

Board of Fire Commissioners
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

November 7, 2024

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

Absent: Commissioner Cavanaugh

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

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 October 3, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Cofiell made a motion to approve, with a second from Commissioner Bemer. There was no discussion. The motion passed, with an abstention from Commissioner Longo.

Correspondence: None

Chief's Report:

Chief Thurz reported the following:

- Fire danger has been elevated to extreme, and it appears will be that way for days to come.
- Glastonbury Fire, along with Newington and Rocky Hill Fire Departments provided five days of station coverage for Wethersfield Fire due to the death of one of their members at the Hawthorne fire in Berlin. The Wethersfield firefighter died as the result of a utility terrain vehicle (UTV) accident. Based on the accident, Assistant Chief Thurz has been asked to reevaluate the department's standard operating guideline, and to look at some type of UTV certified training course. The Connecticut Fire Academy also provided a sample guidance document related to UTV operations.
- Department's annual meeting was held on November 4th at the Riverfront Community Center. There were 39 members in attendance. Members were provided an overview of the past year's accomplishments, proposed Capital Improvement Program and Capital Outlay Projects for the upcoming budget year, and a review of the 2023 statistics.
- Two proposals were received for the replacement of the mobile and portable radios. Marcus Communication was the lowest bidder and selected as the vendor. The overall project cost is approximately \$61K over budget. Deputy Chief Cody will serve as the project manager, and is working with the committee to see what can be eliminated to be

within budget. If additional funds are needed Chief Thurz will review with the Town Manager.

- Grading and paving at the training facility is currently underway. In addition, the Department is looking to purchase a variety of training props, which include a forcible entry door, burn pans, window prop to simulate a vent, enter, search scenario, and a metal cutting prop for cutoff saw training. Consideration is also being given to installing security cameras.
- Annual hose, pump and ladder testing is currently underway. Deputy Chief Motowidlak is the project manager. Approximately 28 lengths of various size hoses have failed to date. The department still maintains a lot of hose that is dated. As part of the upcoming budget year, it will be recommended that funds be appropriated to replace the hoses that failed and to add to the existing inventory.
- The Department will participate in the Hero's Field dedication, which will take place on November 11th at the Riverfront baseball field. Glastonbury Little League will be honoring Police, Fire, and Military personnel. The event includes the unveiling of three monuments outside the baseball field, which have silhouettes of a Firefighter, Military, and Police Officer.
- The department will recognize two high school crew volunteers at the Board of Education meeting on November 11th. The volunteers will receive a civilian citation for saving an individual who drove their vehicle into the Connecticut River. The volunteers managed to pull the individual out of water and brought to shore.
- A meeting with Connecticut OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) was held. The meeting focused on the department's Blood Borne Pathogen and Haz-Com guidelines. A follow up meeting will take place after the first of the year to review revisions to the existing guidelines.
- Attended FEMA's Assistance to Fire Act Grant seminar at the Connecticut Fire Academy. This year's high priorities are limited to items which the Department is either already equipped with or up to date on. One consideration would be the replacement of the self-contained breathing apparatus compressor, which was acquired 25 years ago on a similar grant. This is considered a high priority item, but only on a regional basis. If the department applied on a standalone basis it becomes a medium priority. Typically, medium priority items are not considered for funding.
- October was Fire Prevention month. The Department visited a number of elementary and pre-schools to discuss fire safety. There are a few more schools and daycare facilities that will be visited during November.
- By December 15th the Department will be required to pay the State of Connecticut a \$10.00 fee per interior firefighter for the cancer relief fund, which will become an annual

requirement. The eligibility requirements include a pre-cancer screening prior to becoming a member, which has never been done and has raised some concerns throughout the fire service. However, with the proposed Federal OSHA changes, there is the potential for cancer screenings to be required annually going forward. Other requirements include a non-smoker for 15 years, but it is not clear if certain tobacco products are exempt.

- This year is a long session for the legislature, which starts January 8, 2025 and goes to June 4, 2025.
- The legislative priorities for Connecticut's fire service are still being developed. There is a concern surrounding single means of egress for wood framed multifamily structures. The Connecticut Fire Marshals' Association, and entire fire service opposes this from a safety perspective.
- Reimbursement for the removal of foam from a fire apparatus prior to July 1, 2023 will be another focus. The Department spent \$20K to remove the foam from our apparatus and have not received any reimbursement to date.
- The State of Connecticut's strategic plan to address the current status of the state's fire service, both from a career and volunteer prospective was awarded to Mission CIT, a Connecticut based firm. The hope is the plan will develop a road map for the future of Connecticut's fire service.
- There has been no movement pertaining to the maintenance of highway standpipes. The state was looking to push the testing and maintenance on to the municipality. Glastonbury has one standpipe, located on the Hubbard Street overpass on Route 17. There is also one on the Putnam Bridge, but on the Wethersfield side of the bridge.
- The public hearing on the proposed Federal OSHA changes related to the 1910.156 standard is scheduled to begin on November 12th.
- Commissioner Longo inquired if the cancer screening would be incorporated into the annual physicals? Chief Thurz responded if it gets adopted by OSHA it would need to be, and believes four types of testing will be required. When the State of Connecticut sent out the request for payment the cancer screening requirement was not known. The Uniform Professional Firefighters Association plan to address this issue with Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. The \$10.00 fee only applies to interior firefighters. A firefighter who seeks wage replacement due to a cancer diagnose will be required to complete an affidavit, which states they did not have a pre-existing cancer condition, completed an annual physical, was a non-smoker for 15 years, and an interior firefighter.
- Commissioner Cofield inquired if the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) was considering putting a hydrant in as part of changing the water line on New London Turnpike? Chief Thurz replied the hydrant was removed at the Route 17 off ramp to accommodate a new rotary. Deputy Chief Motowidlak replied they would be adding a hydrant further up the road, but not extending the water line any further east.

- Commissioner Nursick inquired if there is going to be a second meeting with OSHA? Chief Thurz replied that a second meeting already took place and that there will be a follow up meeting after the first of the year.
- A copy of the third quarter report prepared for the Town Manager was provided to the commissioners. Chief Thurz noted that the call volume decreased when compared to the same period last year. Chief Thurz stated the report contained photos of the new members who were recently sworn in, the truck committee members, as well as reference to the upcoming Federal OSHA public hearing, cancer legislation, status of the radio replacement project, and the 100th anniversary in 2027.
- Review of operating expenses.
- Commissioner Bemer asked if the leaking hydraulic line on the ladder truck is still under warranty? Chief Thurz responded it should be as the repair was recently made.

Old Business:

Budget – Fiscal year 2025-2026

- Commissioner Longo reported he spoke with both Chief Thurz and Commissioner Cavanaugh about the budget. Commissioner Longo asked Chief Thurz if he had any more information? Chief Thurz replied the budget documents recently came out and that he would like to set up a time to review. Chief Thurz noted the budget is preliminary, and that the initial meeting with the Town Manager is not until December.
- Chief Thurz provided an overview of the proposed Capital Outlay request, which would include 12 sets of personal protective equipment, various sizes of fire hose, replacement of antennas at Station One, and installing an antenna at the Cox Tower on Bell Street. The Information Technology Department also has scheduled the replacement of some computers. Chief Thurz noted he will also work to keep the operating budget at no more than a 2% increase.
- Commissioner Longo inquired if the upgrades at the Police Department would have any bearing on waiting to replace the new radios being proposed? Chief Thurz replied it would not. What would apply would be upgrading the antenna at Bell Street and at Station One. The only questionable item is trying to improve radio coverage along Route 2 between Exit 11 and the town line. Chief Thurz has reached out to the Police Department's radio vendor to see if improvements at either the FAA site on Clark Hill or installing something on the TN's tower in Marlborough would be beneficial.
- Commissioner Longo inquired if there were any items in the budget that the department could do without, such as those items that might be considered a large expenditure? Chief Thurz replied there aren't any items he would consider removing from the budget. Chief Thurz noted there are three apparatus, two engine tankers and a ladder, Station 1's exterior façade, replacement air compressors for each station with the ceiling air drops and a

replacement self-contained breathing apparatus compressor as a future goal. Chief Thurz reported that he split the purchases of the apparatus over a two-year budget cycle, with an inflationary factored added into the cost.

- Commissioner Longo stated he discussed with Commissioner Nursick that the replacement of the three apparatus was a priority, and wanted to know what could be done differently to sell the initiative? Commissioner Longo is looking for a way to avoid what Colchester Fire recently had to do when they purchased five apparatus all at once.
- Commissioner Nursick stated whether it's a cost benefit analysis, or something in terms of a sales pitch to help those that make the financial decisions understand the benefits of upgrading and modernizing the apparatus, versus the cost implications or operational inefficiencies that go along with maintaining and holding onto older equipment that is less reliable, harder to find parts for, and has an impact on the mission effectiveness of the department needed to be considered.
- Chief Thurz replied it's hard to do a cost benefit analysis if you don't know what repairs need to be made. However, an analysis could be completed on how long an apparatus is out of service. As for other selling points, newer apparatus have upgraded safety features, such as rollover protection and air bags. We've discussed mileage, and all the trips are short distances based on the assigned fire districts. What decision makers don't understand is that the apparatus have hard starts and immediately going out the door without the adequate time to warm up. The cost and timeframe to build a fire apparatus can take up to three years. I think one of the selling points is that our proposed plan will reduce the fleet by another vehicle. With the purchase of the last two apparatus we were able to reduce the fleet by four assets.
- Commissioner Cofield noted that as the metal breaks down, or as it fatigues, it can be the start of a problem. In addition, there is no consideration given for the weight that is constantly left on the vehicle compared to a typical commercial vehicle that is left empty when not in use.
- Commissioner Longo concluded that he only raised the issue because he wanted everyone to begin thinking of ways to convey the need to replace the apparatus. He is looking to avoid replacing multiple vehicles at once based on the significant cost of apparatus. In addition, if funds were appropriate, should the department look at apparatus that hasn't been sold to avoid the extended delivery timeframe?
- Chief Thurz replied purchasing an apparatus that hasn't been sold could be an option, but doesn't want to get in the mindset of purchasing used apparatus either.
- Commissioner Nursick inquired what the NFPA recommendation is for replacing an apparatus? Chief Thurz replied 15 years. However, because of Glastonbury's call volume being around 1,000 incidents annually he would recommend a 25-year schedule. Commissioner Nursick asked if there were any figures associated with what the cost has

been to maintain the three vehicles being considered for replacement? Chief Thurz and Commissioner Longo both replied there was a cost estimate from last year budget session, but didn't have the information readily available.

- Commissioner Nursick stated that while we haven't hit a critical situation regarding the apparatus, if something were to fail or break at the wrong time it could be a significant safety issue. He also asked if there was any hope of seeing changes in the emissions standards for the apparatus to meet the environmental requirements?
- Chief Thurz noted there are changes coming to the emissions standards in 2026, which Commissioner Cofiell replied he doesn't think there will be issues with motors compared to the last change, which was disastrous.

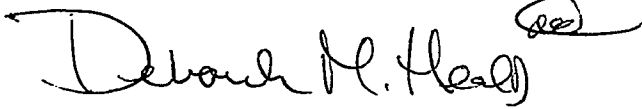
New Business: None

Committee Reports:

- Chief Thurz reported the last Strategic Planning Committee meeting was canceled due to line of duty death of the Wethersfield firefighter and Glastonbury providing station coverage. Chief Thurz noted there will be a November meeting in which the work will continue on developing initiatives for the out of town members.
- Commissioner Bemer inquired if the new fire inspector was full or part time? Chief Thurz responded it was a part time position.

Adjournment:

- Commissioner Cofiell made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Bemer. The motion passed unanimously.
- The meeting adjourned at 7:27 PM. The next regular meeting will be held on December 5, 2024, 6:30 PM, at Company 1, 2825 Main Street.



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