

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

Fire Station 2, George Pierce Training Room  
February 3, 2016

Portsmouth, NH  
1900 hours

**I. Call to Order:**

Chairman Jennifer Matthes called the meeting to order at 1900 hours and led the pledge of allegiance. Along with Chairman Matthes, present were: Commissioners: Richard Gamester and Michael Hughes; Fire Chief Steven Achilles, Deputy Fire Chiefs: Carl Roediger and James Heinz; Executive Assistant Tracy Freeman, Captain Todd Germain and Lieutenant William McQuillen. Meeting was taped for public viewing on Ch. 22.

**II. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

Motion, to approve the minutes of January 13, 2016, was made by Chairman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Gamester made the motion, to suspend the rules and move item IX, Public Hearings, next so that Chief Achilles could present his FY2017 Proposed budget. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

**III. Public Comment Session: None.**

**IV. Recognition of Groups or Individuals: None.**

**V. Reports:**

**A. Fire Chief's Reports:**

Chairman Matthes motioned to discuss Chief's reports 16-012 through 16-015. Motion seconded by Commissioner Hughes.

Chief Achilles reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (012), 2016 Response Report with Service Activity and Safety message for January. The report shows the department responding to 93 Fire Calls and 268 Ambulance Calls for the month. This activity is tracked by calendar year. The Safety Message section focused on planning ahead and

being prepared for weather-related emergencies. The Service Activity and Safety Message report was submitted to the Portsmouth Herald for publication in local newspapers. Report (013), Fire and EMS Calls by District, identified the number of calls by districts for the month with district 1 having the highest call volume at roughly 53% followed by district 2 and 3 being closely matched at 13%. EMS data shows the top three reasons for dispatch this month being traumatic injuries (cuts, broken bones, head injuries, etc.), chest pain and psychiatric/behavioral disorders. There were 2 reported cardiac arrests and 5 overdoses this month. 99% of our transports were taken to Portsmouth Regional Hospital. 49% of the calls this month occurred within the home/residence. Report (014), FY16 Budget, Chief noted being seven months into the new fiscal year and currently showing a slight shortfall due to an increase in overtime for shift vacancies relating to a workers comp injury and disability leave. Memo was issued to implement measures to control costs, stabilizing some accounts and freezing others. Will continue to monitor the budget closely and implement further measures if needed. Report (015), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of January along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

Motion, to approve Chief's Reports 16-012 through 16-015, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion seconded by Chairman Matthes and passed unanimously.

**B. Staff Reports:**

Deputy Chief Heinz reported on operations and training occurring within the department. Preparations are being made for the upcoming Captain and Lieutenant's promotional tests. The process has begun for the renewing of the NH State EMS licenses for members who expire soon. The department hosted a RADEF Officer class and a WebEOC class. Because Portsmouth falls within the Seabrook Station's 10-mile emergency planning zone, a RADEF Officer is responsible for tracking the levels of radiation when an occurrence happens and implements protective measures to responding emergency personnel and personnel in the emergency operations center.

**VI. Old Business:** None.

**VII. Presentations of Written Communications:**

Chief Achilles read thank you letter received today from Chief Andrew Head of Newington Fire and Rescue.

**VIII. New Business:** None.

**IX. Public Hearings:**

Chief Achilles presented the FY2017 proposed budget which shows a 3.0% increase over FY16 due to step increases and increases in retirement, health and telephone. The proposed budget continues to maintain current level of service, staffing, stations and resources. His presentation outlined the essential services of the department which include: fire protection, emergency medical services, hazardous materials and disaster response, marine and waterfront services, fire prevention and inspection, emergency management and community services. Department goals and objectives noted were to maintain and strengthen reliable delivery of essential emergency and non-emergency services, promoting the safety of employees and the community through comprehensive education and training, minimizing the risk of life and property loss through proactive planning, education and enforcement of safe practices and to provide effective, efficient, and customer-centered services. The position summary report showed the department continuing with 61 fulltime positions and 3 part-time positions with no new positions added. The largest revenue source for the department comes from ambulance billing which showed a collection rate up 77.8% over the past 5-years. He did note that the revenue generated from ambulance billing does not go back to the department but to the City's general fund.

The Chief continued his presentation outlining some supplemental considerations and the reasons for them. These considerations included: one additional firefighter per shift which would impact the budget by \$231,892 or 2.64% above the 3.0%; one EMS Officer at \$85,000 or 0.98% noting this position could possibly cover day shift officer vacancies if it didn't impact the duties in which he/she would be required to perform; and one part-time Fire Prevention Officer at \$44,000 or 0.52%. These considerations were cited within the 2015 Self-Assessment of Department Operations Final Report.

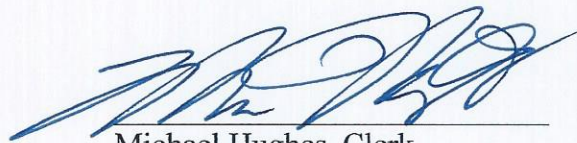
A brief discussion took place following the Chief's presentation regarding department response times, which the Chief stated were longer due to increased call volumes and the impacts from the City's infrastructure and major construction projects (bridges, intersections, pipe and gas lines, etc.) happening within the City. Currently showing response times of 8 minutes from the initial dispatch and the goal is to get back to 7 minutes. Commissioner Gamester inquired about the role of the EMS Officer as identified in the Chief's supplemental considerations. Chief answered that he would be a company officer at the lieutenant or captain level and would provide EMS duties for the purposes of education, training and certifications and if time and responsibilities allowed, could provide shift coverage for vacancies created by a shift officer.

The public hearing closed and the regular meeting of the Fire Commission reconvened.

**X. Non-public Session:** None.

**XI. Adjournment:**

Motion, to adjourn at 1945 hours, was made by Chairman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.



Michael Hughes, Clerk