

**BURLINGTON FIRE COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of the Meeting**  
**February 7, 2023**

Minutes of February 7, 2023 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, Sheehey, and Perkinson. Acting Chief Libby, Deputy Chief Lachance, and Administrative Assistant Meghan Sweeney were also present.

Establish Meeting End Time

Commissioner Bond asked for a motion to establish a meeting end time. Commissioner Sheehey made a motion to end the meeting at 09:00 which was seconded by Commissioner McLaughlin.

Public Comment

No members of the public present.

Review and Accept Minutes December Commission Meetings

Movement to accept minutes as written by Commissioner Perkinson and seconded by Commissioner McLaughlin.

Chief's Oral Report

The following was an update sent by Acting Chief Libby, to the Commission prior to the meeting:

**Personnel** –Recruit Class 22-2 Graduated at the end of December with all members of that class now riding on the apparatus and counting towards minimum staffing.

**Retirements/Resignations:** Since our last meeting, there has been one resignation, effective February 04, 2023. Additionally, we have become aware of two additional pending resignations within the next couple of months. One member is seeking to use his paramedic skills as a flight medic and the other member has chosen to leave the department to work for a New Hampshire agency, which is closer to home. We also have a member working with the city to retire in July.

**Hiring/Promotions** –

There has been one promotion since our last meeting. Ryan Ploof was promoted to the rank of Senior Firefighter. We have scheduled promotional testing for the rank of Captain. That test is to be held on March 15<sup>th</sup> with oral boards scheduled for the following two days. At this time, we are accepting applications from those who are interested in participating in the process. Applications are due on February 10 by the 16:00 hrs.

We anticipate starting our next recruit academy in early June.

Deputy Chief LaChance has committed to participating in a number of job fairs and open houses over the next few months. This is a continued effort to reach candidates that are more diverse and inform potential employees that we are hiring. One fair will be hosted by City HR and will showcase available city jobs to local candidates.

Operation May Day is a new statewide recruitment strategy, which will be coming to life shortly. This state funded initiative will provide advertisement and links for interested people to research an opportunity to

become involved in the fire service. This will culminate with open houses throughout the state on a date in May.

The Fire Chief position has had first round interviews while at the same time, the position remains posted on the cities job-posting site. I have no additional information about next steps in the process.

**COVID/Injuries** – Last year we averaged 254.48 hours of COVID Emergency Leave per month. Since July 1, 2022, we are averaging 189.4 hrs. Sick leave has dropped by roughly 76 hours per month however, Worker’s Compensation leave saw an increase of about 43 hours per month. Currently, we do not have anyone out on workers comp and we hope not to.

**EMS Chief** – Since our last meeting, we examined the job description in cooperation with Human Resources, and posted the job internally as an EMS Coordinator at the Assistant Fire Marshals pay grade. The thought and hope was that a commissioned member may see this as an opportunity while remaining within the Union and having an opportunity to return to the floor. We had previously heard that there was no interest internally as a Chiefs position because the position would not allow them to return to the floor and serve as a firefighter or fire officer in the future. We had no applicants from within. The job description has been reviewed to lessen the requirement of fire based EMS leadership experience, in hopes of recruiting candidates interested in the position.

**Overtime** – Overtime to cover minimum staffing has decreased slightly now averaging 229.32 hours (as of Jan 29) versus 239.9 hours per week (As of December 04, 2022) In the last eleven weeks we have used mandatory overtime to cover a total of 42 hours of staffing.

**Fleet** – Fleet maintenance continues and we are working very hard to ensure the items, which members write up, are being dealt with in an appropriate timeline, with any safety issues taking top priority with us and DPW. This continues to be challenging but is being very well managed by Deputy Chief LaChance on what is really a daily basis.

**New Apparatus** –

The following timelines are the best of our knowledge for apparatus, which have already been ordered:

Ambulance:	Due in end of June 2023	Ordered: October 15, 2021
Ladder 4:	Due in end of Jan 2024	Ordered: May 03, 2022
Engine 3 & 1	Due in July of 2024	Ordered May 03, 2022

FY24 we are supposed to be replacing the following vehicles:

- BATT 1 holdover from FY23
- CAR 2
- Ambulance

At this time, we are not sure what the fleet replacement plan looks like though we continue to advocate for timely replacements and emphasize the multiple year build times on front line pieces. We are in the process of working with the city to apply for an Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) grant for an ambulance, command vehicle, and defibrillators which are all due for replacement during the AFG performance period. The hope is to lessen the burden on the city and taxpayers, if we are successful, while still being able to achieve our replacement timelines. There is a 10% cost sharing with AFG grants.

**Radio System** The radio system were pulled back from the December BOF and CC meetings but was presented at the January 9 Board of Finance meeting and on the concurrent agenda for the council. I spoke at the BOF

meeting and received Committee support for the project and we have a signed contract with Motorola for the scope of work presented. I am scheduled to meet with Motorola for site walks on February 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Station Alerting** – The RFP for station alerting is being readied for posting on the cities RFP site. We are hoping for a clear path forward in regard to dispatch prior to posting. The location of the dispatch center and training of dispatchers is part of the project. We are trying to reduce inefficiencies by not moving the system after installation or retraining staff in its use.

**Burlington Dispatch** – We continue to operate our own dispatch services and are very pleased with the performance of all members working in that capacity. The path forward is currently unclear and significantly depends on the future of Regional Dispatch. I have been in communications with the Mayor's Office about a sustainable path forward, but at this time, we are awaiting some information related to funding for Regional.

**Regional Dispatch** – As we are all aware, Regional Dispatch has come up against some challenges of late. There is hope that additional federal and state monies will be made available to get this on track again, but as of this time, there is no definitive answer.

**Record Management System:** On January 1, 2023, we began to utilize FirstDue as our new RMS. FireHouse RMS was our previous version but was no longer supported by its parent company, causing us to go out to bid early last year. There is obviously a learning curve with any new system; however, members are utilizing the system and have been flexible as we work out kinks.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if we have looked into the apprenticeship program the State offers to have people work without having to pay as much overtime. Acting Chief Libby is not familiar with the program and made note to look into it closer.

Commissioner Perkinson asked if there was any chance of getting any Garnett vehicles to help with Fleet issues. While the department has reached out to them, we have not heard anything in response.

Commissioner Bond asked if we had to go out to bond for all vehicles. Ambulances are purchased by a bidding process, while the trucks are usually done through a bond.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if there are specific issues with vehicles that are causing them to go out of service. DC LaChance said there are different issues with different vehicles. It's all above normal maintenance work that is done, and just a result of vehicles aging.

Commissioner Sheehey asked if there is any data showing a reduced number of students looking into joining the fire science programs. DC LaChance knows Maine Community College has had a large increase as it's fully funded. VT Tech College is no longer offering it since there wasn't enough interest.

Commissioner Bond recognized how detailed the report was, and wanted to recognize DC LaChance and Acting Chief Libby the amount of effort they put into being creative and innovative at solving the department's challenges and problems.

#### Old Business/New Business

- Local Emergency Management Plan was presented to the commissioners to review. This plan is something Acting Chief Libby has been working on and managing for the past five years. After this past weekend's warming shelter was used at the Robert Miller Center he would like to have that process laid

out in the plan. The shelter worked well for the use over the weekend, but to have a set plan in place will allow quick guidance next time something like that is needed.

#### Executive Session

- Pursuant to Title 1, Section 313, of the Vermont Statutes, upon the affirmative vote a majority of the members present, a motion to go into executive session is carried to discuss matters where general public knowledge would place the Department at a substantial disadvantage. The meeting went into executive session to discuss the status of the search for the Fire Engineer position. Motion to go into executive session made by Commissioner McLaughlin and was seconded by Commissioner Perkinson. Acting Chief Libby, DC LaChance, and Administrative Assistant Sweeney exited the room at 09:10. Executive Session ended with a motion for the commissioners to submit a formal letter of recommendation to the mayor's office.

#### Adjourn

Meeting adjourned after executive session at 09:20.