

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 20, 2015**

ATTENDANCE: Mayor Harry Rilling; Commissioner Oscar DeStruge (3:21 p.m.); Commissioner Irene Dixon

STAFF: Fire Chief Denis McCarthy; Assistant Fire Chief Laurence Reilly; Deputy Fire Chief Todd Smith; Michelle DeLuca, Emergency Management Deputy Director; Fire Marshall Chris Hansen; Captain Jonathan Maggio

OTHERS: Emmet Hibson, Personnel Director; Robert Koch

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. A quorum was present.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting December 16, 2014

**** MS. DIXON MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**
**** MR. DESTRUGE SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

ACTION ITEMS

There were no action items.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT

e. COMMENDATIONS

Chief McCarthy asked Ms. DeLuca and Capt. Maggio to come forward. He said that Ms. DeLuca, Captain Maggio and Captain Bassett had responsibilities beyond the Department, and noted that they had been chosen by the Department for commendation. He noted that all three had been elected by their peers. He said Captain Maggio serves as the Region 1 Emergency Planning Team, ESF 20, and Marine Group tri-chair; Michelle DeLuca serves as the vice-chairwoman of the Region 1 Emergency Planning Team, and also Chairs the Steering Committee; and Captain

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Bassett serves as co-chairman of the Regional Emergency Hazardous Materials Response Team, which serves all 14 communities within Region 1. He noted it takes daily attention to perform all their duties, and acknowledged that their involvement has multiplied the effect of the force. Chief McCarthy then read the Letters of Commendation for Captain Maggio, Captain Bassett, and Ms. DeLuca. He noted that Captain Bassett could not be there because of another commitment.

a. BUDGET REPORT

Chief McCarthy then said they have done their mid-year budget review, and said that the operating expenses, which should be 50% of the year's expenses, were being tracked appropriately; he noted, however, that not all are tracked evenly, for example in instances of blanket orders. He said they show a \$900,000 projected positive for where they should be with salaries and overtime by the end of the year; he said they expect that number to come down, but this is a good signal that they'll remain in the positive throughout the year. He said they'd submitted an operating budget about 1.5% above that of the current year, noting that in particular they'd requested additional funds for a test consultant. He said that number, \$75,000 – when the Finance Department represented their increase – showed a little higher because it did not show the revenue they would receive from the application process. He said they nearly offset each other, noting that the cost of the test was roughly \$95,000 from beginning to end, including the consultant, and they factored in somewhere around \$75,000 in receipts, with an applicant fee of \$100/candidate. He said there were about 750 applicants this time, which is less than the previous time, when 1,900 candidates applied, and just over 1,000 took the test. He said they'd continue to work on this project.

Mayor Rilling then asked about scholarships for the application. Chief McCarthy said that personnel has a means to take care of this, and that entry fees as well as entry level test prep fees could be waived if needed. He said the Cadet program is coming along very well. Ms. DeLuca, Captain Bassett, Mr. Maher and Mr. Holmes have worked with the group. He said that Ms. DeLuca just arranged for Kickboxing. Ms. DeLuca then talked about how much they enjoyed kickboxing in the past, noting that whoever the trainer is will incorporate conflict resolution with this as well. She said it's a great workout and also free. Mayor Rilling then said he knows that the last time they hadn't tried to recruit adult Police Cadets to serve as an assistant or advisor; he asked if they'd tried that this time. Ms. DeLuca said that there is a retired officer – one of the cadets that aged out – who is now at NCC, and she is involved as an advisor. Mayor Rilling said the last explorer problem ended up dissolving because they didn't have someone who could step in when they were shorthanded, and that it eventually got to be too cumbersome for the officers. Chief McCarthy said that he thinks the relationship with the Police Department has been beneficial. Ms. Dixon then said to keep up the good work. Chief McCarthy then talked about test

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prep that was developed for NCC; he said the fee was \$195 dollars, and two young women who were cadets – 18, and about to be 18 – were involved with this.

b. FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT PROGRAM

Chief McCarthy then said he and Mr. Hibson have been working on this, and reviewed a meeting in New Haven to understand their process; they used a consultant that he has been in touch with. He said they want to make sure there is equal opportunity in the test, that they have good candidates, higher minority participation, and generally success in the process. He said they will hopefully have more to report on with the recruitment process in February

Commissioner Destruge arrived at 3:21 p.m.

Chief McCarthy then talked about the results of the 2009 test, noting that they'd attracted 102 minority applicants – with scores ranging from 97 to below 70. He said when they saw that, they saw the need to improve their effort. He said in the 2013 test they increased minority participation to 215, which was about 100 additional applicants. Mayor Rilling asked if they were in chronological order as far as written score. Chief McCarthy said yes. He said there were 1,000 applicants in 2013 (~750 were white males, the rest were minorities and female candidates). Mayor Rilling then asked if they could get a more complete list, as it'd be interesting to see where minorities fell opposed to others. Chief McCarthy then noted that residents of Norwalk received 5 points and moved to the top of the list. He said that in working with the Personnel Department they looked at all the scores. He said in the top 87% of applicant pool there is 1 Asian, 1 African-American female, and there were 2 white females. He noted that the African-American female did not present, and that it was unclear why. He said they did significant review of the applicants and their demographics, noting that 16% of applicants came from Norwalk. He said the reason this information is important is that, going into the next test, they want to share this with the consultant to overcome known challenges in the applicant role. He said they work very hard to provide test prep programs; 250 people came and took test prep classes. The end result was they did not have significant number of minorities in the interview pool. He said the end result was that they didn't have significant numbers of minorities in the interview pools; the net result is, in the top 87%, in which they interview 50-75 people, they did not have enough people score high enough to warrant a job interview.

Mayor Rilling then asked if they had data regarding people that took the test prep and their relative score vs. those that did not. Chief McCarthy said that the two groups were very similar in size and makeup. He said there were two 8 week sessions, but they didn't compare their final scores. He said he'll check to see who scored in the top bracket and get that information back to them. He then asked Mr. Hibson if he had anything to say on the matter. Mr. Hibson said he did

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not. Chief McCarthy then said their experiences aren't unique – New Haven has gone through extraordinary means to increase diversity. He said that they would do everything they could to increase diversity, as well. Mayor Rilling then asked if there were any questions from the commissioners.

d. FIRE STATION RENOVATIONS

Mayor Rilling said that he had three documents with 2014 written on them; he asked Chief McCarthy if these were meant to read 2015. Chief McCarthy confirmed this. He then said they'd developed a plan to retire the \$970,000 that is the balance of the headquarters project in station 4 renovation project. He said they are making that money available in the general fund now, noting that they still have a number of small items that have remained, and for which they will eventually owe the State of CT \$50,000 for redesigning the slope outside the fire station, which was part and parcel to an easement they provided to the City. He said he was not sure whether that bill will come to fruition, but they've kept that money in reserve. He said he's worked with Building and Mgmt. to develop an estimate for work on Station 1 on New Canaan Ave, and also on Meadow St. for the roof, HBAC and boiler, and 101 Fairfield Ave. which requires exterior siding and painting, as well as all stations with the vehicle exhaust system. He said that is a supplemental appropriation request he's making to the Board of Estimate, which will be done in conjunction with a \$35,000 request for a study of the Cranberry neighborhood project, and which will equal the amount retired from the capital projects. He said he has submitted this to the Finance Department, and thinks it will head to the BET. He said this came at the recommendation of Mayor Rilling.

He said when this work is done, and they currently have a paving and drainage plan funded for station 1 and 5, the paving will all be completed with another capital budget request the following year for some minor additional paving work; most of the roofs will be newer except for 100 Fairfield Ave. He said Station 1 has a 15 year old roof, and will be completely renovated; the major work at Station 5 will be done; station 3 is being funded by some Station maintenance funds that they have as well as the taxpayers of the district, which Captain Maggio has been involved in. He said Station 4 then will be the only station that isn't being worked on, and will stay that way until the study is completed and they figure out what to do with it. Mayor Rilling asked the Commissioners if there were any questions. He then said he thinks they can support fixing up stations that need it.

ASSISTANT CHIEF'S REPORT

a. OPERATIONS REPORT

Assistant Chief Reilly then gave an overview of incidents that had occurred that month – notably a concealed fire at BJ’s restaurant, a tractor trailer that somehow hit the water main under the Strawberry Hill overpass, which closed down I-95. He said on the 7th they went to New Canaan to assist a propane vendor with a leak; they burned the propane off to empty the tank. Over the weekend there was a carbon monoxide leak, and people were taken to the hospital. He then talked about iPads being used assigned to firetrucks. When they have a call they have the address of the call, and they can then go to the map, which would show where the call is/where the truck is, as well as where fire hydrants are. He said they used to use paper maps, but now they are moving to electronics. Instead of signing on in the radio when they are dispatched, there is a button to press that lets dispatch know they are responding.

Mayor Rilling then asked about the severity of the carbon monoxide incident – specifically what 700 parts per million meant. Assistant Chief Reilly then said that was fairly fatal. Deputy Chief Smith then gave some more information on carbon monoxide poisoning. Chief McCarthy then asked Deputy Chief Smith to tell them more about his catenary project with Metro North.

Deputy Chief Smith said he has a GCIS layer from Metro North that has every catenary across the area. He said every pole in NY is numbered. He said every railroad uses catenaries, and he’s been working on mapping out access to the railroad so in case something happens like in Westport, where a train breaks down with people in it in the summer, they now know which road serves as the best access point to that catenary. He said he had to get in contact with Metro North to see if they object to getting the numbers listed in their database; he said they didn’t really want to share that information, and if that is the case the City could upload the info right into their iPad. Chief McCarthy said when things happen between stations it becomes complicated; command posts need to be established. He said Norwalk Fire Dept. was chosen to partner with/pilot an effort to make this work. Commissioner DeSturges said congratulations for being a visionary unit. Mr. Hansen said there are so many applications for the new technology. Chief McCarthy said this will be crucial in taking further steps to make everything easier, and safer. Commissioner DeSturges then said this will be great coupled with the drones. Commissioner Dixon then asked how close the view was, and whether the technology would be like Google Maps. Mr. Hansen said yes, they actually have google maps. Assistant Chief Reilly said that everyone in the Southwest region landing agency group paid for a flyover by JAS maps, which is even better than Google Maps. Chief McCarthy said he thought they do this every 5 years.

FIRE MARSHAL’S REPORT

a. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Mr. Hansen passed out packets on carbon monoxide, and said he’d get it up on the website soon. Mayor Rilling said he also recommended the media get this out. He certainly thinks people

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should have access to this. Mr. Hansen going down list of fires in 2014, there was really only one commercial fire, and that happened in the floor. But when they read 6 carbon monoxide incidents, it's time for public education. He said as far as summary of activities: they have a fire fighter on late duty, who is savvy enough to use excel who created a spreadsheet of floor plans, so even the older stuff they will be converting back and getting newer versions of will be added to the list. He said out of 250 he's on 160.

b. FIRE REPORTS

Mr. Hansen said they've had issues with compliance during inspections. He said they'd had a meeting to buddy up when going out, or go out with the Deputy Fire Marshall. He then noted that the experience of taking people to court to run it through doesn't happen enough.

c. FIRE MARSHAL FEES

Mr. Hansen said what they take in at the front desk is \$2,999. He said they had an auditor come in and it was perfect. Mayor Rilling asked if that was the auditor from Mr. Hamilton's office. Mr. Hansen said yes, it was Simone. He said it was a great process because they found deficiencies, and now their day to day activities have run smoother than they usually did. He said as far as Fire House software is concerned, they are about 85% things like what happened on Wall Street don't happen again. He said reports should be finished on January 21. Mayor Rilling asked if they ever heard back from Mr. Spahr. Mr. Hansen said they should have, but they didn't. Mayor Rilling asked to be added to the email, along with Mr. Coppola, to Mr. Spahr.

Chief McCarthy asked if there would be a special meeting to review this with Mr. Spahr. Mayor Rilling said yes. Mr. Hansen then asked if he had some of his own ideas that they should have in place. Mayor Rilling said that it's just good to have that dialogue. Mr. Hansen said that after Wednesday should be better; he's done everything in his power to fix this dam. Mr. Hansen said there were 221 inspections in December.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Ms. DeLuca said their first meeting was with the Building Wardens at City Hall to run through for the preliminary draft of their response guide for all school buildings. She said they ran through the guide, did some question/answers, and noted that they'd give feedback on content and that they'd provide an updated version for all the City Hall members as well as Health Dept. and other building staff. She said there had been two capital requests under Building Management for a notification system, and for another person to staff the Meet Desk area; she said ideally they'd like to wait until that's all in place, but they need to get version 1 out so

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there's some training is important. She said they reviewed the "see something say something" concept and had worked at building up a culture of preparedness.

Chief McCarthy said it was clear from that meeting that people feel uncomfortable to threatened about angry residents coming in to City Hall; he said this will give them the tools to properly react. He said Norwalk PD and FD would be there to overlook and help. Mayor Rilling then noted there is a delicate balance to be maintained between keeping City Hall secure, but also making sure it doesn't become a fortress. Ms. DeLuca said that everyone seemed to be on board; it is easy to update and get out via email. She said on February 18 they will be participating in an active shooter response. She said they have to have a conference call system; there will be 15 cities from around the country that will be players, and another 10-15 cities that will be observers. She said this is a great way to see what others are doing, and because its FEMA Emergency Management, it should be pretty well put together. Chief McCarthy said there will be a sequence of phases to simulate the active shooter scenario; they want to make sure they can handle everything in such a situation. Mayor Rilling asked if Commissioners are allowed to be observers. Chief McCarthy said he included him on the list. Ms. DeLuca said they'd be in contact, and work, with the Red Cross; the carbon monoxide situation needs to be figured out, insofar as how they respond as a municipality is concerned. She said ultimately it comes down to coordinating the response process.

TRAINING REPORT

a. EMT/EMR REFRESHER TRAINING COMPLETED AND 31 MEN RECERTIFIED THIS YEAR

Mr. Smith said they just finished their refresher at the end of December; this was a quarter of the Department, and was done by the Hospital.

b. CPR RECERTIFICATION ONGOING

He said CPR recertification is just starting. He said they'd had a couple deliveries that took precedence over that. He said this was good, as the last month there were apparently 5-6 cardiac arrest calls.

c. NEW BAILOUT RESCUE TRAINING ONGOING

Mr. Smith said they are getting training with harnesses; that's starting and is underway. Mayor Rilling asked where this would be. Mr. Smith said they are hosting it at the Fire Department.

d. TASKFORCE ONE NEW OFFICER COMMAND TWO DAYS COURSE CONFIRMED FOR MARCH

Mr. Smith said they are hosting a 2-day command course in March for new officers through Taskforce One; they are getting 3 seats in it, and the goal is to teach new officers how to read people – how to command. He said there are 6 of their people that want to take it, and it's geared towards new officers, so they'll see how that works. Chief McCarthy then talked about training Dispatchers via Bowmac; he said one of the initiatives that came from Sandy Hook was better engagement of dispatchers and telecommunicators as a key element in those kind of events. He said they've received aid from Bowmac to help the 25 or so Dispatchers from the region in this process. Ms. DeLuca noted that this will be from January 27-28.

**e. REGIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM 5 DAYS COMMAND COURSE
BY GRANT ALSO HERE IN FALL**

Mr. Smith said the Regional Incident Management Team did a 5-day incident command seminar in the Fall. He said this takes ICS 300-400, which are NIMS courses, which breaks down each of the subsections. He said they are required to have each of those sections. He said the new building has allowed them to bring training to this location, which they didn't have in the past. He also noted that the fire officer 1 certification program was in October, and that they would host a ladder operator in September here as well.

UNION PRESIDENT REPORT

There were no items.

OLD BUSINESS

Chief McCarthy said he had something for old business. Captain Maggio said the project on Vandam St. is about half done; he noted that the new kitchen will be electrified, the layout flows better. He said that, as the Chief mentioned earlier, most of the work has been done in-house. He said a lot of tradesmen they've had are licensed professionals. He noted that they were able to restore some things that were 100 years old. He said they made molds, and moved the old fire pole from the back of the station to the new kitchen, which will drop them off near the apparatus. He said people have taken pride in the work, and offered some services for free. Chief McCarthy said this was great, and was essentially a sympathetic preservation: it would preserve elements of the station that are worth saving and have historical significance, but also ensure that the station is in line with modern standards. Mayor Rilling then asked if stations 3, 5, 4 have rooms that would facilitate a commission meeting. Chief McCarthy said only New Canaan Ave. and here would be appropriate for handicap access, which is crucial for Public Meetings.

Mayor Rilling said the reason this would be nice, for him at least, is that they'd be able to see what was going on there, and they'd also be able to meet some of the firefighters, and get them to sit in on Commission meetings. Chief McCarthy said he could schedule the next meeting for Station 1 or 3. Mayor Rilling asked that he book it for Station 3 because he'd like to see some of the renovations. Captain Maggio then noted that some of the material is being reused. Ms. Dixon said great job. Mr. Destruge said they're coming up for a new one, but they'd still like to have the existing report. He asked when the new one was coming up. Chief McCarthy said that the current report runs until June 30, 2016. Mr. Destruge asked if they could email him that.

PERSONNEL

EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS SALARY INCREASES FOR AC REILLY & CHIEF MCCARTHY & EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT RENEWAL FOR CHIEF MCCARTHY

- ** MS. DIXON MOVED TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**
- ** MR. DESTRUGE SECONDED**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The Commissioners went into Executive Session at 4:15 p.m. and reconvened the regular meeting at 6:15 p.m.

- ** MS. DIXON MOVED NOT TO EXTEND CHIEF MCCARTHY'S MAY 7, 2009 EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT AND ALLOW IT TO TERMINATE ON MAY 1, 2015.**
- ** MR. DESTRUGE SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- ** MR. DESTRUGE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MS. DIXON SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Justin Hoffmann
Telesco Secretarial Services