

**Chester Board of Fire Commissioners**  
**Minutes, October 25, 2017**  
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The Chester Board of Fire Commissioners held a rescheduled regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, October 25, 2017 at the Chester Fire House, 6 High Street, Chester, Connecticut. In attendance were Joel Severance, Rick Schreiber, Peter Zanardi, John Divis and Bettie Perreault. Ex-officio members present were Fire Chief John Brainard, Selectman Charlene Janacek, Fire Marshals Richard Leighton and David Roberge. Also present was Assistant Chief Kim Brainard. Chairman Severance called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. In the absence of Judy Brown, Bettie Perreault provides minutes.

Item 1: Approval of Minutes of September 20, 2017.

**Motion by Schreiber, second by Zanardi, to approve the September 20, 2017 Minutes as amended:** *Page 3, Paragraph 4, first sentence amended to read: Chairman Severance noted his pool could have been full of paper and fireworks shells this past weekend.* **Unanimously approved.**

Item 2: Audience of Citizens

There were none present.

Item 3: Report of Fire Marshal

Report of activities of the Office of Fire Marshal for the month of September 2017 was distributed. Activities and pending actions in connection with a variety of situations were noted. Questions and discussions included note of a “nuisance” investigated on September 9. The processing of a liquor permit in connection with a fund-raising event was reviewed, along with details of the expedited steps required to secure all approvals prior to the start of the actual event., Note was made that for First Friday and similar Merchants’ Association events individual retail establishments may serve but not sell alcoholic beverages and would not require issuance of a liquor permit. (Fire Marshal Roberge was commended on his pro-active role in successfully meeting the various approval deadlines for approval of the liquor permit.) It was noted that when an establishment engages the services of a caterer with a liquor license, a separate permit is not required. The enforcement duties of the office of Fire Marshal and those of other Town boards, commissions and officials, including enforcement of Zoning Regulations, was discussed.

Item 4: Report of Fire Chief

Chief John Brainard and Assistant Chief Kim Brainard, supported by John Divis, reported the air tanks on Engine 2 have now been fixed; Engine 1 will be going out for maintenance in the coming week. The officers reported that annual performance reviews have not been conducted in the past. As the personnel involved are Town employees, these reviews would be a Town responsibility, handled through the Selectman’s office and the Town’s Human Resources director, in conjunction with appropriate Fire Department officers. A review and possibly revision of the duties and responsibilities of Fire Department officers should also be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen and the Town’s Human Resources director.

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Item 5: Report of First Selectman

Selectman Janacek had nothing to report at this time.

Item 6: Report of Emergency Management Director

Emergency Management Director Severance advised he serves on Coast Guard groups. Included in the matters members were briefed on were the following:

- Guilford has ordered a new, more sophisticated drone; it can be requested if needed and would be particularly beneficial for marine search-and-rescue missions;
- Coast Guard “working groups” have designated Harbormasters as Responders in the case of maritime events; they are considered “Responders”, not First Responders;
- The new coordinator for the Coast Guard’s Harbor Master program will be taking time to review and become familiar with the program before initiating further action(s)
- Recent actions have made Harbormasters responsible for activities but not provided any funding, which has led to the local VSEMA group to fund a training session as well as cover meal costs for Harbor Masters and Deputies;
- For 2017 to date the Coast Guard has responded to 375 search and rescue responses between Stonington and Greenwich; this would not include activities in Chester which did not generate Coast Guard response(s).

Item 7: Financial Reports

(a) 2017 - 2018 Budget – Fire Department

Budget, year to date, was distributed with Deputy Chief Brainard advising that in previous years the costs associated with computer maintenance had been allocated to equipment maintenance; this will be adjusted and corrected going forward. The costs associated with Training were noted, at which time the need to have those who elect training should have already secured and maintained certification(s) for duties, tasks and responsibilities associated with additional training, and that it should be the responsibility of Fire Department officers to ensure that all related training of an individual is coordinated and maintained.

(b) 2017 – 2018 Budget – Fire Marshal

Budget, year to date, was distributed with Fire Marshal Leighton stating that the activities for the period of July, August and September of the current year was the busiest since assuming those duties in 2011. To ensure official coverage on a 365/24/7 basis, the three local officials “rotate” between assignments and events as needed. The duties include activities associated with incidents and events, inspections, administrative tasks, etc. Fluctuation of workload during a given year was pointed out, with note that in winter, activity tends to be slower. Details of what the duties entail and how they are handled were reviewed.

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Item 8: Old Business

There was none brought forward.

Item 9: New Business

Fire Marshal Leighton distributed an extensive spreadsheet detailing activities of the Fire Marshals' office over the past six-and-one-half years (2011 – 2017, current). Using information from the Town Assessors' records for identification of property types, the "statistical need" within each category shows a total of 2,904 person-hours required annually, versus the 1,850 person-hours of a single employee for the same period. The current arrangement allows the three officials available to cover required activities and duties as they occur, with availability rotating as needed.

Fire Marshal Roberge offered an overview of activities associated with an existing business or location as separate and distinct from an activity at the same business or location for a completely unrelated purpose, such as a "fund raiser" or similar. The advisability of having all Town boards, commissions, agencies and officials review, coordinate and implement appropriate procedures was discussed, including but not limited to implementation of ordinance, regulation, etc. all in the interest of protecting health and safety and providing a system for inspection and regulation to ensure compliance. Similar concerns were voiced and discussed in connection with various uses of bed & breakfast establishments, private residents utilized as de facto boarding houses, bed & breakfast arrangements with few rooms used, the current "Airbnb" arrangements, and similar. The need to coordinate the activities, duties and responsibilities of the various agencies, boards, commissions and officials involved in regulating and enforcing appropriate regulations was discussed and should be pursued.

There was brief discussion of the activities associated with an incident involving the illegal discharge of fireworks and the steps to be taken to properly notify appropriate officials in similar situations.

Item 10: Adjournment

**Motion was made by Schreiber, second by Zanardi, to adjourn at 8:47 PM. Unanimously Approved.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Bettie Perreault*  
Acting Secretary