

**BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS**  
***DRAFT REGULAR MEETING MINUTES***  
**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2020**  
**5:30 P.M.**  
**Guilford Fire Headquarters**

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Present: Commission Members: Matt Healy, Barbara Hemming, Josh Hershman, Dean Mitchell and Chairman Ken Wilson

Department Members: Fire Chief Charles Herrschaft, Assistant Chief Mike Shove, Captain Clint Haverkampf

**Chairman Wilson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.**

**1. Public Forum**

None

**2. Approve minutes of:**

**2.1 Approve minutes of the August 11, 2020 Special Meeting**

*Motion: Upon a motion by Commissioner Hemming, and seconded by Commissioner Hershman, the Board of Fire Commissioners voted to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2020 Special Meeting as presented.*

*In Favor: Healy, Hemming, Hershman, Mitchell, Wilson*  
*Opposed: None*  
*Abstained: None*

**3. Chairman's Report**

**3.1 Correspondence and Notices**

Chairman Wilson shared several items:

- Letter of resignation from Firefighter/Paramedic Eric Demeraski
- Follow-up e-mail clarifying finance questions discussed at the August meeting
- Notification from the Selectmen's Office and Parks and Recreation Department regarding meeting space for in-person meetings at the Community Center
- Job Posting for Firefighter-EMT and Firefighter-Paramedic positions

### **3.2 Other Information**

Commissioner Healy asked if exit interviews were conducted when a department member resigns. The Chief stated that he did have a conversation with FF/Paramedic Demeraski. Chief Herrschaft expressed concern with the direction the town has taken with the defined benefit plans. It is unclear how a disability pension would be handled if an employee were injured on the job. The department responds to numerous calls on I-95 and it is a very dangerous situation for either a veteran or new Firefighter and depending on the plan they are under the disability could be different.

So far the retention rate in the Fire Department has been good, that is not the case in the Police Department. This is concerning. The Department spends thousands of dollars on training and then those personnel leave for positions in other towns with better benefits.

Commissioner Mitchell stated that the Commission supports the retention as best as possible but they cannot override the Town. Commissioner Hershman stated that some towns are moving back to defined benefit pensions, because people are looking for an exact understanding of what happens if an employee is injured on the job.

The Commissioners discussed the overall shortage of paramedics in the state and nationwide, it is a concerning problem.

## **4. Departmental Officers and/or Committee Reports:**

### **4.1 Fire Chief/Fire Marshal's Report**

Department members will be conducting a virtual inspection of the rescue truck, and then a member of the department will travel to the manufacturer to conduct a physical inspection and drive the truck back to Guilford. This should happen on or around September 11<sup>th</sup>. There are no additional charges to the town for the truck repairs.

The major components for the ambulance: the chassis, box, and suspension have all arrived at the manufacturer EXCELLANCE. The suspension is not yet attached to the chassis. The General Motors strike and COVID-19 both contributed to the delay in manufacturing the ambulance. The Chief anticipates it could be delivered by December.

There was a major weather event last Thursday when a tornado struck in the Moose Hill, Dromora, Sachems Head, Old Quarry, Colonial, Uncas Point and Andrews Roads' area. There was severe damage to a year-round cottage and

several cars were destroyed when trees fell on them. The Emergency Operations Center was activated.

There was a very good response by Eversource for this storm. By Friday evening the majority of the blocked roads were open.

The Department Mechanic did a major engine repair to Squad 1. The in-house repair saved the Town \$10,000. There was an oil pressure issue due to a problem with the rocker arms.

#### **4.2 Assistant Chief's Activity Report(s)**

The Department responded to 437 calls last month. The large number was due to the weather events that occurred during the month: Tropical Storm Isaias; and last week's tornado.

Response times were up slightly due to the volume of calls and the number of road closures during the storm. The response times were still good despite the conditions.

Firefighter-EMT Moffat and Firefighter-Paramedic Morrissey were in California to assist in fighting the Gold fire. Pictures are on the website. FEMA will be reimbursing the Department for their time in California.

There were no structure fires last month but there was an increase in Carbon Monoxide calls due primarily to Tropical Storm Isaias. There were approximately 30 calls. This was a problem in many towns not just Guilford. Generac, a generator manufacturer, went to some towns and made repairs at their cost. It is believed the excessive humidity, combined with prolonged outages which caused people to run their generators for prolonged periods, caused Carbon Monoxide to accumulate in houses through the pores and attics of the homes.

Storm related incidents have been coded separately so they can be easily identified for FEMA reimbursement, should a federal disaster be declared. The State of Connecticut would have to meet the criteria for a disaster to be declared. Structural damage from Tropical Storm Isaias may not meet the requirements. Captain Haverkamp has been working with the Finance Director on gathering information required for possible reimbursement.

Reimbursements for COVID-19 expenses are being made on a quarterly basis. This is the first time that payments have been made quarterly, but this is an unprecedented ongoing situation affecting the entire country. 75% of expenses are reimbursed by FEMA and the state provides funding through the CARES Act for the other 25%.

Captain Haverkamp and Firefighter Manware secured grant funding for the Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus.

The SAFER grant is up to date. Recently Congress extended the grant for another year, so there will be approximately \$200,000 to offset salaries and benefits in the next fiscal year 2021-2022.

## **5. Monthly Business:**

### **5.1 Status of Budget**

The budget for FY 2019-20 ended at 104.5% expended. There is the potential of receiving \$85,000 in COVID reimbursement that would offset salary line items. Budget figures for FY2020-21 will be available in September.

### **5.2 Consider and take action on Monthly Department Expenditures**

Expenses included six months of medical supplies, new laptops for use in the field, and enhancements for the Emergency Operations Center.

*Motion: Upon a motion by Commissioner Hemming, and seconded by Commissioner Hershman, the Board of Fire Commissioners voted to approve the monthly expenditures in the amount of \$61,711.11.*

*In Favor: Healy, Hemming, Hershman, Mitchell, Wilson*

*Opposed: None*

*Abstained: None*

### **5.3 Receive Revenue Report**

Revenue for FY 2019-20 totaled \$995,092.37, which was \$139,092.47 over target. Chairman Wilson noted this was a phenomenal year for revenue and thanked all Department members who assisted in exceeding the department's goal.

August's unaudited revenue was \$79,000, putting the department on pace to meet this year's target.

There is a total of 2,479 calls so far this calendar year and August had a total of 437 calls.

## **6. Old Business:**

None

## 7. New Business:

The Firefighter/Paramedic and Firefighter/EMT positions were posted today. Shoreline Associates will be administering the written test. The apparatus bay will be used for testing to insure proper social distancing. Assistant Chief Shove anticipates that the Commission will conduct oral interviews of the final candidates in November.

At this time the department has one FF/Paramedic vacancy and no EMT vacancies.

The Commission discussed the nationwide shortage of paramedics. Going forward, there may be a need to send a recruit for training, which would impact the training line item in future budgets.

## 8. Public Forum:

None

*Motion: Upon a motion by Commissioner Hershman and seconded by Commissioner Healy, the Board of Fire Commissioners voted to adjourn at 6:34 p.m.*

*In Favor: Healy, Hemming, Hershman, Mitchell, Wilson*

*Opposed: None*

*Abstained: None*

Respectfully Submitted,  
Karen Quercia  
Clerk