

TOWN OF SOUTHTON
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

Chairperson Bunko called the regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners, held at Company 3 on March 16, 2017, to order at 6:04 p.m. Commissioners Baker, Bunko, Stanforth, Kanute and Robertson were present. Also in attendance were Chief Heath and Asst. Chief Wisner.

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

MOTION: by Kanute, seconded by Baker, to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2017, regular meeting as circulated. Motion carried with three ayes and one abstention.

MOTION: by Stanforth, seconded by Baker, to approve payment of bills for February 2017 in the amount of \$24,819.88. Motion carried unanimously.

Secretary's Report:

Memo from Chief Heath recommending the approval to add a Fire Watch Stipend of \$60 to the Volunteer Benefits, for a maximum period of eight hours.

Memo from Chief Heath recommending the request of a special appropriation of \$940 to the CRR Program Supplies account

CHIEF'S REPORT:

Apparatus and Equipment

- E12's fuel sender is still an ongoing concern. Sutphen and Five Star are aware of the issue. Company 1 members and the Truck Committee are monitoring the issue and a log of fuel use is being documented to track the fueling needs until a solution is found.
- Minor equipment issues have been reported and are being addressed.
- CERT's work on the bus donated by the Calendar House is on hold until some electrical issues are worked on by the department mechanic.
- The Apparatus Replacement Plan is being revised by Captain Paul and the Truck Committee members to align with the Capital Improvement Plan and department needs.
- Portable radios will be issued to volunteer officers shortly.
- Members of Company 3 and the Truck Committee are finalizing training on L2. The members found most of the needed equipment, and some smaller equipment is being ordered. Training was scheduled for the past weekend but had to be postponed due to the weather. Chief Heath will keep the Board apprised of the progress.

- L1 is out for repair at Firematic in Rocky Hill, for a communication issue between a transmission module and the computer, recognizing when it is in pump mode.
- Station 2's internet is still having connectivity issues and is being followed up by the IT Department. The IT Department is considering the cost of hooking into Plantsville School's fiber optic line.

Operations and Administration

- CERT— FF Scott Lee has taken over as the CERT Liaison and BC Dube will be assisting him. FF Lee has already met with the team coordinators and training officer.
- Winter Storm on 3/14 - All stations were staffed. There were no major incidents. E12 received minor damage being towed out after being stuck on a call. The engine scraped a decorative post while responding to an incident. Chief Heath will assess any damage to the post after the snow thaws.
- CRR Program — the program has run for almost 3.5 years. To date 258 smoke alarms and 118 CO detectors have been installed.
- Chief Heath is recommending that a Fire Watch Stipend be added to the Volunteer Stipend Package mirroring Storm Watch Stipend guidelines. Fire watch is assigned to the scenes of a recent fire to watch for rekindling and to secure the scene.
- Changes to SOG 7-5 are being made to allow probationary members (yellow helmets) to respond on apparatus after 60 days, following recommend training and administrative stipulations. An order and SOG change will be posted shortly.
- Changes to SOG 4-11 have been made along with an appendix regarding the issuance of portable radios and unit designations. An order has also been distributed to all members.
- Chief Heath is looking at a tentative date of Thursday April 6, 2017, for next combined officers meeting.
- The next meeting of the third phase of the CT Fire Chief's Association SAFER grant on recruitment and retention via the Volunteer Workforce Solutions program will be held on March 24, 2017, in Branford.
- Chief Heath contacted the YMCA and was able to arrange to have a 10% discount on memberships extended to volunteer members.
- Chief Heath and Maureen Frazier attended a CIRMA presentation on Understanding the Risks of Social Media earlier in the day. Chief Heath has also met with HR Generalist Theresa Buchanan to discuss adopting a Social Media Policy for the department.

Personnel

- Officers of Company 5 attended the CT Fire Officers weekend at NFA March 10-12, 2017.
- Captain Paul will be attending FDIC in Indianapolis April 25-29, 2017.
- Chief Heath and BC Dube will be attending the first portion of the NFA Executive Fire Officer program April 23-May 5, 2017.

Miscellaneous

- The Police Department was contacted to look into possibility and cost of adding flashing yellow lights to the traffic signs identifying to motorists they are approaching a fire station.
- Company 2 will be holding a pasta dinner on April 29, 2017.
- Don Tardif's retirement party is Saturday, March 18, 2017.

Commissioner Stanforth asked if BC Dube was over extending himself with assisting with CERT. Chief Heath responded that FF Lee is the main liaison and BC Dube would not be directly involved with the team.

Commissioner Stanforth asked what the process was to revise the Apparatus Replacement Plan. Chief Heath reported that after the Truck Committee finalizes the plan he would meet with Town Engineer Keith Hayden to discuss it and then submit it to Town Manager Brumback.

Commissioner Robertson discussed concerns that local tow truck drivers have approached him about being left on the highway without safety blocking. Chief Heath responded that if the tow truck drivers want the engines to remain on the scene to block after they have been released by the State Police for them to notify the incident commander.

Vice Chairperson Baker had Chief Heath clarify that the officer's meeting on April 6, 2017, will be held at 7 p.m.

MOTION: by Kanute, seconded by Stanforth, to accept the Chief's Report.
Motion carried unanimously.

ASSISTANT CHIEF'S REPORT:

Activities of the Southington Fire Department for the month of February 2017:

1. Fire Marshal's Inspections – 39
2. CRRS - 9
3. Reports to the State Fire Marshal – 155
4. Damage to property involved in fire - \$365,000
5. Damage to motor vehicles involved in fire - \$6,500
6. Other losses - \$110,000
7. Total - \$481,500

Assistant Chief Wisner reported that there were no significant fire incidents since the last meeting

Assistant Chief Wisner reported the following plans that the Fire Marshals Bureau is involved in:

- The second set of the Calendar House plans have been received and are being reviewed
- Site plans for a new residential street near Lake Compounce was received
- Annual multifamily inspections begin in April
- Site plans for a commercial development on the east side of West St. have been received
- The opening of the Kilted Kinsmen has been delayed

Commissioner Stanforth asked if the cause of the fire on Taunton St. had been determined. Assistant Chief Wisner stated that the cause has not been released and he is waiting on the conclusion of the insurance company's investigation.

MOTION: by Baker, seconded by Kanute, to accept the Assistant Chief's Report. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMISSIONS COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

Chairman Bunko discussed the following:

- At the last Ethics Committee meeting, the committee agreed not to require financial disclosures for members who are appointed rather than elected
- Attended the Board of Finance Budget Workshop with Chief Heath, and was told that the Board's request for additional manpower was not approved
- The first meeting of the fire chief selection committee will have its second meeting on April 5 at 6 p.m.
- Held an exit interview with retired FF Donald Tardif and Chief Heath
- Will attend that next Volunteer Workforce Solutions with Chief Heath on March 4; have found the Southington's recruitment for volunteer firefighters is strong in comparison of other towns
- Attended the combined officer's meeting that was positive forum and Bunko is excited to have those meeting continue

Commissioner Stanforth asked for the different committees be added to the regular meeting agenda so the Board can be apprised of the monthly progress.

Commissioner Kanute asked if the officers meeting minutes could be sent to all the members. Chief Heath reported that they were emailed to all the members who submitted an email for the I Am Responding software.

Commissioner Stanforth addressed the article in the newspaper that talked about the Board of Finance meeting and their discussion of the Fire Department's overtime request by stating that the Board is open to meeting with members of the Board of Finance to help them better understand the workings of the department and the need to replace the line staff when they are out. Commissioner Kanute stated that it became apparent during the selection committee meeting that the members of the Town Council and Board of Finance do not know the make-up of the department. Chief Heath said that he does appreciate the Boards support on maintaining the six-man shift. Chief Heath also reported that data was submitted to

the Board of Finance in response to questions that were submitted to Director of Finance Emilia Portelinha for their budget workshop. Chief Heath also submitted a cover letter to help explain the raw data that was supplied and offered to meet with any of the members to discuss their concerns. Commissioner Stanforth discussed that comparing the Fire Department to the Police Department was not a fair comparison because the Police Department does not always replace their officers.

Vice Chairperson Baker discussed the Board's job is to serve the town by making sure it is best protected and to portray and explain to the public how the fire department is operated. Baker stated that it is not accurate to compare fire protection with the police protection and that the Police Department has two and a half more staff that the Fire Department. Baker discussed the Board's appreciation of volunteer firefighters as supplementary personnel. Baker discussed that the town will need to decide on how they want to be protected and that the Board is objectively looking at how they can provide the service. Baker feels that the new chief should decide how to staff the department.

Vice Chairperson Baker discussed the inaccuracy in the newspaper article stating that the structure of the department has changed since the title change of the career captains and lieutenants to battalion chiefs and captains. Baker suggested that a PowerPoint presentation be put together for the department's webpage to that would include a copy of the page from the ICMA report that shows the structure in 2013 in comparison to the current structure to show that the role of the volunteer officers have not diminished.

Vice Chairperson Baker said that she is willing to accompany Chairman Bunko and Captain Heath to the Board of Finance meetings to support and explain the request for funds in the overtime account. Baker discussed the use of over 60% of the account is to maintain the current staffing levels that were best identified by the standard. Baker looks forward to a positive movement and understanding with the Board.

Chief Heath was tasked with getting information on how the Police Department replaces their staff along with gathering information on the budgeting of other combination departments in the surrounding towns and the per capita cost for fire protection.

Vice Chairperson congratulated retired FF Donald Tardif for his amazing 27 years of service to the department and that she wishes him well.

Commissioner Robertson discussed points that were brought to his attention by different residents. Robertson stated that one question asked was why members of the Board of Finance or Town Council do not attend the Board of Fire Commissioners' meeting and directly talk about their concerns. Robertson agrees and would like these members to address the Board in open session and give all the commissioners an opportunity to respond. Robertson added that another point was if 100 residents were approached and asked if six firefighters were enough to protect the town, they would answer no.

Chairperson Bunko further discussed the Board's request for additional personnel that was sent to the Board of Finance so they knew what was requested before the Town Manger's cuts were done.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Retired Fire Police Nelson DeAngelo asked the Board to answer T.O. Kevin Munson's question from the last meeting of why Assistant Chief Wisner was not appointed as interim chief. Chairman Bunko responded that it is a personnel matter and it was made within the purview of the Board. DeAngelo discussed his belief that the decision goes against common practice and he gave the example of the vice chairperson filling in for the chairperson in their absence.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

OLD BUSINESS:

Volunteer Fitness Reimbursements – Chairman Bunko asked Chief Heath the status of this recommendation. Chief Heath reported that per the January Volunteer Officer's Meeting minutes, two officers are gathering information and will submit their recommendation to the Board.

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Kanute, seconded by Stanforth, to approve adding a Fire Watch Stipend of \$60 to the Volunteer Benefits, for a maximum period of eight hours. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: by Kanute, seconded by Stanforth, to approve requesting a special appropriation of \$940 to the CRR Program Supplies account. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion on the generous donations the department has received to fund the CRR program by the Calvanese Foundation, Lions Club, and UNICO.

MOTION: by Baker, seconded by Robertson, to adjourn to Executive Session, excluding the public and the press with the exception of Chief Heath, to discuss personnel and contractual matters at 6:44 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

No action was taken.

Meeting adjourned at 7:21 pm.

Wayne Stanforth, Secretary
Board of Fire Commissioners