

041

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

Fire Station 1, Training Room  
April 9, 2019

Portsmouth, NH  
1700 hours

**I. Call to Order:**

Chairwoman Matthes called the meeting to order at 1700 hours.

*Motion, to enter into Non-public session at 1700 hours regarding negotiations in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a), was made by Chairwoman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.*

*Motion, to come out of Non-public session and return to regular scheduled meeting at 1755 hours, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

**II. Pledge of Allegiance with Attendance:**

Chairwoman Matthes led the pledge of allegiance.

Present were Commissioners: Jennifer Matthes, Richard Gamester and Michael Hughes, Chief Steven Achilles, Deputy Fire Chiefs: James Heinz and Patrick Howe; Executive Assistant Tracy Freeman; Members of the Fire Department; and Portsmouth Herald Representative Iona Raptis.

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

*Motion, to approve the minutes of March 12, 2019, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

**IV. Public Comment Session: None.**

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

**VII. Reports:**

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

*Commissioner Gamester motioned to discuss Chief's reports 19-032 through 19-035. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes.*

Chief Achilles reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (032), 2019 Response Report with Service Activity and Safety message for March 2019. The report shows the department responding to a total of 391 calls for the month: 96 Fire Calls and 295 Ambulance Calls. Both Fire calls and Ambulance calls were up from last month. Total year to date shows the department responding to 1114 calls: 298 fire and related service calls and 816 ambulance service calls. Chief spoke briefly about some of the activity for the month noting a vehicle fire on 296 West Road, a water rescue where all companies assisted State and local PD, US Coast Guard, NH Marine Patrol and Newington Fire with a water rescue, and a technical rescue at the Wastewater Treatment Plant at Pierce Island. The safety message focused on open burning rules and permit information. The Service Activity and Safety Message report was submitted to the Portsmouth Herald for publication in local newspapers. Report (033), Fire and EMS Call Summary Report, shows the department responded to 221 fire calls for the month of March with 125 of the calls being for rescue responses which gets deducted from the total of fire calls. EMS activity was 295 with the top three responses being for abdominal pain/problems, respiratory distress and nausea/vomiting. There were 3 calls for drug overdose/abuse and 54 non-transport. Report (034), FY19 Budget, Chief Achilles reviewed the budget with the Commission and noted the department is tracking in the good and would see a savings this year in salaries uniform personnel due to retirements after the budget was submitted and in the administration regular salaries with his retirement at the end of this month. With one Lieutenant on disability, we will see an increase in Overtime for Disability. We have a Firefighter currently out on Workers Comp however, we have been able to cover his shifts with on duty personnel. Being within the last quarter of the fiscal year, we are monitoring expenditures closely as these numbers are projected. Report (035), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of March along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

*Motion, to accept Chief's Reports 19-032 through 19-035, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

**B. Staff Reports:**

Deputy Chief Heinz reported on Operations and Training within the department. He noted the department hosting an Inspector II class, Rescue 7 being outfitted with equipment and training at St. Pat's has gone well. Duct cleaning has been completed at station 2 and the new fire boat should be arriving any day now.

Deputy Chief Howe reported on Prevention noting several projects going on within the city. He noted that he and Prevention Officer Wheeler went through two rooming houses as part of their licensing process and found multiple fire code and life safety violations. Project wise: 14 Market Square – Tuscan Kitchen is underway, 403 The Hill - a 10-room inn, 145 Brewery Lane – 94 unit apartment building with parking under, 25 Maplewood – 4 story mixed use

office/residential with parking under, 46 Maplewood – 4 story mixed use restaurant/mercantile/22 residential units with parking under, 135 Congress – 4 story assembly with restaurant and function spaces, 160 Corporate – 2 story manufacturing facility, 121 Corporate – 2 story medical office building, 67 Corporate – 3 story medical office building, 2075 Lafayette – twin 24 unit residential buildings with parking below and 299 Vaughn – 5 story mixed use hotel/restaurant/mercantile with parking. Many more plans and projects going through TAC as well.

**VIII. Old Business:**

Chief Achilles presented the department's FY20 Proposed Budget to the City Manager. Request was to reduce overall budget by \$150K and we were able to do that and maintain our initiatives he stated so we are at 3.32%. May 1<sup>st</sup> is the City Council Public Hearing on the budget with May 8<sup>th</sup> being the City Council Work Session with Police and Fire. This meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> the department will present the budget. Chief has presentation all ready.

**IX. New Business:**

Chief noted that he submitted his formal resignation letter to the Commission on March 27, 2019 effective April 28, 2019. He thanked the Commission for their continued encouragement and support in pursuit of growing professionally and personally. His last work day with the department will be April 26<sup>th</sup>.

*Motion, to accept, with regret, the resignation of Fire Chief Steven Achilles effective April 28, 2019, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

In working with the Commission on a transition plan which is to include the posting of the position and forming a selection committee, Chief made the recommendation to promote Captain Todd Germain to Interim Fire Chief effective April 29<sup>th</sup> through which time a permanent Chief is selected. Captain Germain is the senior ranking Captain and has the support of the other Captains and has demonstrated a high level of commitment to both the department and those we serve. Chief is very confident in Captain Germain and his abilities to lead our organization and provide overall continuity during this transition period.

*Motion, to appoint Captain Todd Germain to Interim Fire Chief effective April 29, 2019, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.*

With regards to the hiring process of the new Fire Chief, Chief Achilles suggested a committee be formed to review the resumes and vet them out, select the top candidates to come in for an oral board and Fire Commission interviews the top 2 finalists. Chief recommended to continue moving the process forward in the month of May and not drag it with the hopes of selecting a finalist by end of May or early June since most outside candidates would probably need to give a 30-day notice.

*Commissioner Gamester made the motion, to form a Fire Chief Selection Committee of five (5) members which is to consist of: one representative from City Hall, one City Council representative, one Fire Chief representative, one representative from the public who is active in other civic duties and one member from this Board. This Committee would be chaired by the Fire Commission representative. Motion was seconded by Chairwoman Matthes and passed unanimously.*

In keeping the members of the department safe, the Chief has been working with Captain Condon on SCBA Retrofit Kits for the tower. These kits would provide a safe and secure SCBA cylinder storage and would hold the bottles in place with a secure fit in all directions. Because this is a safety equipment request, Chief is asking to use Webber Bequest funds. Chairman Matthes inquired about the pricing of these retro fit kits and how many would be needed. Chief replied that they are roughly \$600 each and would need two.

*Motion, to allow the Fire Chief to purchase (2) SCBA Retrofit Kits using the Webber Bequest funds. Not to exceed \$1,200.00, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

**X. Adjournment:**

On behalf of the Fire Commission, Commissioner Gamester thanked Chief Achilles for his time, dedication, hard work and involvement within the community during his time here with the Portsmouth Fire Department.

*Motion, to adjourn at 1825 hours, was made by Chairwoman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.*



Michael Hughes, Clerk