

Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting
72 New Haven Avenue, Milford, CT
Tuesday, December 19, 2023

- I. **Call to Order:** Chairman Kevin McGrath called the meeting to order at 18:25 hours. A quorum was present.

Roll Call: In addition to the Chairman, Commissioners Howard Stein, Thomas Riso, Richard Smith, William Brennan, Peter Smith, and Cynthia Twiss were present. Also, present were Alderman Liaison's Paul Healy and Jason Jenkins. Chief Anthony Fabrizi, Assistant Chief Christopher Waiksnoris, Assistant Chief Stephen Rabel, Battalion Chief AJ Murphy, and Deputy Fire Marshal Tim Suden.

Absent: none

- II. **Public Statements limited to the function of the Board of Fire Commissioners:**

None

- III. **Consideration of Minutes:**

Regular Meeting Minutes – November 21, 2023

Commissioner Stein abstained from voting as he was not in attendance at the November meeting.

Commissioners R. Smith and Brennan made and second a motion to accept the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 21, 2023. Motion carries with the forementioned abstention.

- IV. **Communications:**

Commissioner R. Smith read a letter from Kathleen Donahue the Director of Advancement from Lauralton Hall. Thanking Inspector Brian Trenchard for his professionalism and positive attitude during the extra duty for the Christmas in the Mansion event. She was so grateful for the quick care he provided during a minor first aid incident. She also thanked the entire department for their service, doing a job that puts others first and being heroes in the community.

- V. **Chairman's Report:**

Chairman McGrath provided the commission with the 2024 meeting dates that will be presented to the city clerk. He extended a welcome to Alderman Healey and Jenkins. He also thanked the new recruits that are currently in-house training. Chairman McGrath noted the article that will be in the Milford Mirror regarding the heating issues at East Side Fire Station. Public works is still working on the issues. This issue has been a multiyear problem that should be resolved quickly. Three alternatives have been identified for solutions. He thanked Battalion Chief Murphy for his response and attention to the heating issue. Finally, he extended a holiday greeting to everyone, including family and friends.

VI. **Committee Reports:**

- a) Personnel Committee: None
- b) Maintenance Committee: Commissioner Brennan stated the new engine should arrive in March. The other engine is two years out. Engine 8 is out for complete rehab, to be set up as a spare. Chief Rabel stated Engine 8 is at the vendor for preventative maintenance, repairs, DOT and pump test. It is expected to be back by next week, this will allow the department to have two spares available.
- c) Safety Committee Liaison: Commissioner Brennan informed the board there will be a new firefighter attending the safety committee meetings, as the previous person has elected not to run. He feels the safety committee works well as issues that may not normally be addressed are discussed.
- d) Education Committee – Commissioner P. Smith complimented the department on all the work regarding public outreach and social media. This helps the public understand the needs of the department. He had the opportunity to speak with the alderman liaisons about dates for a walk through, as its important to have elected officials see the stations and inside workings of the department.

VII. **Chiefs Report:**

Chief Fabrizi stated at the time of his report the budget was twenty-three weeks in, the payroll accounts are on track. The budget is closely monitored, to make sure expenditures are valid, justified and fall within the department's needs. He noted the EMS collections and comparative figures from this time last year. Commissioner P. Smith stated it is helpful to look at the comparative monthly. Commissioner Brennan noted the cost savings of changing the EMS collection vendor. Chief Fabrizi stated the new recruits have begun their three-week post academy training in-house. Recruit Joseph Ungar received the hard charger award which is given to one candidate in the academy class. He noted how Milford has received the most hard charger awards in the state. Recruit Sean Brown received the instructor award. Chairman McGrath was at the graduation and noted the compliments that Milford receives. He thanked everyone involved including the commission during interviews. Chief Fabrizi stated the department intends to make offers of employment for two vacancies for the spring recruitment class. Four spaces have been reserved. The fire department presented its 2024-2025 fiscal year budget to Mayor Giannattasio. Marine 1 is out of the water and being serviced. Assistant Chief Rabel is pursuing grant funding to remove and flush AFFF foam from apparatus. A brief conversation was had regarding state allocations, quotes and costs related to the hazmat disposal. Chief Fabrizi has contacted state representative Kathy Kennedy regarding developing a statute for firefighter retention, similar to CT general statute 7-294dd. He is also working with the legal department regarding something in place locally. Chief Fabrizi also noted several medical responses that were lifesaving. Battalion Chief Murphy instructed St. Mary's church with hands only CPR. The roof replacement at HQ has begun. The main part of the building's damage is far more extensive than expected, putting a pause to the work. A temporary roof has been installed until funding is secured to address the issues. The heat issue at East Side continues, a resolution is waiting to be deployed. The written exam for the position of BC was held yesterday. The oral exam is scheduled for December 29. The chief congratulated the multiple firefighters who have completed their one-year probationary period. Two new 2023 Ford Explorers have been received and are being outfitted with equipment. Yearly DOT and pump testing is underway. The sealed bid for the auction of Tower 1 is waiting on more offers, a better decision can then be made. Chairman McGrath stated Tower 1 will be

discussed in January.

VIII. **New Business:**

- a) Deputy Fire Marshal Tim Suden spoke regarding the updated hydrant ordinance proposal. Since taking office he has been trying to update items that have relevance to what the department does. The ordinance was last updated in 2010, codes change every three years. One reason for the change is due to fire department access and water supply as the city is growing at a fast rate. This would ensure the department has proper access to buildings and proper safety when they are accessed and that the water supply is up to date. Milford would be leading the charge for CT on how the ordinance is updated. Commissioner Stein questioned what the acronym AHJ is, stating it should be defined. Commissioner Stein also stated regarding enforcement, the fines may not have the same effect as a cease-and-desist nuisance abatement revocation of their certificate of operations. He recommended speaking to the city attorney's office for more specific language including but not limited to language that you want to put somebody on notice that this department has the right to seek some type of nuisance abatement. Commissioner P. Smith stated some of the changes were spoken about but questioned if all the differences in the ordinance were presented. Deputy Fire Marshal Suden stated most changes were grammatical besides quickly identifying public and private hydrants. He changed the wording of single- and two-family dwellings, as the fire department identifies multi families as three or more. The greatest addition was the fire department access which is referenced from the IFC. Commission Brennan suggested meeting with planning and zoning, so they understand the changes. He also noted that overhead hazards should be defined as public utilities have the right to be there.

Commissioners Brennan and Riso made and second a motion to accept the report and recommendations to the Board of Alderman with the forementioned additions pending further inside discussion and/or corrections of subsections. Motion carries unanimously.

- b) Tower 1- Tabled until January when more information is available.
- c) 2024/25 Proposed Budget – Chairman McGrath made the commission aware of the roof at headquarters and extend of damage with the rotting rafters and granite tapering coming loose. He also mentioned the money needed for preventative maintenance for the roof at the west side station. Chief Fabrizi noted the seven items needed for repairs on the roof for Station 8 and the cost. Chairman McGrath stated the department budget does not have the money for general maintenance on the aging buildings. He noted HQ is the perfect example of requests getting put off. Commissioner Stein mentioned a report regarding the study of the life of headquarters that was presented to city hall during his tenure. Chief Fabrizi provided the commission with the proposed budget and additional information. He stated the increase across the board were due to inflation, noting the fire department has been historically underfunded. Commissioner P. Smith questioned the increase in OT and meal allowance. Chief Fabrizi stated that due to an MOU regarding training, the amount is what is needed to meet the contractual obligations of the department. He explained what meal allowance provided, which was underfunded, transfers had previously been made to offset costs. Commissioner Stein noted the first four items are contractually driven by the collective bargaining agreement which have had a past fiscal deficit. Chief Fabrizi agreed and noted the education supplement line item which is for paramedic and EMT stipends is historically underfunded even knowing what the cost is.

Commissioner Stein added; resulting in trained medics giving up their certification or looking for opportunities outside the department, where paramedic certification is at a premium these days and make up 70% of the fire department. Chief Fabrizi stated the department is just asking to be caught up to meet the collective bargaining agreement. Commissioner Stein questioned how the department is dealing with the fleet acquisitions and long-term equipment planning rolling stock. Stating that the amount that is being requested for vehicles and equipment cannot be the vehicle budget. Chief Fabrizi stated that the line item is typically for day staff vehicles when Mayor Smith was in office, he provided a letter prior to his departure agreeing to bond for an engine in February and an ambulance in spring. The Quint 3 which has a late 2025 delivery was already bonded and approved. This puts the department in a reasonable shape. A list of all apparatus was presented to the previous mayor, Assistant Chief Rabel will be providing an updated list for Mayor Giannattasio. Allowing Mayor Giannattasio to be aware of the pace that needs to be maintained for the rolling stock. Commissioner Stein informed the new board members that it takes 3 – 4 years to acquire a major piece of apparatus. Chief Fabrizi stated call volume is up, transport to hospitals are up and revenue is up, which relates to increased costs. He noted the comparison to other towns and the ARPA distribution. Commissioner P. Smith stated he understands the struggle of wear and tear on equipment due to traveling to area hospitals. Commissioner Stein noted the larger issue is what apparatus goes to calls. The extensive wear and tear on apparatus needs to be revisited due to wear and tear and living in a seaside community. Commissioner Brennan stated that having other vehicles go to calls results in more runs a year and a lot of wear and tear. A discussion was had regarding wear and tear and challenges, including manpower, and miles on apparatus. Assistant Chief Waiksnoris spoke of the remedy to lessen the burden on vehicles. Including more paramedics on ambulances and making the members engaged on the ambulance. Commissioner Stein stated EMS calls are 70% of the department and the positions should be made lucrative for special skill set people.

- d) New Hire Language – Chairman McGrath stated some members may leave as there is not language to maintain an employee for any amount of time. He stated the city attorneys are being worked with to put a one-page document in the next application packet regarding time commitment obligations. Chief Fabrizi stated the time frame that is needed for the February class. The police have a state statute regarding reimbursement for all costs of certification. Commissioner Stein stated if the department is not limited through statute why not identify a cost for damages, cost of training and schooling. Noting the document should state you should consult with an attorney of your choice. The individual would be obligated to pay the city x amount upon leaving. A discussion was had regarding costs to the department, lateral transfers, employee retention and the legalities. Commissioner P. Smith stated it was a great idea to calculate the cost and seek legal opinion. Commissioner Twiss stated a person may be inclined to go to another department where this document is not required. Chairman McGrath stated he would keep the board updated on the process.

IX. Unfinished Business:

None.

X. **New Equipment:**

Chief Fabrizi stated the two new explorers were received and should be returned in a week or two.

XI. **Comments and Concerns of the Commissioners:**

Commissioner P. Smith suggested sending a letter of recognition to Probationary Firefighters Ungar and Brown. Chairman McGrath would do this. Commissioner Brennan reiterated the need for a station on the north end of Milford. Engine 6 makes all the calls in north Milford. Chairman McGrath stated preliminary introductions have been made to set up a meeting with a law firm regarding the topic.

XII. **Adjournment:**

Commissioners R. Smith and Riso made and second a motion to adjourn at 19:52.