

BURLINGTON FIRE COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting
December 1, 2020

Minutes of December 1, 2020 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, 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 Sheehey.

Public Comment

No members of general public present.

Review and Accept Minutes from October Meeting

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

Chief's Oral Report

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

Fleet – The fleet is in good shape and all units are in service. We have begun high level planning for the replacement of Ladder 4 and Engine 3, which should happen in 2023. We have sold the old Tower 1 to a department in Nebraska. We are happy to have it finally gone. It had been stored at Station 4, but we need to begin preparing for the third ambulance which is still on track for the summer of 2021.

Personnel – While we are technically at full staff, we have several members out on injury or COVID leave which has made staffing a challenge. It is almost a daily occurrence that we must mandatory personnel on overtime. I am hopeful that in another six weeks or so that will begin to change, but it is a fluid situation.

Recruits – As you may remember, we currently have seven recruits in the training program. They are scheduled to complete it in a couple weeks and then will be assigned to a shift. This class has been a challenge as well. One of the recruits was forced to quarantine and miss eight days due to his spouse testing COVID positive and another recruit sustained an arm injury that has limited her participation. Unfortunately, she has missed enough skills that she will need to retake the class in the spring. We also have learned some valuable lessons of having a class this large with diverse skill sets. We will certainly change the way we run the spring class to adjust. We expect the spring hiring will be a minimum of seven personnel with six of those being new positions.

Operations Chief & EMS Coordinator – We still have not been able to permanently fill the Deputy Chief of Operations position. While the City budget is looking better than initially projected, several positions are still on hold. I hope to get authorization in the coming weeks to fill the spot. I plan to introduce a new position as an EMS coordinator in the coming weeks as well. There is little doubt that direct oversight of our EMS Division is seriously needed. I have some ideas to implement this with little expense. I had previously gotten support from the Administration for this position, but COVID changed the plan.

Budget – The FY 21 budget continues to be a challenge. We are basically only spending what is absolutely necessary and have already spent almost 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 first quarter of the fiscal year was approximately 50K.

Grant – The new Plymo-Vent exhaust system has been installed. This new system will serve us for years to come and was 90% grant funded. Nice job to the staff getting this funded and completed.

3rd Ambulance – The plan remains to hire six additional personnel in March of 2021 for the third ambulance. We are currently focusing on purchasing the equipment and supplies to make this happen. We expect the new ambulance to be in service in July/August of 2021.

Paramedic Class – We have three members enrolled in the current VTC paramedic class. In addition, two other members just passed the testing process and will be able to practice in the coming weeks. We now have 12 paramedics providing service to the City.

Training Site – we have signed the contract for construction of the training site. Unfortunately, the connex boxes are delayed and it is unlikely this will be completed this fall. We are hopeful we will have this training site completed in the spring.

Chief Locke added the members of the department, like many others, are aware of the struggle of pandemic and covid fatigue. Members are responding well to the mandate of masks in the stations and single company trainings. While it has been a challenge, it's the right thing to do.

Commissioner Perkinson asked if there was any plan to change training due to the injury. Chief Locke clarified the injury was a result of normal training. The challenge has been the training is being conducted with a much smaller setting and not as many other crews able to assist. This has caused a challenge for many things this year.

At this point the fire service is not considered a top level priority for getting the new covid-19 vaccine. Chief Locke has volunteered the department to be one of the sites for administering the vaccine with VT Department of Health. This may help the department to become a higher level priority.

Commissioner Bond asked about the EMS Coordinator position. Chief Locke knows there is a strong need for that position to be created especially with a third ambulance that will be coming into service soon. There had been strong support from the previous CAO, and he's hoping Administration will still see the value. The budget is a concern as it is for many departments.

Old Business/New Business

- Commissioner Stan Hills had to resign as a result of moving out of state. Commissioner Bond has encouraged some to apply. Postings for open positions are on the City's website. Burlington Fire Commission page has been updated with Commissioner McLaughlin added and Commissioner Hills removed.
- The draft of 2021 meetings schedule had no conflicts at this time and was approved as submitted.

Executive Session

- Commissioner Bond: Pursuant to Title 1, Section 313 of the Vermont Statues, 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 and seconded by Commissioner McLaughlin. Commissioners moved to a new meeting with Chief Locke to discuss a personnel matter.

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 09:18.