

CITY OF NORWALK
FIRE DEPARTMENT



BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

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

FIRE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 20, 2024

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

STAFF: Fire Chief Gino Gatto; Assistant Fire Chief Mark Conte; Assistant Fire
Chief Edward McCabe; Michele DeLuca, Emergency Management; Deputy
Fire Chief Joseph Coppola; Linda Shields; Tina Fogell, Personnel Director

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting on Tuesday, July 16, 2024

**** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 16, 2024
MEETING.**

The following changes were noted:

Page 2, please delete the following text in italics:

The following correction was noted:

Page 2, regarding the correction to the minutes: please make the following change from :

*Page 1, under **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**, please change the following from:*

**** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 16, 2024 MEETING.**

**** COMMISSIONER FINE SECONDED.**

*To : ** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 16, 2024 MEETING.*

**** COMMISSIONER DIXON SECONDED.**

TO: Page 1, under ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES, please change the following from:

**** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 16, 2024 MEETING.**

**** COMMISSIONER FINE SECONDED.**

*To : ** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 21, 2024 MEETING.*

**** COMMISSIONER DIXON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 18, 2024 MEETING AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. ACTION ITEMS

There are no items to consider at this time.

4. FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

a. Budget Report

Chief Gatto gave a brief overview of the June and July budgets.

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

5. ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF OF ADMINISTRATION

Assistant Fire Chief Conte presented the details of his report.

a. Buildings

1. Station 1: Apparatus Floor

- i. Soil testing completed on 7/8/2024. The Engineer is reviewing the results and will present a report of his recommendations.

2. Station 3: Apparatus Floor

- i. Maggiore Construction has been awarded the job.
- ii. Work is scheduled to begin in September.

3. Station 4: Building Renovation

- i. Cost analysis in process.

- ii. Guardian performing repairs, as needed.
- 4. **Citywide:** Overhead Door Replacement
 - i. Door replacement will begin with Station 3 and continue through all of the stations.

b. Records Management Software Upgrade

- 1. The Software build and data migration has begun.

6. ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

Assistant Fire Chief McCabe presented the monthly statistics along with his report.

There were 792 incidents, which averaged 25.6 per day. There were 10 fires, including 1 building fire. There were 49 rescues of which 28 were motor vehicle accidents with injuries. The Department responded to 429 EMS calls; 45 hazardous conditions; 28 service calls; 159 fire alarms and 72 good intents. There was a total of 4,700 incidents and 7,364 total responses.

Assistant Fire Chief McCabe reported that the Norwalk Fire Department had received a Mutual Aid Request for the High Water Rescue Truck from the Town of Monroe due to extreme flooding. A Safety Chief and a firefighting crew of four were sent. This group ended up rescuing four residents and three pets from a house that had become completely surrounded by swift running water. More details will be provided in next month's reports.

a. Department Commendations

- i. Record of all Fire Department Commendations from 1970 to 2022
- ii. Forthcoming presentation of awards for 2023 and 2024

b. Water Supply

- i. Water supply for I-95 north of East Ave. to Westport line
- ii. Tanker task force for West Norwalk

c. Highway Emergency Scene Safety

- i. Recent highway accidents involving emergency vehicles and personnel throughout our region

Assistant Fire Chief McCabe then related the following statistics regarding highway accidents:

- April 2024 – Passenger vehicle rear ended a parked fire department vehicle at the scene of a motor vehicle accident on Route 8 in Beacon Falls
- May 2024 – A Connecticut State Trooper was struck and killed on I-84 by a DUI driver
- June 2024 – A Connecticut DOT worker was struck and killed on I-95 in Wallingford by a vehicle that veered into his work zone.
- June 2024 – A vehicle struck a Greenwich Fire Department engine that was blocking the scene of a motor vehicle accident, totaling the engine and three firefighters were transported

- to the hospital with injuries.
 - July 2024 – A passenger vehicle veered into a work zone where firefighters were extinguishing a vehicle on I-91 in Rocky Hill.
 - July 2024 – A State Police cruiser was struck by a car on I-95 South in Norwalk at the scene of a motor vehicle accident as the the Fire Department vehicles were arriving on the scene.
 - August 10, 2024 – An SUV hit a Fire Engine that was blocking the scene of a car fire on Route 15 in Milford.
 - August 14, 2024 – A DOT truck was struck by a car while working on Route 118 sending a worker to the hospital with injuries.
- ii. Discussion to improve upon SOP 2.060, which stipulates a blocking engine for scene safety
 - iii. Project planning for the purchase of a purpose-built barrier truck for the NFD to protect firefighters working on the highway (See photos)

Discussion followed regarding the purchase of a purpose-built barrier truck for the NFD, which would be the first of its kind for a Fire Department in the State. Chief Gatto said that the Department has the funds for this purchase.

Commissioner Paskind asked for more details about the Commendation awards compilation from the last 50 years. Assistant Fire Chief McCabe said that the Department awards Commendations every few years. He explained that while doing the preparation work for the upcoming awards ceremony, they realized that there was no complete listing of previous awards. That information has now been gathered from a number of different sources and compiled into a list.

7. FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT

- a. Summary of Activities**
- b. Fire Reports**
- c. Fire Marshal Fees**

Chief Gatto stated that the Acting Fire Marshal was not available to attend the meeting. He then read Acting Fire Marshal McDonald's report to the Commissioners.

The Fire Marshal's Office performed 174 inspections. 32 renotifications were sent out. Three different Public Education events were held. 19 Plan Reviews were done along with six Liquor Licenses and 7 Investigations, including 5 Code issues. There were almost 300 more inspections done this year than last year. There was a total income of \$1,590 for the month with a yearly total of \$25,375.

In addition to the statistics, it was noted that one of the part time Fire Inspectors retired.

On July 10th, the Norwalk Police requested the assistance of the Fire Marshal's Division regarding a local business hosting a teen party. The party was cancelled following the discovery of alcohol on the premise.

Ludlow Commons scheduled and performed a supervised Emergency Evacuation Drill on July 11th, which went smoothly.

Deputy Fire Marshal Troy Donohue passed the State Pre-Certification Code Module with a score of 91%, one of the highest scores in the class.

8. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

a. Emergency Management Update

Ms. DeLuca said that on the 18th, Norwalk received between 4 to 7 inches of rain, but significantly less than Oxford, Monroe, Newtown and other nearby areas. The State is pursuing a Disaster Declaration for public assistance and hopefully residential damage for the flood areas. It is hoped that the Municipalities damage claims will be granted by FEMA. She said that they would be working with other municipalities on this.

The Oyster Festival will be held on September 6th-8th. A planning meeting will be held in the coming week to discuss routine logistics and coordination. An event action plan will be distributed prior to the opening of the Oyster Festival.

The Open House is scheduled for September 28th from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. This will be for Norwalk Fire Department, Police Department, and Public Works and will be held at 15 South Smith Street. Food collection will be done during this Open House for the Open Door Shelter.

Food Rescue US recently delivered 28 pallets of fresh produce to DPW and calls go out to the various organization who can utilize the food.

Commissioner Dixon expressed concerns regarding a previous statement made at a planning meeting that was made stating a helicopter would not be able to land on the baseball diamond. He said that the EMS helicopter pilots should have the ability to land the helicopter right in the center of the diamond.

9. TRAINING DIVISION REPORT

Deputy Fire Chief Coppola presented his report to the Commissioners.

a. Current Training Activities

1. Below-grade victim removals using rope & rigging gear on Rescue Co. 2
2. Probationary task books
3. Ladder rescue training utilizing ground ladders
4. EVOC Training – Specifically aerial operators
5. Ongoing physicals (Coming to a close soon,)

6. 2 Probationary members attending online/hybrid EMT initial training

Completed Training Activities

1. Elevator Emergency Management class (In-classroom sessions)
2. Aerial (Tiller) Operator signoff for FF Edwin Agosto
3. OSHA Quarterly respirator training
4. Ground ladder raise and deployment drills
5. Man overboard training with Marine Unit

Upcoming/Scheduled Training Activities:

1. Fire Officer 1 contract class for our members here in Norwalk confirmed Fall 2024
2. Norwalk High School & Wegmans Construction Site Walk-throughs & Preplanning
3. MTA Metro North Railroad Safety Class (September) FREE
4. CT DOT Traffic Incident Management Class (September/October) FREE
5. Eversource Electrical Underground Safety Class (TBD) FREE
6. 2025 EMT Refreshers January 2025

Deputy Fire Chief Coppola stated that he RESPONDED with the four firefighters who responded to the Mutual Aid request from Monroe. The Norwalk Firefighters were the ones who actually extracted the residents from the flooded residence. He added that due to that incident, the NFD was featured on News12 and a live interview was done which was aired on national news. Chief Gatto noted that two members of the team had Swift Water Rescue Training.

10. LOCAL 830 REPORT

There are no items to report at this time.

11. OLD BUSINESS

There are no items to consider at this time.

12. NEW BUSINESS

There are no items to consider at this time.

13. CORRESPONDENCE

- **Retirement Letter**
- **Request for Leave of Absence**

Firefighter Richard Garbus, a recent transfer has submitted a resignation letter in order to work with the NYFD.

Firefighter Richard Garbus also submitted a request for a Leave of Absence which is included in the contract can be approved by Commissioners. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Destruge suggested that the firefighter withdraw the letter of resignation and request the year of absence.

**** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED TO APPROVE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE WITHOUT PAY REQUEST BEGINNING ON AUGUST 23, 2023 FROM FIREFIGHTER GARBUS WITH THE CONDITION THAT HE WITHDRAW HIS AUGUST 15TH RESIGNATION LETTER.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- **A Thank You Letter from Mr. Markow**

Chief Gatto gave a brief overview of how two off duty firefighters, Robert Mossop and Ron Kayal went to assist Mr. Markow when he suffered a heart attack. The two firefighters will be recognized at a ceremony at City Hall.

- **Letters of Commendation**

Chief Gatto stated that they would be holding an awards ceremony and they have placed copies of the Commendations in each firefighter's file. Discussion followed about the different Firefighting badges for the dress uniforms. A copy of the badge listing will be sent to the Commissioners.

14. PERSONNEL

- a. Announced Retirement (Joining the DROP Pension):**

1. Fire Captain Anthony Matera
2. Fire Captain Mark Franzen
3. Fire Lieutenant Marc Chimento

Chief Gatto said that the appropriate paperwork had been submitted. The Commissioners are required to sign these documents. He added there would be two more individuals submitting their paperwork for DROP plan in the near future.

- b. Executive Session:**

Commissioner Paskind left the meeting at 3:58 p.m.

**** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:**

1. CIRMA UPDATE

2. DISCUSSION ON VACANCIES

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Commissioners, Ms. Fogel, and the Fire Dept Staff entered into Executive Session to 3:58 p.m. to discuss the stated issues. They returned to Public Session at 4:36 p.m. No actions were taken or motions made during Executive Session.

15. ADJOURNMENT

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services