

TOWN OF SOUTHLINGTON
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

Chairperson Wilson called the regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners, held at Headquarters on December 17, 2020, to order at 6:16 p.m. Commissioners Wilson, Shanley-Buck, Kanute, Moise, and Lajoie were present. Chief Paul was also in attendance.

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairperson Wilson welcomed Commissioner Mark Lajoie to the Board. Commissioner Lajoie introduced himself to the commissioners and told them of his background as Southington resident for over thirty-five years where he lives with his wife and raised two children. Commissioner Lajoie thanked past fire commissioner Michael Bunko for his service and looks forward to being part of the Board.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

MOTION: by Moise, seconded by Shanley-Buck, nominating Wilson as chairperson. Nominations were closed. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: by Moise, seconded by Kanute, nominating Shanley-Buck as vice chairperson. Nominations were closed. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: by Lajoie, seconded by Moise, nominating Kanute as Secretary. Nominations were closed. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: by Kanute, seconded by Moise, to approve the minutes of the October 15, 2020, regular meeting as circulated. Motion carried with four ayes and one abstention.

MOTION: by Moise, seconded by Kanute, to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2020, special meeting as circulated. Motion carried four ayes and one abstention.

MOTION: by Kanute, seconded by Moise, to approve payment of bills for October and November 2020 in the amount of \$108,441.09. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Moise asked that more information be given to the board when over \$2,000 is spent on miscellaneous overtime.

Secretary's Report:

Memo from Chief Paul recommending dates for the Board of Fire Commissioners 2020 meetings

Memo from Chief Paul recommending a transfer request for the CT Fair Plan grant funds into an expense account

Memo from Chief Paul recommending approval of BC Heath and FF Comen's request to pursue applying for a FEMA AFG grant for implementing firefighter escape systems.

CHIEF'S REPORT:

Chief Paul reported:

COVID-19

- Chief Paul told of the number one goal of the department is to keep its members safe
- A few existing directives were revised in response to the change in COVID-19 guidelines that has impacted all the suppression, prevention, and admin staff
- There were several members that were put on quarantines for fourteen-day periods to adhere to COVID-19 guidelines
- Crystal Restorations was hired to sanitize most of the vehicles and apparatus in November and Chief Paul plans to schedule them to come back in January
- There has been one reported case of a member testing positive with COVID-19
- Human Resource Manager Michelle Passamano has been wonderful to work with regarding exposure and information on quarantining our members
- Health Director Shane Lockwood and his staff have been great in helping to answer questions and recommendations for limiting staff into a house/building to reduce exposures

Administration

- There have been a few career members out with nonwork related injuries and one on military leave, who has just returned
- Work on the 2021-2022 budget and CIP requests were started in early November and there are still estimates that have not been received to finalize the requests
- The CIP includes station improvements, and vehicle replacements from 2021/2022 to 2025/2026
- The department has received a \$400 grant through the CT Fair Plan to purchase a digital camera for fire investigations that will be assigned to Fire Inspector Roy
- BC Heath and FF Comen have put in a request to pursue a grant for implementing firefighter escape systems; BC Heath and FF Comen continue to look for grant money that would benefit the department
- This week on and off duty members participated in Community Services' delivery of gifts to the elderly

- Chief Paul held a meeting with the volunteer captains and FF Mike Casey to discuss the following topics concerning manpower shortage during the weekday daytime hours in Company 3's district:
 - Company 3's current roster has five members with only two to three being active
 - All 5 members work during weekday daytime hours
 - Suggestions made were:
 - Company 2 to be toned when Company 3 has a call
 - To do an "All Call" or "General Alarm" at all times when there is a toned call
- The union has submitted a proposal for a Functional Firefighter Fitness Program to replace the current Height and Weight Guidelines for Chief Paul to review
- A change to the Leave of Absences Policy was brought up by Chief Butler at his last regular meeting which Chief Paul supports
- DC DiBattista revised SOG 7-5 to clarify a probationary firefighter's eligibility to ride in the apparatus
- Chief Paul has discussed with the Health Director having the town distribute the COVID-19 vaccine to department members and it is being looked into

Commissioner Moise asked about the height and weight requirement for volunteer applicants.

Master Plan

- The first information on the Master Plan was received late October to early November
- The plan will be an extensive report of a "road-map" for planning the department's future
- BC Donnelly and Lt. Polzella are assigned all data regarding dispatch and mapping to ensure the data is accurate and the maps reflect the information
- Chief Paul along with all four battalion chiefs and the deputy chief put together information needed by ESCI for an online survey that will be sent to residents and business owners regarding SFD; the survey is expected to go live online the week of January 4, 2021
- A site visit will be conducted by a couple of members of ESCI during the week of March 15, 2021
- Remote sessions will be conducted by ESCI with the Board of Fire Commissioners, Town Manager Sciota, Town Council members and the Board of Finance

Training

- On-duty training is being done with split crews when possible to comply with COVID-19 restrictions; some drills require all 7 or minimum of 6 personnel
- Volunteer training program was going very well however with the increase in COVID-19 cases the health director recommended that all training be switched to online as of November 9, 2020

- Volunteer training topics were chosen by Chief Paul and Deputy Chief DiBattista for November and December; plans for online training for January and February are being made in case the restrictions are still in place
- Captain Scott Lee has been working closely with DC DiBattista to plan the 2021 training objectives; Captain Lee is also working on several projects for next year with hands-on topics
- The next probationary firefighter class will be held in the beginning of January 2021 with COVID precautions and approved by the health director; there are currently eight members of the class

Building Maintenance

- Stations 2 and 5 experienced problems with their heat; both have been repaired
- Chief Paul met with the insurance inspector from Hartford Steam Boiler to do the biennial inspections for all station boilers and hot water heaters
- The overhead awning for the entrance of Headquarters was installed
- The concrete repair at Headquarters front lobby was completed
- A contract for snow plowing all four stations was signed with McAllen Construction of Prospect

Apparatus

- Tanker 2 was out of service for an extended period due to a pump issue, while out of service several items on the punch list were repaired
- Tanker 2 returned to service on December 11, 2020, and has been out of the road several times for continued training with no issues
- The new rescue-engine is scheduled for its final inspection in late January to early February and at this point looks that it will be done remotely due to COVID-19.
- Several vehicle recalls on the staff vehicles are being completed
- R-3 is still for sale

FMO

- FF/FI Jeff Roy is attending Code Enforcement classes remotely through February
- Chief Paul and DFM Leonard Chozick are working with detectives from the Southington Police Department and the State of Connecticut FEIU on an open fire investigation
- All the buildings at Lincoln College are vacant and have maintenance/security guard on site during the weekday daytime hours; Chief Paul and DFM Chozick are working with the owners on some of the issues with the alarms and sprinkler systems
- The public-school fire drills were completed in October and November
- The annual multi-family inspection notices were sent out on December 7, 2020.
- The multi-family inspections will be done differently this year in response to COVID-19 concerns by offering a self-check list for home inspections; the

check list was drawn up by Lisa, Maureen and DFM Chozick, who was also in contact with the State Fire Marshal's Office for guidance

- The Fire Marshal's Office is currently limiting in person inspections and are using their time to catch up on office work
- The inspectable properties list, a multiyear project, is being finalized

Alarms

- October and November have been very busy months for the department and surrounding towns
- The department has responded to several mutual aid calls for service to Meriden and Plainville
- There was a house fire at 133 North Summit St, that involved a bathroom on the second floor which occurred in the morning during a shift change which allowed a few extra members to work the scene

Miscellaneous

- The department purchased two thermal imaging cameras through a trade-in opportunity from Fire Tech and Safety
- Several sets of PPE were received for both career and volunteer FF's; another order was placed in mid-November
- Chief Paul thanked Maureen Frazier for helping with many of the open projects left by Chief Butler, and Lisa Pknosh for all her work on the inspectable properties project

Activities of the Southington Fire Department for the month of October and November 2020:

1. Fire Marshal's Inspections – 119
2. CRRS - 7
3. Reports to the State Fire Marshal – 348
4. Damage to property involved in fire - \$2,020,100
5. Damage to motor vehicles involved in fire - \$2,200
6. Other losses - \$100
7. Total - \$2,022,400

COMMITTEE REPORT:

Recruitment and Retention Committee – Commissioner Moise discussed how the committee is doing soft recruiting in response to the COVID-19 restrictions and hopes to be able to have a more active recruitment program before the July 2021 class.

COMMISSIONS COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

Chairperson Wilson thanked Chief Paul for all that he has been doing for the department in the role of interim chief and that he now has the responsibility of three jobs. Chairperson Wilson talked of Chief Paul and his team's handling of the past forty-eight hours and all the work they did. Chairperson Wilson told of Chief Paul that he has the full support of the Board.

Chairperson Wilson thanked past fire commissioner Michael Bunko for the eight years he served on the Board and all the work he did for the department. Vice Chairperson Shanley-Buck and Commissioner Kanute also expressed their thanks to past fire commissioner Michael Bunko. Commissioner Bunko thanked the Board and told of his openness to help and that they were free to contact him in the future.

Chairperson Wilson discussed the status of the Chief's Search Committee and that the hiring firm has posted the position that will close on January 5, 2021.

Commissioner Moise thanked the career members who are continuing the toy drive tradition at Station 5. Moise also thanked the crews for doing a great job on recent fire incidents.

Commissioner Lajoie thanked Chief Paul for giving him a tour and introduction to the department. Lajoie also thanked past fire commissioner Michael Bunko for his work on the Board.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC:

BC Glenn Dube thanked past fire commissioner Michael Bunko for his service and welcomed Commissioner Lajoie. BC Dube talked about how the union has had a good working relationship with the Board and the administration and hopes for it to continue.

BC Dube discussed the history of the toy drive at Station 5 being that was started by the neighbors and then the volunteer members of the station took it over and now the career members are happy to continue the tradition.

BC Dube also discussed his shift being on duty for the incidents that Commissioner Moise had referenced including a recent call that displaced many residents. BC Dube wanted to recognize Janet Mellon and her staff at Community Services for the excellent work they did for the residents. Commissioner Kanute asked that a letter be sent to the Town Council so that the Community Services member are publicly acknowledged for their work.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

A Budget Workshop to discuss on the proposals for the 2021-2022 fiscal year request and the Capital Improvement Plan.

OLD BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Kanute, seconded by Lajoie, to table action on the Rules & Regulations. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairperson Wilson supported this action to give Commissioner Lajoie time to read the proposed changes before voting.

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Moise, seconded by Shanley-Buck, to approve the Capital Improvement Plan as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: by Moise, seconded by Kanute, to appoint Commissioner Mark Lajoie to the Chief's Selection Committee in place of retired commissioner Michael Bunko. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: by Shanley-Buck, seconded by Moise, to approve the dates for the Board of Fire Commissioners 2020 meetings as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board members discussed the need to meet sooner in January than the adopted January 21, 2021, date and it was agreed that the meeting would be canceled and a special meeting on January 14, 2021, would be held.

MOTION: by Kanute, seconded by Moise, to approve the transfer of \$400 from the CT Fair Plan grant into an expense account. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: by Shanley-Buck, seconded by Kanute, to approve pursuing a FEMA AFG grant for implementing firefighter escape systems. Motion carried unanimously.

A brief recess was taken at 7:45 p.m.
Return to open session at 7:50 p.m.

MOTION: by Moise, seconded by Shanley-Buck, to adjourn to Executive Session, excluding the public and the press with the exception of Chief Paul, to discuss personnel and contractual matters at 7:50 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

No action was taken.

Meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

David Kanute, Secretary
Board of Fire Commissioners