

**CITY OF NORWALK
FIRE DEPARTMENT**



BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

**MAYOR HARRY W. RILLING
COMMISSIONER/PASTOR OSCAR DESTRUGE
COMMISSIONER RABBI ITA PASKIND
COMMISSIONER HOWARD DIXON
COMMISSIONER STEVE FERGUSON**

**FIRE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 17, 2025**

Via Zoom /Tele Conference

ATTENDANCE: Mayor Harry Rilling, Chair; Commissioner/Pastor Oscar Destruge;
Commissioner Steve Ferguson, Commissioner Howard Dixon (3:05 p.m.)

ABSENT: Commissioner Rabbi Ita Paskind

OTHERS: Fire Chief Gino Gatto; Assistant Chief Mark Conte; Deputy Fire Chief
Joseph Coppola; Fire Marshal Troy Donohue; Assistant Fire Chief
Edward McCabe; Michele DeLuca, Emergency Management; Linda
Shields

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mayor Rilling called the roll. A quorum was present.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one present who wished to address the Commissioners at this time.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: Tuesday, May 20, 2025

**** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 20, 2025 MEETING AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 20, 2025 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. REPORTS

A. FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

1. Budget Report

Fire Chief Gatto said this was the last month of the budget year. The figures in the report are from May and they have been paying the invoices that come in. They are not expecting anything major to happen in the next few weeks. Fire Chief Gatto said that they were working on their roll over requests.

B. ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF OF ADMINISTRATION

Assistant Chief Conte presented his report to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Dixon joined the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

1. Buildings

a. Station 1: Apparatus Floor

Project funding was approved by the Finance and Claims Committee on June 12th. It has been moved to the BET Committee for approval.

b. Station Building Renovation

Building/Facilities Management is drafting the RFP to contract an architect for the project.

c Citywide: Overhead Door Replacement

All doors have been ordered. Installation will begin upon delivery.

2. SCBA Compliance Upgrade

a. Purchasing has approved the quotes for the equipment. They have been placed on the Public Safety & General Government Committee Agenda on June 26th for approval.

C. ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

Assistant Chief McCabe presented his report.

1. Calls in May 2025

For May 2025, there were 676 incidents, averaging 21.81 per day.

The May Fire Calls included 15 fires including 5 building fires and 41 rescues of which 30 involved motor vehicles. The Department responded to 436 EMS calls, 21 hazardous conditions, 20 service calls; 93 fire alarms and 50 good intents.

2. Summary of Calls Year to Date

From January 1st through April 30th, there was a total of 3,317 incidents and 5,296 total responses. Both categories show a slight increase of 255 from 2024.

3. Operations

1. A busy month of Firefighter candidate interviews has resulted in four candidates being chosen and three onboarded for the August Connecticut Fire Academy class.
2. Our new highway attenuator truck, TAC1, has responded to 83 calls through the end of May and is serving its intended purpose of keeping fire personnel safe while operating on I-95, the Merritt Parkway, and Route 7.

Assistant Chief McCabe said that there had been four accidents on the highways where emergency vehicles were at an accident scene in other towns. He gave the details. Other towns are interested in learning about the truck and the details involved in obtaining one.

4. Notable Incidents in May:

1. May 10th, Structure fire, 5 Elmcrest Terrace

The fire started in the lobby and the residents were able to evacuate via the rear entrance.

2. May 11th, Mutual aid response, House fire, 124 Lukeswood Rd. New Canaan

Norwalk provided a Rapid Intervention Team and waited until the fire was knocked down.

3. May 13th, Structure fire, 19 Adams Lane

The fire began in the basement kitchen and spread to the main floor of the house. Eleven occupants were displaced from the house and received assistance from the Red Cross.

Commissioner Ferguson asked about the increase in the incidents. Assistant Chief McCabe said that this was within the normal range of incidents.

D. FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT

Fire Marshal Donohue presented his report.

1. Summary of Activities
2. Fire Marshal Fees
3. Fire Marshal's Office Calls

The Fire Marshals performed a total of 168 inspections including a mega site with 122 units.

During the month, the Department participated in five Public Education events. He then listed the various programs with STAR, Happy Time Nursey School, a Connecticut Fire Prevention and Intervention Program via Zoom, and a two day Arson Investigation Class at Brien McMahon followed by a live burn with popsicle sticks structures and ground beef people.

The Department completed 35 Plan Reviews. The Department generated a total of \$2,400 in revenue for the month.

There were 7 fire investigations in May and one code issue involving a blocked egress.

Mayor Rilling wished to know if the High School students were interested in fire fighting careers. Fire Marshal Donohue said that there were numerous students asking about how to become firefighters.

Commissioner Destruge asked about the follow up on the Order to Vacate involving a furniture company. Fire Marshal Donohue updated the Commissioners on this.

Chief Gatto said that there were current 2 PT Inspectors and they currently have an position open. They may reduce the inspectors down to one. They are considering combining the two vacant part time positions into a single FT position with the Commission's approval. This promotion could come from within the Department. If this happens, the employee would already have their benefits allocated. Chief Gatto then reviewed the details of the funding. Discussion followed.

**** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED THE PROCESS ON HIRING A FULL TIME, INTERNAL FIRE INSPECTOR AS DISCUSSED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

E. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

1. Emergency Management Update

Ms. DeLuca greeted everyone. She reported that the June 2nd Employee Safety event had gone well and there was good feedback. Next week, she along with the Health Department and Public

Works will be at the beach during the Summer Concert series to hand out material before the concert.

Ms. DeLuca said that she was working on a simplified Emergency Plan that is smaller and more user friendly. She gave the details.

Higher temperatures are expected next week and they will be letting the residents know how to stay safe.

There will be a meeting with the Finance Departments about expected FEMA changes for the policies and reimbursements.

Mayor Rilling said that it was concerning about the potential FEMA policies changes. Ms. DeLuca said that they increased the threshold levels for damages. She said that they are watching the developments carefully.

F. TRAINING DIVISION REPORT

Deputy Fire Chief Coppola greeted everyone and presented his report.

1. Current Training Activities

1. Utilizing vacant structures on Renzulli Road and Westport Avenue for various non-destructive training activities.
2. Ongoing operator training on Engines and Trucks, including EVOC Course
3. Site tours of West Avenue apartment construction projects
4. Completing probationary task books for new members

2. Completed Training Activities:

1. Advanced SCBA Confidence Maze for all Stations and Platoons with theatrical smoke
2. Deputy Fire Marshal Exam completed

3. Upcoming Training Activities:

1. Fire Officer 2 certification course, fall 2025
2. Use of Manresa Power Plant site for confined space training
3. Hazardous Materials Operational refresher 3rd week of June, 2025
4. Ongoing Annual Physicals

Deputy Fire Chief Coppola said that he had gotten some very positive feedback on the trainings from the firefighters particularly with the exercises on Renzulli Road.

G. LOCAL 830 REPORTS

1. There are no items at this time.

H. CORRESPONDENCE

1. There are no items at this time.

I. PERSONNEL

1. Drop Pension for Deputy Chief Stephen Shay
2. Drop Pension for Firefighter Elefterios Petridis
3. Drop Pension for Deputy Fire Marshal James Cocchia
4. Drop Pension for Firefighter Martin O'Marra
5. Drop Pension for Firefighter Todd Somma
6. Retirement Letter from Deputy Fire Marshal David Burrows

Mayor Rilling asked if that they had sent out the financials to the Commissioners. Chief Gatto said that five individuals had filled out their initial paperwork for the DROP program which is the first step. Once the documents are processed, they will be sent to the Commissioners for their review.

Mayor Rilling gave a brief overview of the DROP plan for the new Commissioners.

**** COMMISSIONER FERGUSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE DROP PLAN FOR THE FOLLOWING FIREFIGHTERS:**

**DEPUTY CHIEF STEPHEN SHAY
FIREFIGHTER ELEFTERIOS PETRIDIS
DEPUTY FIRE MARSHAL JAMES COCCHIA
FIREFIGHTER MARTIN O'MARRA
FIREFIGHTER TODD SOMMA**

WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE COMMISSIONERS WILL RECEIVE THE FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW WITH THE STARTING DATE OF JULY 1, 2025 AND AN END DATE OF JUNE 30, 2030.

Chief Gatto explained that the maximum length of the DROP Plan is five years, so the end date has to be before the new fiscal year begins. Mayor Rilling noted that since these individuals were already in the Department, the City won't be paying out their pensions while also paying for the training and benefits of the new hires. This is good for everyone.

**** COMMISSIONER PASTOR DESTRUGE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COMMISSIONER PASTOR DESTRUGE MOVED TO ACCEPT WITH REGRET AND GRATITUDE FOR THE YEARS OF SERVICE THE RETIREMENT LETTER FROM DEPUTY FIRE MARSHAL DAVID BURROWS.**

Mayor Rilling said on behalf of the Commission, they were accepting this resignation with regret.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. There are no items to consider at this time.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

The next scheduled Fire Commission meeting is slated for Tuesday, July 15, 2025

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

**** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 3:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services