

Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting
72 New Haven Avenue, Milford, CT
Tuesday, September 26, 2023

- I. **Call to Order:** Chairman McGrath called the meeting to order at 18:37 hours. A quorum was present.

Roll Call: In addition to the Chairman, Commissioners Howard Stein, Richard Smith, Thomas Riso, William Brennan, and Peter Smith were present. Also, present were Chief Anthony Fabrizi, Assistant Chief Christopher Waiksnoris and Battalion Chief Stephen Rabel

Absent: None

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

None

- III. **Consideration of Minutes:**

Regular Meeting Minutes – August 15, 2023

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

Commissioners P. Smith and Riso made and second a motion to accept the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 15, 2023. Motion carries with the forementioned abstention.

- IV. **Communications:**

Commissioner R. Smith noted a donation of \$50 was given to Inspector Marc LaBrecque when he installed a smoke alarm for Ms. Linda Carson. He also read a thank you card from Jack and family from the UK, who visited headquarters. Jack would especially like to thank Phil, Joey, and Charlie for making them feel so welcome. Commissioner R. Smith also read a thank you from Marie Fortin for the kindness received when her mother fell.

Commissioners Stein and Riso made and second a motion to except and deposit the \$50 donation into the Good and Welfare account. Motion carried unanimously.

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

Chairman McGrath extended his thanks on behalf of the commission to Battalion Chief Adam

Hansen regarding the car fire training that was done, the fire blanket was very interesting. He has sent a letter on behalf of the board to Milford Auto thanking Frank for the donation of vehicles for training. Chairman McGrath congratulated Chad Cameron on his retirement and thanked him for his twenty years of service. He also noted that Firefighter Kevin Tobias has accepted a position in another department and will be leaving, this will be a loss for the department. Chairman McGrath wanted to thank the number of reports that were received including Deputy Fire Marshal Tim Suden for his report for the Fire Marshal division. He thanked Chief Fabrizi for his report that will be discussed as well. He noted the public relations area has been great from the department and union standpoint. Chairman McGrath thanked Christian Colon of Colonial Coatings for the number of donations of equipment he has provided the department. A meeting was had with the Chairman, Chief Fabrizi and Assistant Chief Waiksnoris with Mayor Smith regarding apparatus. He noted the mayor is having an Open House on October 11 for an informative public session with all boards and commissions.

VI. **Committee Reports:**

- a) Personnel Committee: Commissioner Stein stated the personnel committee which is comprised of himself, Chairman McGrath and Commissioner Peter Smith meet on August 20 for the purpose of conducting an interview of Battalion Chief Stephen Rabel for the open position of Assistant Chief of Milford Fire Department.

Commissioners Stien and R. Smith made and second a motion to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing the appointment of Battalion Chief Stephen Rabel for the open position of Assistant Chief. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Stein requests the two chiefs and Battalion Chief Rabel remain close by for the purpose of providing opinion or testimony.

The Commission went into executive session at 18:40.

Commissioners Stien and Riso made and second a motion to exit from executive session for the purpose of discussing the interview of Battalion Chief Stephen Rabel for the open position of Assistant Chief. Motion carried unanimously.

The commission came out of executive session at 19:20. Commissioner Stien noted that no votes were taken while in executive session.

Commissioner Stein stated after having interviewed Battalion Chief Stephen Rabel and discussed in executive session the merits of the interview a motion be made to consider Battalion Chief Stephen Rabel for the appointment of Assistant Chief.

Commissioners Stien and Brennan made and second a motion to appoint Battalion Chief Stephen Rabel to the position of Assistant Chief of the Milford Fire Department. Motion carried unanimously.

- b) Maintenance Committee: Commissioner Brennan stated the amount of time and mileage apparatus does running nine thousand calls is strenuous. With additional vehicles going to calls the amount of mileage averages about twenty thousand

responses a year. This is a lot to run on old and high mileage equipment. This makes it difficult to maintain the equipment, as a normal business has time after shifts to do maintenance. The fire department is run twenty-four seven leaving no time to maintain the equipment. A professional qualified mechanic must be available to do the maintenance. He implored the board to press for a mechanic. Commissioner Brennan further stated about twenty percent of repair costs could have been saved if a professional qualified mechanic was employed. With new housing being built the equipment will be running more, adding further stress to the already deteriorated apparatus.

- c) Safety Committee Liaison: Commissioner Brennan stated meetings have been going well. He stated the process is very good as problems arise, suggestions are made, and problems fixed.
- d) Education Committee – None

VII. **Chiefs Report:**

Chief Fabrizi stated the payroll budget lines seem to be trending in the right direction due to filling in the vacancies. He informed the board of the EMS revenue. Commissioner P. Smith asked Chief Fabrizi if he would have comparisons from the previous year in his next report. The new recruits are doing well, they have been implored to sign up for extracurricular activities. Report cards should be received soon. Chief Fabrizi noted Chad Cameron's retirement stating he is a great firefighter and will be missed. He noted Firefighter Tobias's exit being due to historical relevance and wage components. The department was able to secure the fire safety prevention grant, Battalion Chief AJ Murphy will oversee the procurement of equipment. This will increase overall security and accountability. He has yet to hear information regarding the AFG grant for SCBA equipment. The roof replacements and heating for ESFS are in the hands of Public Works director Chris Saley. The Oysterfest went well, it was a beautiful day with no major incidents. A generous donation of exercise equipment was received from John and Laura Mayblum. Chief Fabrizi invited the commissioner to the Regional II field day event, as Milford assets will be on display. Probationary firefighters are doing well. He explained to the board the need for additional water supply in the Red Roof Lane area. Research is needed to determine costs as budgetary line items may not close the gap in that area of town. The new engine request was made to the mayor. Chief Fabrizi expressed his concerns about the age of Engine 8 and keeping it on the road. If an engine is not procured soon there is a fear of not having two spares. He further explained the E-One Quint could be scheduled for delivery at the end of December he asked the vendor for a three week hold while he tried to secure funding. The Tower 1 report was disheartening as several professionals collaborated determined the cost to repair would exceed \$100,000 with supply chain issues taking up to a year. Commissioner P. Smith informed Chief Fabrizi the detailed information in the report is great.

VIII. **New Business:**

- a) New Engine – Chief Fabrizi discussed pricing options with and without a custom build. The current available engine has the options the department requires at this time. Commissioner Brennan inquired about foam. Chief Fabrizi informed him the department and many departments are steering away from onboard foam systems as they are too complex and break down. He has made the mayor aware the need is becoming critical with the four-year gap of the last engine and the newest engines arrival of late 2025. The purchase of the E-One would bridge the gap. He explained lease options that were

available. He also agreed a qualified mechanic on staff would help minimize problems. Chairman McGrath informed the board that the information presented was sent to the mayor and finance director, noting the two-week window. He stated a new vehicle must be on the next bond package.

Commissioners R. Smith and P. Smith made and second a motion to amend the agenda and add VIII. New Business b) Assistant Chief compensation. Motion carried unanimously.

- b) Assistant Chief Compensation – Chairman McGrath stated next payroll cycle the compensation for Assistant Chief will be \$115,659. Commissioner P. Smith stated in comparison to other departments the compensation for the management positions is significantly less. He noted how lucky the department is to have the talented people that it does. Commissioner Stien stated that as Chairman of the Personnel sub committee the input from lack of candidates who were interested in the opportunity has to do with compensation and leaving unionized positions where salary is adjusted periodically as well as overtime opportunities. It is conceivable if not regular for a unionized employee to eclipse a salaried chief. There is a need to create incentive to climb to the positions where the salaries are commensurate with area departments.

Commissioners Stein and P. Smith made and second a motion to increase the compensation of the Assistant Chief positions to reflect the budgeted amount in the approved Board of Alderman adopted city budget. Motion carried unanimously.

IX. **Unfinished Business:**

- a) Committee Assignments

Chairman McGrath stated this item will be tabled.

Commissioners Stein and Riso made and second a motion to amend the agenda and add IX. Unfinished Business b) Tower 1. Motion carried unanimously.

- b) Tower 1

Chief Fabrizi stated the fees to repair Tower 1 are significant, there are several options that can be taken. One would be to do a sealed bid as with the previous engine. The other option would be to go to a broker which could possibly get a larger fee as it would gain more exposure. Although there would be a 10% commission fee. An in-depth conversation was had regarding options, opinions, and suggestions from mechanics.

Commissioners Stein and Riso made and second a motion to give the Chief authority to bring any and all forms of disposal of value for Tower 1 to maximize the revenue for disposal. Motion carried unanimously.

X. **New Equipment:**

None

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

Commissioner Riso complimented all for the information received in this month's packet as it was very informative. Commissioner Brennan reiterated the need for a new fire house on the north side due to increased housing. A discussion ensued regarding housing proposals and parking garages. Assistant Chief Waiksnoris informed the board of the dangers related to EVC stations that are housed underground. Noting some condo associations have banned electric vehicles from being parked in personal garages due to fire concerns. He and Deputy Fire Marshal Tim Suden have met with the city's attorneys office to discuss removing charging stations to the outside of new structures as the statute states 10% of the parking area is required to have electric charging stations. Having them underground puts all other vehicles at risk as the fires burn for hours. Chief Fabrizi noted the department's approach is to be proactive rather than reactive.

XII. **Adjournment:**

Commissioners R. Smith and Riso made a second motion to adjourn at 20:16.