

Chester Board of Fire Commissioners
Special Meeting, April 14, 2015
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The Chester Board of Fire Commissioners held a Special Meeting on Tuesday, April 14, 2015, at the Chester Fire House, 6 High Street, Chester, Connecticut. In attendance were Joel Severance, Rick Schreiber, John Divis and Peter Zanardi. Ex-Officio members present include Deputy Fire Chief James Schaefer, Fire Marshal Richard Leighton and John Brodzinski on behalf of Chief James Grzybowski (who at the last minute could not attend due to a personal emergency).

**Item 1: Approval of Minutes of March 18, 2015
Motion by Schreiber, second by Zanardi, to approve March 18, 2015 Minutes as written. Unanimously Approved.**

Item 2: Audience of Citizens – none.

It was unanimously agreed to move Agenda Item #8 to before Item #3.

Item 8: Old Business
(a) VSAP – review and approval

John Brodzinski noted they have been working over the past several months to put together a draft revision of the VSAP. The latest revision was distributed. John noted the bottom line is they are looking for a 2% increase each year for 5 years. This will bring the plan up to speed with current programs of a similar nature in similar areas (such as Essex, Killingworth, Deep River).

John noted one significant change has to do with age discrimination. If you are 65, you can now continue to get your full vesting at year 15 beyond age 65. The age specific issue was removed. Minimum vesting is 5 years, fully vested at 15 years.

John noted the changes involved had to do with age, the increase and clarity of the document. They defined things in terms of points to give more clarity. The Hose Company has reviewed this over the past 2 months and it was unanimously voted to approve it.

Rick Schreiber noted John had mentioned in comparison to Essex, Killingworth and Deep River towns closest to Chester's size. He asked if this program was equal to theirs. John noted one was under, one was the same and he was not sure on the 3rd one. It was noted in comparing population, Chester is probably the smallest. John noted this is based on accrued retirement benefit index.

John Divis noted there has never been an increase in the level of contribution from the town for the benefits given to each person since 1995. This is a fact the Board of Finance should consider. The purpose of this program is to retain volunteers. Its very difficult to get new people. Peter Zanardi agreed with John

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Divis in that the town can't afford a paid Fire Depart. so this program makes sense.

It was noted the process is – approvals by the Fire Department, Board of Fire Commissioners, Board of Selectmen, Retirement Board, Board of Finance and then Town Meeting.

John Brodzinski noted this will not effect the 2015-16 budget. BOF can put money aside for the 2016-17 budget.

Chairman Severance noted for full disclosure he was a party to the original plan. He also noted he was in support of anyway to reward and retain volunteers because the option is really expensive to the town.

John Brodzinski noted there has been some investigation done regarding fiduciary responsibilities. This needs to be reviewed by the Town Attorney.

Chairman Severance made several suggestions for review and possible changes to the document as follows -

A cover letter should be included stating this is an update and not a new contract.

There was discussion regarding between the 1993 and 1995 document.

Has Town Attorney John Bennet reviewed this document?

Has the Pension Board reviewed this document?

Page 3 - #1 should be under definitions of VSAP. Also add #16 referencing Executive Committee and #17 Review Board because on page 16 there is some confusion.

Page 5 – 2nd paragraph, change 1995 to 1993 ? needs clarification. Also, the 5 year eligibility should be in this paragraph ? needs clarification.

Page 6 - \$16.67 clarify per month ? Also, the 180 ? is that the 15 years referenced later ? Also, didn't understand last sentence in 2nd paragraph.

Page 11 – Qualified Domestic Relation Orders were discussed. Needs clarification.

Page 14 – Point Values - #1 should be worth more than 2 points ? #10 the engineer's work is extremely important and 2 hours is worth more than 1 point ? There was brief discussion regarding points system and the updating of points. It

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was suggested something be added stating points system should be reviewed every so many years independent of the whole document.

Page 16 – (d) not cumulative ? needs clarification.

Page 16 - (i) (j) (k) (l) – Executive Board and Review Board. Review Board is not defined. Is there only one board ? Check By-Laws.

Chairman Severance noted he was not comfortable approving this document without some of these recommended changes. This should go back to the Fire Department before coming back to the Board of Fire Commissioners. Brodzinski noted the changes will be addressed and the document brought back to the Fire Department.

Motion by Zanardi, second by Schreiber, to table VSAP approval until the BOFC June meeting. Unanimously Approved.

Item 3: Report of Fire Marshal

Fire Marshal Leighton distributed the March Activity Report. He noted they attended the drone presentation. March was a busy month. April will be on the quiet side. May and June will be busy.

Rick Schreiber asked how the Board of Finance meeting went. FM Leighton noted he was told his presence at that meeting was not needed so therefore did not attend.

Chairman Severance asked how the Pattaconk Yacht Club is going. FM Leighton replied they are coming along. There will be a small ceremony on May 1st, but they will not be operating by that date. Leighton noted they will take the Fire Department through the building just before the Certificate of Occupancy is issued.

FM Leighton noted there are no concerns. He spent some time at Eagle Landing doing training. They are now up to date on what had to be done.

Item 4: Report of Fire Chief

Deputy Chief Schaefer noted everything going pretty well. The boat will be coming in this week getting ready for summer. Hopefully it will go in Memorial Day weekend.

Chairman Severance noted Chief Grzybowski needs to talk to Deputy Chief Schaefer and Deep River about the River Response Protocol. He further noted Harbor Masters are now classified as responders in maritime events.

Item 5: Report of First Selectman – none.

Item 6: Report of Emergency Management Director

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Chairman Severance noted there was a very successful drone presentation. About 30 attended from around the State. Demonstrations were done by a CCSU Professor and Town of Guilford Fire Department. He noted this is a valuable aid for search and rescue. Chester is still waiting for State approval for funding.

Chairman Severance asked if Chief Grzybowski had contacted anyone in Durham about getting involved in the upcoming exercise at the Durham Fairgrounds. Deputy Chief Schaefer did not know the answer. Severance noted there are a lot of towns participating in this exercise. He also noted there may or may not be another CT River Valley Exercise.

Item 7: Financial Report
(a) 2014-2015 Budget

Deputy Chief Schaefer distributed copies of the current budget. Getting close on equipment maintenance and regular payroll. Chief Grzybowski will be going back to Board of Finance for last 300 hours of payroll that were unfunded. Everything else going pretty well.

(b) 2014-2015 Fire Marshal Budget
Fire Marshal Leighton noted everything is good.

(c) 2015-2016 Budget
Deputy Chief Schaefer noted this hasn't been approved yet. Two more BOF meetings this week.

(d) 2015-2016 Fire Marshal Budget
Fire Marshal Leighton reiterated he was told not to attend the Board of Finance meeting so assumes everything is good.

Item 9: New Business

Chairman Severance asked if everyone wished to contribute \$20 for the Annual Banquet.

Fire Marshal Leighton noted he will be on vacation from April 18 to the 28th. Fire Investigator Roberge will be covering.

Item 10: Adjournment

Motion by Zanardi, second by Schreiber, to adjourn. Unanimously Approved.

Respectfully submitted



Judith R. Brown, Recording Secretary

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