

**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**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 17, 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 Smyth called the regular meeting of the Fire Commission to order at 3:01 p.m. on February 17, 2026.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mayor Smyth conducted roll call and a quorum was established.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

**A. Special Meeting: 01/20/2026**

- \*\* MR. DESTRUGE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF JANUARY 20, 2026.**
- \*\* MAYOR SMYTH SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS PRESENTED.**

There were no corrections, deletions, or omissions.

#### **IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mayor Smyth opened the floor for public participation. No members of the public wished to speak.

#### **V. REPORTS**

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

Chief Edward McCabe presented the budget report. The department is seven months into the fiscal year. The salaries account is at 56.85% utilization, which is 1.48% under budget or approximately \$197,000 below projections. The overtime account is at 59.21%, which is 0.87% over target, although overtime expenses are beginning to level off following the hiring of seven firefighters in November. Overall expenditures are approximately 2.25% over the ideal point for this stage of the fiscal year, primarily due to the absorption of two contractual salary increases (fiscal years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026), including retroactive compensation. Chief Edward McCabe stated that expenditures will continue to be monitored closely and adjustments will be made where possible. There were no questions from the commissioners.

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

Assistant Fire Chief Mark Conte provided updates on projects. The Station 4 building renovation is progressing well. Final drawings are expected to be completed soon with only minor changes, and they will be shared as an attachment once received. The project remains on schedule with construction anticipated to begin around August. RFPs for contracts are expected to go out in the next couple of months.

Assistant Fire Chief Mark Conte reported that a major budget request for the next year is a citywide apparatus exhaust capture system upgrade. The current system uses parts over 25 years old and requires replacement. The upgrade will also augment systems in bays that currently lack them, allowing better storage of spare and auxiliary equipment. The request includes a filter system for gear locker rooms that lack proper ventilation. Some stations already have partial ventilation, and the new station is being built with it included.

Assistant Fire Chief Mark Conte noted that a meeting was held with Guardian regarding the facilities management transition. Guardian is including line items for all stations, which will improve efficiency. Site visits are planned as weather improves to review completed work, planned work, and future needs in order to develop a long-term plan. The city is also going out to bid for fire protection systems, and all detectors and related items will be included in one package.

Mayor Smyth expressed appreciation for the progress on facilities management, noting it has been discussed for years and should improve efficiency and save money long-term. Mr. Dixon commended the work. There were no further questions.

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

Assistant Fire Chief Timothy Reardon thanked the commission for supporting the Station 4 renovation and expressed excitement about the preliminary drawings.

Assistant Fire Chief Timothy Reardon reported 774 incidents in January 2026, averaging 25 calls per day, which is slightly above average for a busier winter.

Regarding fire apparatus, two new engines are in the final design phase and are expected to be completed and placed in service by the end of fall 2026, replacing 2007 and 2009 pumpers at Stations 3 and 5. A capital request has been submitted for another engine for the next year. A new ladder truck to replace the 2010 Truck 1 is in the initial specification phase, with delivery approximately four years after contract award. The new rescue apparatus is in the build phase and expected early in 2027. The high water vehicle refurbishment is in the planning phase to meet modern safety standards and PPE requirements; it will be housed at Station 5 to serve flood-prone areas in South Norwalk.

Assistant Fire Chief Timothy Reardon reported cold weather operations, frozen and broken pipes keeping crews busy, annual EMS recertifications (each member completing five days over one to one-and-a-half months), and training on the new SCBA equipment soon to enter service.

Notable incidents included mutual aid to house fires in Westport and New Canaan, a chimney fire on West Rocks Road that was quickly contained, an attached garage fire on Eastwood Road where crews prevented interior spread, and the widely publicized swan rescue on the Norwalk River. Assistant Fire Chief Timothy Reardon noted the swan rescue demonstrated effective use of equipment, training, and coordination, resulting in positive public feedback.

Mr. Dixon praised the swan rescue but raised concerns about public safety messaging regarding ice hazards, citing recent incidents of people and children falling through ice. Assistant Fire Chief Timothy Reardon acknowledged the need to improve messaging, emphasized that the public should not attempt ice rescues and should call the fire department, and explained the safety protocols used by crews (cold weather gear, tether systems). Mayor Smyth agreed and noted the unpredictability of ice. There were no further questions.

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

Fire Marshal Troy Donohue presented the summary of activities for January 2026. The Fire Marshal's Office conducted inspections of 244 properties, encompassing a total of 2,387 units. There were 4 requests and evaluations for smoke detector installations. Five fire and life safety public education events were held during the month.

Three of these events included an arson investigation educational class at Brian McMahon High School for approximately 75 students, featuring live burn demonstrations using popsicle stick houses and ground meat representations. Another event was a visit to the Norwalk Public Library for story time with Gizmo, attended by approximately 25 participants. The third was Community Hero Day at Silver Mine Elementary School, with approximately 30 students in attendance.

Fire Marshal Troy Donohue reported 33 fire and life safety inspections generating \$1,942.50 in fees, 2 fire watch duties at 165 Water Street (NHRL) related to a robot leak for \$871.77, and review of 33 fire and life safety plans for \$1,712.50. Total income for the month was \$4,526.77. The office conducted 9 investigations during January, of which 7 were fire-related and 2 were code hazard-related issues. The three newly promoted deputy fire marshals completed a basic online course for Fire and Life Safety Plan Review and are continuing to navigate the new software for code enforcement inspections. They were scheduled to begin the fire investigation portion of training at the State Fire Marshal's Office in Hartford the following day.

Mayor Smyth noted a letter of thanks from the family of Georgie Farrar expressing gratitude for the response to one of the fires. Fire Marshal Troy Donohue acknowledged the letter, commenting that such positive feedback is appreciated as it is not always the case. Mayor Smyth agreed that the acknowledgement was very nice. There were no further questions or comments.

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

Ms. DeLuca reported on multiple recent snowstorms and refinements to messaging and outreach tools. The governor's cold weather protocol has ended. Discussions are ongoing regarding warming and cooling centers, including potential use of the Seth Norwalk Community Center and relationships with houses of worship. A tabletop exercise is being planned with the public schools, starting with central office and later with individual school building emergency teams. City building safety guide updates and refresher training for employees are under consideration for spring/summer.

Mr. Dixon asked about sharing ice safety messages through schools. Ms. DeLuca explained that messages can be distributed through school safety teams and communications channels. Mr. Dixon also inquired about refusals of warming center assistance. Ms. DeLuca reported ongoing outreach, use of the PD Community Room, and proactive efforts by Open Doors and similar programs. Tracking usage at libraries and the police department is planned to inform future decisions on expanding centers, with attention to residents who may prefer non-municipal locations such as houses of worship. There were no further questions.

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

Deputy Chief Roy Gagne reported completion of SCBA training for the new SCBAs expected in service next month, with ongoing fit testing of old masks as a precaution. CPR recertification and EMS refresher are nearly complete, with final sessions on February 18 and 20; make-up modules will be available online. Eight members completed SCBA Technician 1 maintenance training to handle minor repairs in-house. Deputy Chief Roy Gagne will attend a public information officer class in Greenwich. Driver training remains ongoing year-round. Work continues on improving record-keeping in the First Due program.

Upcoming activities include hazmat refresher March 1–16, Engine 3 marine division plotting and charting training, a meeting with the selected promotional testing company for the upcoming lieutenant's exam, and planning for live fire training scheduled for two weeks in September and October. Deputy Chief Roy Gagne is developing lesson plans and assigning NFPA-required roles.

A community outreach event is scheduled for March 11 at Brian McMahon High School trade day. Mr. Dixon and Mayor Smyth praised the extensive training efforts. There were no questions.

**G. LOCAL 830 REPORTS**

There were no items.

**H. CORRESPONDENCE**

Chief Edward McCabe reported three letters of thanks: one from a family for compassion during a stove fire response, and two regarding the swan rescue (one via Canada Broadcasting Company, one via Wall Street Journal). Positive feedback was also received through phone calls and social media. Mayor Smyth noted the widespread reach of the swan rescue story and public appreciation for feel-good news.

**I. PERSONNEL**

There were no items.

**VI. OLD BUSINESS**

There were no items.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

There were no items.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:45 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, 2026.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Courtney Baldwin,  
Recording Secretary