

# Town of Suffield



## **Board of Fire Commissioners** **Minutes**

Minutes of the Fire Commission Meeting  
August 9, 2016

Commission Chair, Jeremiah Mahoney, called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. at the Suffield Police Department Community Room. Present: P. Christian, J. Mahoney, J. Caron, E. O'Hurley, A. Parrish, R. Gemme, Chief Flynn, Fire Marshal M. Thibedeau and observers.

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Secretary's Report**

O'Hurley moved, Gemme seconded to approve the minutes of the July 12, 2016 Commission meeting as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Financial Report**

The Commission reviewed current year to date financial information for 2016-17. Chief Flynn brought to the Commission's attention an error in the numbers relating to "Service Maintenance Contracts" which has been identified and will be corrected. The 2015-16 final budget numbers are still incomplete as there are various discrepancies that Chief Flynn is working on with the Finance Director. Discussion ensued as to the specific discrepancies, why there is a delay and what the anticipated numbers should be. Christian moved, Caron seconded to approve the financial report as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Correspondence**

None

### **Calls and Activities**

The Commission reviewed the report for July. Chief Flynn noted that it was a busy month with 59 calls averaging 7 personnel per call. The 7 personnel included 3 career and 4 volunteer firefighters per call. Chief Flynn reported that none of the calls were of substance, however, a barn fire on North Street could have been an issue had the homeowner not been at the residence and immediately called in the fire.

### **Public Comment**

Tom McCabe, 48 Lebria Road. Mr. McCabe noted that he was speaking on his own behalf and wanted to comment on the portion of the Fire Commission Minutes that related to the Fire Chief's professional activities. He hoped that the Commission would consider these four "value-add attributes" as they try to determine how to move forward with this issue. 1) Being a part of the current organizations provides the Chief access to leading edge thought on firefighting tactics and the science behind fires and how to attack them. This knowledge is beneficial as it all comes back to firefighters.

2) The Chief's involvement in various organizations provides a network of Chief Officers to interact with when in or out of town. This network can be used to bounce ideas off of which could be of management concern to a Chief Officer, especially to one who is running a combination department. 3) The Chief has access to legislative developments that are ongoing and would be of importance to firefighters. Mr. McCabe mentioned cancer risks as an example and noted that all firefighters now have two hoods in order to have a clean hood available if necessary. 4) It adds to the stature of the Department to have a Chief that is as engaged as Chief Flynn is with a broader circle of Chief Officers. All combined, these attributes contribute to making the Department as "excellent as it can be," which he feels is the shared goal of all.

### **Old Business**

- Chief Flynn referenced an email sent by First Selectmen Mack on July 25, 2016 to the members of the Fire Commission regarding the Fire Department's apparatus needs. First Selectman Mack asked the Fire Commission to perform due diligence to ensure the right decision for the Town is being made from a safety and fiscal standpoint. She requested a recommendation be presented to the Board of Selectmen by the September 21, 2016 Board of Selectmen's meeting.
- Chairman Mahoney noted that he was unaware of the referenced email. Caron provided the email for review.
- Interpretation of First Selectmen Mack's request was discussed.
- The original ACCE presentation for Apparatus Replacement details were discussed.
- Parrish asked if additional options such as rehabilitating or cost sharing with other towns had been investigated. Chief Flynn explained these options and why they may not be the most effective options.
- Chief Flynn gave a high level comparison of pricing for certain vehicles by different manufacturers.
- Caron suggested the possibility of smaller vehicles or dual purpose vehicles as an option. Chief Flynn discussed some of the equipment requirements and how they would or would not work on the vehicles Caron was suggesting.
- Chairman Mahoney suggested the topic be included for discussion at the next Fire Commission meeting.
- Caron asked Chief Flynn to obtain ballpark pricing with regard to dual purpose vehicles in order assist in making the most informed decision and comply with First Selectman Mack's requests.

### **New Business**

- Chief Flynn presented the job description for Probationary/Firefighter – Step I
- Job description was reviewed and discussed by Commission.
- Required Certification level was discussed. Caron expressed his opinion that requirements should include Firefighter II Certification as opposed to Firefighter I Certification which is currently in the job description. O'Hurley also expressed his opinion that the candidates should be certified pump operators.
- The process for written tests, applications, reviews, interviews and testing of potential candidates was discussed.
- Discussion occurred regarding the selection process and who will be involved in decision making. Human Resources for Town of Suffield will be involved in the process.
- O'Hurley stressed the need for terminology to be current on any written testing used in the hiring process.

### **Chief's Report**

- All vehicles are in service. Minor repairs/maintenance issues have been completed on Engine 3 and Engine 4.
- Station 3 oil separator has been completed. Door and masonry work has been completed.
- Overhang at Station 3 has been completed. Motion lights have been installed.
- Station 1 oil separator has been completed.
- Station 4 oil separator work is underway.
- Station 4 is in line to have roof replaced this year.
- Fire sprinkler system in Station 2 will begin at the end of the month. Final design details are being completed. Structural engineer is reviewing the weight of the sprinkler pipes prior to approving.
- Caron asked about the water issue at Station 2. Chief Flynn noted that the explanation given by CT Water did not make sense based on the amount of water and he would be following up on this.
- Station 4 also has a water usage issue.
- Chief Flynn feels that there is an issue with the water meters which is resulting in the water usage being incorrectly measured.
- Water meters are set to be replaced by CT Water in the near future at Station 1, 2 and 4.

### **Chairman's Report**

- Chairman Mahoney addressed Chief Flynn's Executive Activity Outside Suffield by providing detail from discussions held during the July 12, 2016 Fire Commission Meeting. Mahoney wanted to defer outside activities entirely, while Caron had expressed concerns and wanted to consider each activity on its own merit to determine the appropriate direction.
- Chairman Mahoney asked if it was fair to say that there was consensus amongst the Commission that any activities of the Chief which are outside of Suffield should be known about and approved by the Commission prior to the activity taking place. O'Hurley disagreed.
- Chairman Mahoney moved that any business activity which takes the Chief outside of Suffield requires prior approval by the commission. Christian seconded. Parrish has questions about logistics of this motion. Chairman Mahoney clarified that the point of the motion was to provide a "broad rule" starting point for the Fire Commission to build from. Parrish, Gemme, Caron, Christian and Mahoney in favor. O'Hurley opposed. Motion passed.
- List of Professional Commitments provided by Chief Flynn is reviewed. Commission members asked questions relating to the time commitments involved and the value of each. It is clarified that should the Professional Commitments on the list be approved, Chief Flynn is free to attend without further action or approval by the Fire Commission.
- Calculations of time away from Suffield, inclusive of vacation time, were discussed. Concerns were raised pertaining to the total amount of time away from Suffield as it is deemed to be substantial. Chief Flynn noted that despite his current involvement in outside activities, he has been able to perform his job effectively.
- ***CT Fire Chiefs Association Hartford County Representative to the Board of Directors.*** The Chairman reported the Chief had informed the commission that all meetings are held in the evening after normal business hours usually on the third Tuesday of the month and/or the fourth Tuesday of the month. Gemme moved, Parrish seconded to approve Chief Flynn's participation. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Capital Region Fire Chiefs Association.** The Chairman reported the Chief had informed the commission that meetings are held on the third Thursday every other month. Caron moved, Parrish seconded to approve Chief Flynn's participation. Motion passed unanimously.
- **Hartford County Emergency Plan.** The Chairman reported the Chief had informed the commission that meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month. Gemme moved, Parrish seconded to approve Chief Flynn's participation. Motion passed unanimously.
- **CT Career Fire Chiefs.** The Chairman reported the Chief had informed the commission that meetings are held between 9:00 and noon on the second Tuesday of the month. O'Hurley moved, Caron seconded to approve Chief Flynn's participation in the CT Career Fire Chiefs. Motion passed unanimously.
- **CT Fire Service Instructors Association.** The Chairman reported the Chief had informed the commission that meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month alternating days and evenings. The Chief said that he only attended meetings held during the day if the meetings were held at the Fire Academy in Windsor Locks. Caron moved to allow participation with the following stipulation: no prior approval by Fire Commission is required if the meeting is during the duty day (8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.) at the Fire Academy or after duty hours. Prior approval by Fire Commission IS required if the meeting is during the duty day (8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.) outside of the immediate area. Gemme seconded. Christian abstained. Caron, Gemme, Mahoney, Parrish and O'Hurley in favor. Motion passes.
- **New England Association of Fire Chiefs CT Director.** The Chairman reported the Chief had informed the commission that there were four meetings each year with meetings held on Friday afternoon and Saturday with the June Expo at Foxwoods Wednesday through Saturday with expenses covered by the organization. O'Hurley moved, Gemme seconded to approve Chief Flynn's participation. Mahoney and Christian opposed. O'Hurley, Gemme, Parrish and Caron in favor. Motion carries.
- **International Association of Fire Chiefs, Volunteer Combination officers Section, Board of Directors.** The Chairman reported the Chief had informed the commission that there are four meetings each year, usually in February, May, August and November. Three meetings held Thursday through Sunday with one usually Wednesday through Sunday with travel and accommodation expenses paid by the organization. O'Hurley moved to approve the Chief's participation, Caron seconded. Gemme abstained. O'Hurley and Caron in favor. Mahoney, Parrish, and Christian opposed. Motion Fails.

### **Fire Marshal's Report**

- Fire Marshal Thibedeau reported 71 contacts for service in the month of July.
- One day was spent going through the Suffield Senior Housing to test alarms and smoke detectors in 70 apartments.
- Conducted Fire Extinguisher Training at Health by Designs on Route 75 for 40 employees using the simulator prop that was awarded to the Suffield Fire Department by the Zac Foundation.

### **Other**

None

### **Personnel**

Rich Faraci, Firefighter Recruitment Committee, introduced new Firefighter Scott Kinsey. Firefighter Kinsey is new to town and resides on Hickory Street and will be a member of Company 4. Chairman Mahoney thanked Firefighter Faraci for his efforts in working with new people interested in joining the Suffield Fire Department.

**Executive Session**

Mahoney moved, Caron seconded to enter Executive Session at 8:43 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion to include Chain of Command and Personnel matters.

Caron moved, O'Hurley seconded to return to regular session at 9:29 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

**Adjournment**

Mahoney moved, Gemme seconded to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Paul Christian, Secretary