

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 - DECEMBER 16, 2025**  
**VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE AND IN-PERSON**

**ATTENDEES:** Mayor Harry Rilling, Pastor Oscar Destruge, Rabbi Ita Paskind, Howard Dixon, Steve Ferguson.

**STAFF:** Fire Chief Edward McCabe, Assistant Chief of Administration Mark Conte, Assistant Chief of Operations Timothy Reardon, Fire Marshal Troy Donohue, Chief of Human Resource Officer Sharon Torres, Deputy Chief of Training Roy Gagne, Emergency Management Director Michelle DeLuca.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Rilling called the regular meeting of the Norwalk Board of Fire Commissioners to order at 3:01 p.m. on December 16, 2025.

**II. ROLL CALL**

A quorum was present with Commissioner Paskind arriving at 3:06 PM.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

**A. Regular Meeting: Tuesday, November 18, 2025**

**\*\* MR. FERGUSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE  
REGULAR MEETING OF TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025.  
\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mayor Rilling noted that there were no corrections, deletions, or omissions to the minutes.

## IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mayor Rilling announced that there were no members of the public waiting to address the Commission.

## V. REPORTS

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

#### **1. Budget Report**

Fire Chief Edward McCabe reported that through the end of November, after five months of the budget year, salaries were at 39.87% utilized (1.8% under budget) and overtime at 39.77% utilized (1.9% under budget). The department was holding steady and slightly under on these accounts.

#### **2. Report on Golden Hill Fire After-Action Review**

Fire Chief Edward McCabe described the after-action review process conducted after every working fire, with increased importance due to three firefighters suffering burns on November 29. Interviews, photos, videos, and radio transmissions were reviewed, and Assistant Chief Reardon compiled a comprehensive report emailed to the department and Commission. No major factors caused the injuries, but lessons were identified. The injured firefighters were home, healing well, and expected back after the first of the year.

#### **3. Comments on recent public relations activities**

The December 6 Santa and Grinch rappelling event at the SoNo Holiday Extravaganza by the Technical Rescue Team, led by Captain Whitney King, and the 27th year of Local 830's gift deliveries with Santa on the fire engine, organized by Lieutenant Anthony Papacoda and Firefighter Nick Lipeika, with proceeds to Tunnel to Towers. He also thanked the Commissioners and Mayor Rilling for his service as Chair, noting the department was stronger under his leadership.

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

#### **1. Buildings**

##### **a. Station 4: Building Renovation—Progress Report**

The Assistant Fire Chief of Administration, Mark Conte, reported that design drawings were nearing completion, mechanicals were in progress, Norwalk-based AV Tucci was retained as construction manager, scheduling was underway, and the project remained on track to begin in summer 2026.

##### **b. Citywide: SCBA Upgrade—Progress Report Standard Operating Procedure Updates**

The Assistant Fire Chief of Administration reported that all SCBA equipment had been received and was being entered into software, the fill station was pending (due to higher pressure bottles), training would begin in January, and the new SEMS accountability system would track firefighters, monitor air, and enable alarms, reports, and evacuation tones. Standard operating procedures were being updated. Discussion followed on SCBA life expectancy (over 10 years

expected), maintenance, testing, past safety bulletins, and how upgraded face pieces likely reduced injury severity at Golden Hill.

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

### **1. Calls in October 2025**

The agenda lists Calls in October 2025, but the Assistant Fire Chief of Operations reported calls for November 2025 as 711, averaging 23.7 per day.

### **2. Summary Calls Year to Date**

No specific year-to-date summary was provided.

### **3. Fire Apparatus**

#### **a. New Command Vehicle (Arrived)**

The new command vehicle had arrived, was being outfitted, and included updated communications and the SEMS system.

#### **b. New Tactical Support Vehicle (In service)**

The new tactical support vehicle was in service and had responded to calls, providing on-scene support equipment.

#### **c. New Ladder Truck (Planning)**

Planning had begun with initial specification meetings involving a committee of captains, firefighters, and mechanics.

### **4. Operations**

#### **a. Santa/Grinch Rappel**

The Assistant Fire Chief of Operations praised the 150-foot rappel event and its benefits for training, confidence, and community engagement.

#### **b. Roof Rope Rescue**

A new procedure was added for rescuing victims from inaccessible windows in large buildings, using roof anchors or buddy anchors; all had trained, and equipment was going in service.

#### **c. Marine Unit**

Marine Unit 229, the Harry Rilling, has proven to be very seaworthy. Crews have completed initial training. It will be relocated to Cove Marina in the event of a deep freeze to facilitate easier access to open water if needed. Marine 238 is out of service for the winter for annual service, including undercoating and a few other items. The larger boat is expected to return to service in early spring.

### **5. Notable Incidents**

#### **a. 10 Willard Rd. (Kitchen Fire)**

One civilian was transported for smoke inhalation but was released in good health.

**b. East Ave/Van Zant St (MVA w/Extrication)**

A serious motor vehicle accident at East Avenue and Van Zant Street involving a single vehicle striking a stone wall. The driver required extrication, which crews accomplished quickly in under five minutes. He noted that crews did a good job. Unfortunately, the driver later succumbed to injuries sustained in the crash.

**c. 13 Golden Hill St (House Fire)**

Although this was covered earlier in Fire Chief's report, He added it was an occupied multifamily house with over twelve people found to be living there and that it was a rapidly advancing fire. One occupant was located by the rescue crew in the basement and assisted out of the building. Conditions on the first floor deteriorated rapidly, with crews experiencing high heat while searching for other victims, and a number were found. Five firefighters were transferred to the hospital, three treated for secondary burns and released that night, two expected to return within the next two weeks (one at the doctor currently), and one expected to take slightly longer, perhaps a few more months. The Assistant Fire Chief of Operations stated that crews did a good job under very difficult conditions, recognized the deteriorating conditions, and exited as quickly as they could.

**d. New Canaan Mutual Aid (House Fire)**

Mr. Reardon reported on mutual aid provided to New Canaan for a second floor and attic fire on New Canaan Avenue. Engine 1 and Rescue 3 were dispatched. He stated that a good report was received from the New Canaan chief, who noted that Norwalk crews did a good job and expressed appreciation for the assistance.

**e. 6 Wilton Ave (Building Fire)**

Lastly, Mr. Reardon reported on the final notable incident at 6 Wilton Avenue, a large vacant manufacturing building. First arriving companies heard electrical arcing noise inside the doorway as they stretched their hose line. It was noted that the department approaches such buildings cautiously due to uncertainty about vacancy and possible vagrants, always intending to search within personnel safety limits. Upon opening the front door, a large amount of electrical arcing was heard, and water was observed on the ground. A brand new lieutenant, promoted a month ago, recognized the hazard, paused, stepped back, and transmitted to the incident commander to switch to an exterior attack and secure power cutoff before advancing. He praised this quick thinking as key to preventing potential electrocution of crews.

**D. FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT**

**1. Summary of Activities**

Fire Marshal Donohue reported 225 inspections for the month, including properties with 6 mega multi-sites totaling 660 units. He noted that numbers were somewhat skewed due to the transition to an online submission process, affecting inspections, plans reviewed, and public fire and life safety education events reported. Two smoke detector request evaluations and installations were conducted. Deputy Fire Marshal Kelly provided 6 additional educational events for the Fall Safety Service at the Star Vocational Center at headquarters and on Woodward Avenue, covering topics such as 911 calls and emergency communications, knowing

your firefighter friends, practice drills with visual support, personal safety and community helpers, and identifying safety signs in the community, held at Station 2 or the Star Center. Three newly promoted deputy fire marshals completed and passed the fire code portion of the State Fire Marshal's office, were being trained on new software for code enforcement and inspections, were currently in class for Fire and Life Safety Public Educator 1, would take a basic online course for Fire and Life Safety Plan Review, and in February would start the fire investigation portion. Three companies donated smoke detectors: CAMSAN Electric out of Stamford donated 20, KBE Building Corp (general contractors for 467 West Avenue, the Piper) donated 20, and Home Depot donated 50. These 10-year lithium ion smoke detectors are provided to the community free of charge with free installation.

## **2. Fire Marshal Fees**

Fire Marshal Donohue reported review of 26 fire and life safety plans generating \$1,730 and one liquor license renewal for \$65.

## **3. Fire Marshal's Office Calls**

Fire Marshal Donohue reported a total of 16 investigations in November, consisting of 10 fires and 6 complaint/hazard-related issues. Total income for the month was \$1,795.

Mayor Rilling and Mr. Ferguson expressed appreciation for the smoke detector donations. In response to a prior question about an egress issue at St. Paul's on the Green, Fire Marshal Donohue confirmed that the problem had been rectified.

## **E. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

### **1. Emergency Management Update**

Ms. Deluca reported that upgrades to the Emergency Operations Center and conference room were nearly complete, approximately 95% finished, with new larger TVs, device replacements, and overall technology improvements in the small conference room and EOC. Possible damage from a critter biting through old fiber wire required rerunning some fiber cables, expected to be completed the following day, with training to follow on the new devices to modernize meeting options. The project should be fully in place by the end of the year.

She noted coordination with the Red Cross to provide assistance and referrals to fire victims from the Golden Hill Fire. Regarding winter weather, the governor had activated cold weather protocols multiple times, and following the first accumulating snow over the weekend, follow-up conversations occurred with Public Works and the school district, with additional follow-ups scheduled. Overall, operations went well with minor adjustments needed, no major issues on social media, and only a few minor complaints or questions received. Coordination focused on timing for clearing school parking lots and sidewalks, as Public Works performs initial sweeps and the school district handles sidewalks and other areas, noting that clearing one large lot takes about three and a half hours and there were four new drivers adjusting to routes.

## **F. TRAINING DIVISION REPORT**

### **1. Completed Training Activities**

a. Initial Roof Rope Rescue

The initial roof rope rescue training was completed, with the entire department participating over approximately a week and a half.

b. Company Training

Company training, including basic everyday activities such as pulling lines and searching for the rescue company, was ongoing.

**2. Current Training Activities**

a. Roof Rope Rescue review

Review of roof rope rescue training was underway and expected to continue for the next two to three weeks due to its low-frequency nature, to ensure familiarity with gear and procedures.

b. Company Training

Company training continued, alternating with roof rope rescue reviews.

c. Driver/Operator (Ongoing)

Driver-operator training remained ongoing every Saturday and Sunday, covering learning to drive apparatus and proper use for those already qualified.

**3. Upcoming Training Activities**

a. Norwalk Hospital

Training at Norwalk Hospital was scheduled pending final legal clearance, likely focusing on standpipe training for engine companies.

b. EMS Refresher

An EMS refresher was scheduled to begin in January, lasting about a month and a half through the end of February, with most of the department participating in EMT and EMR refresher training.

c. New SCBA Training

New SCBA training was planned for the beginning of January, including a PowerPoint presentation on differences in equipment such as regulators, to ensure familiarity before use in IDLH environments, prior to rollout of the upgraded units.

**G. LOCAL 830 REPORTS**

Local 830 reported no items on the agenda.

**H. CORRESPONDENCE**

There were no items of correspondence.

**I. PERSONNEL**

1. Executive Session: Review the end of the disciplinary probation period

**\*\*MR. FERGUSON MOVED TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION TO REVIEW THE END OF A DISCIPLINARY PROBATIONARY PERIOD.**

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

The Commission entered executive session at 3:35 p.m. The Commission returned to public session at 3:43 p.m. Mayor Rilling stated that during executive session there was discussion on the probationary period of Lieutenant Maher, with no motions made and no votes taken.

Fire Chief Edward McCabe recommended taking Lieutenant Maher off probation and returning him to normal duty status effective January 1, 2026.

**\*\*MR. DIXON MOVED TO TAKE LIEUTENANT MAHER OFF PROBATION AND RETURN HIM TO NORMAL DUTY STATUS EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026.**

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

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

A. There were no items of old business.

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

**\*\*MR. FERGUSON MOVED TO ADD AN ITEM TO NEW BUSINESS FOR DISCUSSION OF THE GOLDEN HILL FIRE AFTER-ACTION REPORT.**

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

Under the added new business item, discussion occurred on the Golden Hill Fire after-action report, including the cause involving a plastic bin on a stove, suggestions for community education through school visits and social media, EMS response to fires, protective equipment temperature limits and performance during the incident, seam failures due to extreme heat, and the role of a failed window in creating a rollover condition. Commissioners and chiefs emphasized that protective gear performed as designed despite damage, lessons learned, and ongoing searches regardless of occupant reports.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Rilling expressed appreciation for serving as Chair and praised the department's professionalism, training, and community outreach.

**\*\*MR. FERGUSON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

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

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:49 p.m.

**Respectfully Submitted,  
Courtney Baldwin,  
Recording Secretary**