

Chester Board of Fire Commissioners
Minutes, August 19, 2020
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The Chester Board of Fire Commissioners held the regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at the Fire House, 6 High Street, Chester, Connecticut. In attendance were John Divis, Bob Quale, Rick Schreiber and Bettie Perreault. Ex-officio members present were Selectman Charlene Janecek 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 7:33 P.M.

Item 2: Audience of Citizens

There were none present.

Item 3. Update – Main Street Project

Selectman Janecek reported that the first layer of paving has been installed on Main, Maple and Spring Streets, the steps at the Chester wall are being constructed and the steps for 12-14 Main Street (former French Hen store) are being replaced. The Sunday Market will return to Main Street on August 22 with health precautions required for all. Traffic barricades and police officer(s) will be present. (It was noted that following the installation of paving a truck had entered the street, having moved traffic barricades, doing cosmetic damage to the uncured pavement.)

Item 4: Report on Hurricane Isaias and pandemic responses

Chief Grzybowski advised the Department had responded to 47 calls for trees and/or wires down during the storm. Power was out in close to 99% of the town. Crews were assembled at the Fire House before disbursing to assignments. When winds exceeded 30 MPH, all were called back to the Fire House for safety. Once winds subsided, work resumed, with all roads in town effectively opened within 24 hours. Individual driveways were made passable within 48 to 72 hours. Power to nearly 90% of the town had been restored within four days; the remainder, with more significant damage, took longer. Following the storm, the Department and Fire House provided a water station, charging station, cooling, and food for personnel from line and tree crews, Public Works and others. Cost of food (\$357.28) will be submitted for FEMA reimbursement.

Following the storm, the Department responded to two adjacent houses that became electrically charged, causing small fires; a working fire developed the following day from residual heat in metal hardware in one of the buildings.

EMD Guasp stated, “You should be very proud of the Hose Company and those who support it”, noting they all worked together, following a “good plan of action” which provided the “backbone for success”. “All hands were on deck”, he said. Communication technology was found to be lacking, leading to arrangements to bring in a Communication On Wheels (COW) unit and sharing of the Essex internet. Three phone towers were disabled during the storm and the area lost communication frequencies for

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most responder services. Guasp reiterated that communications are key during events such as this and should be a priority going forward. He summed up by saying preparation was key and all need to continue to be prepared because there will be another event requiring responses. Bettie Perreault thanked all for the Department's quick response in clearing downed trees, making her driveway passable following the storm.

Item 5. Report of Board of Selectmen

Selectman Janecek reported on the Main Street Project earlier in the meeting.

Item 6. Report of Fire Chief

Chief Grzybowski reported the Department had responded to 58 incidents during the month of July. They included seven fire responses, 30 medical responses and additional responses for false alarms and other reasons. He advised a second check was just received in connection with the CARES Act, and that an additional request will be submitted for the next three months.

The bay floor has been installed and the apron completed; the bay will be repainted by Company volunteers, after which the apparatus can be returned.

Check for \$1,395 from the Connecticut Water Company for installation of slow-close valves for truck connections to hydrants has been received.

Item 7: Report of Fire Marshal

Fire Marshal Dick Leighton distributed the activity report for the month of July detailing what he referred to as "every day, routine stuff". He explained the working relationship that has been established between the Chief, Emergency Management Director and Fire Marshal, ensuring that the "real stuff" as well as the requisite reporting and paperwork are being addressed.

Item 8: Financial Reports

(a) 2020-2021 Fire Department Budget: Chief Grzybowski advised that the budget is in good shape with 12.6% expended year-to-date.

(b) 2020-2021 Fire Marshal Budget: There was nothing to report as nothing has been expended. He noted that serving as both Fire Marshal and Building Official is working well as the two services can be provided in a single inspection or call.

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

Item 10. Approval of Minutes of July 15, 2020

On motion by Rich Schreiber, seconded by John Divis the minutes of the July 15, 2020 meeting were unanimously approved.

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Item 11. Report and Status of Events

Chief Grzybowski advised that while events have been planned for the fall, the decision on whether they can be held will be made early in September, depending upon the status of the COVID-19 pandemic and any other issues which may arise.

Item 12. New Business

Construction activities associated with Cherry Hill Apartments will start later this month. (The Town had facilitated obtaining a funding grant to perform the repair and remedial work for the property.) Construction at Chester Point Marina will also be underway, replacing a Butler-style building that was demolished. (The Hose Company was able to use the structure for drill and training purposes prior to its removal.)

The Fire Department was recognized for its excellent responses during and after Hurricane Isaias by Grano Arso, which recently provided dinner for 30 members of the Department. (The restaurant is located at 6 Main Street in the former Chester Bank building.)

Item 13. Correspondence: There was none.

Item 14. From Members or Guests:

EMD Guasp noted there would be after-action meetings with utilities and tree services to address make-safe activities needed, liaison with representative of Eversource to address situations and issues that arose during the recent hurricane and to plan and be prepared for any that may arise in connection with future storms and events.

Item 15. Adjournment

Motion by Rick Schreiber, seconded by John Divis to adjourn at 8:17 P.M. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Bettie Perreault, Chairman