

Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting
Commissioners Conference Room at Fire Headquarters
72 New Haven Avenue, Milford, CT
Tuesday, September 28, 2010

Call to Order: Chairman Riso called the meeting to order at 1907 hours. A quorum was present.

1. Roll Call

Commissioners Thomas Riso, Karen Craig, John Healy, Richard Smith, Howard Stein, Jonathan Bercham, and William A. Brennan. Also present were Chief Louis A. LaVecchia, Assistant Chief Robert J. Healey, Assistant Chief Al Zingaro, Union President Paul Geer, and Union President Todd Ricci.

2. Public Statements limited to the function of the Board of Fire Commissioners:

None.

3. Swearing In:

None.

Commissioners Healy and Craig made and seconded a motion to reorder the agenda to take up matter IX on the agenda: New Business. Motion carried unanimously.

4. New Business:

Fire Explorers Post 260

Chairman Healy turned the floor over to Kevin from the Explorers Post.

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The representative explained that the Milford Fire Explorers had been in existence since 1981, and they are looking for sponsorship. There are currently nine kids in the program, ages 14 to 20. He further explained that it's a good way to get them involved early. They work under the jurisdiction of the Boy Scouts of America, although the program is open to both males and females.

Chief LaVecchia explained to the Commissioners that the financial obligation of the sponsorship is very minimal as the program does its own fundraisers. They are primarily looking for a meeting place. He assured the Commissioners that the Explorers Post would follow the Department's rules and standards. The Chief further added that the participants of the program have assisted the Department in local fundraisers of their own, especially the Toys for Tots program. He then added that several of the Fire Department members are in favor of the sponsorship of the Explorers Post, as many of them had come through the program themselves.

Commissioners Brennan and Smith made and seconded a motion to approve the Explorer Post under the auspices of the Fire Department's rules and regulations, to be further explained in writing. Motion carried unanimously.

Grievance # 7-004

Chairman Riso turned the floor over to Union President Paul Geer of Local 944 and Jeff Luciano, who represents the committee.

Mr. Luciano explained to the Commissioners that Firefighter Ed Whitbread raised a grievance against the Department because allegedly his collective bargaining rights were violated because he was denied swap time.

He explained that Firefighter Whitbread went away on vacation (out of State) for three days, and put in his swap cards for all three nights at the same time. The second of the three nights, the on-duty Battalion Chief noticed that there was no swap card in for that particular night. The Battalion Chief then contacted Firefighter Whitbread, who was not in State. Firefighter Murphy was covering the shift for Firefighter Whitbread and the shift had already begun. Firefighter Murphy was sent home, and another Firefighter was called in for relief. Firefighter Whitbread was never given an explanation, and four days later, he was docked a vacation day.

Commissioner Brennan asked what the swap cards look like and what the procedure is to turn them in. Mr. Luciano explained.

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Assistant Chief Zingaro explained that the Battalion Chief had a shift orientation on January 28th, where he told everyone the rules for swap time.

Assistant Chief Zingaro further explained that accountability is a big deal, and that in 900 swap cards handled in the past six months, none were lost. He also noted that the swap time is not approved until the shift is actually started.

Chairman Riso commented that using three swap days to take a vacation is inappropriate and an abuse of the system. He also noted that 900 swap days in six months is also an abuse of the system, and that the current procedure needs to be fixed.

Commissioners Healy and Stein made and seconded a motion to give Firefighter Whitbread his vacation day back, and for the Department to make changes to the current swap time policy to avoid this situation in the future. Motion carried unanimously.

Emergency repair fund

Commissioner Brennan explained to the Commissioners that the Department's boat was damaged and for five weeks, it was out of service while waiting for the insurance claim to go through. He suggested that the Commissioners go to the Board of Aldermen to ask for an emergency fund for this type of situation.

Chief LaVecchia informed the Commissioners that he had done research on this subject himself and that there is a fund in place currently, however the City's deductible is \$50,000, and it's the bidding process that is the holdup. The Chief recommends that the Commissioners send a letter to the Mayor suggesting they work together to determine the need for such a fund.

Commissioners Brennan and Smith made and seconded a motion for the Commission to send a letter to the Mayor to expedite the waiver of bids and the bid process on emergency repairs/replacement equipment; and also requesting a meeting with the Mayor regarding same. Motion carried unanimously.

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5. Consideration of Minutes:

Regular Meeting - June 15, 2010

Commissioners Healy and Smith made and seconded a motion to table the consideration of the minutes for the June 15, 2010, regular meeting until the next regular meeting of the Fire Commission. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Communications:

- a. Thank you letter from Gloria Schapiro, thanking the Department for the help they gave her son Ray when he broke his leg. Included with the letter was a \$25 check.

Commissioners Stein and Healy made and seconded a motion to incorporate the \$25 check into the Good and Welfare Fund. Motion carried unanimously.

- b. Thank you letter from Amy Thompson, thanking the Chief and Assistant Chief Johnson for their assistance in the Touch-a-Truck fundraiser.
- c. Thank you letter from Ellen Sedowski to the Fire Department.
- d. Thank you letter from Bridgeport Fire Chief Brian Rooney to the Department, thanking them for the coverage they provided on the day of the funerals for their fallen firefighters.
- e. Letter from Joan Colemeir, thanking the firefighters who helped her when she was locked out of her old rental unit. Included with the letter was a \$100 check.

Commissioners Stein and Smith made and seconded a motion to incorporate the \$100 check into the Good and Welfare Fund. Motion carried unanimously.

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- f.** Letter to Chief LaVecchia from Captain Russell Chapman regarding a September 18th, 2010 vehicle fire on 27 Center Street, where a moped was severely damaged and the patient had severe burns. The neighbor put the fire out.

Chairman Riso had this letter forwarded to the Awards Committee.

- g.** Thank you letter to Chief LaVecchia from Pam Gery of the Parks and Recreation Department in North Branford, thanking the Department for the generous donation of light towers for the Potato and Corn Festival.
- h.** Thank you letter to the Chief from Rob Scinto, thanking the Department for sending the Marine to the Swim Across the Sound event.
- i.** Thank you letter to the Department from James O'Brien.
- j.** Thank you letter to the Department from the Orange Avenue School for the generous donation.
- k.** Thank you letter to the Department from Bridgeport Fire Chief Brian Rooney for the mutual aid given on July 6, 2010.
- l.** Letter from Battalion Chief William Healey requesting that the 1995 Crown Victoria, aka Car 15, which is currently inoperable, be classified as surplus equipment.

Commissioners Stein and Smith made and seconded a motion 6to transfer ownership of the 1995 Crown Victoria, aka Car 15, to Public Works. Motion carried unanimously.

- m.** Thank you letter from Bridgeport Fire Chief Brian Rooney to the Department for the mutual aid during the recent tornado.
- n.** Thank you letter to the Department from the Wepawaug Valley Cub Scouts for the Department's assistance on July 20th, 2010.
- o.** Letter from Assistant Chief Al Zingaro seeking a non-matching grant to replace the old video camera, as the Department is currently attempting to replace all video with DVD.

Commissioner Stein and Smith made and seconded a motion for a non-matching grant. Motion carried unanimously.

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7. Committee Reports

Apparatus

Assistant Chief Zingaro reported that all apparatus are currently in service.

Awards Ceremony

It was decided that the Awards Committee would meet to discuss an upcoming awards ceremony; date yet to be set for the meeting.

East Side Fire Station Building Committee

Commissioner Healy reported to the Commissioners that the Building Committee has made significant progress. The Board of Aldermen has approved funding, the conceptual floor plan has been approved, and that DeCarlo & Doll, Inc., had been selected as the architects for the project. Commissioner Healy also noted that the timeline for the project is going to be tight going forward. He offered to answer any questions any of the Commissioners may have on this project.

Chairman Riso commented that he attended the previous Building Committee meeting, and he would like to commend the Committee and its Chairman, Commissioner Healy, for their work thus far.

8. Chief's Report

Asst. Supt of Apparatus Testing

Chief LaVecchia reported that this test was held last Thursday, and one individual passed, Joe Whitman, with an 83. Mr. Whitman is a highly qualified individual and a master mechanic.

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Personnel Issue

Commissioners Stein and Healy made and seconded a motion to enter executive session for personnel matters. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board entered executive session at 2035 hours.

The Board came out of executive session at 2130 hours.

9. Unfinished Business

Entry Level Testing

The Chief then commented that recruitment went very well. A test was held last Wednesday. Chief LaVecchia then explained the changes to the fitness test, namely changing the ladder climb to a stair climb. The swim test will be held October 9th.

10. Comments/Concerns of the Commissioners:

None.

11. Adjournment

Commissioners Smith and Bercham made and seconded a motion to adjourn at 2134 hours. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by C. Birney