

BURLINGTON FIRE COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting
February 15, 2022

Minutes of February 15, 2022 Meeting of the Burlington Fire Commission. The meeting of the Burlington Fire Commission convened at 08:30 hours via Zoom and in person with Commissioners Bond, McLaughlin, Perkinson, Sheehey, and Chapman. Chief Locke, Deputy Chief Libby, Deputy Chief Lachance, and Administrative Assistant Meghan Sweeney were also present. Braddon Wilson joined for an award presentation. Commissioner Perkinson had to leave at 09:00.

Meeting End Time

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

Public Comment

No members of public to comment.

Review and Accept Minutes December Commission Meeting

One edit from the minutes. Meeting for today was mentioned to start at 08:15 and meeting was instead scheduled for 08:30. Minutes will be updated with noted correction.

Commissions

Previous October commission meeting Braddon Wilson was unable to attend to receive his Commission for Lieutenant. Chief Locke presented him with his Commission via Zoom. LT Wilson left the meeting.

Chief's Oral Report

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

Personnel – What started as a group of nine recruits in the spring of 2021 is now down to six, but we are very pleased with their progress and look forward to them completing their probation in the coming weeks. The eight firefighters hired in September of 2021 are performing well and are working hard to learn the skills of the profession. We have made conditional offers to eight additional people with an anticipated start date in early April. Five of these eight positions fill currently vacant slots, and for the first time in my tenure, the City has authorized filling three additional positions in anticipation of vacancies over the next few months.

COVID/Injuries – Since the holidays we have had several staff out due to COVID and/or injuries. This is even worse than normal and has had a significant impact on the remaining workforce. The use of overtime is staggering. We are truly fortunate to have staff willing to cover so many vacant shifts.

Promotions – Michael Lachance has assumed the role of Deputy Chief of Administration and is working hard to learn the functions of the office. Between all of the COVID/injury leave and fleet problem, Mike has been busy.

EMS Chief – Unfortunately our new EMS Chief resigned after two weeks for personal reasons. We are working through the process to re-advertise the position and hope to have an identified candidate soon.

Overtime – Overtime continues to be a major challenge within the Department. While I had hoped to see a reduction in early January, it only lasted a couple days and then COVID and several injuries derailed our gain. I anticipate our overtime budget will exceed authorized limits by \$500,000. We have a plan to cover this if our revenues remain strong. Chief Locke added that he hopes there will be some relief in March with some members coming back from different leaves.

3rd Ambulance – We recently made some changes to the deployment of the ambulances in an effort to reduce the workload on Ambulance 1. We had analyzed five months of call data and attempted to make changes in areas where a slightly increased response time should have minimal impact on patient outcomes. We will continue to make adjustments in the coming months as needed.

Fleet – We have had several problems with the fleet that have been difficult to manage. Specifically, both Ambulance 4 and Engine 3 have spent a lot of time in the shop and with these vehicles out, we really do not have a spare engine or ambulance. DC LaChance is in constant communications with DPW, developing maintenance plans that maximize efficiencies and reduce downtimes.

Capital Bond – The capital bond that is going to the voters in March still has 2.2 million for fire trucks and 4 million for public safety radio infrastructure. The questions requires a super-majority to pass.

Budget – With the exception of overtime, the FY 22 budget is looking okay. We have begun initial planning for the FY 23 budget, but initial guidance requires no new spending beyond salary and benefits. This will be another challenge.

King Street – Great job by the crews responding to the fire on King Street during terrible weather conditions. We were fortunate no firefighter injuries occurred given the conditions faced. Proud to work with this group.

Old Business/New Business

- Commissioner McLaughlin asked if any update on the station consolidation project. Chief Locke said nothing further at this time.
- Commissioner Sheehey asked if there was any policy to help fast track the new recruits who come with previous firefighting experience to help with staffing. There are a lot of parts to this, but members who are on probation cannot drive the trucks yet. Commissioner McLaughlin asked what other limitations for a new recruit/probationary member have. Chief Locke explained they cannot be assigned to a two person company due to driving limitations and there must be at least one advanced provider on an ambulance crew.
- Chief Locke also explained that Command staff cannot be paid overtime as they are salaried employees. DC Libby is covering as the Battalion on Friday night due to no one else being available. He is not able to be paid for the hours beyond his 40 for the week, and they normally do at least that many hours for their regular responsibilities during the week.
- Commissioner Chapman asked if there was any problems with recruiting or why there were so many new people leaving. Chief Locke said most are not leaving to join other departments, but the career all together which makes him believe it's not necessarily our department that is motivating these people to leave. Commissioner Bond asked if the length of time people are working on the ambulance are causing some of these issues. Chief Locke thinks it's definitely a contributing factor, but there is no change that can happen without it going to negotiations..
- Awards Ceremony: Not a lot of details yet, but the membership presented an idea to have a more formal gathering to recognize the groups coming off probation and other officer commissions that should be recognized throughout the year. This would be open to family and friends with possible more roles from Commissioners. Commissioner Bond thinks it's a great idea and may help with moral and team building.
- Discussed Commission Awards. Chiefs recommended some changes to the type of award in one nomination and the Commission agreed to it with motion from Commissioner Sheehey and seconded by Commissioner McLaughlin.

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 09:15 by Commissioner Bond.