

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

Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, February 9, 2021
1800 hours

Remote Meeting via Zoom Conference Call

You are required to register in advance for this meeting

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_XAi0hPnUQQqAsRIDuVmAbg

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

I. Call to Order:

Chairwoman Matthes called the meeting to order at 1800 hours and read the following statement:

Per NH RSA 91-A:2 III (b) the Chair has declared COVID-19 Outbreak an emergency and has waived the requirement that a quorum be physically present at the meeting pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8, as extended by Executive Order 2020-25, and Emergency Order #12, Section 3. Members will be participating remotely and will identify their location and any person present with them at that location. All votes will be by roll call.

II. Pledge of Allegiance with Attendance:

Chairwoman Matthes led the pledge of allegiance.

Roll Call

Present were Commissioners Jennifer Matthes, Richard Gamester and Michael Hughes; Fire Chief Todd Germain, Assistant Fire Chief William McQuillen, Deputy Fire Chief Patrick Howe and City Manager Karen Conard.

Executive Assistant Tracy Freeman was also present and no members of the public joined the Zoom meeting.

III. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

*Commissioner Gamester moved to approve the minutes of January 20, 2021.
Seconded by Chairwoman Matthes.*

On a unanimous roll call vote 3-0, motion passes

IV. Public Comment Session: None.

V. Public Hearings

Chief Germain invited the City Manager to speak. She spoke briefly about solidarity and support and outlined citywide impacts and projections for the FY2022 budget with a goal to continue to provide current services.

City Manager left the meeting to attend a City Council meeting.

Chief Germain presented the department's FY2022 proposed budget outlining the department goals, position summary remaining the same as in FY21 with no new positions added, ambulance revenue collections being \$1.027 million in FY20 noting a 20.7% growth from FY14 to FY20. He continued his presentation with the department's budget request for FY22 at \$10,121,961 which represents a \$497,493.00 or 5.17% increase over FY21. Impacts on the FY22 budget includes an increase in the NH Retirement systems contribution amount to an increase of 13.19% over FY21 amounting to \$208,224 and approved Collective Bargaining Agreements with Cost of Living Adjustments through June 20, 2023. The FY22 budget maintains current level of service, staffing, stations and resources. An outline of budget summary expenditures was presented where the Chief noted that there were no increases in other operating expenses and that the 5-year strategic plan of providing one staffed fire truck and one staffed ambulance in each of the three geographic response zones of the city and funding the salary, benefits, shift coverage lines to ensure 15 on-duty firefighters and officers 24/7 is now more likely to be pushed out to a 6-8 year plan due to COVID19 impacts..

Chair Matthes asked the Chief if any additional, or changes, the department should be considering with the impacts of COVID19? Chief replied that the department continues to meet all of the goals noted and the department has been absorbing COVID testing and vaccinations into a daily routine and FEMA is covering additional costs at 100% now. Chair Matthes went on to ask if the ambulance revenue was based on actual collected or what was billed. Chief replied collected noting we have about a 75% collection rate. Chair Matthes inquired about revenue collected for Prevention and Permitting. Chief replied that we set an expectation of \$95K for FY21 and we have collected \$56-57K to date and anticipate revenues will be over the \$95K amount.

With no further questions, Commissioner Gamester moved to close the Public Hearing. Seconded by Commissioner Hughes. On a unanimous roll call vote of 3-0, motion passes.

VI. Recognition of Groups or Individuals: None

VII. Reports:

A. Fire Chief's Reports:

Chairwoman Matthes moved to discuss Chief's reports 21-018 through 21-021. Seconded by Hughes.

Chief Germain reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (018), 2021 Response Report with Service Activity and Safety message for January 2021. Chief Germain noted that the department responded to a total of 390 calls for the month which is noted in the YTD however, had mistyped the incident activity total. 112 Fire Calls and 278 Ambulance Calls. Fire calls were slightly down from last month however ambulance calls were slightly up from last month. Chief spoke briefly about some of the activity for the month noting an apartment fire at 114 Springbrook Circle, a motor vehicle crash on I-95 NB Exit 7 with crews arriving to find a single vehicle accident. The lone occupant unfortunately, suffered fatal injuries. He went on to note a hazardous materials incident at 88 Thornton St. where oil was leaking into the North Mill Pond. The safety message focused on February being American Heart Month. Report (019), Fire and EMS Call Summary Report, shows the department responded to 112 fire calls for the month of January. EMS activity was 280 with the top three responses being for alcohol abuse and effects, cardiac: chest pain and weakness. There were 5 calls for drug overdose/abuse. Chief noted COVID calls remain steady where we are transporting at least 1 COVID positive per day for the last 6-7 days. There were 66 non-transport. Report (020), FY21 Budget, Chief Germain reviewed the budget with the Commission and noted that we are still projecting a small surplus at this time and EMS recertifications have taken place. Staffing remains at minimum of 13 and not staffing the 3rd ambulance when shifts fall below 15. Report (021), 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 and Shift Coverage for COVID related impacts.

Commissioner Gamester moved to accept Chief's Reports 21-018 through 21-021. Seconded by Commissioner Hughes. On a unanimous roll call vote 3-0, motion passes.

B. Staff Reports:

Assistant Chief McQuillen reported on Operations and Training within the department. He spoke briefly of the COVID impacts to the department being impart to possible exposures, illness as a result of a positive exposure, no childcare or school however, no firefighters have contracted COVID due to a transport of a COVID person as of today. The department has protective measures in place and are supplying members with PPE and the resources they need. We have hired Brian Foster who lives in Hampton and currently works on call with Hampton Falls Fire Department and Jonathan Gould who lives in Northwood and is a member of the NH Army National Guard who recently returned from deployment to Iraq. Both firefighters will join shifts soon. In working with the City's IT Department, we updated the fire stations allowing for video conferencing. This has allowed the department to continue training which includes training with the Fire Academy, substance abuse disorder and Narcan leave behind. It has been a busy month with EMS refreshers. Many

were done virtually on various occasions to keep within the COVID/CDC guidelines. AC McQuillen went on to add that he is tracking the amount of COVID within the community which appears to have decreased and the plan is to start site visits again. Station 1 renovation project is underway with electrical and plumbing roughed in. One bath is being made into 2 baths and a janitor closet will also be added along with renovating the kitchen. A recall on the generator motor has required a loaner generator in its place which is currently sitting on a trailer outback. Parking is extremely limited behind the station and has required us to use street parking and is a juggling act with contractors and their crews along with our own personnel.

Deputy Chief Howe reported on Prevention noting several projects happening within the city and not seeing a slowdown in permitting for construction. Working with the Health Department on requests of igloo style outside dining. Rules and life safety codes being established. Multi-family inspections still moving forward and beginning to set up a system to make it seamless once we begin but with the impacts of COVID, we don't anticipate starting these inspections for at least another year.

Chairwoman Matthes inquired as to whether or not the Prevention Department has been hampered in providing on-site inspections with other buildings and new construction. DC Howe replied that both workers and contractors are following city guidelines, codes and rules and have been good with it. When inspections are being done, all are masked up and only those mandated to be present at the inspection are allowed in. It does take a little longer but is running smoothly. She also inquired about the multi-family inspections and the anticipated start time of a year out and asked if there is a grace period for them to begin repairing things and if there was some sort of checklist that we could provide the landlords in advance? DC Howe replied that there would be some flexibility with deadlines but don't want to go into their living spaces during this pandemic for safety reason. We do have a pre-inspection checklist that landlords can fill out but would look into creating another type of checklist that may be helpful as well.

VIII. Old Business:

Chief provided an update on COVID operations and vaccinations with vaccine clinics well underway. Department is working with Public Health Network and the state and have vaccinated a good amount of senior citizens and others that fall into the 1A and 1B category. Keefe House has been provided with their first round of shots and have a running list of those that want the vaccine should we have left overs. 9 clinics are scheduled for next 3 weeks and most are 2nd shot clinics. Still working on establishing Portsmouth as a vaccination site but decisions have been delayed due to the allocation of vaccines. We have 40 firefighters that have signed up to be vaccinators and are assisting at the PHN clinics and at the State's vaccination sites in Dover and in Exeter and willing to help out in any way they can.

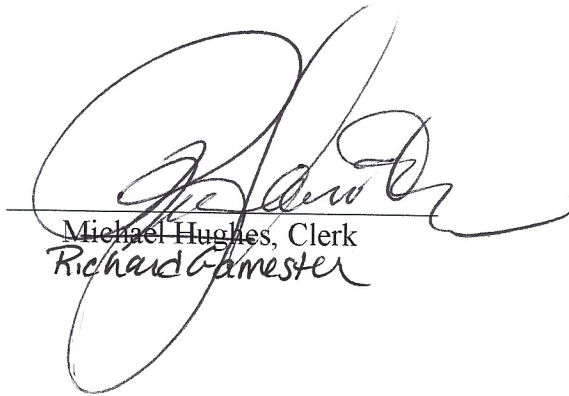
Fire Commission Minutes of February 9, 2021 continued:

On behalf of the Commission, Chairwoman Matthes asked the Chief to extend their thank you to the staff who have helped with these vaccinations.

IX. New Business: None.

X. Adjournment:

Commissioner Gamester moved to adjourn at 11857 hours Seconded by Commissioner Hughes. On a unanimous roll call vote 3-0, motion passes.



Michael Hughes, Clerk
Richard Gamester