

BURLINGTON FIRE COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting
December 14, 2021

Minutes of December 14, 2021 Meeting of the Burlington Fire Commission. The meeting of the Burlington Fire Commission convened at 08:05 hours via Zoom and in person with Commissioners Bond, McLaughlin, Perkinson, Sheehey, and Chapman. Chief Locke, Deputy Chief Libby, Captain Lachance, and Administrative Assistant Meghan Sweeney were also present. Members of the department and public were present for Jason S Smith Commission.

Meeting End Time

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

Commissions

Commission was presented to Firefighter Smith.

Public Comment

No members of public to comment.

Review and Accept Minutes October Commission Meeting

A movement to accept the minutes from the October meeting made by Commissioner Perkinson and seconded by Commissioner Sheehey and McLaughlin.

Chief's Oral Report

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

Personnel – The seven members hired in the spring of 2021 are progressing nicely and are entering the last few months of their probationary year. All are performing well and are right on track. We also have eight members who are almost finished with the 12 week recruit school. The training division has implemented some changes with this group of recruits that we hope will address some of the challenges we have experienced previously. Many thanks to BC Ruggles and FF Carson who have worked hard on these changes. I am confident we have a better program that will help our staff succeed. There is little doubt that having 15 members with less than a year of experience taxes the entire organization. We currently have four vacancies and are accepting applications through the end of December. We plan to start another recruit class in late March of 2022 and hope to be back on schedule for one recruit class per year.

Promotions – In the coming weeks (January 3 effective) Michael Lachance will assume the role of Deputy Chief of Administration. This same day SFF Tyler Mitchell will be promoted to Lieutenant. We do not currently have any members on the captains list, so we will maintain 18 officers, but will be down one captain. We are following the testing schedule outlined in the agreement with the BFFA.

EMS Chief – Also on January 3, our first dedicated Chief of EMS, Don Scott, will join us. Don will spend his first few weeks learning our EMS system and our people. We look forward to having Don with us and this position filled.

Overtime – Overtime continues to be a major challenge within the organization. While labor and management have implemented several changes to address this, we still are forced to mandatory staff to work several times a week. We hope this reduces when the seven members complete recruit training later this month.

3rd Ambulance – We continue to see a tremendous value from a third staffed ambulance. There has been a significant reduction on the need for a mutual aid ambulance and response time have decreased. We are still monitoring call volume by vehicle and would like to reduce the Ambulance 1 call volume, but that is not easily done.

Fleet – We currently have on order a new ambulance and a new administrative vehicle that were funded in the FY 22 capital lease program. The ambulance will not arrive until the fall of 2022 which is disappointing. The pandemic has almost doubled the normal delivery time for ambulances. The administrative car is a fully electric Mustang Mach E, and will replace the 2014 car.

Capital Bond – The defeat of the capital bond earlier this week dealt a blow to our fleet replacement plans. The bond included funding for the replacement of Engine 3, Ladder 4 and Engine 6. It also included approximately 4.3 million for the replacement of the public safety radio system as well as our station alerting software. There have not been conversations yet that I have been involved in on the next steps.

Budget – With the exception of overtime, the FY 22 budget is looking good. Earlier this month we exceeded the entire 350k allotted to overtime, but am hopeful overtime will slow down in January. We continue to monitor/project salary savings from vacancies to bridge this gap before we make other reductions. We have begun initial planning for the FY 23 budget, but expect guidance to be for a lean request.

Renovations – Led by Captain Laramie, the shift commander's office is undergoing a renovation to spruce the place up. This is the last office space in need of renovation and could not have been done without the efforts of staff. The old paneling was removed, sheetrock installed, new lighting and carpet has made a significant difference. This work should be completed in the coming days and will serve us well. We have also hired a contractor to make an office for the EMS Chief in the space currently used by the Fire Marshal. This work should be completed before the EMS Chief starts.

Commissioner Perkinson asked how Burlington Fire Department's attrition compare to other departments. Chief Locke wasn't sure, but is concerned about the fire service in general. Most of the employees that are leaving are not going to other fire departments, but in fact are leaving the service to pursue other careers in general. The Chief obviously would desire a lower attrition rate, but not sure there is a simple solution to the problem.

Commissioners discussed there wasn't a lot of coverage of what the Fire Department's needs were from the funds of the bond. There will need to be a new plan set forth, however Chief Locke isn't sure what the steps will be. Commissioners were sympathetic with the increase on taxes for some due to the new tax assessment.

Commissioner McLaughlin was asking about the budget, and Chief Locke explained as a whole the City FY 23 budget development may be a challenge for all departments. He did explain that the Fire Department is allowed to carry vacancy savings for positions not filled to offset some of our overtime budget. Not all departments are allowed to do so.

Old Business/New Business

- Commissioner Bond asked about updates with Regional Dispatch with some changes in neighboring communities. Chief Locke said there are some ideas at the state level, but nothing further at this time.
- Commissioner Perkinson asked about the Sears Lane encampment having an effect on the department. DC Libby said he was down at the space and it's well cleaned out and still no one there.
- The 2022 Commission Meeting dates were discussed. February 8th date does not work for everyone, so the meeting will be held on February 15th instead. Meeting start time will be changed to 08:15 instead of 08:00.

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 09:01 by Commissioner Bond.

DRAFT