

Chester Board of Fire Commissioners
Minutes – January 17, 2024
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The Chester Board of Fire Commissioners met on January 17, 2024 at the Fire House, 6 High Street. In attendance were Bob Bandzes, Charlene Janecek, Bettie Perreault, Bob Quale and Rick Schreiber. Also, present were Chief James Grzybowski, Fire Marshal Dick Leighton, Battalion Chief and Fire Investigator Ben Belisle, First Selectman Cindy Legnar, TFC Matt Warren, Board of Finance member John Chillock and Chief's Administrative Assistant Karen Schaefer.

Item 1: Call to Order

Chair Bettie Perreault called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. followed by self-introductions by all present.

Item 2: Audience of Citizens – nobody offered any comment.

Item 3. Report of Board of Selectmen

First Selectman Legnar reported the budget process for the next fiscal year is underway, and that she has met with members of Rep. Joe Cortney and Rep. Christine Palm's staffs on numerous issues that could be helpful to Chester in a variety of ways. Funding and grants were among the topics that were discussed.

Item 4. Report of Fire Chief

Chief Grzybowski distributed the activity report for December 2023 showing that 65 calls had been responded to during the month. The new marine vessel is currently out of the water but will be available, if needed. The vessel will be out of service for a week later in January while Whelen installs updated and additional equipment. Whelen Engineering has donated a Tahoe vehicle to the Chester Hose Company for the use of the Chief or another designated member. In-service use document will be created to provide allowable uses for those using the vehicle. (This is the first vehicle – a Tahoe, that Whelen has donated to the Hose Company.) There had been no recent meetings of the new Truck Committee, although the Chief has been finalizing details with the vendor.

Review of the current year budget showed "front loaded" expenditures for a number of items for which payments had been made for items which would be used for the remainder of the fiscal year. A total of \$138,520 of income in reimbursement for ambulance services had been received for the first months of the fiscal year – off-setting expenditures for services which had been rendered. First medical responders who are no longer available because of new employment have resulted in an increase in mutual aid responses. Potential increases to rate of pay for pay-for-call members is being discussed and additional funding will be included in the Department's budget request for the 2024-25 fiscal year. The preliminary budget was reviewed briefly, along with individual capital expenditure items, with questions and answers from commission and others asked and answered. (Chief Grzybowski had met with Board of Finance members and Commissioner Bob Quale during the preparation of the draft budget.)

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Events and training programs the Hose Company will be participating in include, among others, the following:

- STBA Training, to be conducted with the Haddam department;
- Live fire training to be conducted with the Old Saybrook department;
- The training trailer has been re-located to the Middlesex County Fire Association that covers Region 2 as of December 2023. The Chief anticipates having the trailer available for a variety of uses for the Chester department and others during the current year.
- The annual Tractor Parade and the Hose Company's chili event will be held on February 18, 2024.

Item 5: Report of Fire Marshal:

Fire Marshal Leighton circulated the activity reports for the Fire Marshal and Building Official offices, and advised that the department remained "in the black" for the current fiscal year. Fire Investigator Belisle continues to work with the Fire Marshal's office.

Item 6: Report of Resident State Trooper

TFC Matthew Warren advised that an order has been placed for a new Tahoe vehicle for the Police Department, which would probably be available around the first of the next fiscal year. While increased pricing has been prevalent, a reduced price of \$50,500 has been negotiated for the vehicle, which must first be equipped with communication and lighting equipment before going into service. Warren is working with Whelen Engineering and members of the Deep River Police department on completing the new vehicle.

Activity for the Department and CT Police personnel showed a total of 126 stops in Chester for January 1 – 16, 2024. Many were for speeding or failing to stop at a stop sign and were issued by both local officers and state police officers. New officers have been assigned to Westbrook's Troop F and will be working with local officers as they start their service.

Item 7. Report of Emergency Management Director

While the Emergency Management Director was unable to attend, First Selectman Legnar advised the Board of Selectmen and other officials and consultants are working with numerous state and other agencies regarding the dams along Pattaconk Brook. Some of the dams are town owned, others are privately owned. Remediation measures to avoid potential failure(s) are being investigated, with some private owners cooperating in the funding required.

Item 8. Old Business:

Chief Grzybowski advised he is working on a possible grant application in connection with a diesel exhaust system for the Department in response to query by Bob Bandzes.

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Members also discussed disposal measures associated with a toxic foam that had been used by fire departments and is no longer used.

Item 9. Approval of Minutes of the meeting on December 20, 2023:

On motion by Rick Schreiber, seconded by Charlene Janecek, the minutes of the December 20, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved.

Item 10. Reports:

Nothing was brought up by members or guests.

Item 11. New Business:

Battalion Chief Belisle reviewed the tax exemption regulations that Department members have available. Recently enacted legislation has increased the eligibility to \$2,000 for member-owned property (real estate, motor vehicle, etc.), requiring up-dating of the Town's current ordinance. Eligible members will be able to take advantage of the exemption at a level based on their service record and property value(s).

The Board of Fire Commissioners will hold a Special Meeting to review and approve the proposed Department budget on Wednesday, January 31. Members will receive draft of the proposed budget for review prior to the meeting.

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 Bob Quale, seconded by Charlene Janecek, the meeting was adjourned at 8:52 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Bettie Perreault

Bettie Perreault, Chair