Board of Fire Commissioners
June 1, 2021
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Room 1
Regular Meeting

Commissioners present: Jennifer Spencer, Bruce Dutch, Tim Reynolds
Visitors: Don Lee (Colchester FD), Chief Brian Auld, Ray Swol, Kevin Rutty, Eric Kolasinski, Liam Duncan, Carleen Quinn

1. Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Bruce Dutch at 5:00pm. Chairman Dutch introduced Tim Reynolds as new Fire Commissioner to complete term held by Howie Bogue, term ends 1-1-22. The history of Board of Fire Commissioners was reviewed.

2. Acceptance of Minutes of Regular Meeting of May 4, 2021
   a. Motion made by B. Dutch, seconded by J. Spencer, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 4, 2021. Motion passed.

3. Bill Approval: Recent submissions reviewed and discussed.

4. Budget Recap: Current expenditures were reviewed. We are maintaining our bottom line at this time. There are several line items with costs exceeding the expected expenditure. J. Spencer reminded everyone present regarding the need to be very careful with expenses until the end of the fiscal year. After next week's submission of invoices, the Commissioners will have a better idea of the final expenses that can be addressed. The priorities are gear, laptops and new motor for the Jon boat.

5. Old Business: None

6. Visitors Participation: Don Lee discussed the history of Colchester Volunteer Fire Department and paid staff and how they work together. Also reviewed was how Cochester handled the chain of command between volunteer members and career staff. D. Lee reviewed the struggles and the solutions including specific job responsibilities, chain of command as well as SOG's (standard operating guidelines) and SOP (standard operating procedures) as well as by-laws that included disciplinary guidelines which are strictly enforced. Many remarks came from the visitors at the meeting. The biggest concern is determining the appropriate chain of command especially as it relates to the career staff. The career staff are Town employees and felt they should report to the First Selectman not the Volunteer Chief. Some visitors felt the career staff should report to the Volunteer Chief. The end decision will need to be determined as soon as possible. A benefit for communication could be having a Captain determined for the career staff. This is being worked on at this time and will involve Union guidelines. No matter the determination all communications should be transparent and sent to all appropriate persons. It was discussed that there are still open positions for career staff which need to be filled as soon as possible in order to fill the schedule. It was mentioned that all parties strongly felt we should resume quarterly meetings with the First Selectman. The Commissioners will discuss this with First Selectman Smith to initiate these upon his return.

7. Fire Chief Report: The Fire Department Executive Board met with EHAA representatives and discussed current issues. One main issue is meeting the importance of having one Ambulance stage temporarily at Company #2 from 6:00am – 6:00pm, Monday thru Friday. Chief Auld reviewed a letter from Jim Santacroce from Middlesex Hospital. The letter noted nothing needs to be done to have this need met. Currently the career staff need to leave Company #2 to go to Company #1 to get the ambulance then respond to the actual call. This is greatly affecting response times to our town's residents and visitors and delays care. Chief Auld also noted Don Angersola approved purchasing a new monitor for Active 911 and security camera views. Lt. Eric Kolasinski will oversee placement of monitors. It was noted that at a recent live burn training session a junior firefighter was allowed into the burning building in full gear and SCBA apparatus for breathing. This is not allowed as he is underage therefore, he was at high risk for injury. This is an OSHA violation. Chief Auld noted he has done this in the past but now recognizes it is wrong and will no longer allow this to occur.

8. Fire Marshal's Report: None

9. Building Report: Bathroom doors are reported to have new locks. Access can be gained in case of emergency with a "pin" into the lock. J. Spencer is to confirm this has been done. B. Dutch noted he will speak with D. Angersola and will recommend he has the floor repaired in the ladies bathroom and convert the shower into a closet which will have access to plumbing if/or when issues arise.

10. Equipment Report: There is a need for a replacement motor for the Jon boat. Research has been done and information distributed tonight for review. The Fire Department is requesting they be allowed to purchase a 25hp long shaft motor from a local vendor if the budget allows. Motion made by J. Spencer, seconded by B. Dutch, to approve spending no more than $5,500 after next invoice submission on June 8th if funds are available. Motion passed. Deputy Chief Swol will handle the purchase after speaking with the Fire Commissioners following submission of invoices.

    Another item the Fire Department is looking for are I-Pads for accessibility to Active 911 / Target solutions while enroute to calls as well as other duties. They will be wireless, have an estimated monthly fee of $40.00 after purchase. The cost is to be determined with research. J. Spencer noted they should be sure to obtain Tough Book covers for the 2 I-Pads as well. This purchase will be tabled until the next Fire Commissioners meeting.

11. Correspondence: None

12. New Business: None

13. Adjournment: Motion made by J. Spencer, seconded by B. Dutch, to adjourn the meeting at 6:45pm. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Spencer, Secretary