

**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 MINUTES  
AUGUST 19, 2025 – 3:00 P.M.  
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

**ATTENDEES:** Mayor Harry Rilling, Commissioner Ita Paskind, Commissioner Howard Dixon, Commissioner Steve Ferguson (3:02pm)

**STAFF:** Gino Gatto, Fire Chief, Mark Conte, Assistant Fire Chief of Administration, Edward McCabe, Assistant Fire Chief of Operations, Troy Donohue, Fire Marshal, Michele DeLuca, Emergency Management, Joseph Coppola, Deputy Chief, Training Division, Linda Shields

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mayor Rilling called the roll as listed above. A quorum was present.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

**\*\*COMMISSIONER DIXON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 15, 2025 REGULAR MEETING.**

**\*\*COMMISSIONER PASKIND SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No members of the public addressed the Commission.

## **V. REPORTS**

### **A. FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT**

Chief Gatto reported that FY2025 closed with a surplus. The firefighters' salary account began at \$12,292,000, with \$11,934,000 spent, leaving \$358,000 (97% utilized). The overtime account started at \$4,597,000, with \$4,463,000 spent, leaving \$133,000 (97% utilized). Combined, salaries and overtime produced a \$492,000 surplus. Overall spending closed at 95.1% of the approved budget. He noted the department met operational needs under budget and these funds may be considered for rollover.

Chief Gatto reported the July payroll expenditure came in higher than usual due to July containing five pay weeks, but this was identified as a timing issue rather than an overage. No budget transfers in or out had been required to date.

Mayor Rilling commended Chief Gatto and the department for again successfully operating within budget.

### **B. ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF OF ADMINISTRATION**

Assistant Fire Chief Conte reported on administrative and facilities projects. At Station 1, the apparatus floor replacement is underway, with completion expected by early October; Truck 1 is temporarily relocated to Station 6. At Station 4, the renovation project is in the design phase, with three architectural firms shortlisted and interviews scheduled Thursday with City Facilities Management.

The citywide overhead door replacement is progressing, with work at Station 6 starting Thursday; Station 1 will be last, after the floor project in October. Assistant Fire Chief Conte also reported on the SCBA upgrade program, noting all equipment has been ordered and delivery of new harnesses and breathing apparatus is expected by December.

### **C. ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF OF OPERATIONS**

Assistant Fire Chief McCabe presented a detailed review of the department's emergency responses for July 2025.

The department responded to 775 incidents, averaging 25 per day.

These included:

- 18 confirmed fires,
- 42 rescues (including 33 motor vehicle accidents),
- 421 EMS calls,
- 45 hazardous conditions (such as downed wires or gas leaks),
- 33 service calls,
- 155 fire alarms, and
- 61 good intent calls.

For the year through July 31, the department recorded 4,895 incidents and 7,876 individual responses.

Assistant Fire Chief McCabe reported that fireboat MU229 has been outfitted and will launch once lettering is complete. Station 3 officers are developing a training curriculum for the vessel. Truck 1 is temporarily relocated to Station 6 during Station 1 floor work, while Engine 1 remains at New Canaan Avenue.

The Tactical Support Unit 2 (TAC 2), equipped with an air compressor, SCBA fill station, spare bottles, and tools, is ready for service. The highway blocking truck (TAC 1) was evaluated by Greenwich Fire, which may purchase a similar unit.

Seven recruits began training at the Bridgeport Fire Academy on August 11, with positive feedback from instructors. McCabe also noted the July 4th fire at 22 South Street, which involved a converted garage. Crews suppressed the blaze with a first alarm assignment; no residents were present and no injuries occurred.

#### **D. FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT**

Assistant Fire Chief Donohue reported the Fire Marshal's July 2025 activities. The office conducted 285 inspections covering 773 units, held one public education event, reviewed 27 fire/life safety plans (collecting \$2,050 in fees), and completed 15 investigations (10 fires, 4 code/hazard cases).

Key events included inspections and escort of rescheduled City Fireworks, a fire watch at the Wegmans grand opening, assistance with St. Anne's Festival inspections, and final safety checks at the new SONO Elementary School.

Upcoming coverage includes a DPW education event, Oyster Festival, Boat Show, and NICE Festival. Assistant Fire Chief Donohue noted fire watches are typically by request for special events, focused on occupancy, egress, life safety, and hazard prevention.

#### **E. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Ms. DeLuca reported hurricane season remains active through November 30, though no threats are expected. Planning continues for the Oyster Festival with City departments to finalize layout and safety protocols, with an Event Action Plan to follow.

On September 18, the department will co-host a business resiliency event with the Chamber of Commerce. The City will also participate in the statewide disaster exercise on September 9, conducted internally this year.

She updated the Commission on the Emergency Operations Center upgrade project, slightly over budget but prioritizing technology and core systems; furniture replacement may be deferred, and rollover funds may be needed.

Ms. DeLuca also reported on the annual open house, which typically draws 1,500–2,000 residents, featuring demonstrations, programs, and a community food drive. This year's donations will go to Person-to-Person, with Open Door as next year's recipient.

#### **F. TRAINING DIVISION REPORT**

Deputy Fire Chief Coppola reported on training activities. Vacant properties on Renzulli Road and Westport Avenue are being used for joint drills with police, including entry practices and upcoming roof-cutting exercises. Probationary firefighters hired in May have completed evaluations and continue progressing through task books. Driver training for engines and trucks is underway, especially for newer members.

Crews toured the new SONO Elementary School for pre-incident planning. Training included Rapid Intervention Team rescue, pump operations, and recruit instruction at the Bridgeport Fire Academy. The Marine Division practiced small boat deployment from the fireboat and later applied the procedure in an actual incident near Kikini Island.

Annual programs completed included injury prevention/wellness sessions, physicals, and SCBA fit testing, with results used to order correctly sized masks ahead of new air packs.

Upcoming training includes a Fire Officer II certification course, confined space drills at Manresa Power Plant, collapse shoring exercises at Renzulli Road, and fall hose testing.

#### **G. LOCAL 830 REPORTS**

There were no items.

#### **H. CORRESPONDENCE**

There were no items.

#### **I. PERSONNEL**

1. Joining the DROP Pension:

**\*\*COMMISSIONER DIXON MOVED TO APPROVE THE DROP PENSION PROGRAM FOR ASSISTANT FIRE MARSHAL KIRK MCDONALD, EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 1, 2025, CONTINGENT UPON THE COMMISSION RECEIVING THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. **Executive Session:**

At 3:30 p.m., the Commission entered Executive Session to discuss reorganization and promotions.

**\*\*COMMISSIONER DIXON MOVED TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

*The Commission returned to public session at 4:03 p.m.*

*Commissioner Paskind did not rejoin after Executive Session, but a quorum remained.*

No motions were made or votes taken during Executive Session.

**\*\*COMMISSIONER FERGUSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE REORGANIZATION OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT, INCREASING THE NUMBER OF CAPTAINS FROM 12 TO 15, AND DECREASING THE NUMBER OF LIEUTENANTS FROM 20 TO 17,**

**EFFECTIVE AUGUST 25, 2025.**

**\*\*COMMISSIONER DIXON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Following the reorganization motion, Chief Gatto presented the promotions.

**\*\*COMMISSIONER FERGUSON MOVED TO PROMOTE LIEUTENANT COREY GILCHRIST TO CAPTAIN, EFFECTIVE AUGUST 25, 2025.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER DIXON MOVED TO PROMOTE LIEUTENANT WHITNEY KING TO CAPTAIN, EFFECTIVE AUGUST 25, 2025.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER DIXON MOVED TO PROMOTE LIEUTENANT JAMES LYONS TO CAPTAIN, EFFECTIVE AUGUST 25, 2025.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER FERGUSON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

There were no items.

#### **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

There were no items.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER FERGUSON MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

The next regular meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 16, 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Courtney Baldwin*

*Recording Secretary*