Town of Suffield

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SUFFIELD TOWN CLERK

Board of Fire Commissioners
Minutes

Minutes of the Fire Commission Meeting – January 12, 2016

Commission chair, Jeremiah Mahoney called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the main firehouse. Present: R. Gemme, P. Christian, J. Mahoney,, J Caron, E. O'Hurley, Chief Flynn, Fire Marshal M. Thibedeau, First Selectman Melissa Mack, and observers.

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Personnel
Chief Flynn introduced Rick Carlson to the Commission. Rick has been accepted for a probationary membership in the department.

Secretary's Report

- Christian moved, O'Hurley seconded to approve the minutes of the December 8 meeting as amended to fix a typo under election of Commission Secretary. The motion passed unanimously.
- O'Hurley moved, Caron seconded to approve the minutes of the December 30 special meeting as amended to reflect: 1) that Chief Flynn's requested trip to Baltimore on February 20-26, 2016 as an evaluator of federal grant applications will not incur any cost to the town of Suffield and 2) no stipend is paid to the individual covering for the Chief when he is out of town. Discussion followed. The motion passed.

Financial Report
The Commission reviewed the current year to date financial information. Gemme moved, Christian seconded to approve the financial reports as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence
Chief Flynn referred Commissioners to two items of correspondence in their packets:

- Letter dated December 15, 2015 from the Volunteer & Combination Officers Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs thanking Chief Flynn for his commitment as a member of the Board of Directors during this past year.
- A letter to the First Selectman from officers, staff and members of the Suffield Fire Department.

Agenda Change

- Chief Flynn requested and the Commissioners agreed to move the Fire Marshalls Report to be included in the Calls and Activities report section of the agenda.
- Chief Flynn requested and the Commissioners agreed that the 2016-2017 Budget Discussion be moved to the last item before Executive Session.

Public Comment

Amanda Thibedeau, 1510 North Stone Street, stated that the meeting was being recorded for documentation purposes.

Calls & Activities/Fire Marshal's Report

The Commission reviewed reports dated December 2015 and January 2015-December 2015. Fire Marshal Mike Thibedeau answered questions from Commissioners and provided more detail to the reports as requested.

Old Business

- 2015 FEMA AFG Grant application – Chief Flynn met with the Board of Finance for final approval to submit this application ($25,000 with 5% match). If the grant is received, it will be used to purchase two thermal imaging cameras, two, four gas meters and one e- hydraulic tool. The application will be submitted by the end of the day on Thursday.
- Chief's Professional Development/Fire Service Organizations Involvement – Chair Mahoney reviewed a list of organizations that Chief Flynn participates in and asked the amount of time commitment that was involved with each. The Chair stated that Commission needed to exercise a role in assessing the allocation of the Chief's time. Chief Flynn provided an approximate amount of time need for each organization meeting and stated that while several of them met monthly or quarterly, he did not attend all of the meetings, as many are not mandatory. Discussion followed on meeting locations.

  O'Hurley moved, Caron seconded that **the Fire Commission not limit Chief Flynn's professional development involvement with organizations within the response area of Connecticut/Springfield.** Discussion followed.

  Chief Flynn further elaborated that many of the CT professional meetings moved locations during the course of the year and he generally attends those closest to Suffield only as attendance is not mandatory. Commissioner O'Hurley stated that Chief Flynn brings back knowledge from these sessions to share with the Suffield Fire Department that is very important. The First Selectman asked how much of the professional development attended is professionally appropriate and stated she felt that many people benefit from the information Chief Flynn brings back. The Chair noted that the allocation of time spent with the International Association of Fire Chiefs is significant and asked if part of that could be reduced or covered partially with vacation time. Chief Flynn asked for time to consider that request.

Mahoney motioned, Christian seconded **to table this discussion until the next meeting or until appropriate.** The motion passed.

The First Selectman suggested contacting area organizations to ask about their professional development time allotments.

Chief's Report
Vehicles, Facilities and Equipment

- Preventative maintenance on all apparatus is up to date.
- Gas tank straps on Engine 3 need to be replaced.
- Arial ladder needs to be tested.
- Waiting for repairs to start on Station 3
- Report on exhaust system removal at the stations and failure of two air compressors

Chairs Report
None

New Business
Chief Flynn presented the proposed 2016-17 budget with three staffing options: 1) keep current staffing, 2) add one firefighter, 3) add 2 firefighters. He also shared the Fire Department's updated Capital Expenditures Summary Sheet reflecting changes in costs for items not purchased during 2015-16.

Gemme moved, Caron seconded **to submit the presented capital expenditure adjusted planning cycle to ACCE.** The motion passed with Christian voting against.

The Commission discussed the three staffing options at length.

O'Hurley moved, Caron seconded **to approve the 2016-17 budget based on the addition of two firefighters.** Discussion. The motion was defeated 2-3 with O'Hurley and Caron voting for and Gemme, Christian and Mahoney voting against.

Mahoney moved, Christian seconded to **approve the 2016-17 budget based on current staffing.**
The motion was defeated 2-3 with Mahoney and Christian voting for and Gemme, Caron and O'Hurley voting against.

Caron moved, O'Hurley seconded **to approve the 2016-17 budget based on the addition of one firefighter.** The motion passed 3-2 with Caron, Gemme, and O'Hurley voting for, Christian, and Mahoney voting against.

Chief's Salary 2016-17 for Budget

Chief Flynn waived his right to have an Executive Session to address his salary for the 2016-17 budget.

The Chair commended Chief Flynn on his performance as Chief of the Suffield Fire Department since his arrival. He has met and continues to meet all challenges of that position. The Chair stated a bit more transparency with the Commission is something that should be worked on for the future in regards to the Chief's memberships on boards/committees. The Chair recommended a salary increase of 4%. Commissioner O'Hurley stated that he was new to the Suffield Fire Commission and commended Chief Flynn for bringing back extensive knowledge from the Professional Development he attends.

Gemme moved, Caron seconded **to recommend a 4% salary increase for Chief Flynn in the 2016-17 budget.** The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

O'Hurley moved, Mahoney seconded to adjourn the meeting adjourned at 9:36 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Christian
Secretary

Volunteer & Combination Officers Section
of The International Association of Fire Chiefs
4025 Fair Ridge Drive • Fairfax, VA 22033-2868 • Tel: 703/273-0911 • www.iafc.org

December 15, 2015

Chuck

Dear Chief Flynn,

Thanks for dedicating your time, energy, and knowledge to the VCOS board of directors and the entire volunteer and combination fire service. I really appreciate all the projects and initiatives you've been involved with that further the mission of the VCOS and better the fire service. You truly are an integral part in the implementation of the VCOS' mission to, "provide chiefs and chief officers who manage volunteers within a volunteer or combination fire, rescue or EMS delivery system with information, education, services and representation to enhance their professionalism."

This has been a successful year due to your dedication and commitment. It is quite inspiring to think about how much VCOS continues to improve and expand; that wouldn't be possible without your involvement and hard work. Your passion for the fire service is evident in all that you do. I feel honored to work with you and the rest of the VCOS board members. I personally give a chief's salute to you, your department members, elected officials, community residents, and most importantly, your family. I hope you have a wonderful holiday season and look forward to all of the great accomplishments to come in 2016.

Sincerely,

Timothy S. Wall

Chief Timothy S. Wall
Chair, Volunteer and Combination Officers Section
International Association of Fire Chiefs

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December 31, 2015

Melissa Mack
Suffield First Selectman
83 Mountain Road
Suffield, CT 06072

RE: December 30, 2015 Emergency Fire Commission Meeting

Dear Madam Selectman:

On Tuesday evening, December 30, 2015, a special Fire Commission Meeting was held at Company 1 at 7 p.m. It was attended by 5 Commission Members, Chief Flynn, and several Officers and Members of the Suffield Fire Department to vote on his request to attend and participate in the FEMA Grant Review in Baltimore, Maryland in February, 2016. This is an event in which he has attended many times in the past, and is by invitation only from the FEMA Administration. The Commission voted on a 3-2 vote against his attendance at the event, after what appeared to be a drawn out and apparently reluctant, Second to the Motion, to keep Chief Flynn from attending this event as part of his Professional Development.

It should be noted that this event is of little to no cost to the Town of Suffield, despite the availability of funds specifically allotted to the Chief for events and professional development such as this event in question would undoubtedly provide. Furthermore, it is very concerning that this is potentially only the first step in further reducing Chief Flynn's travels out of town for Professional Development. The meeting was closed with no inquiry allowed by the attending personnel, nor public comment invited.

After the meeting was closed, many Fire Department Members spoke to the Commission in favor of Chief Flynn's attendance at this event, and what his involvement brings back to the Officers, Staff, Members, and Townspeople of Suffield. We feel that this is not only a setback, but detrimental to our Organization and Town, and that the overall morale in the Fire Department will suffer as a result of the apparent micromanagement that has seemingly begun of the Chief's professional development activities. As the Fire Service demands more and more of us at each call we attend, we don't always have the ability to stay on top of what's happening in our industry and the Chief's attendance and participation in these events brings back vital information regarding cutting edge technology, creative and new idea models for training that put us at a greater advantage in emergency situations, and makes us a model for surrounding towns because Suffield is "in the know". Although this may seem like a new approach from where the Department's roots are, it is crucial to stay relevant in Firefighter Training, Grants for new equipment and personnel, Firefighter health and safety concerns, and Firefighter recruitment and retention.

After the meeting was adjourned, several members of the fire department asked the Commission why they felt it was necessary that Chief Flynn stay in town for the week of the Event, and the Chairman's response was that he is the Chief and as such, is expected to respond to all emergencies, and that he needs to be available for an emergency in town should one occur. The Staff of Suffield Fire Department operates with a chain of command and are prepared for, have, and will continue, to facilitate Emergency Operations should the need arise during any short term absences of our Chief, that may be considered Professional Development, vacations or other events or personal business that may necessitate his absence from town.

We are writing for your consideration in review of the Commission minutes of this meeting. We question if the recent Charter revision grants you the authority to overturn the Commission decision, and we humbly request your support as we stand with our Chief.

Respectfully,

Officers, Staff, and Members of the Suffield Fire Department.