

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Regular Meeting via ZOOM App
Wednesday July 8, 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: Mayor Peter Nystrom and City Manager John Salomone, City of Norwich; Eric McDermott, Norwich Public Utilities; Robert Rautio, American Ambulance; and Chief Patrick Daly and Captain Jim Veiga, Norwich Police Department.

Volunteer/Central Fire Departments and Others: Norwich Chief Keith Wucik; Taftville Chief Timothy Jencks; East Great Plain: Chief Keith Milon; Laurel Hill: Chief Aaron Westervelt; and Yantic Chief Frank Blanchard.

Citizens Present: None.

- I. **Call to Order and Quorum:** Alderman DeLucia called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. There was a quorum present.
- II. **Adoption of Previous Meeting Minutes:** Alderman Nash made a motion to approve the previous minutes as written. Alderman Bettencourt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
 - a. March 11, 2020: **Approved.**
 - b. April 8, 2020: **Approved.**
 - c. April 15, 2020 (Special Meeting): **Approved.**
 - d. May 13, 2020: **Approved.**
 - e. June 10, 2020 **Approved.**
- III. **Citizen Comment:** None.
- IV. **New Business:**
 - a. **Discussion and Possible Action; East Great Plain Engine/Tanker Final Invoice:** Chief Keith Milton reported that EGP's truck is not in service as of yet as it is still at the dealership getting items mounted and receiving programming from the manufacturer. Chief Milton explained that the lettering and striping received from an outside vendor that is shown on the final invoice is covered by money allocated from the

remaining 2020 operating budget. Chief Milton stated after discussing the process with the City comptroller he was instructed to receive bill approval from the Public Safety Committee. Alderman DeLucia asked if the remainder of the operating budget was not spent by the end of the fiscal year would the money go into undesignated funds to which City Manager John Salomone responded was corrected. Alderman DeLucia stated he appreciated that the Chief was willing to utilize operational funds. Alderman Nash made a motion to approve and forward an authorization to pay the final invoice for remaining work on the East Great Plain Volunteer Fire Department tanker truck. Alderman Bettencourt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

- b. **COVID-19 Resurgence Impacts:** Chief Keith Milton reported that EGP had not noticed any spikes in the area as of yet but they are still taking things day-by-day and utilizing proper PPE on calls with potential exposure. Chief Milton stated EGP is doing its due diligence and they do have plenty of PPE in stock. Chief Frank Blanchard stated Yantic is still receiving a weekly supply of PPE from the State and calls are being handled on a case-by-cases basis. Chief Keith Wucik reported Norwich has been diligently maintaining a list of hotspots and locations and thanked American Ambulance for their efforts in limiting exposure for departments on calls. Robert Rautio reported that American Ambulance is also still receiving PPE from the State however they still have not been able to access N95 masks. Robert Rautio stated they are well stocked otherwise and invited any departments that are not to reach out to American Ambulance for supplies. Robert Rautio reported that the State has raised the restrictions for first responders however AA is still handling calls on a case-by-case basis to limit exposure to members. City Manager John Salomone reported that from a City standpoint the governor put a hold on phase 3 of the reopening as there aren't any serious trends yet but there are concerns and things are not out of the woods yet. Alderman Bettencourt stated he felt that things were going in a positive direction due to the current regulations in place so time will tell if things remain stable. City Manager John Salomone stated the reopening of the casinos presented concerns due to the amount of customers they receive on a daily basis although he commended the efforts being made to screen patrons upon approval. Alderman Nash stated concerns with canceling certain events and festivals while seeing a push for City sponsored events and stated he was hesitant to entertain event scheduling at this time although he appreciated the sentiment and efforts involved. Alderman Nash stated his concern for social distancing guidelines being followed and noted events later in the year that had already been canceled. Mayor Peter Nystrom stated he had spoken to Mr. Jenkins and he would need to

confirm that everything in regards to the event would clear the COVID-19 requirements and that there were still a lot of questions as to what was in compliance and what was not. Discussion ensued on how local sporting practices are being held within schools and groups.

c. **Department Updates:**

- i. **NPU Update:** Eric McDermott reported that NPU is currently in Phase 2 of their return work to plan and are monitoring COVID-19 closely by paying attention to federal and state guidelines to keep employees and customers safe. Eric McDermott stated PPE and IOs were sufficient and that leadership continues to meet daily. Eric McDermott stated NPU started their annual flushing program today that would run between July and August during which reservoirs will be closely watched. Eric Dermott stated the reservoirs are currently at 98% capacity. Eric McDermott stated to Chief Patrick Daly that NPU was looking into power failure that occurred the previous and that they are still looking at annual safety training. Eric McDermott apologized for the delay caused by COVID and stated NPU is considering a virtual alternative.
- ii. **American Ambulance** Robert Rautio reported an uptick in call volume, which was not unanticipated, with 676 emergency calls in May, 250 of which ALS and the rest BLS calls of some variety only, which is a decrease in 79 calls from the previous year. Robert Rautio reported 743 emergency calls for June with an identical number ALS but with an increase of BLS level of service. Robert Rautio noted an increase in non-emergent emergency calls as people had held off on such calls during the immediate COVID outbreak but are now understandably calling again with state reopenings. Robert Rautio stated AA had almost a double amount of responses for motor vehicle accidents in June versus May which he again attributed to reopenings as more people are on the road driving. Discussion ensued on rescinded restrictions for first responders.
- iii. **Police Department Update:** Chief Patrick Daley reported that Circuit 614 had died the previous night creating a significant power issue that affected the station's server and backup server. Chief Daley stated both servers were scrambled in a way similar to a hard reset for about 45 minutes before coming back online again causing a longtime outage of the operating system. Chief Daley stated NPD could hear incoming audio but audio on their end was not transmitting out/ Chief Daley stated the NPD generator did not kick on which was a known

issue due to the transfer switch problem but the overall problem would have occurred regardless of the generator. Chief Daly stated emergency plans would need to address this contingency which has not needed to be addressed in the past. Chief Daly stated NPD had already worked on the issue extensively that day but would be involving the following agencies to determine what occurred and what to do moving forward; NPD, NPU, City IMS, UPS, Purchasing, and Building Maintenance. Chief Daly stated NPD is about 90% ready for grant approval on their generator replacement but the new generator would still be about a year out. Chief Daly stated all agencies will work to review what happened and what could have executed better. Discussion ensued. Eric McDermott stated a bird within the wires was the cause of the outage and surge. Chief Daly reported NPD received the 2 million dollar Cops Grant for Community Policing which allows for six officers over a six month period. Chief Daly stated he had gotten the call from the congressman and an email from the Department of Justice but had not received the award package yet. Chief Daly stated NPD's goal is to take what has been learned from protests and community meetings to enforce community policy. Chief Daly stated they would instate six officers to have a total of 10 officers who would use a park and walk or biking policing method and three officers would be in the schools. Alderman Nash stated he witnessed a large number of DARE graduates at the protests which showed the lack of relationship between officers and citizens from middle school age onward. Chief Daly reported that there would be some upcoming budget concerns as well as upcoming retirements and stated he may have difficulties filling the six positions during the current climate. Chief Daly clarified that per the grant each position has a clock of 36 days after the position is filled. Chief Daly reported in the past month the three remaining crews graduated from the virtual police academy and that NPD met with the NAACP and other community groups to discuss issues that the protests have identified. Chief Daly stated the meetings were very positive and progressive with a lot of the recommended actions already being taken. Chief Daly echoed the increase of motor vehicle accidents and reported a serious motorcycle incident had occurred earlier that day. Chief Daly reported that Captain Jim Veiga was responding well and his prognosis from doctors was good. Discussion ensued on moped issues. Mayor Peter Nystrom stated he was receiving an influx of calls regarding fireworks and asked if NPD had any information to pass along or date on areas with larger priority. Chief Daly stated the issue is spread over the city and NPD is working to maintain balance of not ruling with a heavy

hand while maintaining safety and a quality of life, but the fireworks were currently an increasing city wide issue.

iv. **Emergency Management Update:** Chief Keith Wucik stated the EOC had been partially open since April and just closed July 1st due to a decrease in paperwork. Chief Wucik stated it is always possible that the EOC will reopen if things get hectic again. Chief Wucik stated he has been in constant communication with DEHMAS and other state agencies and has been continuing to distribute PPE as needed.

v. **Fire Department Updates:**

- **Norwich:** Chief Keith Wucik reported 150 incidents for the month of July including 56 fire and 50 EMS as well as 50 fire marshal investigations which was twice the normal level. Chief Wucik stated that Jason Balletto resigned May 4th so NFD is currently hiring. Chief Wucik stated that transactions in the fire marshal office have transitioned to drop offs to limit contact with the public. Chief Wucik they are handling COVID-19 on a daily basis with no current personal callouts. Alderman DeLucia asked if there was any reasoning to the uptick in fires. Chief Wucik responded no and while some had been suspicious many were accidental and caused by cooking, car fires, smoking etc.
- **Taftville:** Chief Timothy Jencks reported an increase in calls with 67 in the last month 14 percent of which were overlapping and some being mutual aid. Chief Jencks stated Taftville has begun reopening training with smaller groups to stay within CDC guidelines for social distancing. Chief Jencks stated they lost two members the past month with one being transferred and the other accepted to the Coast Guard. Chief Jencks reported that the Rescue Truck should have gone down to Florida on the 23rd for inspection but after speaking to the City Manager and the manufacturer the current plan is to do a virtual inspection which is not ideal but needs to happen for things to move forward. Chief Jencks stated Taftville is working on several projects including the fire marshal abatement and new washer and dryer hookups. Chief Jencks stated the parking lot is complete and they will plan out Phase 2 during the next couple years. Chief Jencks stated that the past Sunday Taftville participated in a large live water drill which utilized an airplane prop and several live volunteers. Alderman DeLucia stated that while the inspection on the rescue truck is not optimal he appreciated the innovative approach to keep things

moving

forward.

- **Yantic:** Chief Frank Blanchard stated all is well at Yantic firehouse.

- **Occum:** None.

- **East Great Plain:** Chief Keith Milton reported 62 calls for the past month and that EGP is slowly getting back to regular training while doing due diligence in regards to social distancing. Chief Milton stated they recently held a special training using the new bail out kits which have since been put into service for properly trained members. Chief Milton stated they were doing good on PPE and had no isolated or quarantined members so far. Chief Milton stated the Ladder Truck had been back in service for a few weeks and that Engine 52 had been out of service for a week-and-a-half for needed body repairs. Chief Milton stated the new truck was not in service and was still at the dealership getting equipment mounted and programming issues addressed. Chief Milton stated the radios should be installed on the truck the following week following which he is hoping to receive the truck. Chief Milton stated he was also getting quotes on residing the firehouse.

- **Laurel Hill:** Chief Aaron Westervelt reported that Laurel Hill's PPE supply was good and that they are still going to Mohegan Sun each week for a replenishment. Chief Westervelt they are figuring out training as they go along and recently had to hold a specialized training for the new truck but otherwise are working with social distancing requirements. Chief Westervelt stated membership was steady with one member being deployed to the navy for about a year. Alderman DeLucia asked if there were updates to the firehouse upgrades for training and equipment that had been discussed previously. Chief Westervelt responded that he had no solid answers yet as they just began looking at the new budget.

- d. **City Manager Update - 2020 Fire Service Study RFP:** City Manager John Salomone reported that the RFP was distributed and posted on time on June 30th. City Manager Salomone stated the RFP was sent to four consultants directly, which the purchasing director deemed of interest that were more regional, and should be sending responses back on the 17th of

July. City Manager Salomone stated at that point the working group -- including himself, Chief Blanchard, Chief Wucik and Josh Pothier -- would analyze the responses and have reviews if necessary with the finalists. City Manager Salomone stated the group would contemplate returning to Council as there is no funding in place but at which time they would have a price and then if the price meets their criteria things would move forward. City Manager Salomone stated the first meeting could be anticipated to occur in August and then if the price is agreeable the City would enter into an agreement with the final consultant. Alderman Nash asked if the City Manager was still meeting with the chiefs as a group. City Manager Salomone responded that the meetings have not been canceled just have not occurred since the spring due to COVID-19 so they have met on an individual basis. Alderman Nash recommended that the meetings continue in the interim of the RFP return in order to be ahead of the curve once it is.

- V. **Next Meeting: August 12, 2020, via ZOOM App, unless otherwise notified.**
- VI. **Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Alderman Bettencourt, seconded by Alderman Nash, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:06 PM.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Katherine Rose*