

**Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting  
Training Room at the East Side Fire Station  
980 New Haven Avenue, Milford, CT  
Tuesday, April 16, 2013**

**Call to Order:** Chairman Riso called the meeting to order at 1901 hours. A quorum was present.

**1. Roll Call**

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

Chairman Riso thanked everyone present for the Civilian Awards for attending.

**2. Public Statements limited to the function of the Board of Fire Commissioners:**  
None.

**3. Swearing In/Civilian Award**

Chairman Riso explained the recipients of the Civilian Awards did a good service for the Department during the snowstorm in February. They assisted the Department in clearing the 38 inches of snow Milford received. He explained the Fire Commission has the power to present special awards for outstanding service by civilians. The Chairman informed the award recipients they will be sent letters speaking to their six hours of community service performed, to be presented to their respective high schools.

Chairman Riso presented the awards to David Moyher, Gavin Manzi, Tyler Quantrano, and Randin Manzi.

Acting Chief Healey offered the award recipients and their families to tour the East Side Fire Station.

**4. Consideration of Minutes:**  
**Regular Meeting - March 19, 2013**

Commissioner McGrath noted a change was required to his statement from the previous meeting on Item VI, Fire Chief Selection Committee Report. He said he should have stated seven applicants are from within the Department, and eight applicants are from within the state.

*Commissioners Smith and McGrath made and seconded a motion to accept the minutes of the March 19, 2013, Regular Meeting, as amended. Motion carried unanimously.*

Chairman Riso abstained from voting as he was not present at the last meeting.

**5. Communications:**

- a. Thank-you letter from the Bridgeport Hospital Medics thanking the Department for their instruction.

**6. Committee Reports**

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East Side Fire Station

Commissioner Brennan reported the dedication of the East Side Fire Station was the previous Saturday. He explained the Committee would hold at least one more meeting, the next being April 17<sup>th</sup>. He noted the Committee has met 58 times since the beginning of the project. He reported there are a few things still to be worked out at the station. Commissioner Brennan said there is a meeting scheduled with the City Attorney on April 17<sup>th</sup> as well.

Chairman Riso congratulated the Committee for toughing out the project. He said the dedication was great and very well-attended.

Commissioner McGrath thanked Commissioner Brennan and Former Commissioner John Healy for their hard work and dedication. He noted they did a great job on the station.

Fire Chief Selection Committee Report

Commissioner McGrath reported that everything is on-schedule. He said five candidates from within the Department will go forward from this point as two candidates did not meet the qualifications.

Commissioner Smith inquired who the five candidates from within the Department are; Commissioner McGrath said he did not have the names with him but will provide them to Commissioner Smith.

**7. Chief's Report**

Acting Chief Healey inquired if anyone had questions on his written report.

Commissioner Brennan inquired if the grievance mentioned in the report had been resolved; Acting Chief Healey said it had been.

The Acting Chief said a letter of request to carry over comp and vacation days is included in his written report. He explained with the recent hurricane and blizzard, the Department has been short-staffed and he has been unable to use his vacation days. He said the ordinance allows a maximum of 30 days, or 240 hours of vacation and comp time; he personally has over 700 hours, but has been trying to whittle down his time. He asked the Commission to approve his request to carry over his vacation and comp time.

Commissioners Brennan and Smith made and seconded a motion to approve the request made by Acting Chief Healey to carry over vacation and comp time.

Commissioner Stein inquired if there is a specific amount of time the Acting Chief is requesting or if it's an open-ended request. Acting Chief Healey said he will have a better idea of the time he is requesting at the June Fire Commission meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

Acting Chief Healey informed the Commissioners the police/fire radio integration project is on track. He said the radios were narrow-banded two weeks ago as part of a \$4 million police radio upgrade. He added the programming needs to be completed. This integration should allow for better broadcasting. He noted one area of coverage is not as good at this point, but there will be further testing into June.

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The Acting Chief said the welding on Marine 1 has been completed. He added that Twin Lights will begin painting and everything is on schedule. Commissioner McGrath inquired if the grant for repairs to Marine 1 was granted. The Acting Chief said it had been but with the contingency that Marine 1's repairs are to be completed by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Acting Chief Healey reported the hose has been changed to national standard thread and so the Department is in compliance with the national standard. He noted the Department now has a great deal of excess hose equipment. He informed the Commissioners that the New London Fire Department uses the metal threading and suggested offering the excess hose equipment to the New London Fire Department. Once he has made contact with the Fire Chief, he will then ask permission of the Commissioners to donate the excess equipment to New London.

The Acting Chief informed the Commissioners that the official PSAP move date will be May 7<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Riso inquired if the PSAP consolidation process has been moving smoothly. Acting Chief Healey said it has been. He explained further the move itself is expected to take about 17 hours and the dispatchers will need to utilize manual dispatch cards during the move. He said they will switch over to the manual dispatch cards on May 6<sup>th</sup> to give a buffer. Acting Chief Healey noted it is not a bad idea to go manual once in a while as practice for the dispatchers.

Commissioner McGrath inquired if the dispatchers will have to undergo extra training to prepare for the PSAP consolidation. Acting Chief Healey said most have done "collect" training in compliance with NCIC regulations. He explained there will be a sign-in, sign-out system, along with key fobs for Battalion Chiefs for routine check-ins with the Fire Department workers. He added the new PSAP center will be like a new station.

Commissioner Brennan inquired if all the dispatchers are up to date on their medic requirements. Acting Chief Healey said all the dispatchers are EMD-trained. He added he has posited a proposal to the Mayor to upgrade a civilian dispatcher to a supervisory position. He will update the Commissioners when he receives a reply from the Mayor.

Chairman Riso inquired if the Department has been able to utilize the Seemans Lane location a bit more. Acting Chief Healey said the Department has been moving equipment to the facility, but the Department does not officially own the building yet. Commissioner Brennan inquired if there is a garage on the property. The Acting Chief said there is, but it is in questionable condition. He added the Department is looking into getting training tools onto the site. Commissioner Brennan suggested contacting UI for possible use of their old telephone poles; Acting Chief Healey said contact with UI had already been made and the poles will not be made available to the Department. Chairman Riso commented he is glad the Seemans Lane location seems to be falling into place. Acting Chief Healey noted the Department would like to make the Seemans Lane building a green building to keep costs down. He said the Department will seek any available grants. He suggested the location have a geothermal power based so as to leave no carbon footprint.

**8. New Business**

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Union President Dunn passed out pamphlets to the Commissioners. He explained the foundation NJFMBA running a program called Pennies for Playgrounds. It began as a charity following Hurricane Katrina which built three handicapped-accessible playgrounds in Mississippi. After Hurricane Sandy, the same program aided areas affected locally. Union President Dunn explained the New Jersey Professional Firefighters run the program and would like to “pay it forward” to Newtown, Connecticut. There will be 26 playgrounds built, one honoring each victim of the Newtown tragedy. The families of the victims choose the location of each of the playgrounds, and Milford was put on the agenda by two of the families. Union President Dunn said he has spoken with Mayor Blake and Parks & Recreation Commission Chairman Paul Piscatelli about the program along with Bill Lavin, the director of the foundation in New Jersey. Union President Dunn commented that Mayor Blake loves the idea.

Union President Dunn said members of the Fire Department and Police Department would build the playground. He said he hopes by bringing the city in, it will eliminate much of the red tape involved with building the playground.

Union President Dunn asked the Commissioners for their blessing as this project will involve a significant amount of fundraising in order to keep the idea of “paying it forward” going. He noted all the Local Unions in Connecticut will aid in the fundraising. Union President Dunn said a definitive location has yet to be determined. He said each playground will have a theme of a different victim of the tragedy.

Acting Chief Healey added Union President Dunn requests permission to use the Department’s name during the fundraising. He said Milford was chosen for a playground site based on the damage sustained during Hurricane Sandy.

Commissioners McGrath and Smith made and seconded a motion to approve the Sandy Ground Project playground concept and any required fundraising as requested by Union President Dunn.

Commissioner Stein inquired if this project has been sanctioned by City Hall; Union President Dunn said it has. Commissioner Stein inquired who would be holding any money donated to the project if donated through the Department. Union President Dunn said any money donated goes into its own account, and any money donated through the Department will be forwarded to that account. Commissioner Stein inquired what the timeframe is of completing the playground. Union President Dunn said the playgrounds are all custom-built and the current build time is four weeks. Commissioner Stein inquired about the fundraising timeframe. Union President Dunn said there is no set timeline as the Locals will be involved as long as necessary.

Motion carried unanimously.

**9. Unfinished Business:**

Rules for establishing an Eligibility List

Commissioner Brennan commented he believes felons should be excluded from applying to the Department. He said he has mixed emotions regarding the age limit exclusion. Commissioner Stein said he does not rest easy being told he has to do something to fall in line with what everyone else is doing. He said he needs to be shown something to convince him otherwise. He said he is not sure he has gotten a legal instruction from any

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Milford entity on this issue. Commissioner Stein added he does agree with the sentiment that some applicants over the age of 35 might be physically fit at the time of testing, but he questions the ability of the same person to have a full career in the Department on the line before being able to retire. He commented firefighting is not a career that time favors.

Commissioner Weber noted some applicants may be coming from other types of careers that require the same type of physical ability as firefighting.

Commissioner Stein inquired about the years of service required for retirement currently; Acting Chief Healey informed him the standard is 20 years currently, with 25 years strongly encouraged. The Acting Chief added there is not enough movement within the Milford Fire Department to freely allow firefighters to officer positions with less physical demands.

Commissioner Stein suggested keeping the age limit restriction in the notification, or perhaps raising the limit to 39 to alleviate any additional concerns.

Commissioner Brennan inquired about a complaint received surrounding this issue on the previous eligibility list creation; Chairman Riso said the issue resolved itself.

Commissioner Weber inquired how many over the age limit of 35 applied last time;

Acting Chief Healey said there was one. He noted the number of 35-and-over applicants might rise because the Milford physical ability test is not being administered.

Commissioner McGrath asked what the timetable is for testing. Acting Chief Healey said the end of June will be when the written test is held; he added if the Department would like to hire recruits for the August class, June testing will be cutting it pretty tight. He said any open positions on the Department will be filled by overtime until the spots can be permanently filled. He said there is potential for the Department to have up to 15 members retire this year. Chairman Riso stated he feels the Department needs to have recruits in the August class.

Acting Chief Healey informed the Commissioners the Department has expended a lot of effort in the past with little success on recruitment of minorities. He said he spoke with New Haven Fighters who informed him there was trouble in that same area in their Department. Commissioner Stein inquired about who the point-person is on recruitment; Acting Chief Healey said Chief Wassmer is that person and is ready to begin. The Acting Chief said Chief Wassmer will be recruiting at more local colleges and is anxious to begin.

Commissioner Stein confirmed the EMT requirement had been voted on previously by the Commissioners, and confirmed the remaining issues are the felon restriction and age limit. Acting Chief Healey said there is an application fee of \$100 and the applicant must hold a Connecticut driver's license, along with a high school diploma or GED. He said in previous years, convicted felons were excluded from applying. Commissioner Brennan stated he believes convicted felons should be excluded from applying.

Commissioners Stein and McGrath made and seconded a motion that the basic eligibility list requirements include a candidate who holds a high school diploma or GED, have a valid Connecticut driver's license, pay a \$100 application fee unless the appropriate hardship paperwork is submitted to the Department, and include the CPAT language as published in the last eligibility list.

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Acting Chief Healey suggested having a CPAT card issued within six months of application. Commissioner Stein suggested a CPAT card issued on or after July 1, 2012. Acting Chief Healey said once the end of the list is reached for hire, the CPAT card will be over two years old. He stated the language on the last eligibility list test is appropriate.

Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioners Brennan and Stein made and seconded a motion to preclude convicted felons from being eligible to apply to work for the Department. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Stein said he would be prepared to make a motion to maintain the current age restriction of 35. He inquired if any of the Commissioners felt the age restriction should be adjusted at all prior to voting. He said he believes leaving the restriction is in the best interests of this Department. Chairman Riso echoed Commissioner Stein's statements.

Commissioners Stein and McGrath made and seconded a motion to maintain the age restriction of 35 at time of application. Motion carried unanimously.

Acting Chief Healey said the Department will start the process and will set dates for testing and begin recruitment.

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

Commissioner McGrath inquired if members of the Honor Guard were volunteers or part of a Union. Acting Chief Healey said the Honor Guard is comprised of Union volunteers, but the City will pay for certain functions.

Commissioner Brennan thanked Acting Chief Healey for providing a list of Department vehicles, but asked for a list including every vehicle operated by the Department for the next meeting. The Acting Chief said he will provide that to him.

Commissioner Brennan asked about the vacancies on Rescue 1 and Rescue 2 for paramedics. Acting Chief Healey informed him the Department has to hire a per diem paramedic daily.

Commissioner McGrath asked about the bonding for the new truck for the Department. Acting Chief Healey said the bond has gone through and the Department is looking into a group purchase. He added the Milford City Attorney is investigating that point.

Commissioner Brennan inquired where Engine 8 is currently. Acting Chief Healey said it is at Seemans Lane. He noted the Department might be trading it in, or possibly donating it to the Fire Science program at the University of New Haven.

**11. Adjournment**

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*Commissioners Smith and McGrath made and seconded a motion to adjourn at 2009 hours. Motion carried unanimously.*

Recorded by C. Birney