

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Regular Meeting via ZOOM App
Thursday November 12, 2020
7:00 PM

Committee Members Present: Alderman Joseph DeLucia, Alderman William Nash and Alderman Mark Bettencourt.

Committee Members Absent: None.

Administration and Staff Present: City Manager John Salomone and Alderwoman Stacy Gould, City of Norwich; Eric McDermott, Norwich Public Utilities; Robert Rautio, American Ambulance; and Chief Patrick Daly, Norwich Police Department.

Volunteer/Central Fire Departments and Others: Norwich Chief Tracy Montoya; East Great Plain; Chief Keith Milton; and Occum Chief Carroll Spaulding.

Citizens Present: Tom Quinley

- I. **Call to Order and Quorum:** Alderman DeLucia called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM. There was a quorum present.
- II. **Adoption of Previous Meeting Minutes:** Alderman Nash made a motion to approve the October 14, 2020 meeting minutes. Alderman Bettencourt seconded. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.
- III. **Citizen Comment:** Alderwoman Stacy Gould asked that the Public Safety Committee send a favorable recommendation on the firefighter relief ordinance to the City Council. Alderwoman Gould stated the relief ordinance was an important part of volunteer firefighter retention and only cost taxpayers a few dollars. Alderwoman Gould stated it is important to retain the volunteer firefighters we have in the City and the excellent delivery of services volunteer firefighters offer.

Tom Quinley of 75 Sunnyside Street, Chairman of the Firefighter Relief Fund Committee, reiterated Alderwoman Gould's comment in that the ordinance was a positive improvement to the plan and was important in continuing to be able to encourage young people to join the volunteer service. Tom Quinley stated the ordinance would also help assist elders and maintain the positive direction the City has maintained for many years.

IV. **Old Business:**

- a. **COVID-19 Resurgence Impacts:** Alderwoman Joe DeLucia noted that

the region is currently struggling with the pandemic. City Manager John Salomone as of that Wednesday Norwich was at 931 active cases and approaching the 1,000 mark, with unfortunately 18 deaths associated with COVID. City Manager Salomone stated there had been 99 new cases in the past two weeks but the average daily rate had decreased to 18 per 100,000 opposed to the 50 per 100,000 rate the City had been at a few weeks prior. City Manager Salomone stated the City had done about 3,400 tests in the last two weeks with a 3.7 average percent of positives which was still on the high end, but lower than the state average and averages on the west side of the state. City Manager Salomone stated there had been an uptick of cases in town in the past week which he was unsure if that was caused as a result of the general surge, as we may be catching up with bordering Massachusetts, where it's possible that the uptick 3 to 4 weeks ago was caused by an individual surge. City Manager Salomone stated the City had been successful in communicating with local restaurants that were all going back to a 50 percent capacity threshold and dialing back gatherings. City Manager Salomone stated the businesses were not being physically checked but the City assumed the businesses were making a good faith effort in compliance. City Manager Salomone stated there would be more updates next month and that he reported to the City Council at each meeting. City Manager Salomone reported that city hall has remained under the same protocol since the beginning of the virus and that there had been a couple COVID cases within the police and fire department but they have resolved themselves at this point. Chief Keith Milton expressed concern regarding an email he received from Backus Hospital on October 23rd which provided response modifications for first responders which had not occurred and stated that East Great Plain had been dispatched for many life-assist calls which he felt were somewhat uncalled for along with other calls that did not meet the dispatch modifications. Chief Milton continued he understood the call for EGP on lift assists but noted their call volume had increased since the memo came out when its goal was to limit first responder calls. Robert Rautio of American Ambulance stated for the last month calendar period they had seen a decrease in call volume so it was troubling to see an increase and if the departments were going on calls they should not be on then communication needed to be revised between dispatch as they should not be getting an increased number of calls. Alderman Joe DeLucia asked what the specific dispatch notification had been. Robert Rautio responded that Backus Hospital issued guidelines of traditional response criteria that severely curtailed fire response on calls that would normally warrant it in order to reduce unnecessary exposure and limits the number and type of calls firefighters respond to. Robert Rautio said he would need to do research to determine the issue of why the

guideline may not be being adhered to. Alderman DeLucia asked if anything was new from the issue released a few weeks prior to which Robert Rautio stated there was not, it was just reinstated.

Online disruptions occurred. Alderman Nash made a motion to adjourn the meeting and schedule a special meeting due to online disruptions. Alderman Bettencourt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Discussion and Possible Action – Expanding the Volunteer Firefighter Tax Abatement:

V. New Business:

a. Discussion and Possible Action – City Council referral of the Volunteer Firefighter Relief Fund Ordinance:

VI. Department Updates:

i. **NPU Update:** A digital report submitted by Eric McDermott after the meeting's adjournment read:

- Our employees continue to work and respond from home with no impact to our emergency response capability. Our customer service staff is continuing their routine duties remotely without any disruption to service or communications. We do not have any known COVID cases among our workforce at this time.
- Our Control Room, water and sewer plants remain minimally staffed and we continue enhanced protocols for cleaning the facilities and reducing interactions between staff.
- Our reservoir capacity is at 74% which is slightly lower than the 5 year average. We currently have a 2" rainfall deficit. However, draught conditions continue to improve across the state and most rivers are running near normal levels.
- The NPU Leadership Team continues to meet each morning over WebEx to review, discuss and plan for all issues that are, or could be impacted by the pandemic. Our managers are interacting by WebEx, email and phone with all employees every day.
- Our PPE levels are sufficient. Our purchasing team is actively managing our inventory and monitoring lead times to ensure we maintain adequate supplies.
- The next NPU Board of Commissioners meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday, November 24 via Webex.

ii. **American Ambulance:** None.

iii. **Police Department Update:** None.

iv. **Emergency Management Update:** A digital report submitted by Chief Tracy Montoya after the meeting's adjournment read:

- Base stations were installed at Fire HQ and McKinley Ave for new radios through a grant received last year.
- Recently received and distributed 6,000 masks (adult and child) to the BoE.
- Supported a COVID testing site at McKinley Ave.
- Supported the flu shot clinic at Norwich Tech which served as a regional drill for Uncas Health. CERT members also supported.
- Hosted a battery give away: Change your Clock – Change your Battery for smoke detectors sponsored by Energizer. Ongoing program by appointment, we will revisit another event in the spring.

v. **Fire Department Updates:**

- **Norwich:** A digital report submitted by Chief Tracy Montoya after the meeting's adjournment read:
 - Responses: The department responded to a total of 181 incidents over the past month.
 - 61 fire and 120 EMS with 27 (14.9%) overlapping where there were multiple incidents responded to at the same time. Mutual Aid was given 4 times and received twice. The average apparatus response time on all calls was 3:10 (which includes an average turnout time for fully staffed apparatus). (See ER Doc ID #1645).
 - FEMA AFG finalizing the training plan/schedule for the spring, equipment has been purchased and partially delivered. (extrication equipment and training (\$193,977, city share 19,397, total 213,394).
 - Corning Rd. Fire: 2-alarm fire in a 4 bay garage, 14 vehicles, 1 horse. Under investigation.
 - Water Rescue: person in the river, Dive team called in. Body recovery made.
 - McGrath visit: Chiefs met with PSAP consultant. Upcoming

visits next week with other Fire consultants.

- Critical Needs: Replacement of Squad A. Engine-3 still out of service – 3 weeks plus, awaiting an alternator, Engine-4 in service. Squad-A had an air leak today and was out of service until Fleet Maintenance could make a repair. There is no spare engine available if one goes out of service.
- Staffing: Acting Director of Training and Safety still in place. One Firefighter vacancy. To date there have been 4 positive COVID cases in staff, all have returned to work with no issues.
- Facilities: Both stations are still closed to the public. Contract was awarded for replacing the windows at HQ, order was to be placed by Mattern with an 8-10 week delivery.
- Training: Company training continues. All training is being conducted with COVID safe practices.
- COVID-19: We continue taking extra precautions around stations and during incidents due to COVID. We constantly review our operations and the measures we take to protect personnel.

● **Taftville:** None.

● **Yantic:** None.

● **Occum:** A digital report submitted by Chief Carroll Spaulding after the meeting's adjournment read:

- Membership at 37 with 4 appointments pending review
- COVID 19: Firehouse still remains closed to non-fire personnel; drills and meetings have been canceled.
- We have 7 people EMT, Firefighter 1 and 2, Instructor Class.
- We are looking into having a Chicken BBQ on December 5th at 5-9PM, waiting to hear back from Uncas Health for permit.
- We met with McGrath and gave them information they requested, waiting to hear back from them.
- Two items put into next year's capital budget:
 1. Turnout gear
 2. Replacement of Engine 41 in having three different companies bring in demos, 2 we could have bought for \$460,000 and 1 for \$550,000 which is the way we are looking at to go with.

● **East Great Plain:** A digital report submitted by Chief Keith Milton after the meeting's adjournment read:

- EGP responded to 73 emergency incidents last month.
- We went mutual aid 9 times and received aid 2 times.
- We had 14 over lapping calls which came out to 19.18%.
- EGP operated in the Town of Montville for over 12 hours at their scrap yard fire with our ladder truck and shuttled over thousands of gallons of water with our new truck. Both trucks operated without any problems.
- Due to the uptick of the virus, we have stopped all of our hands-on trainings until further notice. We are doing online training.
- Apparatus had routine maintenance. E 52 has been having significant issues the past months. It was out of service for a few days last month for some mechanical and pump work. I'm being told that the steering box needs to be replaced. The cab mounts and motor mounts have been replaced as well. Need to start looking into the replacement of this piece.
- Members are being diligent in exercising caution and wearing proper PPE during ems calls where there is a possibility of an exposure. They are disinfecting the apparatus and equipment after calls. Wearing masks on all calls, and also when at the firehouse.
- I have 5 members who are currently isolated/quarantining. 2 tested positive for the virus, myself being one of them, and 2 other members who are quarantining live with the 2 members who tested positive, and 1 member awaiting their results. I'm happy to report myself and the other member are doing well and our symptoms have been minor in nature thankfully. Other members have been getting tested as well.
- We still have a good surplus of PPE for the covid virus.
- The fire dept received a new donated Autel Drone. It was donated through a program called National Public Safety Drone Donation Program. The donation was made possible by Autel Robotics and Foxfury lighting solutions. The program was started by a company called Airborne Works out of Hebron, CT. This will be a valuable asset to Norwich and will be available to all departments. We have paperwork that we need to meet with the city manager to get together and completed so we can get the drone labeled as a public safety drone through the FFA. This will allow us to do things that aren't normally allowed. We still have more training to do with the drone. More info will come out about it in the future.
- This is the concern that I brought up about the virus and

discussion followed with Rob from American Ambulance. We will have a follow up discussion soon.

- I have a concern as well as my members. Departments received an email from Backus Hospital on Oct 23rd regarding response modifications for first responders due to the uptick of the virus. This in my eye hasn't been happening. EGP has been getting dispatched for a lot of lift assists and other ems calls that don't meet the dispatch modification. I do understand that some of these lift assists are in housing units where the ambulance crew needs access and the fire department is the only ones that have that access. So to me, I feel that we are responding to more ems calls than we should be according to the modification. This is a concern, cause now we are potentially exposing more responders.

• **Laurel Hill:** None.

VII. **City Manager Update - 2020 Fire Service Study Contract:** City Manager John Salomone reported

VIII. **Public Safety items for future discussion:**

IX. **Next Meeting: December 9, 2020, via ZOOM App, unless otherwise notified.**

X. **Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Alderman Nash, seconded by Alderman Bettencourt, the meeting was adjourned due to online disruptions at 7:28 PM, and a special meeting would be scheduled. All voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Katherine Rose*