

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Public Safety Commission Fire Department Staffing Subcommittee
Special Meeting Agenda – March 3, 2020 – 5:30 PM
Public Safety Building Conference Room
MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Leonard called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present were Commissioners Jim Moran, Karen Perkins, Stephen Stewart, and Jon Leonard.

Also present were Fire Marshal/EMS Director Bill Bundy, Mohegan Fire Chief Corey Gaetano, Deputy Fire Chief Mike Butterworth, Town Councilor Lenny Bunnell, Union Representative Tim Condon, Union F.F. Kevin Roe, Oakdale FD Captain Ray Occhialini, Tom McNally. Came in late: Oakdale FD Member Tom McCarthy, Mohegan Deputy Chief Matthew Suarez

3. Remarks from the Public regarding items on the Agenda (with a three-minute limit)

Commissioner Leonard asked three (3) times for remarks. There were none.

4. Old Business

a. Fire Protection Budget

Commissioner Leonard reported Mayor McDaniel was attending the Board of Education Budget Presentation but said he had spoken and emailed back and forth with him today. He said per a carryover from the Fire Protection Budget, the Subcommittee received from Finance Director Hart a list of firefighter members that included the members' qualifications and their individual stipend payment. The list comprised three (3) years of data for 2017, 2018 and 2019 to present. Commissioner Leonard reviewed and separated the data by fire company for ease of reading. He reported the receipt of one (1) letter in reply to a request sent by the Subcommittee for the current stipend tally. The only response came from Chief Turner and was emailed to the Subcommittee today. Commissioner Leonard stated the stipend expended to date for the current fiscal year totaled \$37,100.

Per the stipend list, Commissioner Perkins asked for the distinction between a Firefighter 1 and a Firefighter that was identified previously. Commissioner Leonard said a Firefighter 1 is certified while a Firefighter is either in probationary status, uncertified, or is an exterior-only firefighter. Commissioner Stewart explained that certified firefighters are based upon criteria deemed by the departments as well as State and OSHA standards for interior-only firefighting in addition to a range of training. But he said the department must still say "yes." He also responded to Commissioner Perkins that a Firefighter 1 is at a higher station than a Firefighter. Commissioner Stewart then explained the list provided

may not be complete as an individual may not have made the stipend list for various reasons--that was confirmed by Chief Turner. He stated the Subcommittee was seeking information about the total number of certified/qualified individuals for a comparison factor said Commissioner Leonard.

Commissioner Leonard read into the record from Item 8 of the Departments' contract citing its obligation to provide a financial statement, budget, and an actual analysis accounting. In addition, fire department budgets must be presented to the Commission and thereafter to the Finance Department in compliance with the Town Charter. Noncompliance to the request of the Subcommittee was addressed by Commissioner Leonard.

Information request communication to the Fire Chiefs from Fire Marshal Bundy in January, and on February 7 and 24 was discussed. The Fire Marshal noted the response from Chief Gaetano that included a list of qualified personnel operating apparatus and background on those who joined departments since passing of the Town resolution. Drivers' histories were not received, nor were responses from the other three (3) stations. Commissioner Perkins asked Deputy Chief Butterworth if he was aware of Fire Marshal Bundy's request for and receipt of information by February 24 who said "yes", and said the information was being compiled. Chief Gaetano said he thought the request was for stipend information only. Commissioner Perkins identified the information requested by the Fire Marshal as new driver histories that speaks to an individual's ability to operate Town-owned vehicles, new member background checks, and annual motor vehicle checks.

b. Career, part-time staffing

Commissioner Leonard stated all shifts are largely being covered per the new firefighter contracts until the new schedule for Saturdays takes effect. Oakdale Deputy Chief Butterworth said no one was at Mohegan station on Saturday. Fire Marshal clarified that the contract mandating shifts on Saturday takes effect July 1 and said Saturday shifts are being covered per schedules he prepares and corresponds with part-timer schedules. It was confirmed that the schedule is still overtime shift coverage. Commissioner Stewart asked if there was any feedback as to the budget request for six (6) additional firefighters. The Fire Marshal submitted his budget but said there is no word yet about the budget meetings. He said three (3) firefighters were approved under the current contract and the closing date for applications was February 28 and 30 applications were submitted. Fire Marshal Bundy said he would be meeting with the Commission regarding interviews and to get the hiring process started.

c. Staffing grant applications/requirements

Commissioner Leonard stated any potential grants would rely on identification of the individual departments as one entitled as "Town of Montville Fire Department." Per a

question by Commissioner Stewart, discussion followed as to how to create a Town fire department. Fire Marshal Bundy said the protocol is outlined in the Town Charter, as it was explained to him. R. Occhialini commented that the individual departments could seek grants on their own. Fire Marshal Bundy spoke of the consensus to obtain global grants using Town demographics versus district demographics. Commissioner Perkins mentioned the Town has no control over grant requests made by the individual departments.

5. New Business

a. Qualification levels and number of Firefighter I/II/III for all four (4) fire companies. Commissioner Leonard said he was educated that the Firefighter III rank are no longer or not recognized. Per 2019 numbers regarding Town certified staff who meet the qualifications for Firefighter I, he said there are 23 and three (3) who are ranked as noncertified exterior. He also said the rank of Firefighter holds no certification. Fire Marshal Bundy explained the State does not recognize the distinction between Firefighter I and Firefighter II for stipend purposes. Referencing Chief Turner's list of active members at the Montville Fire Company, Commissioner Leonard reported there are ten (10) certified members [they are not recognized as noncertified or firefighter], 11 EMTs, two (2) EMRs, and one (1) Fire Police. Commissioner Stewart said the list supports the idea that not all qualified staff are receiving stipends—only three (3) are listed for stipends for 2019.

Per discussion, it was explained some members work at multiple companies or serving in different positions, example firefighter and EMT. Deputy Chief Butterworth asked about the purpose for the request for numbers. Commissioner Stewart said the numbers are good to have given year-to-year fluctuations and to ensure the Town is providing appropriate responses. Commissioner Leonard read into the record the letter sent to the fire chiefs requesting the information on qualified staff and noted his contact included in the letter. He read the request was for numerical data and said names were not needed and that the data would be used to identify coverage needs and as stated by Commissioner Perkins to make sure that persons operating Town vehicles are qualified. She spoke of Town liability and Fire Marshal Bundy added that the information must be provided per the contract. In addition, Commissioner Leonard stated the Commission is an oversight board per the Town Charter and noted the request for information was not unreasonable. Town Councilor Bunnell said staffing was the purpose of the request to identify needs regarding coverage at this time. R. Occhialini mention a change in the stipend as of December 8. Commissioner Leonard referenced the change and suggested a recruiting program. Commissioner Perkins asked about the flyer discussed at a prior meeting attended by all the chiefs—a mutual effort for distribution or recruitment purposes that has been started.

b. Qualification levels and number of EMT/EMR for all four (4) fire companies.

This item was discussed under Agenda Item 5.a.

c. Qualification levels and number of Fire Police for all four (4) fire companies.

This item was discussed under Agenda Item 5.a.

6. Remarks from the public (three-minute limit)

Town Councilor Bunnell referenced his earlier comments and spoke of the purpose for the Subcommittee, efforts to promote volunteers and assimilating the information into a formal report to the Commission. He stated part-timers are the backbone of staff. He also said liabilities, standards, marketing, and additional volunteers are goals that should be worked toward.

Tom McNally spoke about recruitment and retention noting there was nothing on the agenda about it.

Union President Tim Condon remarked on looking for locations for staff as done by other towns as well as safety issues related to a lone staff of one (1) in firehouses as cited by the Almont Study. He referenced other studies that address crew sizes and staffing, location response times versus outcomes. He also said he was not advocating for hiring new people but said the departments were designed as a backup or support, not a primary force.

Fire Marshal Bundy said the hiring of three (3) staff per the current contract would not provide all week. He standards were not being met and would not do so with the new hires and said ongoing dialog was needed to reach the standards.

Commissioner Leonard agreed with the recommendation to apply for grants to offset the budget. He read into the record the charge for the Public Safety Commission, Sect. 6 - 1.408, according to the Town Charter.

7. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Stewart ; seconded by Commissioner Moran to adjourn the meeting at 6:37 p.m. Discussion: none. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

An Audio Record is Available on the Town Website.