

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS MEETING
November 18, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.
Fire Department Headquarters

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. Present were Chairman Robert Massey, Jr., Commissioners LaCroix, Clem, Riccio, and Fox. Commissioner Ahern was absent. Also present were Chief Mahoney and Assistant Chief Bloomquist.

Approval of Minutes – the minutes from previous meetings will be approved at the next regular meeting.

Committee Reports:

Finance – Commissioner Riccio and Chief Mahoney provided additional information concerning the transfer request. The transfer is necessary to cover the overtime costs due to four full time vacancies.

Motion made by Commissioner Riccio to approve, a request from Fire Chief Thomas Mahoney for the following transfer:

<u>From:</u>		
10142040-517000	Regular Wages & Salaries	(\$80,000.00)
<u>To:</u>		
10142040-518000	Overtime	\$80,000.00

Seconded by Commissioner Fox. Vote unanimous.

Personnel – Commissioner Massey reported that there are four full time Firefighter Paramedic Vacancies. We are currently running the hiring process for both full-time and part-time personnel. There is a significant shortage of Paramedics statewide.

Training – Commissioner Clem reported that there was live fire training at the former Day’s Inn property, all career and volunteer members attended; A combination of 53 career staff and volunteer members attended one of two sessions of “Principles of Lifting and Stabilization” class; Six career staff members have completed Fire Officer II class and are awaiting the certification test; Five career staff members are completing Fire Officer I and II class and are awaiting the certification test; Three members began Fire Service Instructor class; and the Fire Marshal and four Deputy Fire Marshals are attending the two day 2021 Arson Investigator’s Seminar this month.

Apparatus – Commissioner LaCroix reported that the new re-mounted ambulance is under construction. Delivery is expected in February. Discussion took place concerning the re-

mounting of ambulances. Commission LaCroix also provided a brief overview of the work that is being done on the vehicles in house by Firefighter Ghiroli. He and the board extended their appreciation to Firefighter Ghiroli for all his hard work, limiting the repair turn around time and providing a significant savings.

EMS – Commissioner Fox reported that the year to date revenue is \$708,242.00 There have been 1,847 EMS incidents from July 1, 2021 to November 16, 2021. Call volume has returned to pre-COVID 19 levels.

Buildings – Commissioner Massey reported that a reoccurring leak at Station 9 is being investigated.

Pension & Communications – Commissioner Clem stated that there is no report. The committee will be meeting in January.

Chief's Report – Chief Mahoney reported that the department responded to 2,479 calls for service from July 1, 2021 to November 17, 2021 averaging 17 calls per day. The town experienced four major fires in the two week period beginning October 27 – 315 Leetes Island Road; 146 North Ivy Street; 50 Ridge Acres Road and 1145 Main Street. In all cases the crews were able to rapidly extinguish the fires preventing further loss. A great job by everyone involved. There was one minor injury and the firefighter has fully recovered. An EF-0 tornado struck Branford on November 12 causing damage along an approximate 2 mile path. No reported injuries. The Firefighters union raised more than \$8,000 for the Daniel Cosgrove Animal Shelter. Members had a strong showing at the Veterans Day Parade. He and Commissioner Ahern attended a CT Firefighter's Memorial fundraising dinner on November 15. The department also made a \$500 donation. The Exit 56 radio site is progressing. The department radios will be going all digital beginning November 19. The change will improve coverage and clarity.

Assistant Chief's Report – Assistant Chief Bloomquist reported that the process has started to hire both full time and part time positions. They are experiencing a serious issue with staffing Medic 3. They have designed an incentive plan. The big issue they have right now is filling the openings on Medic 3. He conducted a survey with all the part time personnel one of the issues is wages. He stated that they have been working on putting together an incentive plan. The incentive proposal includes a quarterly bonus if the employee works a minimum of 72 hours in a 3 month period they would receive a 10% bonus. Other employees that have 2 or more years of consecutive service would receive a bump in pay and they would be eligible for the bonus as well. He stated that if implemented January 1, 2022, using top step pay rate and assuming every member hit the bonus the worst case scenario for cost would be \$27,256.32.

A brief discussion took place concerning Certified Paramedics and the struggle to recruit new members.

Discussion took place concerning volunteer staffing issues. There are 7-8 new volunteers. The number of active volunteers are a little less than last year. In general, people are not volunteering anymore. During the day there is very little response maybe one or two members respond. Co 4. Is currently in crisis. They only have 6 members left. Chief Mahoney recommended putting the company on notice and stated that they will need to consider consolidating companies. There is a nationwide problem facing volunteer companies.

Chief Mahoney also mentioned that the Sybil Creek Bridge will be closed for approximately 28 days. During that time the state will pay to staff Co. 9 during that time.

New Business:

Chief Mahoney mentioned that the current rate for our part time EMS personnel is \$30 per hour. The current market rate for part time EMS in the surrounding area is at \$35 and \$36.

Assistant Chief Bloomquist provided information concerning the proposed incentive plan. He stated that they have met with Human Resources to review a proposed incentive program. The proposed plan would provide employees that work a minimum of 3 shifts per month (72 hours per quarter) with a 10% bonus. The plan would also include a step for employees that have 2 or more years of consecutive service would receive a bump in pay and they would be eligible for the bonus as well. Filling all the shifts has become problematic. The Commission also discussed the current starting rate and feels that the rate is too low.

Chief Mahoney stated that he would resurvey the market and come back to the Board of Fire Commissioners with the most current information.

Discussion took place concerning providing a financial incentive to Certified Paramedic's to attend the Fire Academy. To pay/reimburse the cost of attending the Fire Academy.

Motion made by Commissioner Fox add the approve a financial incentive program for tuition reimbursement for new full time Certified Paramedics to attend and graduate the Fire Academy within two years of hire date. Seconded by Commissioner LaCroix. Vote unanimous.

Motion made by Commissioner Fox approve a financial incentive program for tuition reimbursement for new full time Certified Paramedics to attend and graduate the Fire Academy within two years of hire date. Reimbursement payments to be paid in installments over 4 years provided that the proper documentation is provided. Seconded by Commissioner LaCroix. Vote unanimous.

Discuss the future status of Short Beach Hose Hook and Ladder – Volunteer Co. 4. Chief Mahoney recommended putting the company on notice and stated that they will need to consider consolidating companies. Motion made by Commissioner Fox recommending Chief Mahoney send a letter putting Co. 4 on notice. Seconded by Commissioner Clem. Vote unanimous.

Motion made by Commissioner Riccio to enter into executive session at 8:12 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter. Seconded by Commissioner Fox. Vote unanimous.

Return to regular meeting at 8:26 p.m.

Present in executive session were Chairman Robert Massey, Jr., Commissioners LaCroix, Clem, Riccio, and Fox. Commissioner Ahern was absent. Also present were Chief Mahoney and Assistant Chief Bloomquist.

For the record no votes were taken while in executive session.

Motion made by Commissioner Fox to add the hiring of a full time lateral Firefighter Paramedic to the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Riccio. Vote unanimous.

Motion made by Commissioner Fox to extend a conditional offer of employment for a full time lateral Firefighter Paramedic position to Eleftherios Gionteris. Seconded by Commissioner LaCroix. Vote unanimous.

Motion made by Commissioner Riccio to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Fox. Vote unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Trista Milici, Clerk