

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

Fire Station 2
George Pierce Training Room
March 10, 2020

Portsmouth, NH
1800 hours

I. Call to Order:

Chairwoman Matthes called the meeting to order at 1800 hours.

II. Pledge of Allegiance with Attendance:

Chairwoman Matthes led the pledge of allegiance.

Present were Commissioners: Jennifer Matthes, Richard Gamester and Michael Hughes; Fire Chief Todd Germain, Deputy Fire Chiefs: James Heinz and Patrick Howe; Executive Assistant Tracy Freeman, Lieutenant John Goodwin; Firefighters: Nathan Lyman, William Riffert, Matthew Sylvester, Philip Davis, Shaun Sullivan and Parker Cutting; family and friends of the above mentioned firefighters and Lt. Goodwin, and members of the department.

III. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Motion, to approve the minutes of February 11, 2020, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Chairwoman Matthes and passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comment Session: None.

V. Presentations of Written Communications: None.

VI. Recognition of Groups or Individuals:

Chief Germain referred to Deputy Heinz for the introduction of the department's new hires: Firefighters Matthew Sylvester, Philip Davis, Shaun Sullivan and Parker Cutting.

Chief Germain swore in Firefighter Nathan Lyman, Firefighter William Riffert and Lieutenant John Goodwin.

Commissioner Gamester made the motion for a 10-minute recess for pictures at 1815 hours. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

Meeting reconvened at 1825 hours.

VII. Reports:

A. Fire Chief's Reports:

Commissioner Gamester motioned to discuss Chief's reports 20-030 through 20-033. Motion was seconded by Chairwoman Matthes.

Chief Germain reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (030), 2020 Response Report with Service Activity and Safety message for February 2020. The report shows the department responding to a total of 359 calls for the month: 106 Fire Calls and 253 Ambulance Calls. Both fire and EMS calls were slightly down from last month most likely due to the short month. Chief spoke briefly about some of the activity for the month noting a motor vehicle accident at the intersection of Corporate Drive and Durham Street involving a 2-car, roll-over accident with vehicle on its roof with a fire hydrant protruding into the passenger compartment through the windshield. Patient transported to hospital. Companies also responded to a 3-car motor vehicle accident at 300 Woodbury Ave. Three vehicles were heavily damaged with debris spread out over several hundred feet of roadway. All three people were transported, 1 with serious life-threatening traumatic injuries. Also noted was a machinery fire at the Sig Sauer building located at 72 Pease Blvd. A laser etching machine had caught fire and was extinguished with water and dry chemicals. The safety message focused on Coronavirus COVID-19 with information found on the City's website which may help answer any questions the public may have. Chief also noted that Lieutenant Kenneway is fit-testing department members with N95 masks along with getting the necessary equipment and supplies that may be needed should calls increase for treating patients with the potential virus. The Service Activity and Safety Message report was submitted to the Portsmouth Herald for publication in local newspapers. Report (031), Fire and EMS Call Summary Report, shows the department responded to 188 fire calls for the month of February with 106 of the calls being for rescue responses which gets deducted from the total of fire calls. District 1 responded to 47% of the calls. EMS activity was at 253 with the top three responses being altered mental status, alcohol abuse and effects and cardiac chest pain. Chief noted that there were 3 calls for flu like illness and 3 respiratory illness. Will continue to monitor these calls to see if they increase over the next month or so. There was 1 call for drug overdose/abuse and 41 non-transports. Report (032), FY20 Budget, Chief Germain reviewed the budget with the Commission and noted that the department is still tracking with a surplus and is accounting for a long term officer vacancy due to a disability and provides projected expenses for the remainder of the fiscal year including trainings for new firefighters and department members. Report (033), 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. It was noted that OT-Earned Time was slightly down from last month.

Motion, to accept Chief's Reports 20-030 through 20-033, 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 within the department. Noted were eight firefighters preparing for the lieutenants exam with the written portion done and the assessment center taking place on Friday and Saturday. The department is participating in tours of the National Passport and Visa Centers as part of the follow up to the Active Shooter drill. Members of the department participated in the first of three Seabrook Station drills. Lt. Kenneway is providing training on respiratory illness and hospital has been providing stroke care training to on-duty crews. Capt. Gionet assisted with getting the new Ambulance 2 in service and spoke briefly about the process which required getting it equipped with supplies, radios, etc required for the state inspection. He also noted that both ambulance 1 and 2 are now identical in compartments which gives us continuity. Commissioner Gamester inquired about the age of the oldest ambulance we have now. Captain Gionet replied noting the 2013 Horton is our oldest which was a demo ambulance at time of purchase. This ambulance is anticipated to be replaced in 3-years. Deputy Heinz noted that we established an ambulance committee that met regularly to assist with the project which has been very beneficial and we are doing more of that now so that officers and firefighters have input on apparatus purchases. Deputy Heinz continued with his report noting that the firefighters handed out their sportsmanship trophy last night at Connie Bean.

Deputy Chief Howe reported on Fire Prevention and being a busy month as usual. Hotel inspections are half way through. Will be participating in the Joint Loss Committee which has been established through the City. Took delivery of the new fire prevention vehicle and it has been lettered and radios installed and is now in service.

VIII. Old Business:

Chief Germain updated the Commission on the status of Engine 3 and is currently back in service after several issues, two which were under warranty and one was addressed by National Wrecker. The new engine ordered in 2019 is nearing completion with final inspection to be done soon and anticipate receipt of the engine at the end of April. On another note, Chief spoke with the City Manager and Finance Director regarding the ability to order the new tower, which is identified in the FY21 CIP, earlier than July 1 due to a price increase taking place at the end of April. City Manager will requesting the approval from City Council at their next meeting. Ordering it now vs. in July will save about 3% Chief noted.

IX. New Business:

Chief Germain led the discussion regarding the draft proposal on the Health and Wellness Program which would require mandatory physical fitness, job related skills and movement training which would require employees to participate in. Quarterly job related skills and movement training would be to provide benchmarks to the employee and provide a means of monitoring the employee's physical fitness trends. The program would also provide behavioral health and wellness which would encourage employees to seek assessment and counseling if needed, routine education and training dealing with behavioral health, which the department would provide. Topics like substance abuse, addictive behaviors, stress management, domestic violence, PTSD, depression, grief counseling, cumulative stress, etc. would be examples of what would fall under "behavioral health". The program would also provide training and education in areas of physical fitness, diet/nutrition, injury prevention, or other health and wellness related topics. As part of the Health and Wellness program, all parties would agree to modify the shift schedule for the Firefighters, Local 1313 and for the Fire Officers, Local 4039 moving to a 24-hour shift schedule which would still maintain the current average of the 42-hour work week and the same number of 14-hour night shifts and same number of 10-hour day shifts over an 8-week work cycle. The modified schedule would go into effect beginning on the first day of the eight week work cycle in order to avoid any costs to the city. The new schedule would fall in line with industry standards and would be mutually beneficial to all parties and contribute to the Health and Wellness Program by reducing sleep deprivation, recovery time between shifts, which is important due to the physical demands of the job, foster a healthier more stable routine for the employee, a 50% reduction in shift changes which would lead to less forced overtime for holdovers due to late calls and negative impact on home/family life, and less exposure to consecutive weekends and holidays which could decrease external stressors.

Chief Germain also noted that this Health and Wellness Program would be in place for a trial period of one year. After the one year trial period, the parties can agree to extend the program for an additional trial year, modify the program, or adopt it in its entirety. At any point during the one year trial period, management and/or either labor organization would have the right to withdraw from the program after a 30-day written notice without penalty. If any party chose to withdraw from the program, it would be agreed that the program is then null and void for all parties. After one year, the parties would agree to meet to discuss the future of the program.

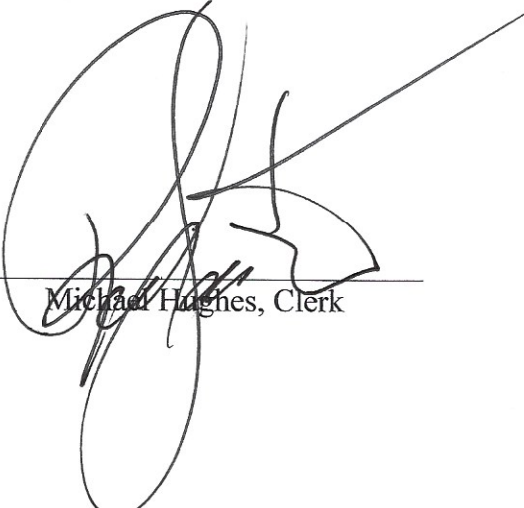
Chairwoman Matthes inquired about after the trial period, can either party choose to do the wellness portion and not the shift schedule or the shift and not wellness. Chief replied yes if all parties agreed. Matthes also asked about the required physical every year and if there was an initial physical required? Chief replied that it would depend on when the firefighter had his/her last physical and if it fell within the 12 months. If program passes or is extended for an additional trial period they would need it within 14-months of the original date that the program was implemented.

Commissioner Hughes made the motion, to accept the Draft Health and Wellness Program proposal as written. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

Chief Germain did note that all parties along with City Council would need to adopt this as an addendum to the current collective bargaining agreements and that the next step would be drafting an MOU for all parties to sign which would then be forwarded to Council for acceptance.

X. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn at 1900 hours was made by Chairwoman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.



Michael Hughes, Clerk