



COMMISSION MEETING

August 8, 2023

The Westfield Fire Commission met at the East Street Firehouse, Middletown, CT on June 13, 2023. Chairman Amy opened the meeting at 6:31 p.m. with the following Commissioners present – Peterson, Plummer, Scarrozzo, Bysiewicz, Balch, T. Bysiewicz. Commissioners Alderman and Turner were absent.

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

Chairman Amy made a **MOTION** to open the public session; Ross Andrew, Middletown reported on the Telecommunication Commission meeting held on July 3rd; the City of Middletown put out a request for proposal for a feasibility study and preliminary designs for a new 911 center. They are due back August 4th and they will review the three proposals. The plan for the location is on the property on Mile Lane. With no additional comment the public session was closed on a **MOTION** by Comm. Peterson, all in favor.

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

-On a **MOTION** by Comm. Scarrozzo seconded by Comm. Balch it was approved to waive the reading of the June 13, 2023 regular meeting minutes and the June 30, 2023 special meeting minutes an accept as written; all in favor.

The bills for July 2023, including the detailed Liberty and 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 Peterson the August Tax Collector report submitted by Tax Collector Cynthia Augeri was reviewed and approved, all in favor.

-On a **MOTION** by Balch and seconded by Peterson it was approved to issue tax refunds to the various taxpayers on the list provided by the Tax Collector in the amount of \$15,480.10, all in favor.

Fire Marshal's Report

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

On a **MOTION** by Amy and seconded by Peterson the monthly meeting was suspended @ 6:37 pm to attend the swearing in of Fire Marshal Kotowski and Firefighters Heiden & Lemay, all in favor.

On a **MOTION** by Amy and seconded by Peterson the Commission meeting reconvened at @ 6:51 pm after the conclusion of the swearing in ceremony. The Board continued the regular monthly meeting.

Chief's Report

- The Chief reminded the Commissioners of the department picnic on Saturday, September 16th starting at 4 pm, they and their families are welcome.
- The Chief stated that the retirement party for Arthur Higgins held on August 1st was very successful, he got nothing but positive feedback about the event. He wished to thank Linda for orchestrating most of the party. On a **MOTION** by Scarrozzo and seconded by Balch it was approved for; 1) the District to cover the cost of the event; 2) an amount of \$3,500 will be transferred for the unassigned fund balance to AC #8577-Fire Dept other in the 2023-2024' budget, all in favor.
- The Chief updated the status on the 2023 Spartan Tanker (W4). The suspension issue was resolved and the apparatus arrived on July 8th. The gold lettering is being scheduled hopefully for next week. When the lettering is done the contractor will also re-do the maltese's on Car 5. New Class B foam is needed to stock W4. On a **MOTION** by Amy and seconded by Balch it was approved to; 1) buy 16 pails of foam from MES, Inc. in the amount \$3,736.00; 2) transfer \$3,736.00 from the 2022/2023 budget, line item #81112 – Firefighting Equip - Replacement to category #8113 – Firefighting Equip – New in the Chief's 2023/2024 budget for the purchase of Class B foam, all in favor.
- A sales agreement has been signed with Rockwood Fire & Rescue of Rockwood, Maine for the sale of the 1999 Spartan Tanker in the amount of \$50,000. The District has received the \$5,000 deposit to secure the sale with the understanding the apparatus will be made available once Westfield's new replacement truck is placed in service, the exact date TBD.
- The Chief reported two minor accidents over the last month. One with W3 that happened while responding to an incident and one with W5 while out driver training. There was reported damage to another vehicle involved in both incidents, there was minor damage to Westfield's apparatus. Both are being handled thru the District insurance company for the other parties involved.
- There was no update on Westfield becoming a CDL/Q testing facility, Comm. Balch stated he is waiting for the Commissioner to get back to him.
- The Chief is seeking approval for funds from the training budget for various activities (officer class, burn trailer, simulation training, etc.) that would be administered by Flash Fire Industries. On a **MOTION** by Balch and seconded by Peterson it was approved to; 1) retain Flash Fire Industries services for \$14,400.00; 2) transfer \$14,400.00 from the Chief's remaining 2022/2023 budget to category #8104 – Training-Fire & EMS in the 2023/2024 budget, all in favor.
- On a **MOTION** by Peterson and seconded by Balch it was approved to enroll five (5) members in an upcoming EMT class that is being hosted at Westfield's station by First Approach EMS Education & Staffing at a cost of \$1,200 per member, this will come out of the Chief's current training budget, all in favor.
- The weekend summer staffing program is going reasonably well; the participation was at 83% which the Chief is very pleased with. The program will continue thru the trial period in October and then see where we are at that point. The Chief is requesting to add an additional shift slot specific to Officer participation when they are available. On a **MOTION** by Balch and seconded by Scarrozzo it was approved to add this shift on the weekend calendar under the existing terms of the program, all in favor.
- The status of training classes for members was reported as follows: FFI-Initial – member Sorenson is enrolled (Aug-January); FFII-Initial – member Connole is enrolled (Sept-November); Fire Instructor – member Scarrozzo has passed the course; Tanker Shuttle Ops – FF's DiCostanzo & D. Passamano are in a course at the end of August; Certified Pump Ops – FF Ahern is in a course (Aug-Sept); Q Endorsement – (4) members are enrolled (Aug-Sept); EMT-Initial – (5) members are enrolled (Sept-Dec).
- The Chief stated training officer DiCostanzo created a 5-month on-boarding and training plan for the two new hires encompassing all they need to know; the plan includes driver training. They are currently executing this training plan. Comm. Amy stated he appreciates the team putting this together and executing.

Commissioner(s) Report

- On a **MOTION** by Balch and seconded by Plummer it was approved for FF DiCostanzo to take an Incident Safety Officer class (11/1-11/3) in the amount of \$140 for the course, all in favor.
- On a **MOTION** by Balch and seconded by Plummer it was approved for Leanna Harris to enroll in the CCMC I course (Oct-Nov) in the amount of \$400 for the course being held in Watertown, all in favor. The tax office may need to be closed for one day (October 2nd) in her absence but the proper notification will be posted to make the public aware if it is necessary.

- The State of CT DAS Office of Education and Data Management is accepting applications for the Fall 2023 Fire Code Inspector Module; submittal deadline is September 25th. FF Arroyo has again expressed interest in taking this course as the second part of training following the investigator module, which he completed in 2022. On a **MOTION** by Scarrozzo and seconded by Balch it was approved for Arroyo to take this course that runs from November-February, all in favor.
- Linda reported a medical only worker's comp claim for FF D. Passamano who sustained a minor injury at the station, he has returned to full-duty.
- The Board was informed that the District's workers compensation experience modification is now below 1 for good/low claim experience, this resulted in a significant savings in the annual premium.
- The total for the reimbursement of responses to I-91 thru the State funded Limited Access Highway Incidents (LAHI) for fiscal year 2022/2023' was \$42,000 for 84 calls. The State budget included funding the LAHI program again for the 2023/2024' fiscal year.
- On a **MOTION** by Peterson and seconded by Balch it was approved to increase the agreed value on the 1996 Spartan ladder to \$2 million for an additional annual premium of \$754.00, all in favor.
- The committee met with the broker from Raymond James (RJ) to review the investment portfolio. The recommendation and plan are to use the current available liquid funds for 3-year investment grade corporate bonds, taking into consideration bonds maturing over the next 2 ½ years. The money market interest rate is at the highest it has been in years. At the conclusion of that tax season Linda will move the available funds to the RJ money market account, these funds will remain liquid and available for cash flow when needed.
- The renewal policy for the District's Accident & Sickness (A&S) offered significant enhancements to the plan benefits and due to a change in how the plan is now rated it resulted in a premium savings of approx. \$3,700. The Board reviewed the weekly disability benefit and on a **MOTION** by Balch and seconded by Peterson it was approved to increase the amount to \$1,000 from the current \$800, all in favor.
- The annual LOSAP actuarial report for 2023 is now available, it can be emailed to those interested. The plan statements will be distributed to members at their next department monthly meeting.
- Linda reminded the Board that the City sent out an invitation to the Mayor's ball on September 23rd for those interested.
- The three new sidewalk projects were completed in July by Wespro, LTD; they will return in cooler weather to finish the sealant process. At the top of the stairs by the Fire Marshal's office there is an original concrete panel that appears to have settled over the years and poses a tripping hazard. Dana would like to have Wespro quote the work to repair this as well as some epoxy work on the steps. Linda will get a quote for this work.
- Linda inquired about available LoCIP funding to assist with the cost for the Districts paving project. The response from the City was there should be 50% funding available from the States LoCIP program and there may be additional funds available thru the City's Road bond fund. The necessary forms will be submitted to Finance & Government for approval and then go on the Common Council agenda at their September meeting. If there is sufficient funding the Board would like to include the paving of the apparatus driveway aprons which would make the paving project total \$136,800.00. American Pavement Specialists, LLC out of Danbury was the low bidder of the three proposals received for this work.
- The Board would like to hold off on Chief evaluations until a date in September. Linda will inquire about the Chief's availability.

Old Business – None

New Business – Comm. Balch would like to see 10 new chairs purchased for the Commission office. Linda will seek a quotation for these and report back next month.

MOTION to go into Executive Session by Comm. Balch seconded by Comm. Peterson at 7:51 pm, all in favor for discussions regarding: Personnel; new hire, salaries; legal opinion – member applications 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, Plummer, Bysiewicz, Scarrozzo, Balch, T. Bysiewicz, FDA Linda DeManche and Chief Ponzio.

Commissioner Scarrozzo left the executive session @ 9:26 pm.

MOTION to come out of Executive Session by Comm. Amy seconded by Comm. Plummer @ 10:15 pm, all in favor.

On a **MOTION** by Peterson and seconded by Bysiewicz it was approved for the Chief to seek legal advice from Attorney Eric Brown regarding the issues presented, all in favor.

There have been no applicants for the position of tax collector that has been posted since March. Linda spoke with AR Mazzotta Employment Service to explore their recruit options for the vacancy in the tax office. On a **MOTION** by Amy and seconded by Scarrozzo it was approved to retain AR Mazzotta for the permanent placement of either the position of tax collector at \$25 per hour and/or bookkeeper at \$20 per hour; Mazzotta's fee is 10% of the first year's salary, all in favor.

MOTION to adjourn @ 10:16 pm by Comm. Plummer and seconded by Balch. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Linda DeManche
Fire District Administrator
as Recording Secretary