

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

Fire Station 1, Training Room  
January 8, 2019

Portsmouth, NH  
1730 hours

**I. Call to Order:**

Chairwoman Matthes called the meeting to order at 1730 hours.

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

Commissioner Gamester led the pledge of allegiance.

Present were Commissioners: Jennifer Matthes and Richard Gamester, Chief Steven Achilles, Deputy Fire Chiefs: Carl Roediger and James Heinz; Executive Assistant Tracy Freeman; Inspector Patrick Howe, Captains: Todd Germain, Jason Gionet and Richard Murphy; Firefighters: Samuel Couinard and Shawn Wheeler

Absent: Commissioner Michael Hughes due to snow

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

*Motion, to approve the minutes of December 18, 2018 was made by Chairwoman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.*

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

**V. Presentation of Written Communications:**

Chief Achilles read the thank you letter from Gino Marconi of the Pease Development Authority and the thank you note from Casey Tinder of 1827 Sheafe House.

*Motion, to accept and place on file, was made by Chairwoman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.*

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

**VII. Reports:**

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

*Chairwoman Matthes motioned to discuss Chief's reports 19-004 through 19-007. Motion seconded by Commissioner Gamester.*

Chief Achilles reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (004), 2018 Response Report with Service Activity and Safety message for December 2018. The report shows the department responding to a total of 411 calls for the month: 112 Fire Calls and 299 Ambulance Calls. Both Fire calls and Ambulance calls were up from last month. Total year to date shows the department responding to 4892 calls: 1407 fire and related service calls and 3485 ambulance service calls. Chief spoke briefly about some of the activity for the month noting a motor vehicle crash on Rte. 95, SB car versus a tractor-trailer, pedestrian struck by a motor vehicle in the area of 801 Islington Street requiring a trauma alert notification at PRH, and a motor vehicle crash for truck into a building at 697 Islington Street. The safety message focused on preventing frozen pipes. The Service Activity and Safety Message report was submitted to the Portsmouth Herald for publication in local newspapers. Report (005), Fire and EMS Call Summary Report, shows the department responded to 247 fire calls for the month of December with 135 of the calls being for rescue responses which gets deducted from the total of fire calls. EMS activity was 299 with the top three responses being for abdominal pain/problems, alcohol abuse and effects, and respiratory distress. There were 2 calls for drug overdose/abuse and 62 non-transports. Report (006), 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 currently showing a savings in overtime workers comp and disability leave however do anticipate some increased expenditure in these two line items because we currently have one Lieutenant on disability for an extended period of time due to an injury and a Firefighter on Workers Comp. Report (007), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of December along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

*Motion, to accept Chief's Reports 19-004 through 19-007, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Chairwoman Matthes and passed unanimously.*

**B. Staff Reports:**

Deputy Chief Heinz reported on Operations and Training within the department. He noted department personnel taking tours of Great Bay Community College to familiarize themselves with possible hazards and layouts of the buildings in case of emergencies at the school. The USCG provided personnel with training in navigational aids, ropes and knots, etc. to help when we receive the new rescue boat. Training also took place at the SIM Lab at PRH and at St. Pat's with ladders, Search, RIT, F4, VES, and smoke

machine. Deputy Heinz noted the department spent 6352 hours training last year. Deputy Heinz took a moment to recognize Firefighter Wheeler who recently obtained his Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. Firefighter Wheeler noted his capstone project was in Communication, Coordination and Cooperation in tying in Criminal Justice with Fire. He is currently pursuing his Master's in Homeland Security in Intelligence with hopes of advancing here within the department and pursue other avenues when he retires.

Deputy Chief Roediger noted he and Inspector Howe are closing out permits for last year's sprinkler work projects. Inspector Howe is working with renovation projects where a portion of a building is being renovated and finding areas of concern with the rest of the building which is leading into drawn out processes. Discrepancies arise when condo association and owners are in disagreement because there is a need to take care of the entire building and not just the section being renovated to host a restaurant or other commercial space. Continuing to work with Seacoast Rep and working on procedures here in the office with hopes of helping to make an easier transition to his predecessor.

#### **VIII. Old Business:**

Chief Achilles announced the posting of the promotional exam for Captain and Deputy. Two candidates applied for Captain having met the time requirement so at his discretion, he re-opened it with a reduction in years as officer and there was an additional candidate that applied so there will be three total.

As far as the Deputy internal posting, he had one candidate, Inspector Howe that applied. Chief spoke briefly of Inspector Howe's achievements and accomplishments with the Commission. After reviewing Inspector Howe's application and resume and talking with personnel, Chief made the recommendation to promote Patrick Howe to the position of Deputy Chief of Community Risk Reduction to the Fire Commission. With this promotion he will continue to enhance what we do in the department. Chief stated he is making this recommendation now so that we can begin negotiations for a contract and have Patrick in the position for March 1, 2019 when Deputy Roediger retires.

*Motion, to accept the Chief's recommendation of promoting Patrick Howe to the position of Deputy Chief and begin the negotiation process, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Chairwoman Matthes and passed unanimously.*

Chief Achilles noted that he would be moving forward with the internal posting of the Fire Inspector's position next week.

#### **IX. New Business:**

After a brief discussion on emergency services rates, Chief Achilles stated he worked with Deputy Finance Director Andrew Purgiel to establish a fee schedule which closely reflects the going rates as identified by Comstar and what is being

charged regionally. Chief Achilles also noted that the department does offer abatements for those who fall upon a hardship and are not able to pay their ambulance bill.

*Motion, to accept the recommended Emergency Service Rates as outlined in the memo from the City Manager, was made by Chairwoman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.*

In accordance with Chapter 1, Article VIII, Section 1.804 – Code of Ethics - Commissioner Gamester's name was drawn and will represent the Fire Commission on the Board of Ethics.

Chief Achilles noted that he had received Firefighter Ken Ward's letter of intent to retire and read it to the Commission.

*Commissioner Gamester made the motion, to accept Firefighter Ken Ward's letter of retirement with regret that he is leaving and wishing him all the best in his retirement. Motion was seconded by Chairwoman Matthes and passed unanimously.*

**X. Adjournment:**

*Motion, to adjourn at 1800 hours, was made by Chairwoman Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.*

---

Richard Gamester, Clerk