

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
MAY 21, 2024

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.

ATTENDANCE: Commissioner Oscar Destruge; Commissioner Howard Dixon; Mayor Harry Rilling, Chair (3:01 p.m.)

STAFF: Fire Chief Gino Gatto; Assistant Fire Chief Mark Conte; Assistant Fire Chief Edward McCabe; Michele DeLuca, Emergency Management; Assistant Fire Marshal K. McDonald, Deputy Fire Chief Joseph Coppola
Linda Shields

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Destruge called the meeting to order 3:00 p.m. and noted that there was a quorum present. He announced that the Mayor was would be joining the meeting shortly.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

• Regular Meeting on Tuesday, April 16, 2024

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

**** COMMISSIONER FINE SECONDED.**

Mayor Rilling joined the meeting at 3:01 p.m.

**** THE MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 16, 2024 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mayor Rilling assumed the Chair.

ACTION ITEMS

There are no items to consider at this time.

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

a. Budget Report

Chief Gatto said that the Department was in the 10th month of the budget year and the good news was that there were surpluses in the salaries and overtime expenses. In the larger firefighting account they are at 79.5% in overtime and 71.9% in the salaries. Overall, the budget stands at 73.8% versus 83.3% which would be the normal percentage 10 months into the budget.

a. Long term injury/sick

Chief Gatto said that he wanted to update the Commissioners on the status of the long term injury/sick firefighters. He gave a general overview of the number of firefighters who were out on injury leave including a firefighter that was injured at the recent I-95 tanker fire. One firefighter was out for 14 months and has since been granted disability.

Chief Gatto then reviewed the number of firefighters who were out on sick leave with the Commissioners. He noted the expected return to duty dates for the firefighters. One firefighter is out on military deployment and is scheduled to return to work in September.

The amount of sick time has decreased and while the injury time has been a bit higher, the number is decreasing as more firefighters return to work.

ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF OF ADMINISTRATION

Assistant Fire Chief Mark Conte welcomed Commissioner Dixon and presented his report as follows:

a. Station Alerting System Upgrade

1. Final system testing nearing completion.
2. System cut-over is scheduled for June.

b. Buildings

1. **Station 1:** Apparatus Floor
 - i. Soil testing and slab inspection to begin in July.
2. **Station 3:** Apparatus Floor
 - i. The RFP to hire a contractor has been submitted to purchasing for posting.
3. **Station 4:** Building Renovation
 - i. Preliminary work with Alan Lo has begun to obtain an updated cost analysis.

4. Citywide: Overhead Door Replacement

- i. Beginning the approval process of the '25 Capital project.

c. Records Management Software Upgrade

1. The Fire department will be transitioning from ESO to First Due Records Management Software in the next Fiscal Year. Purchasing and IT have already approved the software.

It will be placed on the Public Safety & General Government agenda for their May meeting.

Mayor Rilling said that he was dismayed to hear about the compromised living conditions at Station 4. The City does have some ARPA funds that can be used for this. Mr. Lo will be doing an inspection on this.

Assistant Fire Chief Conte said that they had hired a new pest control company and that there had already been some roof repairs. The new company is a bit more aggressive in that they check for vermin entrance points. Chief Gatto said that they had not had anyone call out sick due to the mold at Station 4.

ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

Assistant Fire Chief McCabe welcomed Commissioner Dixon and greeted the other Commissioners. He then presented his report as follows:

- a. **STRUCTURE FIRE:** On April 10th, NFD was dispatched to 18 Thomas Place to assist the Rowayton Volunteer Fire Department with reported smoke in a residence. Engine 5 arrived first and met with a worker on the scene who brought the crew to the homeowner and the location of the smoke. Workers on scene had been cutting rebar on the exterior of the building in the area where the smoke smell was present. Engine 5 investigated the area as Car 2 and Truck 2 arrived on the scene. During the investigation, Rowayton Fire arrived. Car 2 briefed them on the situation and Rowayton continued the investigation and extinguishment. Norwalk Fire went back in service and cleared.
- b. **STRUCTURE FIRE:** On April 17th, NFD responded to 4 Crest Rd. to assist the Rowayton Volunteer Fire Department with a working structure fire. Norwalk Engine 5 arrived first on the scene, followed shortly after by Car 2 and Truck 2. Heavy fire was showing from the rear of the house. The homeowner had just been dragged out by a bystander and was suffering from smoke inhalation. In addition, a Rowayton volunteer had just been electrocuted and suffered a resulting serious hand injury. The Norwalk Deputy Chief called for a full structure fire assignment as Norwalk crews went to work extinguishing, venting, and overhauling the fire. A unified command was established with the Rowayton Chief and approximately 10 Rowayton

volunteers assisted on scene. The homeowner was transported to Norwalk Hospital and later to Bridgeport burn center.

- c. **STRUCTURE FIRE:** On April 24th, NFD responded to a structure fire at 15 Tarone Drive. A fire had started in the attic and smoldered under insulation before it was finally discovered. When the first fire companies arrived, smoke was venting from the attic eaves. Engine 4 stretched a hoseline to the attic and extinguished the fire, which had run the floor joists the entire length of the house.
- d. A meeting was held with the Rowayton volunteer Chief following the structure fire on Crest Rd. The result was an agreement to update NFD's automatic aid response SOP to structure fires and high-hazard occupancies in Rowayton. This will ensure adequate NFD personnel and apparatus respond to handle any structure fire efficiently and safely.
- e. Following the tanker and bridge fire on I-95, an after-action review was held with the incident commander and all the officers who worked on that fire. A detailed report will be written, and more details on the incident will be included in next month's agenda.

Mayor Rilling said that he would be checking with legal to see if the Commissioners can attend the area after action response meeting regarding the I-95 fire incident.

There were 662 incidents in April of 2024, which averages out to just over 22 per day. There were 24 fires and 37 rescues of which 25 were motor vehicle accidents with injuries. The Department responded to 394 EMS calls, 30 hazardous conditions, 27 service calls; 102 fire alarms and 48 good intents. There were 211 fewer incidents this January thru April than the previous year.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

a. Emergency Management Update

Ms. DeLuca greeted everyone and welcomed Commissioner Dixon. She said that they were working on an Air Quality Management response. They are working on updating the plan and expect higher than normal temperatures later in the summer.

Hurricane season starts on June 1st. They will be working on helping families and residents prepare for the inclement weather. They are also expecting an above normal hurricane season this year.

Regarding the I-95 fire, Ms. DeLuca said that it did not look like the State SBA funding would apply to Norwalk's small businesses, but she will be checking to see if the City would be able to apply for any potential funding.

Ms. DeLuca thanked Mayor Rilling for securing the Saint Ann's Club for the area after action response meeting scheduled for May 30th. There may be some smaller after action meetings within the department before the 30th.

FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT

Assistant Fire Marshal McDonald presented his report.

a. Summary of Activities

For the month of April the Department statistics were lower. This month they had a total of 187 inspections completed compared to 233. There were 18 notifications sent and there were two Public Education events held at three different locations. Fire extinguisher training was held for the Walk Bridge construction staff and also for the Keystone House staff. There were 18 Plan Reviews and 2 Liquor licenses were done.

b. Fire Reports

The Fire Marshal's Office was called to investigate 4 building fires, 2 car fires and three outside fires. There were no code violations or hazards. Inspections of the large residential apartment complexes continues. Four complex sites have been inspected, which includes 17 buildings with 605 apartments: The Merritt River Apartments; the Platform at SoNo on Chestnut Street; Harbor Side SoNo on Water Street and the entire Monterey Village complex.

c. Fire Marshal Fees

The total income for the Fire Marshal's Office was \$1,630.

Assistant Fire Marshal McDonald said that Deputy Fire Marshal George Baez was honored at a recent Mets game at City Field. There is a video and photo link. Assistant Fire Marshal McDonald gave the details.

Commissioner Destruge said that the Commissioners had received a letter of retirement for Fire Marshal Broderick Sawyer and commended him for his years of service. Mayor Rilling agreed.

Commissioner Destruge said that he would recommend that everyone have a home inspection.

TRAINING DIVISION REPORT

Deputy Fire Chief Joseph Coppola presented his report as follows:

b. Current Training Activities

1. Hazmat Operational Refresher Continuing Education Units – Research Resources
2. Trucks 1 & 2 Driver Training and Aerial Familiarization ongoing
3. Online EMS refresher for members who were out during the winter due to injury/illness
4. Marine Operations, deck operations and use of navigational technologies
5. Ongoing NFPA 1582 Physicals
6. Use of Fire Department Standpipe Connection (FDC) at River Street Parking Garage

b. Completed Training Activities

City of Norwalk
Board of Fire Commissioners
Regular Meeting
May 21, 2024

1. ICS 400 at Fairfield Fire School (DC Coppola, FF Chila, Lt. Lyons & Michele Deluca)
2. Pitched Roof Ventilation using our prop at 100 Fairfield Avenue (Photo attached)
3. Rescue Operations – use of the tripod
4. Rescue Operations – Hydro-Fusion Struts
5. Person in the Water Drill with Middlesex/Ciambro Construction at Walk Bridge Site
6. DC Mike Terpak Seminar in Stamford (several members attended)
7. Operating Foam Streams

c. Upcoming/Scheduled Training Activities:

1. Tabletop exercise with King Industries (Tanker vs. Train at Crossing)
2. Probationary Class orientation week starting May 23rd
3. Host CFA Pump Operator certification course scheduled for later this month
4. Fire Officer 1 contract class for our members here in Norwalk tentatively Fall 2024
5. Drafting water from a static water source (Lakota Oaks Property)
6. Norwalk High School & Wegmans Construction Site Walk-throughs

Special Note:

Through the use of a free training website (CFITrainer.net), DC Coppola was able save training funds used for educational reimbursement from members taking degree programs by the members being able to utilize credit hours obtained through CFITrainer.net. In one case, an NFD member was able to get 8 free elective credits for his degree thus bringing down the needed credits to 13 from 45 resulting in a huge savings to the training budget.

Members are constantly encouraged to take advantage of these free online opportunities by the Training

Mayor Rilling said that during the tanker fire under the bridge, the firefighters knew what they had to do and did it smoothly. He added that he had sent a thank you certification to King Industry for providing their foam truck at the scene.

LOCAL 830 REPORT

There were no items to consider at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

There were no items to consider at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

There were no items to consider at this time.

CORRESPONDENCE

- **Thank You letter attached**

Chief Gatto said that there was an incident on I-95 involving a mother and her 18 month old daughter. The Mother was very appreciative of the firefighters assistance and also dropped off some treats for the staff along with a note.

PERSONNEL

c. Executive Session:

1. Firefighters Grievance

**** MAYOR RILLING MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSSION LEGAL ISSUES.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Fire Commissioners entered into Executive Session to discuss legal issues at 3L49 p.m. They returned to Public Session at 3:59 p.m. No actions were taken or motions made during Executive Session.

Commissioner Destruge said that Pastor Greg Saunders had indicated that he was willing to be considered for the position of Fire Chaplain. Mayor Rilling asked to have Pastor Saunders send his resume in to him.

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services