

**Chester Board of Fire Commissioners**  
**Minutes – December 20, 2023**  
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The Chester Board of Fire Commissioners met on December 20, 2023 at the Fire House, 6 High Street. In attendance were Bob Bandzes, Charlene Janecek, Bettie Perreault and Rick Schreiber. Also, present were Chief James Grzybowski, Fire Marshal Dick Leighton, Battalion Chief and Fire Investigator Ben Belisle, TFC Matt Warren, Officer Kershen Bissette, Deputy Chief Dylan Grzybowski and Chief's Administrative Assistant Karen Schaefer.

Item 1: Call to Order

Chair Bettie Perreault called the meeting to order at 7:15 P.M once all were present.

Item 2: Audience of Citizens – there were none present.

Item 3: Election of Officers

Election of Chair, Vice Chair and a Secretary are required following each municipal election. With this clarification,

**On Motion by Rick Schreiber, seconded by Bob Bandzes, Bettie Perreault was re-elected as Chair of the Commission.**

**On Motion by Bettie Perreault, seconded by Rich Schreiber, Bob Quale was re-elected as Vice Chair of the Commission.**

After reviewing a previous decision made by the Commissioners, the ex officio member representing the Board of Selectmen was selected to serve as the Commission's Secretary.

Item 4: As provided in the meeting Agenda, the Executive Session was held with only members Bandzes, Janecek, Perreault and Schreiber present. The duties and responsibilities of the Board of Fire Commissioners, its relationship with the Chester Hose Company and appointees, staff and members were discussed. No actions or votes were taken during the Executive Session.

Item 5. Report of Board of Selectmen

There was nobody present to represent the Selectmen.

Item 4. Report of Fire Chief

Chief Grzybowski distributed the activity report for November, showing 65 calls responded to during the month. For the first five months of the fiscal year, a total of 396 calls had been responded to, an increase of 40 calls from the previous year. Review of the activity indicated that the closing of Chesterfield's would have little impact on call activity, and that rehab patients vs long-term care patients represented a higher percentage of calls made. Call activity fluctuates but continues to rise, year over year.

The annual holiday wreath sale was highly successful, selling out within the first of the two-day event. Area departments along the Connecticut River from Cromwell to

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Saybrook have formed the Connecticut River Marine Task Force, with a focus on coordination between departments, and the sharing of training, knowledge and equipment. The Department's first Holiday Appreciation Dinner held earlier in the month was well attended and highly successful, with 85 members and invited guests present. The Department's "Santa Comes to Town" visit followed the Dinner the following day, when Santa distributed gifts of donated toys to a number of local families' children.

The Department's marine vessel, which is still in the water, will be pulled within the next few weeks, but will remain in limited service over the winter.

Battalion Chief Belisle advised the Town's Tax Abatement Ordinance is being reviewed by the Department and once finalized will be presented to Department members for approval, after which it will be forwarded to the Fire Commissioners, then Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance before being presented at a Town Meeting for final approval.

The Department's budget is currently 51.78% expended, with the Chief noting that purchases and equipment and vehicle maintenance are typically done early in the fiscal year. Ambulance income, year to date, is \$115,438.

**Item 5: Report of Fire Marshal:**

Fire Marshal Leighton advised the previous month had been a relatively quiet month, with considerable administrative work performed. The office worked with the local Police Department in connection with a high-volume of alarm calls from a local business, and will be meeting with the new owner(s) of two larger properties regarding future plans and uses. A property adjacent to Chester Airport, which the town had taken over for taxes and remediated brownfield contamination, had recently been sold.

Fire Investigator Belisle continue working to assist the Fire Marshal's office and "fits in really well" according to Leighton.

A part-time employee is now providing clerical services to multiple offices, relieving personnel in the Building Department, Fire Marshal's office and Public Works, allowing the employees of those departments to concentrate on job-related duties rather than clerical tasks. The sprinkler system in the Town Hall is currently a "work in progress" with contractors taking remedial steps pending a more comprehensive solution. Income for the offices of Fire Marshal and Building Official continue to cover most expenditures associated with them.

**Item 6: Report of Resident State Trooper**

TFC Matthew Warren advised that the Police Department worked closely with the Fire Department, Emergency Management, Public Works and officials during the recent weather event. "Everything was taken care of within minutes" was his summation of the cooperation of personnel. Police officials worked with Cliff's Market (Essex) and was able to donate a number of turkeys to local families at Thanksgiving.

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Replacing department vehicles has become a problem, with virtually none available for purchase. Current vehicles are old and in need of major repairs, with the department “hurting”. Taser equipment has been upgraded, with up-dating equipment mostly completed. Accreditations have been successfully completed.

Changed personnel for the regional Animal Control Officer has left both Chester and Deep River with less coverage. Guidelines for that office need to be prepared and approved for the tri-town area for mutual control and other legal issues.

**Item 7. Report of Emergency Management Director**

While the Director has not been able to attend these meetings, he is available when needed. It is anticipated that future work loads will permit time to attend and participate.

**Item 8. Old Business:** There was nothing to report at this time.

**Item 9. Approval of Minutes of the meeting on November 15, 2023:**

**On motion by Rick Schreiber, seconded by Bob Bandzes, the minutes of the November 15, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved. Charlene Janecek abstained as she is a newly-appointed Commissioner and had not been at that meeting.**

**Item 10. Reports:**

Nothing was brought up by members or guests.

**Item 11. New Business:**

Bob Bandzes noted driver training occurring recently. The Chief advised that three department members had successfully passed the driving test.

**Item 12. Correspondence:**

Nothing had been received.

**Item 13. Other – Members or Guests:** No one brought anything up.

**Item 14. Adjournment:**

There being no further business brought up,

**On Motion by Rick Schreiber, seconded by Charlene Janecek, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Bettie Perreault*

Bettie Perreault, Chair