

**Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting
Commissioners' Conference Room
at Fire Headquarters
72 New Haven Avenue, Milford, CT
Tuesday, January 17, 2017**

1. **Call to Order**: Chief Edo called the meeting to order at 19:15 hours. A quorum was present.

Roll Call: Commissioners McGrath, Brennan, Smith, Stein, Riso, Weber and Stanford were present. Also, present was Chief Douglas Edo and Assistant Chiefs Gary Baker and Bernie Begley.

Commissioners Riso and Smith made and seconded a motion to amend the Agenda to include the annual election of Board of Fire Commissioners officers. Motion carried unanimously.

2. **Election of Officers**:

Commissioners Riso and Brennan made and seconded a motion nominating Commissioners McGrath, Stein and Smith as Board Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary, respectively. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman McGrath assumed control of the regularly scheduled meeting at 19:19 and thanked the Board for their continued support.

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

Commissioner Riso commented on how busy the department has been lately and the unusual nature of the calls, including the dive team responding to a car submerged in a city pond. He further stated that the department is doing a great job addressing these calls.

Commissioner Stanford began inquiring about the Melba Street fire at which time Chairman McGrath requested that comments of the Commissioners be held to Comments and Concerns of the Commissioners agenda item as this agenda item is limited to public comment.

4. **Consideration of Minutes**:

Regular Meeting – December 20, 2016

Commissioners Riso and Smith made and seconded a motion to accept the minutes of the December 20, 2016, Regular Meeting as presented

5. **Communications:**

Commissioner Smith reported that the Department received the following communications:

- i) Chief Edo received a thank you letter from Fire Chief Robert McGrath of the Town of Stratford for providing coverage for the wake and funeral of their firefighter.
- ii) A donation check was received from Dr. Anita Kohli (Allergy, Asthma & Immunology Center, LLC.) in the amount of \$50.00.

Commissioners Stein and Riso made and seconded a motion to accept the aforementioned donation and deposit it into the good and welfare fund. Motion carried unanimously

5. **Chairman's Report:**

Chairman McGrath hoped everyone had a great Holiday season. He thanked the Commission for their support and confidence for another great year.

Chairman McGrath expressed his condolences to the family of retired firefighter David King who recently passed. The Chairman indicated that David would be missed. He also thanked the department on behalf of the King family for the support that the department provided to the family during this difficult time.

Chairman McGrath gave kudos to the fire department for their response and efforts at the recent Melba Street condo fire.

Chairman McGrath also congratulated Commissioners Riso and Smith on their reappointments to the Fire Commission.

6. **Committees Reports:**

- a) Personnel Committee: Commissioner Stein had nothing to report.
- b) Maintenance & Equipment Committee: Commissioner Brennan had nothing to report.

7. **Chief's Report:**

Budget - Chief Edo reported that at the request of the Mayor, he submitted a "flat" budget. Chief Edo informed the Board that he met with the Mayor and other city department heads in a roundtable discussion. The Mayor informed the department heads that the State of Connecticut has removed about \$750,000 from funds that were promised and incorporated into the current fiscal year budget. They Mayor informed the department heads that they should expect to see more "cuts" coming. Chief Edo expects to be getting final numbers from the City

shortly and will include them in next month's packet. The Chief further indicated that the Mayor instituted a City wide hiring freeze and suspension of overtime pay as of January 5, 2017, however, the department had hired 4 new recruits before the Mayor's letter was received. These recent hires will not be effected. Finally, the Chief mentioned that there could be further cuts based on any further reduced State funding.

Ambulance update - Chief Edo reported that the new ambulance will be here on Thursday, January 19. It will be inspected by the State the next day and should be in service next week. This addition will bring our capacity to 4 ambulances. The department currently has 3 front line units and a well-used spare. The Chief intends to request another unit in the next bonding package. The manufacturing time together with the increased usage of these ambulances requires the department to stay on top of these vehicles.

New Recruits - The department has hired 4 new recruits for the fire academy class which is beginning February 14th. The recruits will come in-house for two weeks of training on January 30th and then go to the Academy.

Tower 1/Medic Unit relocation: The Chief reported that they took some office space away from fire headquarters so that they can house 2 medic units there. The Tower unit will be relocated to Station 7. Asst. Chief Baker commented that the department is formulating procedures to begin alternating the calls that the medic units are responding to. This will help facilitate crew and unit recovery after each call.

Melba Street Fire - Chief Edo stated that the department did a phenomenal job that night especially with the weather conditions. The Chief indicated that this went to a 3 alarm fire. West Haven and Stratford both assisted Milford at the scene. Additional, Stratford sent units to cover the City while Milford's units were committed to the fire scene. Fire suppression was hampered by the cold weather. The interior stairwell in the building was a sheet of ice and there were a lot of falls but no injuries . The Chief also noted that because of the fire wall within the building it prevented the fire from spreading any further than the 3 units that were destroyed. He expressed thanks to the building department and fire department fire marshal's office for their diligent inspections of prebuild plans and on-site construction inspections when these units were built. Without this basement to attic fire wall, this fire could have been a lot worse.

8. **New Business:**

None.

9. **Unfinished Business:**

None.

10. **New Equipment:**

Asst. Chief Begley stated that the new engine was on schedule for mid-February completion. Board members who wanted to see the current progress of the engine could see photos online.

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

Commissioner Brennan noted that the Commissioners did not receive a dispatch communications report this month. He understands that it is due to a retirement. He indicated that he finds them very informative and hopes that the department will assign someone to produce them. He also would like to see these reports include information about the dispatches and transportations that Nelson's is doing.

Commissioner Riso asked if the new hires brings us up to full staffing? The Chief indicated that we may need 1 more. Commissioner Brennan asked if the hiring list was over? The Chief indicated that there were 2 candidates left on the list.

Commissioner Stanford comment that she is very concerned with budget cuts to public safety. She further comment that the State's failure to proper fund its pension obligations is the cause of this crisis today and that the State is passing it onto the cities by cutting funds from the current fiscal year that the Cities relied upon in creating their budgets. She reiterated her concern for public safety.

Chairman McGrath indicated that he and the Chief are in constant communication with city hall. The communication channel is wide open. Chairman McGrath indicated that he sent a letter to the City's elected state representatives expressing concerns about these cuts. Chairman McGrath did indicate that the one positive thing is the revenue stream that is now developing from transporting medical calls. The department and board are watching these numbers very closely.

Commissioner Riso indicated that the recent state cuts are affecting the city in the current fiscal year which we are half way through. We have yet to see what effect this will have in the next fiscal year.

Commissioner Brennan inquired whether there was an ability to move funds from line item account to another and about the departments revenue stream from the EMS transports. The Chief indicate that this is a small amount of room for transfer of funds if it is in the same account and Chairman McGrath indicated that revenue coming into the department from the city pertaining to the EMS billing is a fixed amount.

Commissioner Stein reminded the board that while proper funding is absolutely necessary, direct threats to public safety are not likely. He indicated for instance that even though the Mayor indicated that no overtime was to be authorized, the department is bound by the collective bargaining agreement and other regulatory agencies like NFPA and OSHA to provide minimum manpower requirements. So, these minimum staffing requirement will always

be met by the department even if it requires overtime. Where the department is likely to be hurt is in equipment and supplies. We have already identified the looming frailty of some of our front line equipment due to age, maintenance issues or frame rusting issues. We have identified the desperate condition of the dive truck and the equipment used by the dive team (which was called into service yesterday for a car submerged in a city pond). We have heard it suggested that the tower should be removed from service and its manpower reassigned. Yet, we see how important it is when you have a fire like the nature of last week's Melba Street fire. So, bottom line is if you feel strongly about public safety here in the City, pick up the phone and call your friends in City Hall and on the Boards of Alderman and Finance and express your concern to them. Point out to them that the department needs to be properly funded to continue to provide the top notch public service that this department has always provided.

Commissioner Brennan further indicated that proper funding is required for adequate planning purposes. The equipment this department uses require long lead time to budget, spec, manufacture and deliver into service.

Commissioner Stanford requested the Chief and Chairman to notify the Board when the Department's proposed budget is going before the Board of Finance so that she can make calls and attend the budget hearing. The Chairman indicated the he would email her.

12. **Adjournment:**

Commissioners Smith and Riso made and seconded a motion to adjourn at 19:50 hours. Motion carried unanimously.

Prepared by Recording Secretary Diane Stein