

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FEBRUARY 17, 2015**

ATTENDANCE: Commissioners: Irene Dixon, Oscar Destruge (3:20 p.m);
Mayor Harry Rilling.

STAFF: Denis McCarthy, Fire Chief; Assistant Chief Lawrence Reilly;
Captain Todd Smith, Training; Chris Hansen, Fire Marshal,
Michelle Deluca, Emergency Operations;

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**** COMMISSIONER DIXON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE
JANUARY 20, 2015 MEETING AS SUBMITTED.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ACTION ITEMS – None

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

Mayor Rilling suggested the order of the agenda be changed in consideration of the guests in attendance.

Cadet Program - Explorer program

Chief McCarthy recognized the cadets and said the Fire Department's Explorer program began in September. Explorer Lt. Scott Bass said they were happy because they get to see the police side and the fire side and see how both sides work. They can learn from both sides and see if we want to be a fireman or what do in a situation or at a crime scene.

Mayor Rilling said we look at the cadet program as growing your own garden because you are making advances now at bringing young people into emergency services; it gets people interested in the fire and police services and make a decision with what they are going to do with their lives.

Home Fire Preparedness Campaign

Ms. Stacey Hayden from the American Red Cross distributed a flyer on Smoke Alarm Installation Event Overview. She spoke about a nationwide effort to combine new technology and innovation with neighbor-to-neighbor outreach on home fire preparedness. She noted that they will save lives, reduce injuries, and cut down on needless losses, with the goal to reduce the number of fire deaths and injuries in the United States by 25% within five years. She outlined that to achieve that goal activities listed below together with our partners include Smoke Alarm installation, education, reporting, and sustainability.

She further explained that by combining historical data on fire incidents with demographic risk factors like poverty, maps will highlight the neighborhoods at greatest risk. The coalition will target areas dynamically and the goal is to install 500,000 smoke alarms each year.

Fire Marshal Hansen said a smoke trailer would visit neighborhoods that have recently been the site of a fire, an eye-catching maneuver to get the attention of people whose awareness of the danger has been heightened. Firefighters will go door to door to distribute information and free smoke detectors.

Budget

Chief McCarthy stated that the budget is tracking at comparable percentage versus expenditures. He will have a better indication of the percentage next month of the overtime trends factoring in the months of spring.

Fire Fighter Recruitment Report

Chief McCarthy reported he and the City's Personnel Director, Emmett Hibson met with the New Haven Fire Department Battalion Chief Matt Marcarelli, Director of Training for the He explained that New Haven process has had greater success in recruiting minorities and is one that we hope to emulate.

Battalion Chief Marcarelli reported that their experience has been the recruits that come out of the new testing process are better than the cadets that came out of the previous efforts. New Haven had been giving a written test as the first step in its process, and the goal has been to narrow the field before proceeding to an interview. He outlined that Norwalk has followed that practice but that process eliminates 90 percent of all the candidates that apply and does not make the written and the oral examination equally weighted.

Fire Fighter Recruitment Report -- continued

Chief McCarthy outlined that we're not reducing the standards, we're adjusting the standard or changing the standard, or evaluating those things are really important to the service or the work a firefighter does. He explained that prerequisites have been that you have to have a high school diploma and a valid Connecticut driver's license. When we test, scoring it that way we are giving preference to those who have college degrees and test better, and that may not be the best measure of what it takes to be a firefighter. We take fire service element out of the process, because there is no fire service experience needed to apply.

Chief McCarthy said the written test becomes a pass/fail as less than a 92 percent on the written is fail, and the result is no interview. New Haven has worked with a consultant from North Carolina and now requires a 70 percent score on the written exam to qualify for an interview. This results in a much greater pool of applicants that are interviewed by teachers, and a video tape of the session is made, and that takes out bias. He reported that results in New Haven have been very good-- out of 90 new hires, 25 percent are from the minority community, the same percentage in two classes of 45 new hires.

He noted they hope to have candidates for the fire academy class with the goal of more diversity in September 2016.

Fire Station Renovations

Chief McCarthy noted that the Fire Station renovations proposal is part of the capital improvement recommendation has been submitted to Finance and the BET. He noted that this will come before the Common Council the first meeting in March.

Recognition of Paulette Saddler

Chief McCarthy described an incident where Paulette Saddler used a phone app to translate a call in Spanish and was able to reply in English and then translate back into Spanish to communicate the dispatch communication. He noted that next month he intends to formally recognize this incident and acknowledge this example of using technology and cross training in the Department.

Major Projects:

Condo Fires

Chief McCarthy spoke of the condo fire in Edgewater, New Jersey where 500 families were evacuated and over 1,000 residents were on the street. He spoke of the impact on the community and learning that can be deployed into mutual aid education. He noted that there is a meeting with Westport, New Canaan and Westport to review mutual aid protocols.

He referred to the map on display that illustrates the location of City fire fatalities over the past three years. He noted that this is an important use of GPS mapping and cross labeling fire incident data geographically to identify trends and locations for station coverage.

Active Shooter Drill

Chief McCarthy reported that over thirty communities across the country will participate in this FEMA sponsored drill that covers three major modules of an EMT event. He highlighted the first responder protocols, dispatch, city response, school and community partner education elements.

Community Outreach Update (Red Cross program presented earlier in the agenda)

ASSISTANT CHIEF REPORT

Assistant Chief Reilly referred to the report as included in the agenda packet and reviewed the report of notable incidents for January 2015, highlighting the major fires:

1/10, 10:56, 474 Main Avenue. EMS--possible drowning. FD arrived to find a child lying by an indoor pool in the care of a bystander who a nurse practitioner. The bystander stated the patient was found under water in the pool. The nurse pulled the patient from the pool and began CPR. After 1-2 minutes of CPR. The child came to and began vomiting and coughing up water. FD assisted EMS in transporting the child to the hospital. Assistant Chief Reilly read an e-mail recognizing the nurse as Katie VanDyke and the Department wants to nominate her for an award for her critical life-saving efforts.
More information to follow.

1/17.20:26.35 Woodward Avenue - Carbon monoxide leak. 6 of 8 occupants of a were found either inside or outside of the house suffering varying levels of carbon monoxide poisoning and were admitted to the hospital for treatment. The cause of: the CO leak was a malfunctioning furnace.

Mayor Rilling announced that he had to leave the meeting due to a visit by the Lt. Governor, and left the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

STATIONS AND EQUIPMENT

As a result of the two significant snowfalls in January firefighters began the process of checking fire hydrants and shoveling them out if needed. There are slightly over 1.650 hydrants in Norwalk. As of today approximately 90% have been done.

Peterson Engineering Consultants surveyed the HVAC system at Station 5 and is prepared to assist the Fire Department and Purchasing in developing an RFQ for the replacement of the system.

Stations and Equipment – continued

Big East Environmental is working with Purchasing to write the RFP for removal of underground storage tanks at the maintenance building, 100 Fairfield Avenue.

Chief McCarthy noted that they are working with David Starkey, Neighborhood Coordinator on the issue of digging out hydrants that are buried in the snow. There was discussion on possibly working with DPW to have flags to designate the hydrants and to clear an area around them.

FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT

Fire Marshal Hansen referred to his reported as included in the agenda packet and summarized the activity and inspections for the month. He noted that total units were 1292 for over 189hours representing routine inspections.

He explained that there is a new update on inspection violations reporting to provide a follow-up notification system. He explained that this brings technology into real time application applied to inspection history on a location, which brings forward outstanding violations. He noted that this will provide statistical reporting by occupancy type designation and by next year should compile information for important data for reports, goals, actual versus standards along with an assist with manpower assignment.

TRAINING REPORT

Todd Smith referred to the report as follows:

TRAINING REPORT

a. Personnel Escape Training for Department trainers has taken place. Trainers are:

Capt. McCabe	LT Brown
Capt. Markowitz	FF Chimento
LT Reardon	FF Baez
LT Sanford	FF Dennis Dustin
LT Conte	FF McCabe
LT Matera	FF King
LT Rywolt	

The shift training was scheduled to begin Monday, February 8th and finish by the end of the month. Weather permitting.

b. CPR recertification on hold with Weather and PES Training taking precedence will occur when possible

c. Most of the past couple of weeks Clearing of Fire Hydrants has also taken a priority

d. Automatic RIT Mutual Aid with Westport is proceeding and departmental cross training will occur shortly.

e. Metro North Layer of Catenaries still in progress. Working with IT to get layer posted to GIS

Assistant Chief Reilly referred to the map of Metro North stations with street access as part of a post-analysis review following the recent accident in New York.

Emergency Management

Ms. Deluca reported the snow emergency response system has been working well in view of the recent large snowfalls. She spoke about cold weather issues that have resulted in greater occupancy at the shelter.

Long Term case work plan for long-term recovery is in development. She noted that the learning from post emergency analysis is that there are cases that take years to resolve with FEMA and state and federal recovery processes.

The Active Shooter Drill will be held this week and from that they will establish a priority check list of actions and post evaluation processes.

Ms. Deluca explained that the ongoing Schools Emergency Plan, as approved by the Central Office, will be reviewed by the state for compliance. She noted that they will continue the District Wide School Safety meetings with the Steering Committee to continue meeting monthly. The next meeting focus is on state mandate compliance and action plans for after school programs at the schools.

UNION PRESIDENT REPORT

No report

OLD BUSINESS/ NEW BUSINESS

Adjournment

**** COMMISSIONER DESTRUGE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox,
Telesco Secretarial Services