

Regular Meeting of the
Board of TFD Fire Commissioners

DRAFT -- Meeting Minutes – September 15, 2021
Thompsonville Fire Station, 35 N. Main Street, Enfield, CT

1. Call to Order: by Comm. Perry at 7:00 pm.

2. Roll Call: present were Comm. Perry, Comm. Gillespie, Comm. Pliszka, Comm. Bouthiette and Comm. Dodd. Also, present were Chief Deskis and Department Secretary Steneri.

3. Chief's Report:

Chief Deskis said Captain K. Pliszka and Firefighter DeMur have been working hard on the plaque for the bell. The pad for it is finished. The bell will be placed on the pad after we receive the plaque.

Chief Deskis said the new ice machine was installed. The old ice machine was kept in the bays. The new ice machine is in the kitchen. The members may install a countertop over it.

Chief Deskis said the dirt pile is almost out of here. The Town was harping on me about it. The Town is moving forward with projects. A basketball court is currently being built next to the station.

Chief Deskis said all of the apparatus had their DOT inspections and pump tests. Squad 21 had a gasket issue that got repaired. There is also a break sensor issue.

Chief Deskis said all of our hose has been tested by an outside company. This will our firefighters from getting any injuries while doing the testing.

Chief Deskis said our boiler has been inspected. There were some broken parts and a new motor was installed.

Chief Deskis said the kitchen and hallway floors have been waxed. The members will wax the other areas of the station.

Chief Deskis said there is a sheet about Wreaths Across America in the packets I gave you. Wreaths are placed on veterans' graves and there will be a ceremony as well. The event didn't happen last year due to Covid-19. Hopefully it happens this year.

Chief Deskis said there will be a trunk or treat event on October 30th from 4-6 pm in the upper parking lot of the Town Hall. All 5 of Enfield's fire departments and the Police Department will be there.

Chief Deskis said the department has been conducting several community risk efforts recently. The department has handed out File of Life folders. We have been giving out batteries for smoke detectors.

Comm. Perry said she will volunteer for the event on October 30th.

Dept. Secy. said she forgot to add Treasurer's Report back onto the agenda.

MOTION to add Treasurer's Report under 3 a on the agenda made by Comm. Perry, seconded by Comm. Bouthiette. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 5-0.

3. a Treasurer's Report:

Comm. Dodd said everything looks good on the treasurer's report. We have received our money from the Town. It is still early in the year so there isn't a lot to talk about.

Comm. Dodd read the balances of the bank accounts: municipal investment account: \$3,860,000, apparatus/building fund: \$212,000, and contingency fund: \$29,000.

Comm. Dodd thanked Chief Deskis for putting together a great budget. Looking at our September expenses against the budget, several line items that are difficult to determine came in right around the budgeted amount.

Comm. Pliszka asked about the apparatus and building maintenance fund. Comm. Dodd said the fund is for both items. Dept. Secy. said it is separated within the account. Each item is a subaccount within the fund. Comm. Dodd said next time the report can be printed to show what is in each subaccount.

4. Public Communications:

None.

5. Commissioners' Communications:

None.

6. Old Business: a) Apparatus Replacement, b) Fire Marshal's Office:

Apparatus Replacement: Chief Deskis said Comm. Bouthiette and Comm. Gillespie are on the apparatus replacement committee. I wanted to give the other members of the committee an answer about where do we stand with the apparatus. How does the Commission want them to move forward? I reached out to several financing companies to find out what apparatus rates would be. Captain Flanagan gave an update from the committee. The Commission, Chief Deskis, and the Apparatus Replacement Committee members discussed a budget amount for the new apparatus.

Fire Marshal's Office: Chief Deskis said our Fire Marshal needs help in the office. Our overtime budget is out of control right now. There is no one to help the Fire Marshal with inspections. Can we use the money from the Fire Marshal Ordinance to pay for a fire inspector? Comm. Pliszka said fees from the Fire Marshal's Office go into the general fund. Any extra money goes into windfall.

Comm. Dodd said the dilemma is the Fire Marshal needs help and he needs help now. How do we resolve that dilemma? Chief Deskis said we will have to do more with less. Comm. Dodd said there has to be a solution. We can't always prepare for things like this to happen and he needs help. We need to come up with a solution to help the staff. Comm. Perry said I understand what you are saying but unfortunately we are stuck with that charter. Comm. Pliszka said it goes into the general fund. Comm. Dodd asked how do we help him today though. Chief Deskis said he had budgeted an amount for someone to help with inspections but we have a member who is out for an unspecified amount of time and another person going out next month. I just found out today that another person is going out on FMLA. There is no money left. Comm. Perry said there are no people. Chief Deskis said I'm just trying to figure something out for the next budget. Comm. Dodd said payroll would be increased. But that doesn't help you today.

Comm. Pliszka said this doesn't really have to do with the Charter. There is the contingency fund. There is overtime in the payroll budget. Chief Deskis said that is going to be used. The contingency fund will probably be used for overtime too. Comm. Perry said there aren't people to give him help. Three people will be out. There are people that will take vacations or get sick. Where is that body going to come from? Comm. Dodd asked will you bring in somebody from the outside? Chief Deskis said another position would be created from the Fire Marshal money. Comm. Dodd said we can't use that money. If we were able to get the money, would you hire someone? Chief Deskis said I don't think we need to hire someone. Maybe for the next budget we can do that. We need someone who can do inspections.

Fire Marshal Ellis said he has a sworn obligation to the community and to his profession. I don't need help. The statutory obligations of the Fire Marshal are not getting done. There will never be a point where all those obligations will get done. We have to have a solid effort to do what we can. There is a need now and it's not going to go away. I am able to get things done because of the help from the other members.

We are meeting the obligations for plan reviews. People pay a fee so we have a responsibility to get that done. We are able to meet the State of CT's requirements.

Fire Marshal Ellis said the thing that exposes the District to a huge liability is annual and biannual inspections. This is where the community risk reduction plan comes in. There is a risk analysis and prioritization of all the buildings in Thompsonville that are not a single or two family homes. Multi-family residences are statutorily required to be inspected by the Fire Marshal every year. There are thousands of those in our district. Fire departments have been sued by estates of people who have died in a fire. These departments argued that they didn't have the money or enough people. The courts said that isn't good enough. There was a fire on Tariff Street where luckily the building had been inspected.

Comm. Dodd asked what is the solution. Fire Marshal Ellis said the best case scenario is someone working Monday – Friday on this. The interim solution is there are 3 people who are able to be sworn deputy fire marshals. The issue is how do we pay them. Comm. Perry said we are using these people for overtime to man the shifts. The people just aren't there. Fire Marshal Ellis said we prioritize it. Chief Deskis said we need to sit down with the Union and figure out a rate of pay. There is nothing in the contract about Deputy Fire Marshals. There needs to be a rate for fire inspections. It's going to be tight because there is a lot of overtime.

Fire Marshal Ellis said our liability is reduced if we are in the process of developing a plan. Comm. Dodd asked can we bring in a person from the outside to do this. Chief Deskis said it would be going against the union contract. It has to be done internally. Comm. Dodd said that will have to go in next year's budget.

Fire Marshal Ellis said on a good note, there is a lot of construction going on. We should be able to determine a figure for fees coming in each year. Comm. Dodd asked who pays for the yearly inspections. Fire Marshal Ellis said no one. It is one of those unfunded mandates. Comm. Dodd said we need to figure out how many inspections can be done in a week and come up with a cost for an employee. Fire Marshal Ellis said I presented a budget of \$8,000 to the Chief. That would allow for 3 inspections a day for 2 days a week. It is a start to show that we are doing something.

Comm. Dodd asked are you asking the Board to come up with a solution or are you going to present one. Chief Deskis said the Fire Marshal and I can probably work that out together.

7. New Business: a) Building Improvement, b) Department Master Plan Proposal:

Building Improvement: Chief Deskis said he got some estimates for security cameras for the station. Can we use money from the building maintenance fund to purchase them? Comm. Dodd asked what is the cost. Chief Deskis said around \$5,500. Comm. Pliszka said the Charter says non-recurring capital expenditures must not be accessed

without majority vote. Comm. Gillespie asked what type of cameras are they. Chief Deskis said high resolution outdoor dome-style 4.1 MP 2.8 mm wide angle digital IP cameras. Comm. Gillespie said you can buy that camera at Home Depot. Is there going to be a DVR somewhere in there? Are TVs going to be installed? Chief Deskis said the TVs aren't included. Dept. Secy. asked how many TVs will there be. Chief Deskis said two. Comm. Pliszka asked where will the cameras be placed. Chief Deskis said on the building's corners, by the apparatus doors, and one inside the apparatus bay. Comm. Dodd suggested that Comm. Gillespie look over the estimates. Comm. Gillespie asked can people access the cameras from outside the station. Chief Deskis said it is going to be internal. Comm. Gillespie said you should be able to access it from home or phone. If something happens, you can go back and review it. Comm. Pliszka said Comm. Gillespie can review everything and the Board can vote on it next month.

Department Master Plan Proposal: Chief Deskis said he looked into a company that reviews staffing models, effectiveness, apparatus replacement plans, and other things. I would like the Board to review the information and decide if this is something our department should do. The company can determine what things we are doing wrong and how to improve things. They would develop a long-term strategic plan. The cost is \$13,000. Maybe it can be put in next year's budget.

8. Approval of Minutes from September 15 regular meeting:

MOTION to accept the minutes of the September 15 regular meeting made by Comm. Gillespie, seconded by Comm. Bouthiette. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 5-0.

10. Adjourn:

MOTION to adjourn made by Comm. Bouthiette, seconded by Comm. Gillespie. All in favor by ayes at 8:30 pm.