

**CITY OF NORWALK
FIRE DEPARTMENT**



**BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
MAYOR BARBARA C. SMYTH
COMMISSIONER/PASTOR OSCAR DESTRUGE
COMMISSIONER RABBI ITA PASKIND
COMMISSIONER HOWARD DIXON
COMMISSIONER STEVE FERGUSON**

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES –
JANUARY 20, 2026 3:00 PM
ZOOM AND 121 CONNECTICUT AVE, 3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

ATTENDEES: Mayor Barbara C. Smyth, Pastor Oscar Destruge, Rabbi Ita Paskind, Commissioner Howard Dixon, Commissioner Steve Ferguson.

STAFF: Chief Edward McCabe, Assistant Fire Chief of Administration Mark Conte, Assistant Fire Chief of Operations Timothy Reardon, Fire Marshal Troy Donohue, Training Director Roy Gagne, Michele DeLuca (Emergency Management), Thomas Reich (Local 830).

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Barbara C. Smyth called the special meeting of the Norwalk Fire Commission to order at 2:00 p.m. on January 20, 2026.

II. ROLL CALL

Mayor Barbara C. Smyth conducted roll call. A quorum was present.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: Tuesday, December 16, 2025

There were no changes, additions, or corrections.

**** PASTOR OSCAR DESTRUGE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2025.
** THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION MAYOR BARBARA C. SMYTH. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS PRESENTED.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mayor Barbara C. Smyth opened public participation. There was no one in the waiting room wishing to speak. Public participation was closed.

V. REPORTS

A. FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Edward McCabe welcomed Mayor Barbara C. Smyth as the new Fire Commission Chair. Chief Edward McCabe presented the budget report. The department is at the halfway point of the fiscal year. Salaries are at 49.34% utilization, approximately \$87,348 below projections. Overtime is at 52.54% utilization, which is not a concern due to vacancies earlier in the year. With seven new firefighters added in late November, vacancies are now down to four, and overtime is expected to stabilize. The budget absorbed two contractual salary increases, including retroactive pay. Chief Edward McCabe expressed satisfaction with the department's financial position. No questions were asked.

B. ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF OF ADMINISTRATION

Assistant Fire Chief Mark Conte provided an update on building projects and citywide initiatives.

Station 1 (Broad River): Floor replacement completed successfully. New doors installed and functioning well. Landscape plans are being developed for spring. Window replacement is being priced; roof inspection indicates additional time before replacement is needed.

Station 2: Working with Guardian on third-floor improvements to make the space more public-friendly due to increased permit activity.

Station 3 (Van Zand Street): Discussions with the 3rd Taxing District (building owner) regarding repaving the parking lot and painting to maintain the facility.

Station 4: Building renovation progressing well. Final design drawings received and under review with Alan Lowe. Meeting scheduled for Thursday. Construction manager is A.V. Tucci. Goal is to post RFP in March/April, begin work in summer, and complete by summer 2027.

Station 5 (South Norwalk): Designing a gear locker room to separate gear from the apparatus bay to meet NFPA requirements; last station needing this upgrade.

Station 6 (Apparatus Maintenance): New generator replacement approved for this year. Pricing being obtained for front apron and entrance repairs for next year's budget.

Citywide: SCBA upgrade nearly complete; compressor upgrade expected next week. All packs will be in service soon. Inventory management implementation underway using FirstDue software, starting with EMS equipment. Transition from NFIRS to NERIS effective February 1;

new reporting system is more granular and will provide better data once reports are refined. No questions were asked except for Commissioner Steve Ferguson, who inquired about the Station 4 budget. Assistant Fire Chief Mark Conte confirmed it is \$4 million.

C. ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

Assistant Fire Chief Timothy Reardon reported 769 incidents in December 2025, averaging 25 calls per day (higher than the usual 22).

Apparatus Updates Assistant Fire Chief Timothy Reardon provided updates on the following: The new command vehicle is nearly in service, with mechanics finalizing details. It was designed by incident commanders for a streamlined command system setup and quick deployment of tools. A key feature is an improved accountability system integrated with the upgraded SCBAs (which meet new standards). When firefighters arrive on scene, the SCBA automatically accounts for them, tracks remaining breathing air and status, allows an emergency alert button, and enables command staff to send evacuation messages via the vehicle's technology.

The Tactical Support Unit is now in service and stationed at Station 1 (Caden Avenue). It carries non-emergency but essential equipment not suitable for first-response vehicles, including extra SCBA bottle refilling, containment for major leaks and spills, and a rehab unit for firefighter recovery. It responds in a second wave to incidents.

A capital project request has been submitted for the upcoming fiscal year for a **high-water vehicle** to assist with hurricanes, storm surge, and flooding in areas such as South Norwalk, capable of driving through 3–4 feet of water for resident evacuation and emergency response.

A new rescue vehicle to replace the current one at headquarters is due to arrive early in 2027.

Ongoing Operations Assistant Fire Chief Timothy Reardon briefly recapped the SCBA upgrade and new accountability system. He also reported that the roof rope rescue equipment is now in service, allowing firefighters to access and lower victims from roofs when ladders are not feasible. He thanked Training Director Roy Gagne for the training.

Notable Incidents Assistant Fire Chief Timothy Reardon highlighted the following notable incidents from December 2025:

Willard Road — Initially dispatched as a medical call (heart emergency complaint). Engine 4 arrived and their CO detector alarmed upon entry, revealing dangerously high carbon monoxide levels (meter at maximum). A full assignment was called, the building was evacuated, the ill person and five others were evaluated and transported, and the source (mechanical failure of a heating component) was rectified and ventilated.

Spring Hill Avenue — Minor deck fire caused by a turkey fryer; crews extinguished it quickly and prevented further spread.

Bettswood Road — House fire on Christmas Day; fire originated in the living room/kitchen and extended to the second floor. Crews extinguished it quickly and limited further spread.

Silk Street — Basement house fire; crews extinguished it and prevented extension to the first floor.

East Avenue — Commercial building; dispatched as an activated fire alarm but crews discovered a working fire in the back room of an office suite. They accessed the first floor and extinguished it before further spread.

Woodward Avenue — House fire started in the basement, extended to the first and second floors and into the walls. Crews opened walls and prevented further spread.

Camp Avenue — Basement house fire with heavy fire on arrival extending up the interior staircase to the first floor; crews extinguished it.

North Water Street (near Maritime Aquarium) — Vehicle accident where a car struck a tree and dislodged a pergola hanging precariously over the vehicle. Rescue Company 2 used shoring equipment to stabilize it, TAC 2 provided lumber to secure it, allowing safe removal of expensive struts and cleanup.

This concluded his report.

D. FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT

Fire Marshal Troy Donohue reported 212 property inspections in December (364 units including 6 mega-multi-sites). Total inspections for 2025: 2,541. Two smoke detector evaluation/installation requests and 27 fire/life safety plans reviewed (\$1,300 income). No liquor license renewals. Eleven investigations (7 fires, 4 code/hazard-related). Seven fire/life safety events held. Deputy Fire Marshal Kelly conducted five educational events at Norwalk High School Trade Day. Additional events included Temple Shalom Preschool and Carver Center. Holiday Extravaganza inspections completed successfully. Three newly promoted Deputy Fire Marshals completed Fire Life Safety Public Educator 1 and are training on new software and plan review; fire investigation training scheduled for February in Hartford. Commissioner Steve Ferguson and Mayor Barbara C. Smyth commended the work.

E. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Emergency Management Director Michele DeLuca reported multiple winter storms already occurred, with another expected that weekend. Winter briefing sheets implemented after recent storms. A regional tabletop exercise for winter storm and extreme cold is scheduled for tomorrow at Fairfield University with approximately 200 attendees, including 20 from Norwalk. Planning continues for Family Assistance Center enhancements for active threat incidents, incorporating new reunification, social services, and mental health materials. Commissioners thanked Ms. DeLuca for her work.

F. TRAINING DIVISION REPORT

Training Director Roy Gagne reported a slower training period due to holidays. SCBA training and fit testing completed for current masks (annual requirement). Several firefighters attended Texas A&M TEEEX Active Threat Command Training. Company training continued on ladders,

hose, and everyday skills. Current focus is EMS refresher (January/February). Upcoming: search and rescue training at a hospital demolition site using new packs, Hazmat refresher in March, Fire Instructor II class hosted in March, SCBA repair/maintenance training, and continued company training. Planning extends through September, including live fire training preparation. Commissioners commended the forward planning.

G. LOCAL 830 REPORTS

Thomas Reich reported no formal items but extended congratulations to Mayor Barbara C. Smyth on behalf of Local 830 and expressed eagerness to work together.

H. CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items.

I. PERSONNEL

There were no items.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There were no items.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

There were no items.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Barbara C. Smyth thanked everyone for accommodating the early meeting time and commended the commissioners and Fire Department for their service.

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

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Courtney Baldwin,
Recording Secretary