

020

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

Fire Station 2, George Pierce Training Room
February 7, 2017

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; Administrative Assistant Gail Wright, Captain William McQuillen and Lieutenant Rick Condon; and Firefighters: Samuel Chase, Jonathan Grey, and Timothy Griswold. Meeting was taped for public viewing on Ch. 22.

II. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Motion, to approve the minutes of January 10, 2017, was made by Chairman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Gamester made the motion, to suspend the rules and move item IX, Public Hearings, next so that Chief Achilles could present his FY2018 Proposed budget. Motion was seconded by Chairman Matthes and passed unanimously.

III. Public Comment Session: None.

IV. Recognition of Groups or Individuals: None.

V. Reports:

A. Fire Chief's Reports:

Chairman Matthes motioned to discuss Chief's reports 17-014 through 17-017. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hughes.

Chief Achilles reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (014), 2017 Response Report with Service Activity and Safety message for January. The report shows the department responding to 92 Fire Calls and 301 Ambulance Calls for the month. This activity is tracked by

calendar year. The Safety Message section focused on February being American Heart Month. It is a great time to commit to a healthy lifestyle and make small changes that can lead to a lifetime of heart health. If you think you are experiencing a medical condition involving your heart, call 911. The Service Activity and Safety Message report was submitted to the Portsmouth Herald for publication in local newspapers. Report (015), Fire and EMS Calls, identified the number of calls. Data shows the top three reasons for dispatch this month being psychiatric/behavioral disorders, respiratory distress, and traumatic injury. There was 1 reported cardiac arrest and 2 overdoses this month. Report (016), FY17 Budget, Chief noted being 58.31% into the new fiscal year and currently showing 63.4% spent. Slight increase in overtime for shift vacancies relating to a workers comp injury and disability leave. Budget currently tracking \$60,903.21 to the good, should maintain through last quarter. Report (017), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of January along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

Motion, to approve Chief's Reports 17-014 through 17-017, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

B. Staff Reports: None.

VI. Old Business:

Chief Achilles spoke briefly about a \$6000 warm zone grant that was submitted to Homeland Security. This would be used to purchase 2 sets of protective gear for ambulance crews to assist the Police Department outside active shooter areas. Also noted was the citywide radio upgrade project is on track for May. The Chief thanked the Commission for their support during the bond meeting held the evening of February 6th.

VII. Presentations of Written Communications:

Chief Achilles read thank you letter received January 18th from Susan and Keith Bates of Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

VIII. New Business:

Chief Achilles read Webber settlement correspondence from City Attorney Robert Sullivan to the Commission. Commission needs to ratify the MOU dated January 10, 2017.

Commissioner Gamester motioned for a vote to be taken on the acceptance of the Webber donation, and ratification of the MOU. Motion was seconded by Chairman Matthes and passed unanimously.

Vote to accept the Webber donation. Vote taken: 3 Yes (Matthes, Gamester, Hughes) – Vote passes.

IX. Public Hearings:

Chief Achilles presented the FY2018 proposed budget which shows a 5.0% increase over FY17 due to step increases, increases in retirement, worker's comp, health and utilities. The proposed budget continues to maintain current level of service, staffing, stations and resources. His presentation outlined the essential services of the department which include: fire protection, emergency medical services, hazardous materials and disaster response, marine and waterfront services, fire prevention and inspection, emergency management and community services. Department goals and objectives noted were to maintain and strengthen reliable delivery of essential emergency and non-emergency services, promoting the safety of employees and the community through comprehensive education and training, minimizing the risk of life and property loss through proactive planning, education and enforcement of safe practices and to provide effective, efficient, and customer-centered services. The position summary report showed the department continuing with 61 fulltime positions and 3 part-time positions with no new positions added. The largest revenue source for the department comes from ambulance billing which showed a collection rate up 76.7% over the past 5-years. He did note that the revenue generated from ambulance billing does not go back to the department but to the City's general fund.

The Chief continued his presentation outlining some future considerations and the reasons for them. These considerations included: one additional Fire Prevention/Safety Officer in FY18 this would impact the budget by \$107,000.00 or 1.5%; Increase available on-duty staffing FY19-FY21; Year 1, 4 additional Firefighters, one per shift would add \$251,000, noting these positions would reduce overtime consistent with potential savings of additional regular hour staff approximately \$60,000.00 to \$70,000.00; with staffing maximum 15 and minimum of 13; Year 2 add funds to cover step increases, add funds to overtime to increase minimum staffing to 14 during day shifts; Year 3, 4 additional Firefighters, one per shift, add funds to overtime to increase minimum staffing to 14 and maximum of 16. These considerations were cited within the 2015 Self-Assessment of Department Operations Final Report.

A brief discussion took place following the Chief's presentation regarding department response times, which the Chief stated were longer due to increased call volumes and the impacts from the City's infrastructure and major construction projects happening within the City. The goal is to arrive on scene within 8 minutes of initial dispatch 90% of the time. Commissioner Gamester inquired about the other Commissioners thoughts toward presenting the original 5.49% budget to the City Manager. Commissioner Hughes stated the original 5.49% was appropriate for training needs, and increasing call volume. Also

mentioned was the need to train for possible terror activity; we need to protect our people. With the increased demand for services, increased length of incidents, and increased commercial development of over 2.6 million square feet in the last 5 years, we can't rely on mutual aid from other communities that are often calling us. Chief answered that he would be comfortable presenting an increase from the 5% but would like to also respect the joint budget committee's suggestion of 4%. Commissioner Gamester proposed a motion to present an increase of 5.25% to the City Manager. Commissioner Hughes seconded and passed unanimously.

The public hearing closed at 1933 and the regular meeting of the Fire Commission reconvened at 1933.

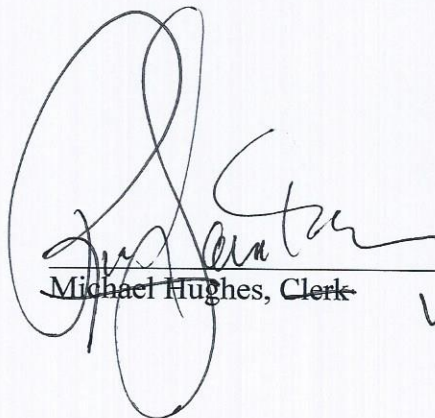
X. Non-public Session:

Commissioner Gamester made the motion to enter into Non-public session at 2025 hours in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a), for the purpose of compensation of any public employee. Motion was seconded by Chairman Matthes and passed unanimously.

Motion to come out of Non-public session and return to public session was made by Commissioner Gamester at 2044 hours. Motion was seconded by Chairman Matthes and passed unanimously. Regular meeting reconvened at 2044 hours.

XI. Adjournment:

Motion, to adjourn at 2044 hours, was made by Chairman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.


Michael Hughes, Clerk V. Chairman