

Board of Fire Commissioners
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 8, 2024

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

Absent: Commissioner Cafazzo

Others: Chief Michael Thurz and Assistant Chief David Thurz

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 February 1, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Cofiell made the motion to approve, which was seconded by Commissioner Cavanaugh. There was no discussion. The motion passed with an abstention from Commissioner Dutton.

Chief's Report:

Chief Thurz reported the following:

- Captains Accornero, Curreri and Ruggiero have recommended the following members for permanent status after completing their Firefighter I certification training.
 - Joseph Hart – Station 1
 - Courtland LeFleur – Station 1
 - Noah Ferrari – Station 2
 - Richard Bowman – Station 4
 - Daniel Silvester – Station 4

Commissioner Cavanaugh made the motion to accept the new members to permanent status, which was seconded by Commissioner Bemer. There was no discussion and the motion was passed unanimously.

- Completed the walk throughs of Stations 3 and 4 with the contractor and architect. The drain for the water cooler at Station 3 is blocked. The contractor will need to comeback, take up the floor in the ladies' room, and make the necessary repairs. There will be no cost to the town.
- The work on the burn rooms at the training facility is complete. Department completed a "seasoning" burn of the three rooms with the contractor and representative from Fire Facilities. The representative with Fire Facilities will come back one more time to provide the department officers with an overview of the new system, and what is required to properly burn within the rooms.
- Commissioner Longo inquired if the burn building was complete? Chief replied there are some other improvements that still need to be completed, such as painting the stairwells on

the exterior which hadn't been done in 18 years, along with adding some additional pavement for a solid work surface. The cost for the parts and labor of the burn rooms was \$212K. With the leftover money there are some other improvements such as replacing the lighting inside the building.

- Commissioner Dutton asked if the panels installed were the same as the previously ones used? Chief Thurz replied they were not the same padgenite tiles, but a galvanized stainless-steel paneling. Assistant Chief Thurz noted the paneling is similar to corrugated roofing material. Commissioner Dutton asked if that is why they recommend different burn tactics? Chief Thurz responded that it is different configuration on how the rooms need to “breathe and move” within their system. There is still padgenite tiles on the windows and door frames, so you still need to go around and make sure things don't loosen and stay tight. Chief Thurz noted that a third burn room was added, which is a much bigger area; it was formally used as the annex room. Assistant Chief Thurz responded that instead of having a 4' x 4' tile flex now the whole wall can expand and contract with the heat temperatures. Chief Thurz invited the commission to go over and take a look at the building to see the difference, and Assistant Chief Thurz had pictures he could email the commission.
- Commissioners were reminded that if they still needed a department email to notify Deputy Chief Cody so they could get set up.
- The Town Council and Board of Finance are still reviewing the various components of the budget. Under Capital Improvement Program there is still discussion going back and forth regarding the purchase of a fire truck. Commission members were provided with two memorandums that were provided to the Town Council and Board of Finance pertaining to Engine Tank 42 and apparatus replacement. The memorandum to the Board of Finance addressed the total number of incidents and number of firefighters, which was broken down between interior, support and probationary. There were questions on apparatus replacement, which Chief Thurz put together a schedule using 25 years as a replacement plan for the larger apparatus. The memorandum provided the year, manufacturer, mileage, and hours for each vehicle. Chief Thurz noted that with the two new trucks on order, the department would conceivably be retiring four vehicles. If a new engine tank was purchased the fleet could be reduced by another vehicle. Chief Thurz noted there was a lot of moving pieces in moving the apparatus around. The second memorandum was to the Town Council regarding Engine Tank 42's repairs, mileage, number of responses and days out of service. The memorandum also addressed market conditions in purchasing a new apparatus, with a one percent increase being experienced every 30 days, as well as the difference between a fire apparatus and a commercial vehicle.
- Commissioner Dutton asked if the town manager understands how the fire trucks operate as compared to a town dump truck? Chief Thurz replied yes, and that a dump truck is out each day, where a fire truck may not be.
- There was discussion between the Town Council and Board of Finance about bonding future apparatus.

- The department's operating budget was presented to the Town Council on February 27th. Questions were raised about the proposed enhancements to the unit program. There was a recommendation not to replace the 25 self-contained breathing apparatus cylinders, despite it being a Fire Commission recommendation a couple of years ago by former Commissioner Quagliaroli. The thought at that time was to gradually replace the cylinders as opposed to replacing all of them in one year. The department had budgeted \$30K in this year's budget to being the replacement.
- Commissioner Longo inquired if the final town meeting on the budget would take place in late March? Chief Thurz responded it would. Commissioner Longo than asked if there will be more meetings prior to the final meeting when a decision on bonding would take place? Commissioner Longo felt it was hard to discuss when final figures were not available. He asked Chief Thurz if he had any insight? Chief Thurz replied there were things being considered, and there was discussion about looking at future project after the budget season was over as to what would fall under a bond or paid with cash. Chief Thurz noted at the budget meeting earlier in the week a council member made some recommendations with the remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that need to be spent by the end of the year, or at least encumbered. There are a lot of projects within the different departments to consider.
- Review of operating expenses.

Old Business:

- Commissioner Longo inquired at last month's meeting about the purchase of a UTV. Chief Thurz replied the committee has put together its specs and submitted it to Sourcewell for a quote based on the government contract. Commissioner Dutton inquired what was ordered? Chief Thurz replied nothing had been ordered, that the committee looked at a Polaris, and the unit was built using the Sourcewell website. Commissioner Bemer asked what had been budgeted to replace the UTV? Chief Thurz responded \$37.5K. Commissioner Dutton asked if the UTV would be a six-wheel vehicle? Chief Thurz replied they no longer make six-wheel units.

New Business:

- None

Committee Reports:

Strategic Committee:

- Commissioner Bemer noted that Chief Thurz provided committee members with copies of the operation budget and the proposed truck replacement schedule. Assistant Chief Thurz provided an updated on the department physicals. Recruitment and retention ideas were also discussed. Commissioner Bemer noted that Company 4 will be celebrating its 60-year anniversary and will have some type of event. Commissioner Longo asked if Company 4

made any decision on an event? Commissioner Bemer responded no decision had been made as of yet.

- Chief Thurz mentioned that Newtown Fire is interested in hosting the 2027 State Firefighters Convention. Given the incoming President for the Connecticut Firefighters Association is from Newtown, it is only right for them to host the convention. Chief Thurz noted that Glastonbury will do something for its 100th anniversary.
- Commissioner Longo informed the commission he met with Chief Thurz to discuss the budget, and that he had covered it earlier in the meeting. Commissioner Longo inquired if any of the other commissioners watched the council proceedings or heard any of the budget workshops? Commissioner Longo went on to state that a comment was made about whether the Commission knew what was going on or not, and in fairness to everybody he felt everything has been transparent as it could be, that there isn't anything specific the other commissioners don't already know about. Some people thought the Commission was not informed, which is not the case. Commissioner Cofiell responded that there still isn't anything to vote on as of yet. Commissioner Cofiell noted they are aware of what is going on, but haven't heard what will be funded to the department. Chief Thurz replied that he presented the commission with a budget, the commission could have voted on it, it had been vetted, reviewed by Commissioners Longo and Cavanaugh with some changes made, and it was acceptable by the commission at an earlier meeting. Chief Thurz recommended that next year a formal vote on the budget will be made, even though it would still need Town Council approval.

Executive Session:

- Commissioner Bemer made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss a confidential attorney-client communication concerning compensation to firefighters. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cofiell. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioners in attendance, along with Chief Thurz and Assistant Chief Thurz entered into executive session at 6:58 PM.
- The Commission reconvene the regular meeting at 8:12 PM with no action taken during the executive session.

Commissioner Bemer made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Cofiell. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: A Special Meeting, due to a time change, April 4, 2024 at Company 1, 2825 Main Street, 5:00 PM.

Meeting Adjourned:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deborah Torres". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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