



COMMISSION MEETING

March 14, 2023

The Westfield Fire Commission met at the East Street Firehouse, Middletown, CT on March 14, 2023. Chairman Amy opened the meeting at 6:32 p.m. with the following Commissioners present – Peterson, Bysiewicz, Alderman, Scarrozzo, Balch, Turner and T. Bysiewicz. Commissioner Plummer was absent.

Others present were: Chief Darrell Ponzio, Deputy Chief (DC) Jason Lube, FDA Linda DeManche and Ross Andrew.

Chairman Amy made a **MOTION** to open the public session, with no public comment closed on a **MOTION** by Comm. Tuner, all in favor.

-On a **MOTION** by Comm. Balch seconded by Comm. Turner it was approved to accept the agenda as written, all in favor.

-On a **MOTION** by Comm. Scarrozzo seconded by Comm. Balch it was approved to waive the reading of the February 7, 2023 regular meeting minutes and accept as written; all in favor.

The bills for February 2023, including the detailed Liberty & Lowes statement, were reviewed; after all questions were answered, the bills were approved on a **MOTION** by Comm. Balch and seconded by Comm. Peterson, all in favor.

Tax Collector's Report

-On a **MOTION** by Balch and seconded by Alderman the February Tax Collector report submitted by Tax Collector Cynthia Augeri was reviewed and approved, all in favor.

Fire Marshal's Report

-The Fire Marshal's (FM) monthly report for February was distributed and accepted on a **MOTION** by Balch seconded by Scarrozzo, all-in favor.

Chief's Report

-The Chief stated the remaining equipment relative to the ARPA grant is due in shortly. The training is scheduled for April 28th & 29th for Westfield members and a few from South Fire. The three fire departments are still working on SOP's that would be common across the city. The daytime EMT staff is not mandated to attend this training but will be compensated if they choose to do so.

-The 2022 FEMA SAFER grant is scheduled to close Friday, March 17th. The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants (SAFER) was created to provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to help them increase or maintain the number of trained, "front line" firefighters available in their communities. The grant would cover 3-years of salaries and benefits for new hires at 100%, there is no District cost share. Westfield is applying for six (6) additional new firefighter hires. If awarded, the Westfield Board of Fire Commissioners fully supports the SAFER grant funding of 6 positions and has agreed to continue to fund the positions after the grant award runs out as they agree how vital this need is to their organization. Comm. Scarrozzo wished to acknowledge AC Coco for all his work on preparing the grant narratives for the application, the entire Board wished to thank him.

- The department NFPA physicals are almost done with only a few stragglers left to complete their exam. The Chief stated this is an annual requirement and this year has probably been the most successful to date as far as organization, participation and results. He thanked Linda for all her coordination efforts on the paperwork and staying in contact with Priority Urgent Care.
- As a reminder the department banquet is scheduled for Saturday, March 18th at Falcon's Pavilion.
- The Chief shared that the CT Fire Department Instructors Association is scheduled to use the station for meeting & training session on April 5th in the evening.
- The Chief updated the Board on the progress of the 2023 Spartan tanker. On March 1st the mechanic and one member went to Wisconsin for the first progress inspection. There were a few small things that needed to be adjusted and tweaked which is normal but the trip was very productive and successful. Custom Fire is pretty much done working on the body and is waiting on the cab/chassis from Spartan. They are anticipating a May or June completion. Linda stated the first lease payment will begin next month.
- The Chief discussed some of the notable incidents the department responded in the past month (ie: structure fire at 166 Russet Lane; mutual aid structure fire in Berlin; I-91/Country Club medical call.
- The status of training classes for members was reported as follows: FFI-Initial – member G. Terry is enrolled in a class that runs thru May; FFII – member A. Maiette is enrolled in a class that runs thru April. The new training officer Jason Powers with AC Coco assisting with coordination has scheduled a lot of interesting future training events for members with some specific to officer training, there is a lot of good things going on.

Commissioner(s) Report

- Linda reported that Cindy's last day in the office on a regular part-time basis was March 10th. The posting for a tax collector replacement is on the CT Tax Collector's & Westfield's website but has not yielded any interest so far. Cindy will continue as tax collector and work to ensure all the District's statutory obligations are met. She has agreed to assist until June or until a replacement can be found. On a **MOTION** by Peterson and seconded by Balch it was approved to pay her a monthly stipend of \$250 (net) for her oversight in addition to paying any hours worked in the office at her regular hourly rate, all in favor.
- On a **MOTION** by Balch and seconded by Peterson it was approved for Leanna Harris to attend the CCMC-IV tax association course which is held once a week (3/30-5/11), all in favor.
- On a **MOTION** by Peterson and seconded by Balch it was approved for FF Ahern to attend a CFA certified pump operator class in August/September for \$450, all in favor.
- Linda update the Board on the Nationwide annuity that was approved in November 2022. Hometown Benefits reported that Nationwide was inundated with application requests due to increasing interest rates. When the policy was finally issued in late January the rate was endorsed at 5%, not the 5.15% that was originally quoted.
- The Board was issued a draft of the financial statements for June 30, 2022 prepared by Costello Company, LLC. On a **MOTION** by Peterson and seconded by Balch the financial statements were approved, all in favor. Chairman Amy is asked to sign the auditor management letter that summarizes the audit along with miscellaneous recommendations. Pursuant to the approved extension request the audit will be filed with OPM and the City of Middletown no later than March 31, 2023. Once filed Linda will post the required legal notice in the newspaper.
- Comm. Amy stated that a letter dated February 10, 2023 was received from the CT Freedom of Information Commission notifying himself and the entire Commission of an alleged violation against the Board of Fire Commissioners. The complainant was identified as Brenda Carlone who is claiming an issue with the Board's executive session held at the regular monthly meeting on December 13, 2022. Comm. Amy contacted the appointed ombudsman to discuss the situation and provided the documentation he requested in hopes to settle the situation from needing an additional meeting. The District received a follow-up letter on March 8th as a notice of an in-person hearing on April 3, 2023. The Board will retain Shipman and Goodwin for representation and accompany a Board member to the hearing.
- The District received notification of the State OPM allocation for fiscal year 2023 for the Municipal Revenue Sharing Grant. As the District does not perform road improvements the Chairman will sign a waiver request stating the funds of \$10,801 would be restricted for the purpose of long-range capital improvements with minimum 20-year life expectancy.

- On a **MOTION** by Peterson and seconded by Balch it was approved to renew the lawn fertilization program thru Plummer All Season Landscaping with the applied discount in the amount of \$1,273 (no increase from previous year), all in favor.
- A committee was established to explore health insurance benefits for future retirees. A meeting with the insurance broker from Smith Bros is set for the week of March 27th to review any updated options.
- The Board will hold off meeting with Raymond James until sometime in April or May to review the portfolio.
- Dana would like to continue updating the lights on some of the older apparatus; newer apparatus comes with LED's. On a **MOTION** by Balch and seconded by Turner it was approved to purchase the M series LED blue/red lights for W5 from Scranton Communication in the amount of \$945.60, Dana will install; all in favor.
- The sidewalk project that was quoted back in September was not scheduled as it was too close to the winter months to complete. The Board will solicit additional quotes and present to the Board for consideration.
- The Board would like to revisit the parking lot paving project that was discussed in the Fall of 2022. Linda will solicit updated quotes from the paving contractors to present at the April meeting.
- The next budget meeting is set for April 4, 2023 at 4:30.

Old Business – None

New Business – None

MOTION to go into Executive Session by Comm. Turner seconded by Comm. Balch at 7:35 pm, all in favor for discussions regarding: Personnel; staffing, salaries, evaluation pursuant to Statutes Section 1-200(6)(A) and Section 1-225(a) of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended. In attendance at the Executive Session were Commissioners Amy, Peterson, Bysiewicz, Alderman, Scarrozzo, Turner, Balch, T. Bysiewicz and FDA Linda DeManche.

MOTION to come out of Executive Session by Comm. Balch seconded by Comm. Peterson @ 9:37 pm, all in favor.

MOTION to adjourn @ 9:38 pm by Comm. Balch and seconded by Peterson. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda DeManche
Fire District Administrator
as Recording Secretary