

BURLINGTON FIRE COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting
February 2, 2021

Minutes of February 2, 2021 Meeting of the Burlington Fire Commission. The meeting of the Burlington Fire Commission convened at 08:30 hours via Zoom meeting with Commissioners Bond, Perkinson, Sheehey, Chapman, and McLaughlin. Chief Locke and Administrative Assistant Meghan Sweeney were also present.

Meeting End Time

Meeting end time set for 09:00 by motion from Commissioner Perkinson and seconded by Commissioner McLaughlin.

Old Business/New Business

- Introductions and welcome to Commissioner Chapman.
- Following up on the personnel. Nothing further needed. Employee has resigned.

Public Comment

No members of general public present.

Review and Accept Minutes from December Meeting

With no comments or corrections a movement to accept minutes as written was made by Commissioner McLaughlin seconded by Commissioner Perkinson.

Chief's Oral Report

The following was an update sent by Chief Locke to the Commission prior to the meeting:

Emergency Incidents – As most of you know, we have had a few significant incidents since we last met. These included three multiple alarm fires. The fire on King Street which tragically resulted in the loss of two residents highlighted the solid work of our members. The conditions faced by the first arriving units were very tough, but the crews quickly began a coordinated search with fire attack that reduced property damage. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those effected by this incident.

Fleet – We are about to take delivery of a new vehicle for the Fire Marshal which will replace not only the small pickup, but also the, “arson van”. The arson van is an old Burlington Electric service vehicle that stores equipment needed to investigate fires. The new staff truck for the Fire Marshal is larger with a cap/storage container in the back that allows all equipment to be stored in one place. This truck was designed similar to vehicles used by State of Vermont Fire Investigators. We are also about to take delivery of a new utility truck that is used to plow snow and tow our Haz-Mat trailer. We have begun planning for FY 22 fleet replacement which will include a replacement staff car and a new ambulance.

Personnel – Fire Marshal Barry Simays is retiring effective this week (1/28/21) and has accepted the position of Fire Marshal for the University of Vermont. We have advertised this position both internally and through a national search. First round resume reviews will occur on February 4. We hope to quickly fill this important position. We have offered employment to eight individuals for a mid-March start. These include six new positions for the third ambulance as well as two that fill vacancies. We just had a probationary employee who has been on workers compensation since October resign, so we will be attempting to fill that position if possible as part of the March class.

Operations Chief – We still have not been able to permanently fill the Deputy Chief of Operations position. The CAO and I plan to discuss this vacancy in the coming weeks and I hope I will be given authorization to proceed. More when I know it.

Budget – The FY 21 budget continues to be a challenge. We are basically only spending what is absolutely necessary and have already spent the entire overtime budget. I am forecasting a 300k deficit in the overtime line, but hope to have some salary savings to offset this expense. The cost to cover COVID leave during the half of the fiscal year was approximately 100K.

Budget FY 22 – We have submitted our first draft of the FY 22 budget, which excluding salary, benefits and the new personnel, the guidance received is no increase from the FY 21 totals. As you may remember, the FY 21 budget included several significant reductions that have been a challenge to work through. Carrying these reductions for another year will have an effect on training/professional development.

3rd Ambulance – The plan remains to have this new staffed ambulance in service this summer. We are excited for this to happen and are currently focusing on purchasing the equipment and supplies to make this happen.

Training Site – The new training site continues to move forward, although slower than any of us would like. Some of the connex boxes will be on site shortly, but I expect it will be spring before the project is completed.

COVID Vaccinations – All staff were offered the vaccination as part of the initial group since we are considered health care providers. The overwhelming majority of our staff took advantage of this offering and we look forward to the time when we can reduce mask usage in the stations.

Vaccine Clinics – We have contracted with the State of Vermont to have our member's staff local COVID vaccination clinics. This is a voluntary assignment, but members are compensated as outlined in the collective bargaining agreement. Several members have completed the required training and agreed to serve in this capacity.

Drain/Vent Repairs – Work was just completed at Station One to repair broken vents pipes and separate the roof drains from the septic drains. For several years when there is a heavy rain, the amount of water coming off the roof was too much for the system to handle causing the toilet in the basement to overflow. This was a very unsanitary situation that was unacceptable. We anticipate these changes will finally resolve this problem.

Supplemental Capital Funding – We received supplemental capital funding to complete two projects. The first was for approximately 45k to allow us to purchase several air packs that are needed to complete the upgrade we made in 2015. Secondly we were provided with 32k to purchase a monitor/defibrillator for the Tower. In 2018 we purchased one of these units for every primary response apparatus except the Tower. With the use of computer aided dispatch (CAD), the Tower now responds to more medical incidents than previously, so adding this piece of equipment is helpful.

Commission McLaughlin asked what the numbers would be for the department after the new hires. With the group expected in September we will be at 93 filled positions.

Chief Locke added that there has been a lieutenants list created that will carry for two years. The captains test is coming up which currently has four members testing. This will create a list for captains that will also carry for two years.

Commissioner Chapman had reached out after the King Street fire to find out what type of mental health support the department offered for the members. The members are still able to contact the Behavioral Therapist, however she has been doing much more remotely during the pandemic. There is a peer support team and other outlets available from the City. It's an ongoing challenge to find what works as each person has their own way

of responding to situations. Chief Locke also understands the term Compassion Fatigue and the struggles people can have especially when on the ambulance for extended periods.

Commissioner Bond reminded everyone to be aware of the public meeting law. Commissioner Perkinson explained that while the Commissioners can receive emails with updates, that a discussion cannot happen by email or in person if more than two commissioners are involved.

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 08:55.