

Chester Board of Fire Commissioners
Minutes, July 15, 2020
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The Chester Board of Fire Commissioners held the regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, July 15, 2020 at the Fire House, 6 High Street, Chester, Connecticut. In attendance were Bob Bandzes, John Divis, Rick Schreiber and Bettie Perreault. Ex-officio members present were Selectman Charlene Janacek and Chief James Grzybowski. Also present were Fire Marshal Dick Leighton, EMD Ray Guasp and Deputy Chief Charles Greeney.

Item 1: Call to Order

Chairman Bettie Perreault called the meeting to order at 7:31 P.M.

Item 2: Audience of Citizens

There were none present.

Item 3. Update – Main Street Project

Selectman Janecek reported the Main Street Project is currently “on track” with substantial completion anticipated early in August and full completion in late September. Local officials have worked with the contractor to ensure that emergency vehicles have ready access if needed and that hydrants are accessible. Eversource is in the process of replacing utility pole(s). That replacement project has been more complicated than anticipated. As the road portion of the project has progressed, concern has been expressed that vehicles may encounter difficulty in negotiating turns when curbing, pavement and pedestrian areas are completed.

Item 4: Report on COVID-19 responses, activities and associated expenses

Chief Grzybowski reported that he has been notified that supplies currently available from governmental agencies will continue to be available for a limited time, with some items already in decreasing supply as the supply chain is unable to keep up with demand. The Hose Company has been able to obtain items for both current needs and in anticipation of future need, particularly should there be a resurgence of COVID-19 in the fall, potentially during a seasonal flu outbreak. A local business has provided storage space for some supplies to alleviate storage concerns at the Fire House. (The Commissioners expressed appreciation to the business for this accommodation.)

Chief Grzybowski and EMD Guasp reviewed their work as co-chairs of the town’s Long-Term Recovery committee, which is working on plans for the future of the community. Subcommittees with assignments for the various activities and venues are working independently, with leadership coordinating those efforts. Note was made of the current influx of out-of-state people seeking to relocate to Connecticut and how it might affect the town. Guasp summed the effort up, saying “Preparedness is everything....”

Item 5. Report of Board of Selectmen

Selectman Janecek advised that there was nothing additional to report and that “All is well in Chester...” (Earlier reports at this meeting included information from the Selectmen.)

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Item 6. Report of Fire Chief

Chief Grzybowski reported there had been 35 calls during the month of June. Detail of the calls was unavailable because of computer issues. He also advised that there has been an up-tick in the number of calls as well.

The Hose Company election of officers will take place at its August meeting, meeting the By-Law requirement on voting procedures. As the pandemic eases, the Boat Committee has begun its search process for a new vessel and the Truck Committee has resumed meetings. The new floor in the bay area of the Fire House was poured earlier this week and will be allowed to cure for several weeks before vehicles are returned. During that time Hose Company members will paint the area. The bottle fill station for Scott Air Packs will now allow the Department to replenish units in house.

DOT inspections of vehicles has been started for the new fiscal year. Units are being checked and any items found needing attention addressed in preparation for inspections. Unit #3 has been completed; #2 is in process; #1, the Tanker and Deuce will follow. Ambulance #1 was found to have a leak in the O₂ line; pending repair the main shut-off is utilized.

Item 7: Report of Fire Marshal

Fire Marshal Dick Leighton distributed the activity report for the month of June and noted that a lot of time had been spent in connection with the Main Street Project ensuring safe access to buildings and passage of vehicles. Annual inspections of establishments and issuance of liquor licenses will begin in August. (The State delayed the required inspections because of the pandemic.) Camp Hazen and group home inspections have been completed.

Sight-line requirements in connection with private driveways were explained and discussed. Emergency vehicles cannot cross private bridges until they have been inspected and rated for safety and load-bearing weights. Property owners are being advised of the restrictions, which may affect insurance rates.

Item 8: Financial Reports

(a) 2019-2020 Fire Department Budget – end-of-year report: The Hose Company ended the fiscal year with a modest surplus of slightly over \$1,000 as the result of diligent budget restraints. Potential reimbursements from FEMA and other agencies may make the year-end accounting even more favorable. Ambulance income for June is showing an increase from earlier in the year, and the CARES Act application for reimbursement for lost revenue is still pending.

(b) 2019-2020 Fire Marshal Budget – end-of-year report: The Fire Marshal budget ended the fiscal year with a modest surplus, primarily attributable to the fact that purchase of new Code books was deferred. With changes to the Codes not assured, it was not possible to know which ones would be required.

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(c) 2020-2021 Fire Department Budget: It is too early in the fiscal year to have much to report. Chief Grzybowski did advise that the traditional practice of placing orders for needed items and equipment had been started.

(d) 2020-2021 Fire Marshal Budget: There was nothing to report.

Item 9. Old Business: There was none to report.

Item 10. Approval of Minutes of June 17, 2020

On motion by Rick Schreiber, seconded by John Divis the minutes of the June 17, 2020 meeting were unanimously approved.

Item 11. Report and Status of Events

Chief Grzybowski advised the Hose Company is planning to proceed with its scheduled Craft Fair and Annual Banquet, pandemic conditions permitting. Additional events may be scheduled as conditions improve.

Item 12. New Business

Chief Grzybowski spoke of the recent article in the Valley Courier recognizing Commissioner (and Public Works Foreman) John Divis' 50 years of membership in the Chester Hose Company. With unanimous congratulations to John, the Commission expressed appreciation for the dedication, commitment and service that he has given to not only the Department but to the Town of Chester during those years. A sincere thanks was extended from all.

Item 13. Correspondence: There was none.

Item 14. From Members or Guests: There were none.

Item 15. Adjournment

Motion by Rick Schreiber, seconded by John Divis to adjourn at 8:20 P.M. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Bettie Perreault, Chairman