

Board of Fire Commissioners
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

October 3, 2024

Present: Commissioner Bemer, Commissioner Cavanaugh, Commissioner Cofiell, and Commissioner Nursick

Absent: Commissioner Longo

Others: Chief Michael Thurz, Deputy Chief Paul Cody, and Executive Officer Bernard Dennler Jr.

Commissioner Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM

Public Comment: None

Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Cavanaugh asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the September 5, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Bemer made a motion to accept with a seconded from Commissioner Nursick. There was no discussion. The motion passed, with an abstention from Commissioner Cofiell.

Correspondence:

Commissioner Cavanaugh read a letter from the Connecticut State Firefighters Association's Memorial Committee regarding a fundraising event to complete upgrades to the firefighter's memorial. The letter addressed the Committee's memorial dinner, which will be held on Thursday, November 7th, at the Aqua Turf, in Southington, CT.

Chief's Report:

Chief Thurz reported the following:

- New apparatus update:
 - The two apparatuses are at their respective stations with training and equipment switch over taking place. The Captains have been asked to determine a date for a "wet down" ceremony.
 - Ladder 31 sustain damage when it was being pulled out of the station. The driver hit the side of the building, damaging the right rear side of the vehicle. Chief Thurz is waiting for a call from an insurance adjustor to inspect the vehicle.
- The swearing in ceremony, originally scheduled for September 18th, but cancelled due to a conflict with a rescheduled Parks and Recreation concert, will be held October 21st, 7 PM, at the Riverfront Community Center.
- The mobile and portable radio specifications have been sent to the Purchasing Department. The department is waiting for the Purchasing Agent to send out the request for proposals.
- The first installment of the stipend payout is being processed. On July 1st, the Department converted to the new stipend plan. The payment will be based on the old unit system, at

\$10.75 for the first three months, and the new point system, at \$25.00 a point for the last three months. The total payout is \$124,836.50, with the first three-months (April thru June) at \$44,311.50, and the last three-months (July thru September) at \$80,525.00. If the \$80,525 was to be annualized over a 12-month period the total payout would be \$322,100 assuming everything remained constant. This year's budget has \$454,000 in the stipend account, which is more than sufficient, if the call volume were to stay at this pace, and there are no major storms and/or increase in call volume.

- The Department's annual meeting, which is required by the By-Laws, is scheduled for November 4th, 7 PM at the Riverfront Community Center.
- Operating expense overview. The Department spent \$85.2K during the month of September. The majority of the expenses were in fire hydrant rental to the Town of Manchester for \$46.7K, two-months of vehicle maintenance expenses of \$9K, and \$19.3K for hose, ladder and pump testing with JLN Associates.
- The New England Fire Chiefs Expo will be held on October 16th through 18th at Mohegan Sun Casino. On October 16th, the exhibit floor will be open for volunteer departments from 5:00 to 8:00 PM. On Thursday and Friday, Chief Thurz will be attending the conference's seminars. On Thursday evening, there will be a memorial mass for Chief Chuck Flynn who was a former President of the association. Chief Thurz asked if any of the Commissioners were interested in attending to let him know.
- Commissioner Bemer inquired if the vendor who sold the new apparatus was taking one of the new trucks to the conference? Chief Thurz replied no. He had offered, but the vendor was not participating in this year's expo. In addition, to the New England Fire Chiefs event, there is a competing event, Fire EMS Expo, which will be held at Foxwood Resort Casino the following week.

Old Business:

- a) Update on Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV):
 - Chief Thurz reported that Polaris Defense has agreed to replace the original unit with a brand-new one. The new unit was shipped to Scranton Powersports in Vernon, and Chief Thurz hopes to pick it up on Friday (9/6/24). Polaris Defense has agreed to extend the warranty, as well as include some preventative maintenance parts for future service needs.
- b) Public Act 24-16 Line of Duty Death
 - Chief Thurz noted the proposed ordinance to change who determines a line of duty death did not move forward. Therefore, as of October 1st the language, as written in the act gives the Chief of the Department the determination authority if a member were to die within 24-hours of responding to an incident or training exercise.
- c) Budget – Fiscal year 2025-26
 - Chief Thurz provided an overview of the proposed Capital Improvement Program for the upcoming budget year. Chief Thurz estimated all the project costs to be \$7,123M, and includes the following:

- Apparatus Replacement
 - Engine Tank 42 - \$1,500M
 - Tanker 34 - \$1,650M
 - Ladder 15 - \$2,900M
 - Station 1 Façade - \$862.5K
 - Station compressor with drops for each apparatus - \$110K
 - New self-contained breathing apparatus compressor - \$100K
- The proposal is to replace three apparatus, one vehicle per year.
- The façade at Station 1 is original, dating back to 1971, and has been a budget item for the past 25 years.
- Replace the air compressors at each station, and include air drops for each apparatus. The air-lines would drop down from the ceilings. The cost is estimated at \$110K, and reflects a 15% contingency. The contingency would be used for unexpected expenses, such as the potential need to upgrade the electrical requirements.
- The self-containing breathing apparatus compressor does not need to be replaced yet, but is something that needs to be considered. The current compressor was purchased in 2003, and MES, the current vendor, does not feel it needs to replace yet, but is 25 years old.
- As for operating and Capital Outlay, these items still needs to be discussed, and a meeting date to review with Commissioners Longo and Cavanaugh to be established.
- Commissioner Bemer inquired if Chief Thurz could address what the difference would be between bonding or buying, and if bonding, would we buy all three trucks at once? Chief Thurz responded that is a decision for the Board of Finance and Town Council to make. Commissioner Cofiell responded the Town Council hasn't even considered this yet, nor discussed with the Board of Finance. Chief Thurz replied that bonding would need to go through a referendum, and if included other projects could be one or multiple questions. It also depends on the rate, how the bonding is structured, and how the trucks would be purchased. Chief Thurz believes if bonding were to be considered it would not be until 2025.

New Business:

a) Training Facility

- Chief Thurz reported that the pavement at the training facility was going to be extended on the sides of the building and down to the pavilion. Chief Thurz noted Commissioner Longo asked that the training facility be added to the agenda, as there may have been some complaints about how it looks? Chief Thurz noted 20 years ago when the training facility was built there was nothing around it. Now there is the magnet school, a Stop and Shop, and that the State has removed some of the trees along the on-ramp. Chief Thurz has discussed with Assistant Chief Thurz about cleaning up the site and disposing of some of the items on the grounds, which included the gas props, some of

the oil tanks that are used for burn pans, as well as possibly having a salvage company remove some of the other items. The only other option to make the area secluded would be to plant some trees, e.g. Arborvitae, which would be a cost.

- Commissioner Cavanaugh asked who was complaining? Chief Thurz replied he wasn't sure, but was informed by Commissioner Longo that it should be brought up due to complaints he received about the cleanliness of the training facility.
- Commissioner Cofiehl stated the only thing he has heard were positive comments about the changes made.
- Neither Commissioners Bemer or Nursick have heard of any complaints.
- Chief Thurz said some of the vehicles have been removed from the site. However, it is getting difficult to find vehicles for training. Chief Thurz noted the department recently spent \$100K on new extrication tools and \$50K on new rescue struts, and this is why the Department is keeping the larger vehicles on the site to be used for training.

Committee Reports:

- Chief Thurz reported at the last Strategic Planning Committee meeting the committee was working on developing some other retention initiatives, especially for those that lived out of town. Chief Thurz noted this was the first meeting, as the committee did not meet during the summer. The next meeting is scheduled for October 23rd. The committee collaboratively has developed a couple of ideas, which Chief Thurz plans to put in a memorandum for the other committee members to review, and then send to the Town Manager for consideration.
- Commissioner Cavanaugh asked what kind of concepts was the committee working on? Chief Thurz replied it focused on something similar to the tax abatement for those that resided outside of town.

Adjournment:

- Commissioner Cofiehl made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Bemer. The motion passed unanimously.
- The meeting adjourned at 6:58 PM. The next regular meeting will be held on November 7, 2024, at Company 1, 2825 Main Street, at 6:30 PM.



Deborah M. Heald
Recording Secretary

c: Fire Commission (5)
Fire Chiefs (4)
Fire Captains (4)
Jonathan Luiz, Town Manager
Michael Makuch, Fire Marshal
Gina Consiglio, Purchasing Agent