

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FEBRUARY 18, 2014**

ATTENDANCE: Commissioners: Irene Dixon, Oscar Destruge, Mayor Harry Rilling.

STAFF: Denis McCarthy, Fire Chief; Assistant Chief Lawrence Riley;
Deputy Captain Todd Smith.
Alan Lo, Manager, Building Services
Firefighters: Lefty Petridis, Peter Brown; Lt. Peter Brown

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: OCTOBER 15, 2013 MEETING

**** MAYOR RILLING MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE
OCTOBER 15, 2013 MEETING AS SUBMITTED.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Action Items:

Mr. Larry Johnson presented a certificate of appreciation to the Firemen for their assistance in his car accident. Chief McCarthy read the incident summary and letter as follows:

On behalf of the Johnson-Jordan family we would like to give our sincere thanks to the quick responding actions of your officers on November 25, 2013. The events of that day were life changing for my father and I, but the comfort your officers gave us was remarkable. They took great care making sure we were safe and out of the vehicle in record time. I cannot remember faces, but the voices of comfort repeating my name and holding my hand made me feel so much better. We understand that your job requires you to risk your lives to help others; we just want to personally show you how grateful we are to you all for your dedication. To save a life, is to change a life. Continue to be the heroes you were destined to be. With Thanks and Love, LaToya Jordan and Larry Johnson

Presentation of Gifts to Former Fire Commissioners Carol Andreoli and Michael Coffey

Chief McCarthy introduced former Commissioners Andreoli and Coffey acknowledge them for their years of service to the Fire Department. He presented them with the personalized fire helmet award and they were congratulated by the Commission and audience in attendance.

Meritorious Service Bar for Firefighter Hector Ramirez

Chief McCarthy read excerpts of incident on December 21, 2013 at 11 Commerce Street. Without any hesitation Firefighter Ramirez jumped into the water, quickly made direct contact with the victim and brought him over other side of the channel, was pulled out of the water by police officers and firefighters and brought to shore where Norwalk Hospital EMS personnel took over patient care.

For Firefighter Ramirez's quick actions the outcome would have been dramatically different, the training and skill level of this Firefighter made this a rescue and not a recovery.

Firefighter Ramirez was acknowledged by the Commissioners and presented with the certificate.

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

Budget

Chief McCarthy stated that the budget reports in the packet were self-explanatory. He explained that there was one issue on the 2014 budget which is a request to reinstate turn out equipment. He said that there is a concern about the ability to replace these items that they feel are essential for adequate response and service.

He added that the Capital Budget includes new pumper equipment and this was in the recommendation by the Finance Department along with station repairs to replace equipment at Fairfield Avenue.

Norwalk Fire Department Force Realignment - June 10, 2010

Chief McCarthy delivered the power point presentation and provided a summary as follows:

The Norwalk Fire Department recommends a permanent reorganization of equipment and personnel to promote a more effective and efficient deployment of emergency services. This proposal replaces a prior proposal for a sixth station (\$3 million capital) and 16 firefighters (\$2 million annual operating costs) in the Cranbury section of the city with a proposal to add a \$250,000 addition to the Westport Ave station to accommodate a ladder truck company. This proposal will also recommends/assumes a resumption of the phased manpower additions to the Rescue truck bringing the staffing to 4 personnel on all shifts (six new employees over the next 3 years). The two pieces of this plan that need to be implemented together include:

1. The design and construction of a small addition to the Westport Ave station to accommodate the Truck Company staffing and is estimated at approximately \$250,000. The RFP for the architectural services allocates \$20,000 for the design of temporary quarters and these funds would be used for this project. This addition will cancel the need for a new 3 million dollar station in Cranbury.
2. Addition of 6 new personnel over three years beginning in July 2011. This would complete the staffing improvement begun in July 2008 and suspended in 2009. This addition of 6 firefighters would cancel the need for future staffing increase of 16 firefighters for the planned 6th station. By leveraging existing and future resources and taking advantage of the opportunities presented by a new fire headquarters, the Fire Department is in a unique position to strategically improve response times throughout the City. This proposal balances the financial challenges that the City and Department faces with the requirements to provide equivalent fire and life savings services to all areas of the community. The proposal addresses the multiple recommendations of the four major station, manpower and operations studies that have been completed since 2004.

The reassignment of personnel will be one of the first tasks in the new station project. Approval of this plan is necessary for the Department to begin the process upon hiring the project architect in July 2011. We look forward to the support of the Board of Fire Commissioners to enable us to complete this major step in improving fire protection in the city.

Mayor Rilling stated that he had several questions on this proposal and also concerns have been expressed from the Council members. He asked about the asbestos, and Chief McCarthy replied that there will be a trailer included for housing during any asbestos abatement process.

Mayor Rilling asked if the Matrix Study recommended the Westport Avenue addition, and Chief replied no, that the study focused on the 6th station. He added that this would really be only a back-up or reserve force and it did not seem worthwhile. He reviewed the Fire Department's evaluation was that this station would have the slowest response time and the highest cost therefore was not an efficient value for the investment. He explained that the Matrix plan takes personnel and equipment from others and creates a shortage of staff and equipment where most needed and is not an effective plan.

Mayor Rilling asked about the plan for renovation of the other stations that are in need of repair. Chief explained that the New Canaan Avenue renovation plan has been pushed off by the Finance Director for another year. He added that the Van Zant Station has received support from the Third Taxing District for HVAC and restroom upgrades.

Mayor Rilling asked why the station repairs have been put off when most of the stations are in such a state of disrepair. Chief McCarthy explained that he was told by the Finance Department that the City is clearing up debt from school projects and as a result is slow to fund Fire Station projects.

Mayor Rilling asked if there are statistics to document need for a second truck on West Avenue, and Chief replied that he will get that to him.

Mr. Lo stated that this recommendation is scheduled to be presented to Health, Welfare and Public Safety meeting next week, and then on the Building and Land Use Committee for approval to forward on to the Council.

Mayor Rilling stated that he wants to have responses to the questions on this proposal along with the concerns that have been expressed from the Council members.

Assistant Chief Report

Assistant Chief Riley referred to the Operations Report of notable incidents for January and he highlighted the major house fires as noted:

NOTABLE INCIDENTS:

1/03, 22:59. 204 South Main Street, basement fire in a 3 story. wood frame residence. When FD arrived two occupants has self-evacuated from the structure. A male had suffered burns to his head and a female had suffered smoke inhalation. Both were transported by ambulance to Norwalk Hospital... The fire was contained to a makeshift bedroom in the basement. Inspector

McDonald responded to investigate.
Notable Incidents – continued:

1/11.01:25, Truman Street, structure fire. FD arrived to a 2-story wood frame with heavy fire on the front porch/front entrance, extending up to the roof line and running along the eaves. All occupants had evacuated on their own prior to FD arrival. Fire caused heavy damage to fire floor of house. There was no fire extension to upper floors. The entire house sustained heat and smoke damage.

1/17, 15:54, Edgewater Place, boat fire. FD arrived to find that a 42 foot steel/wood oyster at dock was on fire. They found the fire knocked down by workers using several dry chemical extinguishers by. FD used a hose line and portable extinguishers to complete extinguishment. There was heavy fire damage below deck, specifically under the wheel house. Vessel owner stated that he was alerted to the fire from an employee seeing heavy smoke coming from the vessel.

1/22, 12:56, 18 Red Oak Lane, house fire. FD arrived to find a fire that was burning between the basement ceiling and first floor wood flooring. FD opened up flooring to extinguish fire. Flooring and ceiling joists and electrical wiring in the area sustained fire damage. Fire was caused by a bag of fireplace ashes that were left on hardwood floor, burning a hole through the floor and igniting the joists. Five occupants were relocated by the Red Cross.

Assistant Chief Riley noted that on page three of the report, the estimated loss for incidents is an estimated number that should be disregarded as it does not represent accurate value.

TRAINING REPORT

Deputy Captain Smith presented his report as follows:

- a. Fire Officer 1 Certification Started Training / EOC Room
- b. Hazardous Material Operational Refresher Training Starting March 3, 2014 for all shifts. 3 day class provided - twice per shift - 8 deliveries paid for with grant funding.
- c. Firefighter Safety and Survival Training in progress
- d. RIT (Rapid Intervention Team) training paid for with grant funding in progress
- e. Acceptance of Captain's Promotion – Eligibility list as submitted.

Deputy Smith reported that a few months ago, they had finished ADD & Autism Awareness training that covered specialized training in situations such as emergency calls, EMS interaction and response involving people with Autism. He reported that there was a tragedy in Philadelphia that an autistic person was scared during a rescue attempt, and went back into the house and the fire fighters were not able to save him. He stated that it is things like this that reinforce the need for specialized training in these areas.

Fire Marshall's Report

Chief McCarthy noted that the report was included in the packet summarized 1597 units and total 281 hours, representing routine inspections. He added that he would include next month the year to date track of fees collected that was done to generate revenue.

Emergency Management

Chief McCarthy reported that they have worked with DPW to assist with getting salt supplies through the Region One and has pursued relief from the state. He noted that there is 45,000 tons in New Haven, but it cannot be accessed.

He added that they are working on a public health grant through the region that will cover attending a crisis management seminar in April at the Double Tree hotel.

Union President Report – There was no report.

Personnel – No report.

New Business/Old Business – None

Assistant Chief Reilly stated that as requested by Mayor Rilling, included in the packet was the criteria for award selection and the process outline.

Mayor Rilling noted that the Southington Firefighter-of –the-Year recognition is scheduled for May, and he recommended that the Commissioners attend.

Adjournment

**** COMMISSIONER DESTRUCE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
**** COMMISSIONER DIXON SECONDED THE MOTION.**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Knox,
Telesco Secretarial Services