

Chester Board of Fire Commissioners
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The Chester Board of Fire Commissioners held the regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, February 21, 2018 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 Former Chief Charles Greeney, Jr.. 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 January 17, 2018.

Motion by Schreiber, second by Zanardi, to approve the January 17, 2018 Minutes. Unanimously approved. Perreault abstained.

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 January 2018 was distributed and reviewed. Items noted and discussed included the following:

- The 2018 Triathlon events: tentative dates have been proposed; who will be responsible for paying expenses associated with the various aspects of these events; note that the First Selectman and other officials have been involved in preliminary discussions and will also make final decisions in connection with all activities involving, affecting and overseen by the Town..
- Activities associated with the permitting process for the proposed establishment of a brewery business at 16-18 Main Street with note that State review of access issues is underway; that the Fire Marshal will meet with the owners directly. It was noted that the owners have approached the Planning & Zoning Commission in connection with a possible modification of the existing Special Exception for the proposal. There was considerable discussion of the need for an established chain of communication between the various boards, commissions, regulatory agencies, enforcement officials, etc. to ensure that all receive notification of pending activities and actions taken by others associated with the review/approval process prior to issuance of final approvals and/or the issuance of any certification, with the suggestion that the Board of Selectmen review and consider enacting such a communication policy.
- Responses to instances of potential hoarding issues were pointed out, with note that all such cases occur when the Fire Marshal's office is dispatched by emergency personnel.

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Item 4: Report of Fire Chief

Chief Brainard reviewed a number of items, including the following:

- In the process of reviewing qualifications to hire three people as medical responders;
- Tanker One is currently out for service in connection with the installation of new valves;
- Unit Two will be sent for service related to electrical problems and leak in O₂ tank;
- The Deuce-and-a-Half has a rear seal leak, which may be the result of extremely heavy use during the recent ice jam and flooding event;
- Call Reports for the month of January 2018 were distributed, with note that the departments received a total of 715 calls during the previous year.
- Issues associated with the operations of the ambulance service are being reviewed by the Chief and a team of previous Chiefs to identify and effect remedial measures.
- Chairman Severance congratulated the Chief and responders in connection with their response to a recent event at Greenwald Industries. It was noted that recent personnel changes at Greenwald are leading to remedial actions, which are already in process.
- Installation of Knox Boxes is being proposed for municipal buildings and others which may not currently have them in place, enabling responders to more quickly access premises in emergencies.
- Requiring house numbers be installed to provide clear identification should be reviewed and implemented to assist responders. This could be implemented through the various regulatory departments as a part of the permitting process.

Item 5: Report of First Selectman

Selectman Janacek had nothing to report at this time.

Item 6: Report of Emergency Management Director

EMD Severance advised that contact information for those in flood-prone areas is being updated as it was found during the recent ice/flood event that many property owners have chosen to discontinue land-line phone service, leaving responding personnel with limited or no way of contacting them. Use of the Everbridge or a Reverse 911 system might alleviate this situation. Praise was given for the valuable service provided by the deuce-and-a-half and its driver to gain access to flooded and otherwise inaccessible areas.

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Item 7: Financial Reports

(a) 2017 - 2018 Budget – Fire Department

Copies of the budget as of January 2018 were distributed and reviewed. The spreadsheet included details of the current fiscal year, the previous year, and the submitted request for 2018-2019 fiscal year. Additionally, a proposed apparatus replacement schedule, including (current) estimated costs was provided. Apparatus items listed included the following, with age date, proposed purchase date, current age (ranging as high as 47 years), and projected cost: Brush Truck, Pierce Pumper, (Fire) Boat, Ambulance (1), Ambulance (2), Pierce Pumper, Tanker, Pickup, Rescue Pumper and Chief's Car. The proposed budget for the 2018-2019 fiscal year as well as the Proposed Apparatus Replacement Schedule were previously submitted to the Board of Selectmen.

(b) 2017 – 2018 Budget – Fire Marshal

Copies of the budget were distributed and reviewed, with note that many expenses are only submitted quarterly and do not cover the first months of the current calendar year. FM Leighton confirmed that, as has previously been advised, the Fire Marshal budget will again be over-expended at the end of the fiscal year, and that current expenditures are at approximately the same level as in the previous fiscal year.

(c) 2018 – 2019 Fire Department Budget

The proposed budget for the 2018-2019 fiscal year was included in the Department's spreadsheet (noted above), with note of a modest reduction for the coming budget year. The proposed budget had previously been submitted to the Board of Selectmen.

Motion by Perreault, seconded by Schreiber, to approve the 2018 – 2019 Budget for the Chester Hose Company, totaling \$339,780 as submitted to the Board of Selectmen. Unanimously approved.

(d) 2018 – 2019 Fire Marshal Budget

There was nothing to report as this had been submitted and approved at the January 17, 2018 meeting,

Item 8: Old Business

There was none brought forward.

Item 9: New Business

FM Leighton brought a number of matters to the attention of the Commission, distributing documentation with details in each instance, including the following,

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- Section 29.303 of the Connecticut General Statutes regarding reporting requirements during fire emergencies. The requirement will entail considerable documentation and recordkeeping associated with fire service personnel involved in every fire emergency to which they respond. Subsequent future review processes may rely on those records in decision-making processes.
- Copy of a memorandum to the Board of Selectmen in connection with correspondence of January 8, 2018 noting consideration of revenues through “user fees, permit fees or other methods...” It included proposed increased fees for both the Building Department and Fire Marshal’s Office. Leighton pointed out that fees for the Fire Marshal’s office are, in many cases, predicated on fees required by the Building Department. Suggested increases are proposed as a measure to offset the costs associated with the duties required by the offices involved.
- Memorandum and associated supplemental documentation regarding a recent Supreme Court of Connecticut Decision in connection with the case *Williams v. Bridgeport Housing Authority* with the subject being “Obligation to Inspect”. The case referenced resulted in a decision by the CT Supreme Court which could lead to municipalities being held liable for failing to conduct mandatory property inspections by officials or agencies within their jurisdiction.
- Distribution of a spreadsheet detailing activities and labor accountabilities of the Office of Fire Marshal for applicable sections of State Statutes showing the number of hours which have been expended in connection with inspections conducted, as well as details of the applicable regulatory sections, frequency requirements, and the number of Chester properties requiring inspection (properties identified through Assessor’s Office records). In summation, the spreadsheet indicated that the hours that would be required to comply with inspection mandates are in excess of the amount allocated in the annual budgets.

Ms. Perreault distributed copies of State Statute Chapter 2.42.020 through 2.24.060 – Board of fire commissioners – Powers.

Item 10: Adjournment

Motion by Schreiber, second by Zanardi to adjourn at 8:51 P.M. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Bettie Perreault

Acting Clerk