

028

**The Board of Fire Commissioners  
Portsmouth Fire Department**

Fire Station 2, George Pierce Training Room  
March 8, 2016

Portsmouth, NH  
1900 hours

**I. Call to Order:**

Chairman Jennifer Matthes called the meeting to order at 1900 hours and led the pledge of allegiance. Along with Chairman Matthes, present were: Commissioners: Richard Gamester and Michael Hughes; Fire Chief Steven Achilles, Deputy Fire Chiefs: Carl Roediger and James Heinz; Executive Assistant Tracy Freeman, Public Works Director Peter Rice, Police Dispatcher Nick Hilton, Members of A-Shift: Captain Michael Hogan, Lieutenants: Peter Gordon and Rick Condon; Firefighters: Robbie Gagnon, John Goodwin, Ezekiel Tappin, Wayne LaCaillade, Casluh "Cassie" Chamberlain, Peter Gordon, Steven Smith, Jonathan Gray, Timothy Dame, Adam LaMonica, John Sylvester and Scott Egan; family members, members of the public and representatives from NH 1 News, WMUR and the Portsmouth Herald. A-Shift Firefighter Ken Ward was absent.

**II. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

Motion, to approve the minutes of February 3, 2016, was made by Chairman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

**III. Public Comment Session: None.**

**IV. Recognition of Groups or Individuals:**

Chief Achilles awarded Letters of Merit to the members of A-Shift for their actions at the scene of a serious motor vehicle accident on February 5, 2016 involving a 45-year old male trapped between a Portsmouth Department of Public Works recycling truck and a passenger vehicle. The victim suffered life-threatening injuries to his lower body and required immediate advanced life support measures. His fate was definitely in the hands of these members Chief Achilles stated. He went on to say that their actions at the incident were in the best traditions of the fire service and are a credit to the Portsmouth Fire Department.

Chief Achilles also awarded a Letter of Merit to Portsmouth Police Dispatcher Nick Hilton for his role in this incident. Nick's composure and proficiency during

the initial dispatch was exceptional and throughout the entire incident, he managed the radio traffic, resources and logged all critical actions of the companies. His actions also were in the best traditions of the fire service and are a credit to both the Portsmouth Fire Department and Police Department.

A 10-minute recess followed for pictures and interviews with media.

Meeting reconvened at 1926 hours.

**V. Reports:**

**A. Fire Chief's Reports:**

Chairman Matthes motioned to discuss Chief's reports 16-019 through 16-022. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hughes.

Chief Achilles reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (019), 2016 Response Report with Service Activity and Safety message for February. The report shows the department responding to 113 Fire Calls and 293 Ambulance Calls for the month. To date, the department has responded to 206 fire and related service calls and 561 ambulance service calls. This activity is tracked by calendar year. Chief Achilles noted a couple of incidents of interest during the month. The Safety Message section focused on daylight savings time starting this Sunday and encouraging all residents to test their smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. The Service Activity and Safety Message report was submitted to the Portsmouth Herald for publication in local newspapers. Report (020), Fire and EMS Calls by Category, with 52% of occurrences being for rescue calls. EMS data shows the top three reasons for dispatch this month being traumatic injuries (cuts, broken bones, head injuries, etc.), chest pain and/or discomfort and abdominal pain/nausea/vomiting. There were 2 reported cardiac arrests and 11 drug overdoses this month. 48% of the runs this month occurred within the home/residence. Report (021), FY16 Budget, Chief noted the implementation of cost saving strategies however some lines are still projected to be over due to an increase in overtime for shift vacancies relating to a workers comp injury and several disability leaves. The individual on worker's comp has just returned to work however, we have a firefighter who will be out for approximately 5-months for a knee replacement. Captain Hogan will be retiring on April 1, 2016 and promotional exams are in the works. We hope to fill the captain vacancy, along with a lieutenant's one, by end of April. Overall, the department shows a slight surplus at this time. Report (22), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of February along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

Motion, to approve Chief's Reports 16-019 through 16-022, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

**B. Staff Reports:**

Deputy Chief Heinz reported on operations and training occurring within the department. Preparations are underway for the upcoming Captain and Lieutenant's promotional tests. Promotional exams help create a list of top ranking officers to fill a Captain's position and top ranking firefighters to fill a Lieutenant's position when a long term vacancy is created. These lists are good for 1-year for a Captain's position and 2-years for a Lieutenant's. Fed Cap Training was held with Sandi Coyle for the recovery center that is now open on Islington Street. The department will be hosting a Recovery Coach Academy at Station 2 to help address the heroin problem within the city. The Continuous Quality Improvement Committee is on-going. The School Safety Committee will be rolling out ALICE, a school shooter program, which will be teaching new methods of what to do. The new methods are practicing the ideas of if you can run, run, if you can hide, hide and if you have to fight, fight. Several ride-alongs were done by PRH Staff members. Honor Guard present for former Mayor Foley's wake and funeral. Well attended and received.

Deputy Chief Roediger reported on Fire Prevention. Lonza project anticipated to be a large one. A residential project is in underway for the old public works area with plans for 100 4-story units behind Southgate Plaza. Inspector Howe attended a 2-week class at the National Fire Academy for the Executive Fire Officer's program. New radio system is functioning as hoped. 2-Way and the installer are out straight but hopes are to get Hobbs Tank wiring and installation scheduled soon.

**VI. Old Business:**

Chief Achilles met with the City Manager on Monday regarding the department's proposed FY17 budget. A 2.93% increase is projected and if we were to include COLA's for the pending contracts, it would jump to 4.29%. The budget accounts for maintaining shift staffing and adds no new positions. Further review is needed for the adding of 4 additional firefighters to see whether or not it would reduce overtime lines. Current calculations do not show that it would. Another meeting has been scheduled for the end of the month for contract negotiations. Commissioner Gamester inquired as to whether or not the City Manager had set aside some funds to cover contract settlement costs? Chief replied that he had and noted that minimally, a \$109K would be needed to cover the costs of COLAs. Capital seems to be moving forward.

Chairman Matthes inquired about the status of the fireboat. Chief stated that its replacement with a different vessel has been identified in the FY18 budget. Over

the last few months he said there were multiple factors in which the fireboat was needed including the New Castle fire. Question comes as do we need to have the same vessel as we have now to carry out the functions of the department. Perhaps having a vessel that we could maintain but could share the costs with other neighboring departments may be something to consider. The current fireboat was grant funded so it would need to be returned to the State and at this time, no other community has shown any interest in taking it.

**VII. Presentations of Written Communications:**

Chief Achilles read Captain Hogan's letter of intent to retire.

Commissioner Gamester made the motion to accept, with regret, and wished him well in his retirement. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

Chief Achilles went on to read the thank you notes from Lisa Karnan, Lucinda Jefferson and James Murray.

Commissioner Gamester made the motion to accept these thank you notes and place on file. Motion was seconded by Chairman Matthes and passed unanimously.

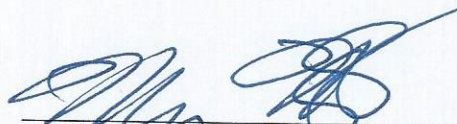
**VIII. New Business:** None.

**IX. Public Hearings:** None.

**X. Non-public Session:** None.

**XI. Adjournment:**

Motion, to adjourn at 2005 hours, was made by Chairman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Hughes, Clerk