

BURLINGTON FIRE COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting
August 23, 2022

Minutes of August 23, 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, Sheehey, Perkinson, and Chapman. Acting Chief Libby, Deputy Chief Lachance, were also present.

Public Comment

No members of public to comment.

Review and Accept Minutes May Commission Meetings

Movement to accept minutes as written by Commissioner Sheehey 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:

On July 1, 2022, I officially became the Acting Chief Engineer for Burlington Fire Department. I am honored for the opportunity to lead the department until a permanent Chief is appointed. Over the past few weeks, we continue to work hard, every day to provide the high level of services, which our customers expect.

Personnel – Recruit class 22-1 started in early April and on July 8, they completed their 14-week academy and received their assignments. By all accounts, the five members of this class did very well in the academy.

Retirement – On June 30, Chief Locke officially separated from the department to pursue opportunities with the City of South Burlington. We are thankful for the six years of service and leadership, which he provided the department, and wish him well.

June 29, Meghan Sweeney announced that she would be leaving the department effective August 2, 2022. Meghan has been with the city for 10 years and the department for nine of those. Meghan has brought an outstanding capability to the position, a caringness for the members, and a willingness to work hard and accurately on all projects, she touched. Meghan will be missed.

On August 18, 2022, we conducted interviews for this position, and at the time of this writing are still in the interview process.

August 5, 2022 I received a resignation letter from Jason Smith. Jason has been with the Department for five years and will be leaving us to pursue an opportunity with the United States Marshal Service.

Hiring/Promotions – The application period for new firefighters closed with 28 applicants. Eighteen interviews were scheduled for the week of July 18. Currently we have four vacancies, not including Chief Locke's position and the BC of EMS. Of the 18 interviews, there were eight candidates, which the committee recommended we hire. After the process, I was able to obtain permission from the city of offer all eight candidates a position in order to fill the current openings and try to get ahead of anticipated vacancies. Of the eight offers made, seven have accepted positions and are in the process of being on-boarded with a September 26 start date.

The job posting for Administrative Assistant opened on July 07, 2022. To date we have received 13 application and are conducting interviews with five of the applicants on August 18.

Since our last meeting, we have promoted Michael Curtin and Jamie Valyou to the rank of Battalion Chief. Jeremy Raymond has been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant and Bill Lyons has completed all requirements for promotion to Senior Firefighter. Congratulations to all.

COVID/Injuries – Last year we averaged 254.48 hours of COVID Emergency Leave per month. The month of July, we saw a significant down turn in those hours to 120 hours. While this was a great change, unfortunately we experienced an increase in workers compensation leave (504 hours) due to a few injuries.

EMS Chief – With Chief Locke's departure, we learned that the candidate to fill the Battalion Chief of EMS has chosen not to accept the offer. Because of this, we will be evaluating how we move forward to fill this much-needed position after we are able to stabilize the Admin Assistant vacancy.

Overtime – Overtime continues to be used to meet staffing needs. We are averaging 298.4 hours of overtime a week so far this fiscal year. I am hopeful that we see a downturn as summer vacations thin out and we see members return to work from FMLA and Workers Compensation leave. In FY22, we spent \$965,882.63 in overtime.

Fleet – This month Tower 1 was out of service for a couple of weeks due to a hydraulic issue in the turntable. The amount of out of service time was due to awaiting parts from the manufacturer and scheduling repairs with E-One mechanic to help city DPW. Additionally we have had our reserve ambulance in service for much of August as other ambulances have had a variety of issues from charging systems to air conditioning troubles.

New Apparatus – July 25-29 members travelled to Ocala FL for pre-build meetings with E-One. At this time, we are awaiting final drawings to be delivered, reviewed, and signed off. It is estimated that we are looking at about a two-year turn around.

On July 15th I received an email from our chosen vendor for the new ambulance. In that email we were notified that, the chassis has not yet arrived at the manufacture "and there is nothing currently scheduled to come in."

Radio System – Lieutenant Wilson has done site visits with the engineers from Motorola to map radio coverage for the city. As this plan continues to be developed, LT. Wilson will be meeting with BPD as this is a joint project, and he will be conducting tests though out the city to verify coverage within known trouble areas.

Station Alerting – DC LaChance has received designs for the new station alerting system and distributed those to the station Captains for review and input.

FY 23 Budget – The FY-23 budget was approved as submitted. Our budget was presented with an increase in ambulance billing to meet the goals of the budget preparation process. It should be noted that around 82% of our billable ambulance fees are Medicare/Medicaid and those returns are set by those programs. Self-Pay, Commercial, Government, Motor Vehicle, Workers Compensation or Private Pay covers the additional 18% of our billable services.

Regional Dispatch – We are very much awaiting the stability which regional dispatch is anticipated to provide. Currently our local dispatch center struggles with staffing challenges. While the target for regional to be operational is July 2023, the popular thought is that it will be in the fall. In the July meeting, there was discussion on the Executive Director Job description. Burlington's representative to CCPSA was Chief Locke. Since his departure, I have sent the Mayors Chief of Staff an e-mail requesting that the Mayor appoint someone to the Board to represent Burlington.

Acting Chief Libby announced that there has been progress made in filling the Administrative and Accounting Assistant position. Meaghan Sweeney has submitted paperwork to return to the position.

Commissioner Sheehey asked about other communities involved in Regional Dispatch, the location of the center, and there was clarification about 911 call handlers at Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) vs. at Regional Dispatch.

Commissioner Chapman inquired about the “average amount of overtime” worked individual members throughout the month. Acting Chief Libby was not able to provide a person-by-person breakdown, there was discussion about how overtime is now distributed both voluntarily and mandatory.

Old Business/New Business

- Commissioner Bond provided information related to the Chief Engineer process and there was discussion about what a potential hiring board make-up would look like. Interest among members of the Commission to be included in the process. Currently there are a number of other Department Head positions open within the City and as progress is made on those then there will be movement in opening the Fire Chief Engineer search.
- Discussion surrounding Retention and Wellness Summary. Current resources were discussed along with a discussion on what more the Commission can do. Thoughts surrounding Commission station visits, scheduling time for formal station visits, and supporting the Department at NPA meetings. This will be an agenda item for a future meeting.
- Commissioner Sheehey inquired if the members had ballistic protection. Acting Chief Libby confirmed that all 22 of the riding positions did have that protection and that there is guidance provided to donning those items before responding to certain incidents, or as seen fit at other times. Short comings in ballistic protection were also discussed.

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. Motion was made by Commissioner Sheehey, seconded by Commissioner McLaughlin with all in favor. The Commission went into executive session at 09:27 to discuss labor relations agreements with employees.

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 09:50 am.