

**Chester Board of Fire Commissioners**  
**Minutes – November 16, 2022 meeting**  
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The Chester Board of Fire Commissioners held its regular meeting on Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at the Fire House, 6 High Street. In attendance were Bob Bandzes, Bob Quale, and Bettie Perreault. Ex-officio members attending were First Selectman Charlene Janecek, Fire Chief James Grzybowski, and Fire Marshal Dick Leighton. Also present were Assistant Chief Charles Greeney, Officer Matt Spina, Assistant Chief Dylan Grzybowski, Battalion Chief Ben Belisle, Captain Jim Schaffer, Deputy EMS Chief Parker Divis, and President Rich Tsou.

Item 1: Call to Order

Chair Perreault called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. followed by self-introductions of those present.

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

Item 3. Report of Board of Selectmen

First Selectman Charlene Janecek reported tree removal contracted by Eversource on Kings Highway would resume the following day. She advised that Ben Belisle, the Fire Department's Battalion Chief, has been named Assistant Emergency Management Director and would begin State-sponsored classes for Fire Marshal certification in January 2023.

Item 4. Report of Fire Chief

Chief Grzybowski reported 97 calls had been responded to during October, a significant increase, with frequent instances of multiple simultaneous calls and a high volume of calls during the overnight hours. For the first 16 days of November, a total of 40 calls had already been received. (During this report, Chester responders were toned out to provide mutual aid to Deep River.)

Additional reports were given for the following:

- Veterans' Day Service, held at the Memorial on November 11 was attended by members of the Department as well as students from the elementary school.
- The Department's Fall Banquet was attended by 100+ members and guests. The fall event was highly successful, with catering provided by The Wheatmarket, which donated the services of its servers, a significant saving for the Department.
- The annual Holiday Wreath Sale will be held on the weekend of December 3 – 4.

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- Santa Comes to Chester will be held on Sunday, December 18, with Department Fire Police and other personnel handling the details of the event and the closing of Main Street.
- Competitive pricing in connection with the purchase of Scott packs is being handled by SourceWell, available only to municipalities, in compliance with FEMA requirements and the grant the Department received. (A RFP for a total of 17 packs and 31 masks for individual fire personnel will be submitted by the end of the month.)
- Quote for the 800- radio system is currently under review. It is anticipated that the radios will be in place within the first months of 2023. The new system will provide expanded, more reliable service for the Department as well as for other departments that respond to Chester events.
- Two new EMTs with extensive experience and qualifications have been hired, providing much-needed additional coverage, particularly for over-night shifts. Details and funding for a full-time person are being pursued as the call rate continues to increase. The increasing need, additional personnel and availability of volunteers will be addressed during the upcoming budget preparations.
- Assistant Chief Grzybowski reported his recent inspection of the under-construction marine vessel. When in service, the vessel will be housed at Chester Point Marina when not in the water; no trailer is required. It was noted that if, in the future, new engines were required the vessel could potentially support two outboard motors, rather than the single motor currently being installed.
- Detail of the breakdown of call load in connection with EMT responders was reviewed and discussed. A significant number of calls are what are called “transport” calls.
- New computer programs being installed are requiring more time than anticipated as the nationwide termination of a similar program has overloaded the required transition. The new programs will provide additional, coordinated Information and detail for Department personnel, Fire Marshal, and, through its Community Direct resident feature, quicker details available to responders.
- Both building and vehicles/equipment are prepared for winter weather. The continuing escalation of costs for fuel and utilities were included in the current year’s budget, but will need to be watched closely if they exceed budget amounts.

**Item 5: Report of Fire Marshal:**

Fire Marshal Leighton distributed activity reports for October, noting it had been a relatively quiet month. Review of street lights is underway; reports of any that are out

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should be reported to the Fire Marshal's office. (Street lights are owned by the Town but are maintained by a contractor for which the maintenance contract had not been renewed during a previous administration.) The fire panel in the Town Hall is being replaced. An eviction on Railroad Avenue was made with furnishings stored by the Town which, if not reclaimed, will be auctioned. Removal, storage and auction costs are borne by the Town.

**Item 6: Report of Resident State Trooper**

Officer Spina reported for TFC Warren, reviewing the number and types of activities and actions taken during the previous month. Local officers as well as State Police officers are included in the counts. Two new doors are being installed in the Town Hall. Following a recent drug take-back day, officers received three large bags of drugs to be safely disposed of. A third part-time officer has been hired. Officers were present and available during a number of recent events and activities during the previous month.

**Item 7: Financial Reports**

Chief Grzybowski advised expenditures to date are at 42%, explaining individual line items, noting that rising costs are affecting many of them, with the increasing costs for ambulance supplies from the higher call volume. Income in connection with medical responses is ahead for the current year as a result of the increasing number of responses.

Fire Marshal Leighton reported the budget for the Fire Marshal's office remains "in the black". Features in the new computer systems being installed by the Fire Department will provide and share additional information, with potential increased income from inspection fees as additional information becomes available.

**Item 8. Old Business:**

Chief Grzybowski advised the RFP for a new truck was sent out earlier in the month, with nine vendors notified and notices posted on the Town's website and in publications. Bid are to be received early in January to have pricing available for budgeting during budget preparations. It is anticipated that it will take between 1½ to 3 years to have the vehicle constructed, and that costs will continue to increase during that time. At the same time, maintenance costs for the Department's aging vehicles and equipment will continue to rise.

A general discussion of the features of electric vehicles, the various types of charging stations, and a number of other matters and their associated costs included all present. Having the officers of the Department part of the conversation brought an expanded wealth of shared knowledge and experiences, and will hopefully continue for future meetings. Officers and members were encouraged to continue participating.

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Upcoming events include the Department's annual Holiday Party on Monday, December 12, to which Commissioners and Police officers were invited. The Board of Fire Commissioners will reschedule the December meeting prior to the Department's gathering. The Police Department will hold a Staff a Cruiser event at the United Church on December 10 to collect toys for the holidays.

Item 9. Approval of Minutes of October 19, 2022 Meeting.

**On motions by Bob Quale, seconded by Bettie Perreault, the minutes of the October 19, 2022 meeting were approved. Bandzes abstained.**

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

Item 11. New Business: Nothing was brought up at this time.

Item 13. Correspondence: None received.

Item 14. Adjournment: there being no further business brought up,

**Motion by Bob Quale, seconded by Bob Bandzes, to adjourn at 8:06 P.M. was unanimously approved.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Bettie Perreault*, Chair