

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday March 11, 2020

Central Fire Department

10 North Thames Street, Norwich

7:00 PM

Committee Members Present: Alderman Mark Bettencourt and Alderman Joseph A. DeLucia.

Committee Members Absent: Alderman William Nash

Administration and Staff Present: Mayor Peter Nystrom and City Manager John Salomone, City of Norwich; Captain Jim Veiga, Norwich Police Department; Eric McDermott, Norwich Public Utilities; Robert Rautio, American Ambulance.

Volunteer/Central Fire Departments and Others: Taftville Chief Timothy Jencks and Assistant Chief William Haddam; Norwich Chief Keith Wucik, Jason Balletto and Kyle Seitz; East Great Plain Chief Keith Milton; Occum Chief Carroll Spaulding; Laurel Hill: Chief Aaron Westervelt and Deputy Chief Pete Clark; and Yantic Chief Frank Blanchard.

Citizens Present: Joanne Philbrick

I. Call to Order and Quorum: Alderman DeLucia called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM. There was a quorum present.

II. Approval of Minutes: Minutes of Wednesday February 12, 2020

Alderman DeLucia motioned, seconded by Alderman Bettencourt, to approve the Wednesday February 12, 2020 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Correspondence: None.

IV. Citizen Comment: Brandon Henry of 18 Rockwell Street reported an accident on Valentine's Day involving a school bus that held 13 minor high school children including his daughter. Mr. Henry stated he was only made aware of the accident because of his daughter as the police officer on scene did not call the children's parents or an ambulance. Mr. Henry stated to his knowledge the driver fled and the Board of Education was not notified to the incident or Norwich Free Academy; only the bus company was told. Mr. Henry expressed concerns to the lack of communication and how the children were medically cared for by a single police officer. Chief Patrick Daly

responded that he did not have answers at that time but he would look into the incident.

Joanne Philbrick of 10 Elm Avenue, Norwich stated she first wished to offer support to all personnel who responded to the fatalities the day before however she was concerned about the current COVID-19 virus and what the City planned to do.

V. Old Business:

a. Apparatus/ Equipment Financing:

i. **Yantic E-31:** Currently in service.

ii. **Taftville E-21:** Currently in service.

iii. **Taftville Squad Rescue:** Chief Timothy Jencks stated the call sign for the apparatus will likely be Rescue 2 and delivery is about 30 days out; estimated for April 1st – April 12th. Chief Jencks stated the old Rescue is going down to the garage to have usable parts removed for repurposing opposed to going through the dealership.

iv. **Laurel Hill ET-61:** Deputy Chief Pete Clark reported ET-61 was delivered on February 19th and is currently at Shipman's Fire Equipment for lettering. Deputy Chief Clark stated they are hoping to get the apparatus back in the next week to begin training and hope to have it in service within 30 days.

v. **East Great Plain ET-51:** Chief Keith Milton stated their team is scheduled to leave that upcoming Tuesday for final inspection and if all goes well the truck should be in the state by the beginning of April. Chief Milton approximated the truck should be service 30-60 after arrival including training.

b. Decommissioning of replaced and out-of-service Fire Apparatus:

Alderman DeLucia stated he saw an email from Chief Blanchard to City Manager John Salomone regarding storage of E-31 and asked if the issue was resolved. Chief Blanchard responded it was and that the truck is being stored at fleet maintenance for two months until the Sunnyside Bridge project commences. Alderman DeLucia asked Chief Jencks if the old rescue would leave the City once the new one is in service. Chief Jencks responded that it was correct that the truck would go to the City garage for auction. Chief Jencks stated the third truck going out of service is a small medical truck that may be repurposed by other departments. Laurel Hill stated their old truck was a direct replacement for ET-61 so it would also be handed over to the City garage. Chief Keith Milton stated the old East Great Plain truck may go to a department up north.

c. **2019 Fire Apparatus Study Update:** City Manager John Salomone reported they are currently looking at the five trucks that have been denoted in general terms to

determine how to faze them out. City Manager Salomone stated currently trucks are on a five-year cycle but they are seeking to develop solid dates. City Manager Salomone stated the last meeting was a few weeks prior and the next had not been scheduled yet.

d. **IMC Bridge Progress Update:** City Manager John Salomone stated from his understanding from IT there is an issue with the vendor which has put the project on hold until it is resolved. City Manager Salomone said he would coordinate a representative from IT to attend the next public safety meeting with more information if the issue had still not been resolved. Chief Wucik added that last he was aware the issue is with emergency reporting.

VI. New Business:

a. Department Updates:

i. **NPU Update:** Eric McDermott reported two weeks prior NPU began reviewing operation contingency plans in response to COVID-19 as well as met with Uncas Health District, Emergency Management and the City. Eric McDermott stated NPU has also begun utilizing social media for public outreach to notify customers to call or contact online opposed to entering the building. Eric McDermott stated NPU is also following CDC guidelines for in house responses.

ii. **Emergency Management:** Chief Keith Wucik reported no weather events and that Emergency Management is in constant communication with DMHAS and other state agencies in response to the COVID-19 virus. Chief Wucik stated EM is still working with NPD to create a cyber-security plan for the City as well as working to attend regional meetings each month.

iii. **American Ambulance:** Operations Director Robert Rautio reported 655 calls for the last month, 227 of which were ALS and 419 as BLS with the most common call being for a sick person which has become a priority due to the ongoing COVID-19 virus. Director Rautio stated there has been an increase in calls for defined breathing problems which is not uncommon for the time of year but American Ambulance does have ongoing emergency disease surveillance for COVID-19 factors in Norwich. Director Rautio said they will automatically dispatch Norwich Fire Department as well as Uncas Health District if a case is discovered before American Ambulance arrives on scene but the national goal is for potential cases to remain at home in self-isolation unless emergency room care is needed. In regards to the increased call volume Director Rautio stated he would like to open a conversation with the chiefs in regards to decreasing fire response on non-priority calls in an effort to not infect first responders while also keeping the community safe. Director Rautio stated based on most recent CDC recommendations departments should be fine if they follow their own guidelines for hygiene and stay

vigilant with disinfecting. Alderman Bettencourt asked if anyone had reached out to the major employers in the area to determine their protocols. Director Robert Rautio responded no however they were in contact with medical facilities such as Backus who would likely suspend patient visiting hours which has already occurred at all nursing homes in the City. Alderman DeLucia asked if there was coordination in play to decontaminate municipal spaces to which City Manager John Salomone responded there was.

iv. **Norwich Police Department:** Captain Jim Veiga reported 3,325 calls for service in the past month with 135 accidents and 115 arrests. Captain Veiga stated the department is currently at full staff however they expect that to change in upcoming months with one retirement and one transfer, however they have one new officer halfway through field training, another recruit graduating mid-June and three more enrolled in the academy. Captain Veiga reported the new cruisers are on order with a 6-month backlog for new Fords due to recall which he hopes will not affect them and a year-long wait for the new Chevrolet. Captain Veiga stated the radio tower shelter is in and the tower is up for whomever wants to take a look.

v. **Firehouse Status Updates:**

- **Taftville:** Chief Timothy Jencks reported 61 calls for the past month with 38 as EMS calls and 28 fire-related as well as conducting annual training and physicals. Chief Jencks reported ET-21 was decommissioned and utilized fleet maintenance to remove items with life left such as the light bar that went to the 91 Pierce. Chief Jencks stated Taftville has been in contact with the City and Uncas Health District in regards to reviewing COVID-19 procedures. Chief Jencks reported Taftville is compiling a full inventory of equipment to determine remaining shelf life. Alderman DeLucia asked why Taftville did not re-use the ladders from the decommissioned apparatus. Chief Jencks responded the new trucks are equipped with ladders in addition the old ladder needed work to remain serviceable but they did remove all valuable and reusable equipment from the old ET-21.

- **East Great Plain:** Deputy Chief Peter Clark reported 69 calls for service as well as ongoing routine training and that EGP would be utilizing the NFD bailout prop for training later in the month. Deputy Chief Clark added membership is good and they are hoping to have their ladder truck back that week after repairs. Deputy Chief Clark stated EGP was in line with other departments in regards to supplies and enhanced cleaning procedures for the COVID-19 virus.

- **Occum:** Chief Carroll Spaulding stated he had two upcoming interviews otherwise membership was good and reported 29 calls for the past month, 7 of which were mutual aid. Chief Spaulding stated Engine 41 would be heading to the garage with air

brake issues for the second time as the old system parts are wearing out so John Raymond at the City garage has had to replace substantial lines and fitting. Chief Spaulding stated Occum's Chicken BBQ fundraiser was coming up on April 4th.

- **Yantic:** Chief Frank Blanchard reported solid membership and 50 calls for the past month with four back-to-back and three overlapping. Chief Blanchard stated all apparatus were in service however they were working with fleet maintenance on an intermittent pump issue on Engine 33. Chief Blanchard reported upcoming planned training with NPU on gas and electrical along with a review of EMS services including proper use of PPE and equipment decontamination in regards to COVID-19. Chief Blanchard reported two Firefighter 1 graduates in the past month and stated there would be a public information meeting regarding the Sunnyside Bridge Project held on Tuesday March 24th at 5PM at Yantic Fire Station. Chief Blanchard stated due to funding allocated by City council the week prior Yantic was able to fund phase three of the fire marshal abatement and hopes to be completed with the project by June 1st. Chief Blanchard stated requests still include a HVAC system on the firehouse main floor and the underground oil tank elimination which they plan to discuss at the upcoming budget hearing on April 7th. Chief Blanchard reported several recent unexpected expenses including the main refrigerator, the boiler sensor intake valve on Engine 32 and the annex overhead door repair which totaled approximately 1,400 dollars. Chief Blanchard stated Yantic is low on masks but is stocked on cleaning supplies and has been enhancing cleaning protocols in regards to COVID-19. Chief Blanchard added Engine 31 did receive lettering with the City seal per discussion at last month's meeting.

- **Laurel Hill:** Deputy Chief Pete Clark reported a busy past month with brush season already having started. Deputy Clark stating they are preparing to receive the new apparatus.

- **Norwich:** Chief Keith Wucik reported 188 incidents for the past month with 51 accidents, 52 fire calls and 5 mutual aid calls including the major Lorenzo Street and Cliff Street fires. Chief Wucik stated with warmer weather Marine 1 is always in the water and that Squad A still needs replacement. Chief Wucik stated NFD is being trained on the new bailout kits they received through grant funding a few months prior and encouraged other departments to use the kits as well. Chief Wucik added NFD is also reviewing infectious control procedures in regards to COVID-19.

VII. Executive Session: Alderman Bettencourt made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:54 PM pursuant Connecticut General Statute Sections 1-200(6), that the members of the Public Safety Committee of the Norwich City Council enter into an Executive Session to discuss the Norwich Public Utilities gas emergency protocols and possible acquisition or use of real estate in gas emergencies when publicity regarding these protocols would adversely impact the public safety, security, and/or the strategic

interest of the city of its utility, where the Public Safety Committee, having determined that the public interest in withholding such clearly outweighs the public interest in disclosure, as well as to review commercial or financial information given in confidence not required by statute.

The following are invited to participate in all or part of this Executive Session at the request of the Public Safety Committee:

Mr. John Salomone, Norwich City Manager
Mr. Peter Nystrom, Mayor of Norwich
Mr. Eric McDermott, NPU Electric Integrity Operations Manager
Mr. Barry Ellison, NPU Gas Integrity Operations Manager
Mr. Mark Decker, NPU Water Integrity Operations Manager
Mr. Shawn Paradis, NPU Senior Maintenance Mechanic
Mr. Chris Golb, NPU

and the following Public Safety complex personnel or their designee:

NFD Acting Chief Keith Wucik
LHFVD Chief Aaron Westervelt
TVFD Chief Tim Jencks
OVFD Chief Carroll Spaulding
YFECO Chief Frank Blanchard
EGPVFD Chief Keith Milton
NFD Chief Pat Daly

Alderman DeLucia seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

No votes were taken. Alderman Bettencourt made a motion to return from the Executive Session at 8:22 PM. Alderman DeLucia seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII.Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 8, 2020 – Lauren Hill Volunteer Fire Department

IX.Adjournment: Upon a motion by Alderman Bettencourt seconded by Alderman DeLucia, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:24 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Katherine Rose