

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

Fire Station 2  
George Pierce Training Room  
November 8, 2022

Portsmouth, NH  
1800 hours

**I. Call to Order:**

Chairwoman Matthes called the meeting to order at 1800 hours.

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

Chairwoman Matthes led the pledge of allegiance.

Present were Commissioners: Jennifer Matthes, Richard Gamester and Michael Hughes; Fire Chief William McQuillen, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Gionet, Deputy Fire Chief Patrick Howe, Administrative Manager Tracy Freeman, Lieutenant Brian Wade, and Firefighters: James O'Brien, Terence Bedell, Gregory Harnois, Zachary Strozewski, Madison Simard, and Chad Cameron.

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

*Motion, to approve the minutes of October 11, 2022, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

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

**V. Presentations of Written Communications:**

Chief McQuillen read the thank you email from Stratham Fire Chief Denton.

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

**VI. Recognition of Groups or Individuals:**

Chief McQuillen introduced three of our recently hired firefighters: Zachary Strozewski, Madison Simard and Chad Cameron. Firefighter James Sheldon was not able to attend due to AEMT class.

**VII. Reports:**

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

*Chairwoman Matthes motioned to discuss Chief's reports 22-083 through 22-086. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester.*

Chief McQuillen reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (083), 2022 Response Report for October 2022. The report shows the department responding to a total of 496 calls for the month: 179 Fire Calls and 317 Ambulance Calls. Total year to date shows the department responding to 4210 calls: 1273 fire and related service calls and 2937 ambulance service calls. October calls increased slightly from last month. Chief McQuillen reported on

some incidents of interest that occurred during the month along with the safety message regarding use of fireplaces and heating stoves. Report (084), Fire and EMS Call Summary Report, shows the department responded to 179 fire calls for the month of October. EMS activity was 317 with the top three responses being for trauma or injury to the head, weakness and abdominal pain/problems. There were 7 calls for COVID and 2 calls for drug overdose/abuse and 72 non-transports. Report (085), FY23 Budget, Chief McQuillen reviewed the budget with the Commission and discussed some emergency repairs needed for engine 3 and ambulance 2. Budget is tracking with a minimal surplus at this point in time. Report (086), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of October along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

*Motion, to accept Chief's Reports 22-083 through 22-086, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

**B. Staff Reports:**

Assistant Chief Gionet reported on training and operations happening within the department. Hiring process is on-going. Firefighter oral boards were held this week with 7 candidates recommended for hire and will move forward in the hiring process. We have 3 vacancies to fill at this time. Station 1 door project is also ongoing. Told the doors are being refinished and should be ready to install in a couple of weeks. Electricians have installed new lighting at station 3 in the locker room and restrooms. Station 2 lighting project replacing existing fixtures with new LEDs is on the agenda next. HVAC issues have been resolved at Station 3. Paramedics attended ACLS and PALS refreshers last week which was hosted by Hampton Fire Department. National Wrecker provided vehicles for auto extrication training for all 4 shifts. 35 department members preparing for National Registry recertification process.

Chairwoman Matthes inquired about the roof study and where that stood. Asst. Chief Gionet answered that it has been moved out to the spring due to the weather.

Deputy Chief Howe reported on Prevention and several new construction projects and tenant fit-ups. Noted were 361 Islington Street with a restaurant, 147 Congress Street with an addition of a Tai restaurant. Went to court yesterday regarding 909 Islington Street for multiple code deficiencies. Owner has been issued a new date to come into compliance. Updated ordinances were presented to City Council on October 24<sup>th</sup>. First reading will be on 11/14, 2<sup>nd</sup> on 12/5 and final reading scheduled for 12/19 with hopes of adoption. This updates us to the 2018 Fire and Life Safety Codes to match the State. Update to municipal enforcement ordinance pulled.

**VIII. Old Business: None.**

**IX. New Business:**

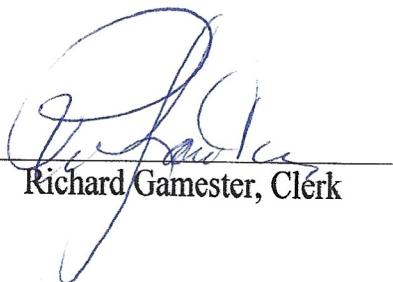
Chief McQuillen provided the Commission with an Ambulance Billing Collection Policy which represents our current practices. This policy will go to City Council for adoption due to ambulance collection being a revenue source for the City. Previously didn't have a "written" policy in place. Chairwoman Matthes inquired how this came about. Chief replied stating Comstar, our ambulance billing company, having a breakdown in communication and their reporting back to Finance on write-offs and abatements that we send back to Comstar to implement. Hughes wanted to be sure we didn't lose our flexibility to decide how balances are handled. Chief discussed our current process and the reports we receive monthly from Comstar which include reports showing balances owed and what action we would like to take, write-off or send to collection. We also receive emails from Comstar with applications for abatements and/or payment options requesting our approval or to decline request.

*Chairwoman Matthes made the motion to approve the Ambulance Billing Collection Policy as presented. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

Chief McQuillen added a quick note regarding the November 14th City Council meeting which will have several action items up for discussion: ordinance changes, public hearing on bonding of the new fire truck and public hearing on taking \$85K from ARPA and moving to Capital to purchase the new ambulance.

**X. Adjournment:**

*Motion, to adjourn at 1845 hours, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Chairwoman Matthes and passed unanimously.*

  
Richard Gamester, Clerk