

Chester Board of Fire Commissioners
Minutes, February 16, 2022
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The Chester Board of Fire Commissioners held its scheduled meeting on Wednesday, February 16, 2022 via ZOOM. In attendance were Bob Bandzes, Bob Quale, Bettie Perreault and Rick Schreiber. Ex-officio members attending were First Selectman Charlene Janecek, Fire Chief James Grzybowski, Fire Marshal Dick Leighton, Resident Trooper Matt Warren and Assistant Chief Charlie Greeney.

Item 1: Call to Order

Chair Bettie Perreault called the meeting to order at 7:09 P.M. followed by roll call of those present.

Item 2: Audience of Citizens – there was no audience of citizens.

Item 3. Report of Board of Selectmen

First Selectman Janecek reported things are quiet right now, other than preparing the budget for the next fiscal year. The Tractor Parade will return, with the event for 2022 to be held on Sunday, February 20.

Item 4. Report of Fire Chief

Chief Grzybowski said Hose Company members will have the trailer at the Chester stone wall with chili and pulled pork available from 1:00 – 4:00 for the Tractor Parade. While those who have done these kinds of events are still involved, new, younger members have stepped forward for this one.

In-person meetings and drills have been resumed; Junior members are again participating. COVID testing for members and local businesses was held but as case levels declined has not continued from lack of turnout. Home test kits are still available at the Town Hall.

Activity reports were distributed, with note that December had 79 medical calls. For 2021, there were 708 calls, with 529 EMS calls. Of these only 36 fire calls included mutual aid. Details breaking down the type of calls were reviewed, as well as charts showing call volume is highest on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays. Time-of-day chart showed activity levels. Coding for the various events were explained.

The contracts for the fire boat and motor have been awarded. Details of time of delivery, type of engine, etc. were discussed. It was noted that the new vessel will not provide pump-out or towing because of potential liability. A fund-drive letter will be sent early in March, with the Hose Company making the initial payment for equipment to ensure timely availability, with funds raised specifically to equip the new fire boat. (The old vessel may be put in if needed before the new vessel is delivered.)

Bob Bandzes reported the Truck Committee has been meeting with vendors and inspecting vehicles with them.

The fob system for the Fire House is on line and working; fobs that are individually coded are being distributed to members and officials. Whelen and local marinas will also have fob access for their sites. The system has generator back-up for power outages and officers will also have access if the system is off-line.

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The Mutual Aid systems were reviewed with the following information provided:

- There are two Mutual Aid associations: Valley Shore Chiefs have 11 members; Valley Shore Ambulance has 13 members. Both associations have automatic State and mutual aid agreements in place.
- Valley Shore Communications coordinates and communicates for all calls, and has the authority to call for mutual aid automatically depending on need.
- For fire incidents, alarm assignments are in place for each town designating call sequence. "Commercial" locations have a higher number of assignments and ability to send appropriate specialized equipment when needed. A Rapid Intervention Team is automatically dispatched for events with personnel inside a structure, and RIT from outside the area may be called to support local units.
- HazMat Teams: there are three in the state: Guilford, Coast Guard and DEEP.
- Dive Teams: departments with trained personnel are available and supported by State Police when needed.
- Tanker Task Force provides mutual aid tanker, accompanied by fire engine(s) when responding.
- There is also an Ambulance Strike Team, with three levels of responding units to cover through mutual aid when needed.

All this pre-planning allows local officers to concentrate on immediate needs because the system is already in place, and specialized equipment and personnel have been identified. This system affects a community's Insurance Service Rating (ISR), on which all insurance policy rates are based. The mutual aid system and various teams, and the number and type of equipment of each department are all part of that rating system. In summary, it is clear that by sharing services, via mutual aid, it makes for an efficient system, saving tax dollars and resources.

Item 5: Report of Fire Marshal:

Fire Marshal Dick Leighton distributed the January activity report and year-to-date budget status. Note and discussion of construction activities associated with a Main Street property have created "fire breaks" between structures, bringing a significant and major improvement to the entire length of Main Street.

Item 6: Report of Resident State Trooper

TFC` Warren reported that from the first of the year through February 16, police have received 861 local calls. He praised the Public Works Department for its excellent response during inclement weather for the lack of accidents. A safety plan has been prepared for the up-coming Tractor Parade. Officers conducted unannounced inspections of local businesses that sell tobacco and similar products and were pleased to find no violations.

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Changed scheduling is providing more coverage time throughout town, with the additional coverage already showing results. Officers can be available for training and information when needed. Maintenance and repair of vehicles and equipment has been prioritized. Cost of maintenance, gas and oil for vehicles is also being addressed.

A recent visit to the elementary school found the facility to have an excellent level of security. Measures to improve security for the Town Hall and police department are underway. State mandates requiring significant local expenditures are being brought to the Board of Finance since many of them address issues which could result in expensive liabilities for the town. Training of officers is being addressed to bring it up to date, with training by one who is already certified helping to mitigate costs. Lack of security, out of date equipment, training delinquencies and other concerns are being identified, addressed and remedied as expeditiously as possible with financial constraints of limited budgets in place.

Item 7: Financial Reports

Chief Grzybowski reported the Fire Department year-to-date budget is “on target” with no issues.

Fire Marshal Leighton reported the same for the Office of Fire Marshal. He also noted that at the present time Code books have not yet been approved and may not get approved during the current fiscal year, which is why that line item again appears in the proposed budget for 2022-2023. If that occurs, the appropriation for the current year will remain and be returned to the General Fund at the end of the fiscal year.

Item 8. Old Business

The Chief advised the inventory has not been completed due to lack of time. Fire Marshal Leighton reported posting of load limits on private bridges is substantially completed but that other matters have taken priority. It was noted that currently emergency vehicles are not authorized to cross private bridges that are not posted for load limits.

Item 9. Approval of Minutes of January 19, 2022 meeting and February 2, 2022 Special Meeting.

On motions by Rick Schreiber, seconded by Bob Quale, the minutes of the January 19, 2022 meeting and Special Meeting of February 2, 2022 were unanimously approved.

Item 10. Reports: There was nothing to report at this time. Item 11. New Business:

Item 12. Correspondence: None received.

Item 13. Adjournment: there being no further business brought up,

Motion by Rick Schreiber, seconded by Bob Quale, to adjourn at 8:46 P.M. was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Bettie Perreault, Chair