

TOWN OF SOUTHTON
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

Chairperson Baker called the special meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners, held at Headquarters on April 25, 2013, to order at 6:00 p.m. Commissioners Sherman, Longo, Dandrow, Baker and Bunko were present. Also in attendance were Chief Clark and Asst. Chief Wisner.

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

MOTION: by Sherman, seconded by Longo, to accept the minutes of March 20, 2013 special meeting as circulated. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: by Sherman, seconded by Longo, to accept the minutes of April 8, 2013 special meeting as circulated. Motion carried with four ayes and one abstention.

MOTION: by Sherman, seconded by Dandrow, to approve the payment of bills for March in the amount of \$62,682.93. Motion carried unanimously.

Secretary's Report:

Memo from Chief Clark recommending to request transfers of \$5,000 to Legal Fees, \$168 to Lease-Copier, and \$252 to Life Insurance.

Memo from Chief Clark requesting to attend the IAFC conference from August 12-18, 2013.

Chief's Report:

- EMT recertification was completed using an online program. Everyone that participated passed scoring 85 or better. This was the first year using the online program which saved about \$20,000 in overtime costs.
- The Recruitment and Retention Committee met during the month. Three applications have been received and all three have been interviewed for the July Probationary Firefighter Class. One applicant has completed all requirements and the other two are in the process. The committee is holding an open house for recruitment on May 11 at Company #1.
- E-11 went to Five Star for warranty work and a service. During delivery it sustained some damage when it rubbed up against a utility pole. All repairs were made, and damage was less than \$750.

- The ICMA Final Report was received on April 5, 2013 and distributed to the Board.
- The following is a summary from the ICMA Steering Committee meeting addressing the ICMA report:
 - All 31 recommendations were assigned to subcommittees who will report back to the Steering Committee.
 - There were six subcommittees formed, with Chief Clark or Assistant Chief Wisner being a member of each:
 1. Multi-Company Impact Committee: (all recommendations that would impact Paid On Call (POC)) Captain Higgins, Captain DiBattista and Chairperson Baker (1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 14, 21, 22, 24, 27, 29).
 2. Strategic Planning Committee: (Short , medium and long range plans for; facilities, apparatus, equipment, along with risk assessment for the community and the Department) Captain Zygmunt, Lt. Paul and Commissioner Sherman (3, 4, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 17).
 3. Performance and Benchmark Committee, (creating performance measurements, time allocation, response time benchmarks) Captain Donnelly and Lt. Heath (6,7,11,20,23)
 4. Operations & Training Committee, (pre fire plans, cross training companies, POC officer development program, NFA, automatic aid agreements, EMR for POC) Captain DiBattista, Captain Donnelly and Lt. Heath (9, 10,12,14,19,28,29).
 5. Fire Prevention Committee, (Civilian Inspector, Eng. Company Inspectors) Asst. Chief Wisner (30, 31).
 6. Administration, (False alarm review, POC covering career, minimum number of career slots that are approved off, call back for standby, automatic aid agreements, civilian inspector) (11, 18, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30).

The Steering Committee will report the finding to the Board of Fire Commissioners for action. The Steering Committee is expected to have some recommendations to the Board by the next regular meeting.

- The new compressor for breathing air was delivered, installed, and put in service. The total cost was \$57,000 with \$50,000 being paid for by a Assistance to Firefighters Grant, written by Lt. Heath.
- A hole in the roof of Headquarters apparatus floor was done to supply outside air to the new compressor.

- Retired Town Manager John Weichsel passed away during the month. Chief Clark attended his funeral.
- A graduation and pinning ceremony was held on April 8, 2013. The ceremony was for the graduation of Recruit Class 5, newly appointed officers, and FF Polzella.
- Met with members of the Board of Finance to discuss the Department budget.
- Met with Town Manager Brumback and Finance Director Emilia Portelinha to discuss the current budget.
- Attended the April 15, 2013 Board of Finance meeting to discuss the Department's request for an appropriation in the overtime account. The request was approved.
- Met with representatives from Five Star and Rom to review issues with the rollup doors on the new engine. All doors are under warranty and the current issues were documented. Since that meeting, Fire Star has contacted Chief Clark to report that they are pursuing Rom to replace all of E11's doors.
- Met with the Town of Southington's labor attorney, Kevin Roy, to review contract negotiations proposals.
- Chief Clark attended a table top exercise for an active shooter in a school, at the Board of Education. Most of the town's department and school leadership were in attendance.
- The Apple Harvest Committee has asked the Department to operate the first aid station at the festival in October. Chief Clark has researched the feasibility and cost, and feels we could do so with an added cost of about \$2,000, which would be billed to the Apple Harvest Committee. The first aid station would be operated through Public Safety Trailer, and the extra costs would be incurred from staffing two additional firefighters. The Apple Harvest Committee is meeting tonight to discuss this option, and Chief Clark would like the Board to recommend for the Department to provide the service to the festival.
- The Finance Department has estimated a shortfall of \$4,000 in the fuel account based on last year's fuel usage from the April through June. The account is currently in the black and will be closely monitored for more accurate numbers.
- Research is being done on the cost of sending Maureen Frazier to the Firehouse Software Conference in Phoenix, Arizona in September. This is being pursued on the verbal recommendation from ICMA representative Joe Pozzo. Chief Clark has heard many positive things about the

conference and feels it is a step closer for the Department to manage its own reporting data.

Vice Chairperson Dandrow asked about the staffing needs for the Apple Harvest Committee. Chief Clark reported that the Public Safety Trailer would be staffed with four firefighters. He plans to have company members cross trained to help keep the costs affordable for the Apple Harvest Committee.

Chairperson Baker asked if the online recertification program was being used for all members of the Department. Chief Clark reported that all members who were due for recertification did use the program. He explained that the online program is more expensive than paying the instructor, but the savings in overtime far exceeds the cost.

Chairperson Baker asked about the status of the company members CPR certification status. Chief Clark reported that not all company members are CPR certified.

Commissioner Sherman stated what a good job Chairperson Baker and Chief Clark did at the Board of Finance meeting.

MOTION: by Sherman, seconded by Dandrow, to accept the Chief's Report as given. Motion carried unanimously.

ASSISTANT CHIEF'S REPORT:

Activities of the Southington Fire Department for the month of March 2013:

1. Fire Marshal's Inspections – 42
2. Reports to the State Fire Marshal – 136
3. Damage to property involved in fire - \$8,500
4. Damage to motor vehicles involved in fire - \$86,700
5. Other losses - \$6,000
6. Total - \$101,200
7. Total units responded were - 491

The following are current plan reviews and inspections:

- Middle School Project
- Homewood Suites on West Street

The following are the significant incidents for March:

- Deck fire from a discarded cigarette
- Two arson fires being investigated by the Police Department

All members of the Fire Prevention Bureau attended a mandatory class in Rocky Hill during the month. Assistant Chief Wisner attended a two day arson investigator class which included how to interview witnesses.

MOTION: by Bunko, seconded by Sherman, to accept the Assistant Chief's report. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMISSION COMMENTS & COMMUNICATIONS:

Commissioner Bunko discussed his discontent with the recent comments from the public and political members that Board of Fire Commissioners is not able to perform their duties as chartered. He stated that he has total faith in both the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Board of Police Commissioners to do their chartered job. In his short time on the Board, there have been a number of critical hires and they are now in the process of responding to the ICMA report. He feels that a lot of the comments being made are out of touch and he feels that both boards are doing a good job. Commissioner Longo agreed 100% and feels that all the members work very hard for the residents of the town.

Vice Chairperson Dandrow asked Chief Clark how he would operate if the Board was removed. Chief Clark stated that he is neutral on the subject.

Commissioner Sherman feels that the current high caliber employees are a direct reflection on the Boards ability. He also feels that the Board of Finance's approval of the overtime appropriation shows support of the current Department's operations. He feels there may be some misunderstandings on how the Board approves recommendations. The time taken by each commissioner, individually outside of the meetings, researching requests before approval in open session, may not be common knowledge. Commissioner Sherman feels that to insinuate that the Board is not capable to oversee their current duties is an insult to all hiring and promotions they have made.

Vice Chairperson Dandrow feels the charter revision process is being rushed. She feels the June deadline does not afford the Charter Revision Committee to properly review any of the recommendations.

Assistant Chief Wisner stated that the thirty-one recommendations from the ICMA report were already being addressed by the administration. He feels that the recommendations were just enhancements of the current structure.

Chief Clark feels the report is a positive reflection in how the Department is being run. He cites other studies done by ICMA of other fire departments across the county that all include recommendations of downsizing. He feels that the absence of this recommendation shows that there is no extra on duty personnel. Chief Clark feels that the Town decided many years ago to run the Department with overtime by turning down annual requests for additional manpower. The report does suggest using the company members more, which is being explored.

Chairperson Baker feels that the Department has made a lot of progress in the last four months with promotions. She also discussed how nice the graduation

and pinning ceremony was. Chairperson Baker also thanked Lt. Heath for his work on the grant he wrote for the air compressor.

Commissioner Sherman discussed the positive work done by Chief Clark in instituting the probationary firefighter program and the establishment of training levels requirements for all officers. He feels those two initiatives helped prepare the Department in addressing the ICMA recommendations.

Chairperson Baker asked if the probationary class would be held in July if there were only three members. Chief Clark said that the class will be held regardless of the size, but he feels the Recruitment and Retention Committee will be successful in their recruitment efforts. Chairperson Baker asked the Board members to attend the open house if they are available.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM FIREFIGHTERS AND THE PUBLIC:

Art Cyr of Berlin Street asked that the ICMA recommendations be included in the minutes to help the public better understand items discussed in the meeting. Chairperson Baker agreed.

Art Cyr also discussed his opinion on the need for the ICMA Report and that if the recommended changes had been made in the last two to four years there would not have been a reason for the Board of Finance and the Town Council to spend the money on the study. He also stated his disapproval of statements made by people to the press in the last three weeks. He further discussed how he seldom speaks to reporters because they rarely get it right. He feels that the comments made that the Town Manager is incapable of running the Fire Department is disparaging to our Town CEO. Mr. Cyr discussed an incident at the Charter Revision Committee meeting when a member of the audience quoted a line from the ICMA Report stating how well the Fire Department was run and questioning the reason for the Charter Revision Committee. Mr. Cyr stated that they will pay for that action and he will make sure that at every town meeting he attends he will have a copy of the ICMA recommendations attached to the minutes to prove why the charter revision is needed. Mr. Cyr also discussed how the ICMA Final Draft was given to the press. Mr. Cyr stated that he was the source for the press and he also gave them the final report. He feels that we are in an open society and the reports should be available to the public. He suggests the next six months of the Board of Fire Commissioners that everyone watches what they say to reporters. He feels that reporters usually get the story wrong and all they usually do is pit the Democrats against the Republicans.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Bunko, seconded by Longo, to request transfers of \$5,000 to Legal Fees, \$168 to Lease-Copier, and \$252 to Life Insurance. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: by Sherman, seconded by Longo, to approve Chief Clark's request to attend the IAFC conference from August 12-18, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.


MOTION: by Dandrow, seconded by Bunko, to adjourn to Executive Session, excluding the public and the press with the exception of Chief Clark and Assistant Chief Wisner to discuss personnel and contractual matters at 6:35 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Returned to regular session at 7:32 p.m.

No action was taken.

Meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.



Michael Bunko, Secretary
Board of Fire Commissioners

Executive Summary

The ICMA Center for Public Safety Management was retained by the town of Southington, Connecticut, to complete a comprehensive analysis of the town's fire services. The analysis is designed to provide the town with a thorough and unbiased review of fire services provided by the Southington Fire Department (hereinafter, the SFD). This report is the result of this analysis and is accompanied by recommendations for ways to improve services. The report also provides a benchmark of the town's existing service delivery performance. Benchmark performance information can be found in the Data Analysis section of this report.

During our study, we analyzed performance data provided by the SFD and we also examined first-hand the department's operations. Fire departments tend to deploy resources utilizing traditional approaches, which are rarely reviewed. This report seeks to identify ways the department can improve efficiency, effectiveness, and safety for both its members as well as the community it serves. The recommendations may be adopted in whole, in part, or rejected. However, ICMA recommends that specific objectives be assigned to individuals with a reporting/report card process to deliver input to the county administration and elected officials.

The ICMA Senior Manager for Fire and EMS Projects conducted a site visit on January 2, 3, and 4, 2013, for the purpose of observing fire department and agency-connected supportive operations, interviewing key fire department and town staff, and reviewing preliminary data and operations. Follow-up telephone calls were also conducted between ICMA project staff and department staff so that ICMA staff could affirm the project information and elicit further discussion regarding this operational and data analysis.

The ICMA team, while reviewing information and discussing operations with department members, always seeks first to understand existing operations, then to identify ways the department can improve efficiency, effectiveness, and safety for both its members as well as the community it serves. ICMA found the town of Southington is not unique, in that it seeks to create a more efficient fire department within existing financial resources.

- * ICMA found that Southington has a very capable department and staff for the delivery of fire services. The SFD has in place several key planning documents that enhance administrative and operational components of the department, and which provide clear objectives and a vision of where the organization is headed. Additionally, the SFD has accomplished and continues to accomplish many organizational and operational tasks with a small staff, which is a demonstration of the commitment of all members in the SFD fire services system.

- * There is, however, always room for improvement in any organization. Critical areas the ICMA team has identified that need improvement and that resulted in our recommendations are: the need to integrate volunteer officers and members in various administrative and operational components is critical to the success of the entire system; measuring the organization against established benchmarks, particularly volunteer turnout and response, is key to identifying potential issues in providing services; managing staffing and programs, including volunteer staffing and deployment so as to minimize overtime; completing a community risk and vulnerability assessment and

implementing communications and time allocation models; and providing modern response tools to more effectively manage volunteer resource deployment. Additional recommendations are offered as well to assist the department in overall efficiency, effectiveness, and improvement.

Recommendations

Thirty-one recommendations for the SFD are listed below and in the applicable sections within this report. The recommendations are based on best practices derived from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE), ICMA, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and other sources, as well as the knowledge of ICMA reviewers. Recommendations are numbered in the order they appear in the report. Priority recommendations, as determined by ICMA, are shown in bold.

1. Integrate volunteer captains and lieutenants into organizational ancillary roles to better support fire administration and enhance these volunteers' organizational value.
2. **Integrate volunteer officers into the incident command system while operating on emergency scenes, with a focus on enhancing organizational value, building skill levels, and increasing effectiveness of the overall organization.**
3. Merge the proposed functional organizational chart with the current SFD structural organizational chart. The purpose of merging these two charts is to further enhance the SFD's ability to carry out the mission of the organization through its organizational chart, break down organizational silos, create leadership teams that include both career and volunteer staff within each organizational component, and promote lateral team-building between organizational divisions and between career and volunteer staff.
4. **Develop and implement a communication model that establishes and ensures an effective conduit of clear and productive communication throughout the entire organization. This model should also include consistent and regular meetings with the volunteer leadership and overall volunteer and career membership by the senior staff of the SFD.**
5. The SFD should ensure inclusion of career and volunteer system members and a representative of the fire commission in future strategic planning and performance measure development sessions to ensure an open and transparent planning process.
6. The SFD should develop and implement a performance measurement reporting system that expands the type of measurement it uses and includes the use of a program logic model.
7. Performance measures should be developed for each department activity, and should link to the strategic and comprehensive planning documents and fiscal/budget documents.
8. **Undertake a community risk and vulnerability assessment. The SFD should use the results for the ongoing planning of fire response run cards, identification of apparatus needs, future facility placement, and staffing and deployment of resources.**
9. Complete pre-fire plans on all identified target hazard occupancies and ensure each pre-fire plan is distributed to all companies for training purposes and placement in primary response apparatus for use on emergency incidents. Annually update pre-fire plans and ensure updated copies are maintained at each company and on each primary apparatus.

10. **Develop and implement a multicompany practical training regimen that includes career staff and all volunteer companies. Practical training drills should include specific goals and objectives, should occur at least quarterly, and should have a purpose of integrating meaningful practical evolutions to include all companies and staff to improve emergency scene effectiveness.**
11. Work within the CBA and develop and implement a probationary firefighter performance evaluation for career staff recruit/probationary firefighters.
12. **Formally include the volunteer officer candidate-professional development program into the SFD succession plan.**
13. **Identify in the SFD station repair plan and five-year strategic plan the needed training props and designated training area (with implementation and continuous costs) to conduct practical training evolutions in support of operational objectives.**
14. Encourage and provide support for SFD officers and officer candidates (career and volunteer) to attend EMI and/or NFA courses to enhance department competencies and for agency and self-development purposes.
15. As funding allows, consider and implement for the construction of new and the renovation of current facilities, the components of NFPA 1402, NFPA 1581, and NFPA 1500.
16. Structure a facility preventive maintenance program designed to maintain efficiencies of systems and longevity of equipment in order to reduce overall building maintenance costs. The facility preventive maintenance program should include all facility components.
17. The SFD should incorporate in all capital apparatus and equipment inventories the procurement date, procurement cost, and anticipated replacement costs for planning purposes.
18. The captain assigned to fire prevention should work with fire suppression and the community to identify occupancy and false-alarm trends, and implement appropriate measures to mitigate alarm issues with a focus on reducing responses and increasing overall response efficiencies.
19. Evaluate public service and good intent call types, and develop and implement strategies that are focused on reducing or eliminating heavy fire apparatus response as a means to increase overall response efficiencies.
20. Adopt a time allocation model; implement and monitor time allocation to ensure effective use of officer (career and volunteer) and staff time as it relates to achieving the organizational mission and to each individual's position in the organization. Review shift commander response practices and determine what calls are most appropriate for this level in the organization. Integrate volunteer officers into the organizational time allocation model so that they are aware of the level in the organization at which they should be operating.

21. **ICMA recommends the SFD establish standby duty crews for the evening hours (1800-0600 hours), with crews comprised of volunteer members, for a more guaranteed response. ICMA recommends these duty crews be comprised of 4 to 6 volunteer members each, and that this program be scheduled and rotated to a different station each night. ICMA strongly recommends the SFD outline performance measurement and reporting on:**
 - **Minimum assembly and turnout time of apparatus for volunteer staff**
 - **Total response time for volunteer staff**
 - **Nonresponse and turnout of apparatus by volunteer staff**
 - **Turnout time of apparatus for career staff.**
22. **ICMA strongly recommends the SFD research and determine the most appropriate web-based or other alerting system for volunteer members to utilize, so that response of individual members can be monitored for each call. Ultimately, the response of dispatched apparatus can be monitored by the shift commander so that appropriate emergency scene decisions can be made based on available and responding or potentially responding apparatus.**
23. **The SFD should establish a benchmark for response time, and develop a performance measurement system that measures response time and staff arrival on the scene of incidents. This performance measurement should have a focus on the effectiveness of the entire system to respond to calls for service.**
24. **Consider utilizing trained volunteer members more frequently to cover career staff vacancies created by scheduled and unscheduled leave, with a focus on reducing overtime. This is allowed in the current CBA (Article 26, Section: 3).**
25. **Establish (bargain if necessary) a minimum number of operational scheduled leave slots or maximum hours (vacation/military/union/LWOP as examples) for each 24-hour operational shift for the purpose of managing scheduled leave and associated overtime.**
26. **Discontinue the practice of allowing career staff to return to station 1 for standby when the on-duty career staff is deployed on a toned out call, or at minimum establish a maximum number allowed to return for standby. Instead, alert, utilize, and integrate the volunteer system when this occurs. The purpose of this is to minimize and better plan for and manage overtime.**
27. **Better utilize the volunteer system when staffing special events and standbys for other events where the SFD is requested. The purpose of this is to minimize overtime, add capacity to any event or standby request, and continue positive integration of the entire system.**
28. **The SFD should aggressively explore automatic aid agreements with any contiguous jurisdiction that can provide timely and effective response of assets, and where the SFD can reciprocate aid with timely and effective assets.**

29. Train all volunteer operational members of the SFD to the EMR and CPR level as a minimum, and place automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and appropriate EMS first responder equipment on all first response fire apparatus.
30. **Aggressively review the possibility of converting fire inspector positions to civilian positions as they become vacated by uniform personnel, with a focus on the efficiencies of salary, benefit, and pension costs.**
31. Establish an engine company fire safety inspection program that is focused on assisting the fire marshal's office with fire safety inspections of the less technical occupancies, and that has a goal of visiting these occupancies at least every two years.