimal with the exception of annual hose testing because of the addition of another engine, and the quarterly inspection required for the self-contained breathing apparatus compressor. There was a slight reduction in Fire Watch expense by \$1,800.
- Commissioner Bemer question what category the purchase of rapid intervention packs would fall under for Stations 2 and 4? Chief Thurz replied that purchase would be under Machinery and Equipment in Capital Outlay because the cost is greater than \$5,000. Commissioner Bemer inquired when the department would anticipate that purchase? Chief Thurz stated it hasn't been considered given both stations currently have rapid intervention packs. Despite the rapid intervention packs being manufactured by Scotts the air cylinders with those packs still have a long-term life expectancy.
- Chief Thurz then reviewed Capital Outlay. Within Office Equipment and Furniture there is \$29,000 allocated to replace a network switch, computers and various wireless access points at the fire stations. There is \$65,000 requested under Vehicles to replace the 2008 Ford Expedition, which has approximately 76,000 mileages. For Machinery and Equipment there are three items: replacement of the self-contained breathing apparatus air cylinders for \$30,000, extrication struts of \$25,000, and 12 sets of firefighting personal

protective equipment, including helmets at \$61,000. Total capital outlay is estimated at \$209,000.

- Commissioner Bemer inquired if the purchase for self-contained breathing apparatus mask would come under firefighting gear? Chief Thurz replied it depended on how many were to be ordered. Commissioner Bemer asked if the department was going to continue to purchase individual masks? Chief Thurz replied that additional masks were acquired by trading in some of the department's older equipment. Commissioner Cavanaugh felt it was a good idea for individual masks given Covid. Chief Thurz replied it is and it isn't. It can be a challenge when it comes to members either not bring their individual masks or tracking them for the annual flow testing. However, the department will purchase individual masks for those that have sizing issues with the universal masks kept on the apparatus, or require prescription glasses. The department maintains 75 masks on the apparatus, in addition to each company having six spare masks. When it becomes a point to purchase individual masks, or the standard changes then it would be addressed. Commissioner Bemer asked with the upcoming testing will those that have their own mask be notified? Executive Officer Dennler stated they will receive a message to bring their masks to their station, just like in previous years.
- Commissioner Longo asked about the helmets that needed to be replaced, and if it was 50 or 37? Chief Thurz replied it was 37 at a total cost of \$16,000. Chief Thurz noted that the new helmets have been received and distributed to the Captains.
- Commissioner Longo inquired if the next step in the budget process is to meet with the Town Manager again? Chief Thurz replied yes. The next meeting is with the Town Manager, the Finance Director and the Finance Department's analyst. During the second week of January there will be a meeting with the Board of Finance, Board of Education, Town Council and department directors. How the budget process will work this year is to be determined based on the changes from how it has been done in years past. Commissioner Longo inquired if there would be another meeting with Commissioner Cavanaugh and himself? Chief Thurz replied yes, as the budget process needs to be a fluid discussion.

New Business:

Nominating Committee:

- Commissioner Longo suggested that a nominating committee be needed to formed. Commissioner Longo spoke with Commissioner Cafazzo who will organize a nominating committee again this year. Commissioner Cafazzo said he would have it done by the next meeting. There was no further discussion.

Committee Report:

Strategic Planning Committee:

- Chief Thurz spoke on behalf of the Strategic Planning Committee as Commissioner Dutton was absent and did not attend the last meeting. Chief Thurz suggested the Commission appoints someone to replace former Commissioner Quagliaroli. Commissioner Longo noted he planned to raise the need after the committee report.

- Chief Thurz reported the Strategic Planning Committee met on November 20th with a physician who previously provided the department with its annual physicals. The physician provided the committee with a presentation of the services offered. At the conclusion of the presentation it was the committee's recommendation to move forward with a new provider. Going forward, the department's annual physicals will be conducted in town twice a month at Station 2, one evening and one weekend day. The Chief's office has already established the first three months as to when the physicals will be completed, and is working with the Purchasing Department to set the physician up as a vendor. Former Commissioner Quagliaroli is willing to be one of the first candidates to evaluate the new process so he can provide feedback to the committee.
- Commissioner Longo asked if there was a price difference? Chief Thurz replied there will be a slight price increase, but a member's physical will no longer be interrupted by other urgent care needs like what has been experienced at the current provider in Rocky Hill. The physician believes a member's physical can be completed within 45 minutes provided the member has their bloodwork completed and OSHA questionnaire filled out prior to arrival. This year members will also be required to have a chest x-ray completed prior to their appointment, which is something that will be done every four years. The physician will also be able to complete a Department of Transportation (DOT) physical. Commissioner Longo personally felt it was a good idea and endorsed the change.
- Commissioner Longo asked if there was a Commissioner willing to replace former Commissioner Quagliaroli on the Strategic Planning Committee? Commissioner Bemer volunteered to take his place.
- Commissioner Bemer asked how many members still go to their primary physician for an annual physical? Chief Thurz was not certain, but noted not as many as in the years past. However, going forward the objective would be for everyone to go to the department's physician. Commissioner Bemer felt older members would still want to go to their own physician because they know the individual's history. Commissioner Cavanaugh noted having two physicals in a year was not a bad idea, especially given the member didn't have to pay for the department's physical.

Commissioner Longo asked if there was agreement with the monthly Fire Commission schedule for 2024? There was no discussion. The 2024 schedule was approved as presented.

Next Regular Meeting: January 5, 2024 at Company 1, 2825 Main Street, 7:41 PM.

Meeting Adjourned: Commissioner Cofiehl made the motion for adjournment, which was seconded by Commissioner Cavanaugh, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:41 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