

Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting
Commissioners Conference Room at Fire Headquarters
72 New Haven Avenue, Milford, CT
Tuesday, July 17, 2012

Call to Order: Vice-Chairman Healy called the meeting to order at 1902 hours. A quorum was present.

1. Roll Call

Commissioners John Healy, Karen Craig, Kevin McGrath, Richard Smith, and William A. Brennan. Also present were Chief Louis A. LaVecchia, Assistant Chief Robert Healey, Union President Michael Dunn, Union Vice President Todd Ricci, EOC Coordinator Dan Worroll, Firefighter Brian Collin, and Milford Resident Paul Geer.

Chairman Riso and Commissioner Stein were excused.

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

Mr. Geer asked if the Commissioners would consider holding future Commission meetings in the classroom at Fire Headquarters, as it is larger and will better accommodate members of the public who would like to attend the meetings.

Commissioners McGrath and Smith made and seconded a motion to hold future Commission meetings in the classroom at Fire Headquarters. Motion carried unanimously.

Union President Dunn presented Grievance 12-003 to the Commission.

Commissioners Brennan and Craig made and seconded a motion to add Grievance 12-003 to the agenda, to be discussed after Item V, Communications. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Swearing In:

None.

4. Consideration of Minutes:

Regular Meeting - June 19, 2012

Commissioner Smith requested to amend the minutes to include his name and presence in Item I, Roll Call. He commented the decommissioning of Station 5, which was discussed at the June meeting, was not included in the minutes.

Commissioner Healy stated he spoke with Chief LaVecchia regarding the multiple issues and discussions that are missing from the June meeting minutes. He explained the Recording Secretary was not available for the meeting and Pat Hoppes filled in.

Commissioner Healy said a motion was made during Unfinished Business, and all that

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was noted was discussion, not the substance of the discussion. He added that the motion in the last meeting was made in the interest of the City economy regarding ten Fire Department employees having access 24/7 to Department vehicles. He further said one of the reasons given for the use of the Department vehicles is due to the lack of parking; Commissioner Healy stated there is now available parking at the new East Side Fire Station.

Commissioner Healy also noted that there was a question asked by Commissioner McGrath at the June meeting that is not reflected in the minutes. He said everyone would like an accurate record.

Commissioners Brennan and McGrath made and seconded a motion to amend the minutes of the June 19, 2012, regular meeting to include the comments made by Commissioner Healy, and the corrections noted by Commissioner Smith. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Communications:

- a. Letter to Chief LaVecchia from the Orange Avenue School chairpersons thanking him for being a guest reader at the school on April 27th.
- b. Thank-you letter from Frank Rohrig thanking the Department for their response to a 911 call for his wife on June 20th..
- c. \$100 check from the Milford Lyons Club.
- d. Thank-you letter to the Department from the Brooks Family thanking the Firefighters for their assistance when their basement flooded.

Commissioners Craig and McGrath made and seconded a motion to accept the donation check into the Good & Welfare Fund. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Grievance 12-003

Firefighter Collin, head of the Grievance Committee, presented the Grievance to the Commission. He explained Captain Todd Ricci has been a voluntary Captain on Marine 1 for 14 years. As of April 16th, he was no longer interested in continuing with the position and submitted his letter of resignation. On June 12th, he received a response denying his resignation. On June 21st, the Grievance was submitted to Chief LaVecchia; the denial of the Grievance was just received that afternoon.

Firefighter Collin explained that Captain Ricci feels that he has “done his time” on Marine 1. He added that nowhere in the rules and regulations does it state any minimum mandatory time is required for the position of Marine 1 Captain.

Assistant Chief Healey informed the Commission that Chief LaVecchia asked him to speak to Captain Ricci regarding this issue when he first submitted his letter of resignation. He said he and Captain Ricci spoke twice about the issue, and he informed Captain Ricci his concerns with remaining in the position were being addressed. He

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added that Captain Ricci did not participate in Marine 1's first-day check. Assistant Chief Healey said he informed Captain Ricci he could not resign from the position; nowhere in the Union contract does it state that a member of the Fire Department can change their apparatus assignment. He further stated if it was allowed in this case, it would open the door for other members of the Department to do the same. He said the most senior man on shift must operate the apparatus. Assistant Chief Healey read Section 4a of the Union contract to the Commission; he said remaining in the position is not affecting his wages, health, and safety.

Assistant Chief Healey commented that the position of Captain of Marine 1 is not a totally voluntary position. The Department paid ½ of the tuition for Captain Ricci to get licensed, and in 2008, Assistant Chief Zingaro submitted a letter of recommendation to the US Coast Guard for Captain Ricci.

Assistant Chief Healey explained there would be a liability to both the City and the Department if they had a qualified member of the Department on duty when a call came in and the Department did not send out the apparatus when needed.

Commissioner Brennan inquired if the Department funded Captain Ricci's license; Assistant Chief Healey answered the Department paid for half of his tuition.

Commissioner Healy thanked Assistant Chief Healey for his articulate presentation. Firefighter Collin commented that other members of the Department had been allowed in the past to resign from driving certain apparatus with no penalty. He restated that Captain Ricci has spent 14 years as Captain of Marine 1 and feels he has put his time in; he feels like he is being punished at the end of his career.

Commissioner Healy said he felt the implication is if the Department were to allow Captain Ricci's resignation, there would be a waterfall effect throughout the Department. He stated Captain Ricci has a skill set the Department would be sorry not to avail themselves of. He commented the Commission has enough information to make a decision on the Grievance, but the underlying issue is that the Chief and Captain Ricci should be able to discuss this issue further and come to a resolution. He said personality issues have no place here.

Commissioner Brennan made a motion to deny Grievance 12-003.

Commissioner McGrath inquired if the resignation was due solely to the equipment and/or personal safety. Assistant Chief Healey answered that Captain Ricci felt there was a lack of training for Marine 1; Assistant Chief Healey added that this issue was being addressed and he himself had indicated to Chief LaVecchia that more training was required.

Commissioner McGrath asked how many other qualified Coxswains are on the Department; Assistant Chief Healey stated there are 11. Commissioner Healy commented that Assistant Chief Healey raised a valid point regarding the liability of the City or Department.

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Union President Dunn said Marine 1 is not apparatus. He said Captain Ricci has brought up the lack of training numerous times. He commented that every other team in the Department allows resignations. He then stated that it cost more to train someone for the Hazmat Team than it does for a Coxsin certification. Union President Dunn said he would like it stated on the record that Marine 1 is considered apparatus.

Commissioner Healy said he needed apparatus defined. Union President Dunn defined it as a piece of Department equipment.

Commissioner Brennan inquired why Captain Ricci would take the Captain course and not follow through.

Chief LaVecchia stated the Department member who was permitted to resign in the past was because of medical reasons. He stated he would like to sit down with Captain Ricci to work on the issues raised. He encouraged Captain Ricci to stay active in his lead role; the Department can clearly use someone with his skill set.

Union President Dunn asked if Captain Ricci could be excused from driving Marine 1 until this Grievance was settled with the State Committee. Captain Ricci informed the Commissioners he is not comfortable driving Marine 1.

Assistant Chief Healey stated he is obligated to send a retraction letter to the US Coast Guard.

Mr. Geer commented the last resignation from Marine 1 was not due to medical issues.
Commissioner McGrath seconded the motion to deny Grievance 12-003. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Healy said he hopes Chief LaVecchia and Captain Ricci will have further dialog on this issue.

7. Committee Reports

Apparatus

Assistant Chief Healey reported Tower 1 has a problem with the hydraulic system; New England Fire Apparatus will do the proper testing on the equipment subsequent to it being fixed. Car 6's utility lights need changing. Marine 1 will be in service by June 22nd.

Chief LaVecchia informed the Commissioners that the Department took possession of the new 75-ft Sutphin Quint, Engine 3. The Quint is current at Five Star for three weeks. The Department will start training on the new equipment in August. Certification of the Quint is done at the factory.

East Side Fire Station Building Committee

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Commissioner Brennan reported the ceiling sheetrock is almost complete. The traffic signal permit would be taken out July 18th. The kitchen equipment is at the site but is not yet installed. He reported that some dings in the cabinets were found, but the supplier is willing to replace them.

The overhead doors have been delivered but the doorstops still have to be received. The paving will be completed within the next couple weeks. He added there are now two generator shut-offs in the building.

Commissioner Healy commented that the two generator shut-offs are not as aesthetically pleasing as one shut-off; the second shut-off will be located in the day room. He said Ret. Battalion Chief William Healey has been monitoring the work done at the site daily. The project is progressing well.

Commissioner Smith inquired if there is a scheduled opening day for the new station; Commissioner Healy said there is no definitive answer as of yet.

Commissioner Brennan said the stairwell to the mezzanine will be in fabrication soon. He explained the shop drawings had to be changed to the City Building Inspector.

Commissioner Healy said he would like to hear the firefighters' opinions on the new station.

8. Chief's Report

Chief LaVecchia relied on his reported as submitted and opened the floor to questions by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Brennan inquired if there was any progress on the EMS billing. The Chief reported there is a rate schedule and he has had several meetings with Assistant City Attorney Debra Kelly on this issue. He said it is being worked on.

Commissioner McGrath inquired when this system will go into effect; Chief LaVecchia said in three to four months; the City had considered hiring an outside consultant.

Commissioner Healy inquired if the new Inspector Test would be given on July 19 and if an independent third party would be monitoring the test; the Chief affirmed this information.

9. New Business

Public Safety Answering Point 911 Center Consolidation

Chief LaVecchia informed the Commissioners he would give a monthly report on this issue, along with Assistant Chief Healey and EOC Coordinator Worroll.

Assistant Chief Healey stated this project is moving forward rapidly. His and others' concerns have been brought up at every step. They are coordinating with the Milford Police Department to move the AS-400 system over to the new center; the appropriate vendors have been contacted.

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EOC Coordinator Worroll explained this is much more of an involved project than people realize. He said it's important to ensure that every function that can presently be performed will be available at the new center.

Chief LaVecchia added the Department has applied for a FEMA grant to replace the current 17-year-old ZTRON system. Assistant Chief Healey said the cost of the new system would be around \$350,000; he isn't sure if they will get the grant in time for the official move. The Chief said the ZTRON system will allow the Emergency Operations Center to communicate with Dispatch.

Chief LaVecchia said the radio system should be operable by September; communication towers are being installed at the Police Department, Station 8, and Station 6.

10. Unfinished Business:

City Vehicles

No report.

Rules and Regulations, Revision and Update

No report.

Scheduling Software

Assistant Chief Healey reported the swap time function went live on July 1st. He reported a few minor glitches, but overall the program is working well. On August 1st, the members of the Department will be able to submit vacation requests.

11. Comments and Concerns of the Commissioners:

Commissioner Brennan commented on the lack of alcohol and drug testing for the Department. He said if people are against submitting to the testing, there must be a reason for it. He added that this is a critical issue as personal safety of the Department employees and the public depend on it.

Commissioner Healy echoed Commissioner Brennan's opinion. He stated the Commission is not involved in Union contract negotiations, and that Commissioner Brennan's initial comment several meetings ago was not politically motivated.

12. Adjournment

Commissioners Smith and Craig made and seconded a motion to adjourn at 2010 hours. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by C. Birney