

Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting
Fire Commission Conference Room at Fire Headquarters
72 New Haven Avenue, Milford, CT
Tuesday, January 15, 2013

Call to Order: Acting Chief Healey called the meeting to order at 1902 hours. A quorum was present.

1. Roll Call

Commissioners Thomas Riso, Kevin McGrath, Howard Stein, Richard Smith, Joseph Weber, Aaron Sanner, and William A. Brennan. Also present were Acting Chief Robert Healey, Union President Michael Dunn, and Union Vice President Todd Ricci.

2. Election of Officers

Commissioners Stein and Brennan made and seconded a motion to nominate Commissioner Riso as Chairman, Commissioner McGrath as Vice Chairman, and Commissioner Smith as Secretary. Motion carried unanimously.

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

None.

4. Swearing In:

None.

5. Consideration of Minutes:

Regular Meeting - December 18, 2012

Chairman Riso apologized to the Commissioners for the late delivery of their monthly packets. He explained that the copy machine at Headquarters had been malfunctioning and replacement parts were necessary. Acting Chief Healey added the lease on the current copier expires in three months and the Department is exploring their options. *Commissioners McGrath and Smith made and seconded a motion to accept the minutes of the December 18, 2012, regular meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.*

6. Communications:

- a. Thank-you card from a “grateful former Milford resident”, thanking the Fire Department for all they do, in light of the recent Newtown tragedy. The writer’s father was also a first-responder.

7. Committee Reports

East Side Fire Station

Commissioner Brennan informed the Commissioners the project is progressing. He said the Committee would be meeting on January 16th, at which time they expect to turn the station over to Acting Chief Healey to begin the two- to three-week process of move-in.

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Commissioner Brennan said the “house lights” were completed earlier in the day. He added that the fan motor in the CO detector had to be replaced, which was also completed earlier in the day. Minor issues are still in contention, but nothing that will hold up obtaining the Certificate of Occupancy, which the Committee hopes to obtain on January 16th. The radio system and phone system have to be moved over to the new station, and final checks of systems still have to be completed.

Commissioner Brennan said the building is in good shape and it is a great firehouse. He added that the project is still way under budget.

Chairman Riso commented that he and the other Commissioners are interested in doing a walk-through of the new station once the Certificate of Occupancy is obtained.

Commissioner Brennan said the Commissioners are free at this point to walk through the station. He added that the Committee would be holding their meeting at the new station on January 16th.

Commissioner Brennan explained that Ret. Battalion Chief Healey had crews from Stations 5 and 6 at the new station moving furniture and supplies in.

Commissioners Stein and Smith made and seconded a motion to return to Item IV on the agenda, Swearing In. Motion carried unanimously.

Swearing In

Firefighters Jason Stacoffe and Christopher Hessberger were sworn in.

Fire Chief Selection Committee

Commissioner McGrath passed out to the Commissioners the proposed revised language for Article 3 of the policy. He said the Milford City Attorney reviewed the proposed revision earlier in the day and approved forwarding it to the Fire Commission for a vote. Commissioner McGrath thanked Chairman Riso and Commissioner Stein for their assistance on this issue.

Commissioner McGrath proposed the Commissioners meet in the near future, possibly January 22nd, to vote on and adopt the revision of Article 3. He invited the Commissioners to call him with any questions on the policy revision. He said there might need to be some minor adjustments made to the language still, and he opened the floor to questions.

Chairman Riso added the Board needs to digest the information they were given and come back soon to vote on the revision. He said they would need to schedule a special meeting. He commented that Commissioner McGrath did a lot of work to get this language prepared.

The Commissioners discussed a mutual date to meet.

Commissioners Stein and Smith made and seconded a motion to hold a special meeting to vote on and adopt the revision to Article 3 on January 17, 2013, at 6:00 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

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8. Chief's Report

Acting Chief Healey reported the Lieutenants' exam has been graded and eight candidates passed. There is a ten-day appeal period, and then the grades are posted for 30 days. He commented that in Milford, a passing grade is 75, while in other Departments, passing is 70. He said this speaks well of the Milford Fire Department.

Acting Chief Healey said they have begun hiring for open positions in the Department. Five people will be attending orientation on February 5th, with the crew class starting on February 13th. He said three EMT offers have gone out, and the candidates have six months to complete their EMT class.

Acting Chief Healey explained one position had been offered to someone serving in Afghanistan, and the Department was holding the spot open until he returned from service. The Department received correspondence from the candidate, who is now working with another Department, but thanked Milford for their offer.

Acting Chief Healey informed the Commissioners Ret. Assistant Chief Al Zingaro has been working as a planner in the Fire Marshal's Office.

The Acting Chief said the PSAP call center move is on schedule, and he believes the final move date will be in mid-February.

Acting Chief Healey confirmed that all Commissioners were in receipt of the updated fee schedule in their packets. He explained along with the fees being updated, the Department will now start to follow through with charges that were previously not being charged in order for the Department to obtain some income. Commissioner Brennan stated the policy says the Department is not able to receive hydrant fees at the new East Side Fire Station.

Acting Chief Healey reported most of the apparatus are in service. The old Quint is at the body shop and should be back within the week.

The Acting Chief said he hasn't had an opportunity to have a discussion with the Union regarding the Use of City Vehicles Policy. Commissioner Stein said this could be discussed further during Item X, Unfinished Business.

Commissioner McGrath inquired if the estimated move date for the PSAP center is "doable" for the Department. Acting Chief Healey explained because several PSAP centers had been consolidated around the state, AT&T now has the correct equipment to facilitate the move more efficiently. The Police Department has set the mid-February date, and the Acting Chief believes it shall be completed by then.

Commissioner McGrath inquired if the current budget had been forwarded to the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen. Acting Chief Healey said it had been forwarded to the Mayor, who adjusted the budget slightly, then approved the budget and forwarded it to the Board of Aldermen.

Commissioner McGrath inquired if any of the trucks, such as the pumper, will be replaced this year. Acting Chief Healey said replacing the pumper will keep the fleet up to speed, as the spare engine is 20 years old at this time. Any new apparatus will be addressed through the bonding company.

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9. New Business

None.

10. Unfinished Business:

Establish an Eligibility List

Chairman Riso confirmed the Commissioners all received the information in their monthly packets. He said the Board needs to act on this issue.

Acting Chief Healey explained the Department needs to find an appropriate administrator for the physical ability test. He said CPAT administers such a test and the Commissioners might want to use that as the standard; he suggested because of Milford's extensive coastline, an additional swim test should be administered as well.

Commissioner Brennan stated it might save the City funds if the Board utilizes the CPAT physical ability test.

Commissioners Brennan and McGrath made and seconded a motion to accept the CPAT physical ability test, as well as an additional swim test, as the criteria for the physical ability standard.

Commissioner Stein asked Acting Chief Healey to explain the CPAT physical ability test to the new Commissioners. The Acting Chief said the physical ability test is administered by the State, but is a nationally recognized test. The test itself is pricey, but two orientations are offered, along with two practice tests. When candidates pass the test, they receive a CPAT card, which is valid for six months.

Commissioner Brennan inquired if the age limit restriction is still contained in the Eligibility List Policy. Acting Chief Healey recommended the Board remove that restriction from the policy as Milford is the only department that has that restriction.

Commissioner Brennan amended his motion to include removing the age limit restriction from the Eligibility List Policy.

Acting Chief Healey added the current list expires on January 25th, so the Board does not have to act on this issue at this meeting.

Commissioner Stein commented he has had some personal experience with this issue due to the death of two firefighters in Bridgeport. He explained the age and physical status of one of the deceased was a contributing factor to his death. He said the firefighter had heart and hypertension issues when he was hired in his 40s. Acting Chief Healey commented there are of course exceptions. Commissioner Stein stated his concern lies with a firefighter who is in his/her 50s and 60s and still working on the floor; he wonders if he/she would be capable of completing his/her career through retirement.

Commissioner Brennan withdrew his amendment to the motion.

Commissioner Stein said he would gather information from speaking with firefighters currently working on the floor.

Acting Chief Healey reminded the Commissioners that two agility tests are administered to candidates. He suggested the Board hold off on this particular issue.

Motion carried unanimously.

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Commissioner Stein inquired after the EMT certification issue. Acting Chief Healey explained that as candidates are offered EMT positions, they have not yet passed their EMT certification. They have six months in which to complete their class and obtain their EMT card. He commented he feels these candidates should have already obtained their EMT cards prior to being hired. He added if these candidates would like the job, they will be ready when the Department calls. Commissioner Brennan agreed with the Acting Chief. Acting Chief Healey added once the Department reaches the end of the list for hiring, the list is essentially extended for the six months that the candidates now have to obtain their EMT card. Commissioner Stein inquired if the Union has any opinion on this issue. Union President Dunn said the Union would like to be vested into this issue, but this is all new to him at this point. He said the requirement was in years past that applicants would have to have a valid EMT card on the date of application. He added this policy changed six years ago, allowing six months for the acquisition of the EMT card. Acting Chief Healey said this policy change was made with the intention of making the Department more diverse.

Acting Chief Healey stated once candidates are placed on the list, they should immediately begin their EMT class. He added the Department is currently working on updating the website to include current EMT courses that are available.

Commissioner Stein outlined the remaining issues in front of the Commissioners regarding the Eligibility List: elimination of extension of six months for EMT new-hires and the age limit requirement.

Commissioners Stein and Brennan made and seconded a motion to table the remaining issues regarding the Eligibility List to the next regular meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Stein stated he welcomes thoughts from the Union on the remaining issues.

Grievance 12-006

Chairman Riso said the Acting Chief stated he had not had an opportunity to discuss this issue with the Union since the last meeting.

Acting Chief Healey stated the reader for the gas pump at the station has not been working, so he hasn't been able to get a firm read-out of the gas usage of the Department. Commissioner Stein explained to the new Commissioners that a new city vehicle usage policy was put into effect at a prior meeting; the following meeting, the Union filed a grievance stating past practice had been violated. He said at the December Commissioners' meeting, a motion to deny the grievance failed, and the grievance was tabled to this meeting for the intricacies of the issue to be flushed out. Commissioner Stein inquired of the Union if this issue could be tabled until the next regular meeting to facilitate a discussion between the Acting Chief and Union. Union President Dunn commented that this issue has been active for three months and several Union members are sustaining financial burdens. Commissioner Stein said the Board can push the issue to a vote, but he assumed the Union would prefer coming to an agreement with the

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Department. He added that Acting Chief Healey has been quite busy lately. Chairman Riso stated the last discussion showed the two parties were very close to an agreement on the proper wording of the policy, but a few issues still needed to be worked out. He commented he would hate to see it all fall apart at this point. He also stated Acting Chief Healey has been working very hard. Union President Dunn said he does not mind tabling the issue, but he would like it to be finalized at the next regular meeting. Commissioner Stein said all have agreed this may be a resolvable issue.

Commissioners Stein and McGrath made and seconded a motion to table Grievance 12-006, in the City's best interest, to the next regular meeting, by Union agreement. Motion carried unanimously.

11. Comments and Concerns of the Commissioners:

Commissioner McGrath suggested the Department draft thank-you letters to former Commissioners Healy and Craig, thanking them for their service on the Board. Chairman Riso said the Mayor's Office had already sent thank-you letters to the former Commissioners, but he agrees one should also come from the Department.

Commissioner Brennan stated that at a previous meeting where a grievance was discussed, the Board asked for a study to be done on pensions. He inquired about the status of the study. Chairman Riso said the request had been sent to the Milford City Attorney's Office, and he would follow up for information.

12. Adjournment

Commissioners Smith and McGrath made and seconded a motion to adjourn at 1955 hours. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by C. Birney