

**SOUTH FIRE DISTRICT  
of the City of Middletown  
COMMISSIONERS MEETING**

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2020, 7:00 p.m.  
South Fire District Meeting Room**

**MINUTES**

**Members of the public were able access the meeting via Zoom  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86410833091> or Dial In – 646-558-8656  
Meeting I.D. 864 1083 3091**

Present: Commissioners Bartolotta, Kleckowski, Giuliano, Penney, and Thazhampallath; Chief Howley, Deputy Chief Jacobs, Fire Department members, and members of the public.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Chairwoman Bartolotta called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** was recited.
3. **AMEND AGENDA**  
**MOTION** to amend the agenda to include the *Annual Meeting Information and Timeline* as Item 15B under *New Business* by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.  
  
**MOTION** to amend the agenda to include *Agenda* as Item 15C under *New Business* by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.
4. **OPEN PUBLIC SESSION** Chairwoman Bartolotta opened the Public Session at 7:01 p.m. No one wished to speak.
5. **CLOSE PUBLIC SESSION** Chairwoman Bartolotta closed the Public Session at 7:02 p.m.
6. **MINUTES TO BE APPROVED**
  - A. **SPECIAL MEETING OF OCTOBER 13, 2020**
  - B. **REGULAR MEETING OF OCTOBER 13, 2020**  
**MOTION** to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2020 special meeting and the October 13, 2020 regular monthly meeting by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Penney requested that *“preferred residency” for the Deputy Chief’s position was discussed at the August 10, 2020 regular monthly meeting* be added to these minutes.

7. **TAX COLLECTOR’S REPORT**

The Commission reviewed the Tax Collector’s report submitted by Tax Collector Cindy Gotta.

A. **TAX REFUNDS FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER: \$2,289.71**

**MOTION** to approve the tax refunds for the Month of October in the amount of \$2,289.71 by Comm. Kleckowski/Comm. Giuliano. Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Penney requested that moving forward, an itemized listing of tax rebates, if any, be included in the meeting packets.

**MOTION** to approve the Tax Collector's report by Comm. Kleckowski/Comm. Giuliano. Unanimously approved.

**8. MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS** were reviewed by the Commission.

**MOTION** to approve the Monthly Financial Reports by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Penney requested and Chief Howley provided clarification of the following expenditures listed in the Monthly Expense Detail Report:

**7403 – Vehicle Repairs**

\$2,251.48 (First Line): The Chief did not have the details readily available, but suggested the service was for repairs on multiple apparatus.

\$5,419.01 (Key Chevrolet): Transmission for Car 34 used by the Fire Marshal's Office, a 2015 vehicle with 125,000 miles. Chief Howley received prices from other vendors prior to approving the repair.

**7903 – Training**

\$1,200 (Corona's Auto Parts): Vehicles received for training purposes.

**7904 – Public Fire Education**

\$1,099.75 (Bank of America): Educational/promotional items distributed the Senior Center, Park and Rec., and schools during Fire Prevention Month. All charges are from one vendor.

**7907 – Fire Marshal's Office**

\$1,611.11 (Airgas USA): New breathing apparatus for the Fire Marshal's Office staff.

**7919 – FEMA Grant Purchases**

Purchases must be made prior to receiving reimbursement from FEMA.

**9. CHIEF'S REPORT**

The Commission reviewed the report submitted by Chief Howley.

**MOTION** to approve the Chief's report by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Penney asked what would happen to the old brush truck when a new one is purchased. The Chief advised that FEMA has very strict guidelines with apparatus replacement grants. Apparatus being replaced cannot be used as an emergency vehicle; all lights and sirens will be removed. Brush 36 will be taken out of service next August/September. At that time, the Commissioners will decide to keep the vehicle, donate it, or offer it for purchase to the public through a formal bid process.

Commissioner Penney also inquired about the disposal of Marine 3. Chief Howley advised that the same process as the brush truck would take place. Marine 3 has an estimated value of \$10,000-\$14,000.

**10. DEPUTY CHIEF'S REPORT**

The Commission reviewed the report submitted by Deputy Chief Russ Jacobs.

**MOTION** to approve the Deputy Chief's report by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

Deputy Chief Jacobs spoke of the updated COVID-19 policy. He has developed a plan to more accurately track COVID-19 related expenses to make the FEMA reimbursement grant application easier.

Commissioner Penney congratulated DC Jacobs on his promotion and expressed his appreciation of the thorough tracking of COVID-19 related expenses and the updated COVID-19 policy. He will follow up with the Health Department for their confirmation that each city agency is operating independently and that the District's policy has been reviewed by the Health Department. Commissioner Penney asked that the current COVID-19 policy be emailed to him.

#### **11. FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT**

The Commission reviewed the report submitted by Fire Marshal Mastroianni.

#### **12. DEPUTY FIRE MARSHAL'S REPORT**

The Commission reviewed the report submitted by Deputy Fire Marshal Hurlbut.

Chief Howley commended the Fire Marshal's office for their involvement with Fire Prevention Month, despite COVID-19. They have gone above and beyond to distribute public fire education materials. This was the first year they've been involved with Xavier High School.

**MOTION** to approve the Fire Marshal's report and the Deputy Fire Marshal's Report by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

A brief discussion ensued regarding SFD's authority over CVH. Chief Howley explained that the department has undergone training for behavioral health issues and works in collaboration with the State Fire Marshal's Office.

#### **13. CAPTAIN'S REPORT**

The Commission reviewed the report submitted by Captain Fischer.

Chief Howley spoke of the numerous serious motor vehicle accidents on Route 9, mostly between exits 11 and 12. He said the situation continues to worsen. Deputy Chief Jacobs explained the need to protect SFD staff, occupants of the vehicle(s) and other public safety personnel by having a second piece of apparatus on scene to block the scene. Chief Howley spoke of the CT law requiring motorists to change lanes upon approaching an incident involving emergency vehicles.

**MOTION** to approve the Captain's report by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

#### **14. COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

##### **A. BUILDING COMMITTEE – COMM. THAZHAMPALLATH**

Commissioner Thazhampallath provided an update on the building renovation project. Details can be found in Building Committee meeting minutes of 11/9/20.

##### **B. PENSION COMMITTEE – COMM. KLECKOWSKI**

Vice-Chairwoman Kleckowski provided an update on the Pension Committee. Details can be found in the Pension Committee meeting minutes of 10/6/20.

##### **C. PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATIONS– COMM. GIULIANO**

Commissioner Giuliano gave an overview of the November 2020 Public Safety Telecommunications Report. He will be sworn in by Mayor Florsheim as the South Fire District representative of the Public Safety Telecommunications Commission on 11/18/20. Regarding call volume, Chairwoman Bartolotta requested that the calls be broken down on future reports.

**8:23 p.m. – Commissioner Thazhampallath lost remote connection to the meeting and did not return; therefore, was unable to vote on subsequent Motions. Chairwoman Bartolotta briefly left the meeting; Vice-Chairwoman led the meeting in her absence.**

**15. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. HEALTH INSURANCE OPTIONS FOR RETIREES AND THEIR DEPENDENTS**

Chief Howley said the auditing process was completed in October. We will receive credits in November.

**Chairwoman Bartolotta rejoined the meeting at 8:24 p.m.**

**B. FOIA WORKSHOP W/FOI COMMISSION**

Commissioner Penney recommended postponing hosting a workshop due to COVID-19. This item will be put back on the agenda when appropriate.

**16. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. CITY OF MIDDLETOWN CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION/FIRE DISTRICT**

**MOTION** to suspend the rules to allow Commissioner Penney to make additional comments regarding the FOIA Workshop by Comm. Kleckowski/Comm. Giuliano. Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Penney advised he has copies of FOI ruling that the Commissioners may not be aware of. He will forward them to the Commission.

**MOTION** to unsuspend the rules to go back to the meeting by Comm. Kleckowski/Comm. Giuliano. Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Penney participated in the initial Charter Revision Commission meeting as a taxpayer and resident of the District, not as a Commissioner. He noted that a firefighter from Middletown Fire is a member of the Commission and suggested South Fire District and Westfield Fire Department also have representation. During the meeting, Commissioner Penney suggested they have a subcommittee to handle consolidation questions. He feels there are major issues in regard to CVH and said the State Fire Marshal's Office is the authority having jurisdiction, not South Fire District. An article will be published in the Middletown Press summarizing the meeting.

Chief Howley made the correction that South Fire District *is* the authority having jurisdiction at CVH and works with the State Fire Marshal's Office.

Commissioner Giuliano stated that consolidation cannot be done by charter revision; the District exists by an Act of CT State Legislature. Consolidation can only occur through the General Assembly and/or the South Fire District taxpayers. Chairwoman Bartolotta stated that the meeting Commissioner Penney attended can only conduct city business and has nothing to do with South Fire District. Commissioner Penney indicated that the attorney present at the meeting said our Charter indicates the District is ruled by the electors and they can dissolve the district by vote; it can't be don't through the City Charter. Chairwoman Bartolotta said SFD was not created and it not controlled by city charter. Special Act 163 supersedes any city charter or ordinance; we can bring it to the electors, they can't.

Commissioner Giuliano feels that interjecting ourselves in the charter revision process might give the impression that we have made a statement and are subject to them.

Chairwoman Bartolotta indicated that she received many phone calls from individuals saying Commissioner Penney came across as if speaking as a Commissioner. She knows and appreciates the point he made at the meeting to the contrary. She made it clear that the SFD Commission has not made a decision and is not participating with the city when it comes to the future of SFD.

Commissioner Penney brought up authority having jurisdiction over CVH. Commissioner Kleckowski called "Point of Order." The topic is a different subject. Chairwoman Bartolotta accepted the Point of Order as the topic is not on the agenda.

## **B. ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION AND TIMELINE**

**MOTION** to approve the Legal Notice to be published in the Hartford Courant on December 3, 2020 and December 8, 2020 by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski.

Commissioner Penney said it should be published in both the Hartford Courant and the Middletown Press. Vice-Chairwoman Kleckowski suggested advertising on Frontier 99 and Comcast 15, which will be free of charge and reaches many people.

Over the years, the District has realized significant price increases by the Middletown Press and they haven't been consistent. Commissioner Penney disagreed and reiterated his request that the Legal Notice be published on both newspapers. A lengthy discussion ensued.

**MOTION** to publish the Legal Notice in the Hartford Courant and if the total cost to publish it in both newspapers does not exceed \$210, then it will be published in the Middletown Press as well by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Votes were as follows: Commissioners Bartolotta, Kleckowski, and Giuliano – Aye; Commissioner Penney – Nay. The motion is approved with three ayes and one nay.

**MOTION** to approve the language of Legal Notice as presented and have it published on December 3, 2020 and December 8, 2020 by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski.

Commissioner Giuliano read the Legal Notice into the record. Commissioner Penney said it was a disservice to the public not to publish it in both newspapers.

**MOTION** to move the question by Comm. Kleckowski/Comm. Giuliano. Votes were as follows: Commissioners Bartolotta, Kleckowski, and Giuliano – Aye; Commissioner Penney – Nay. The motion is approved with three ayes and one nay.

Votes to approve the Motion to approve the language of the Legal Notice as presented were as follows: Commissioners Bartolotta, Kleckowski, and Giuliano – Aye; Commissioner Penney – Nay. The motion is approved with three ayes and one nay.

## **C. AGENDA**

**MOTION** that henceforth all Agendas for regular meetings contain as a 3<sup>rd</sup> item, before public session, a notation to *Approve/Amend Agenda* by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

Chairwoman Bartolotta moved to amend the Motion to include that the Fire Marshal's report and Deputy Fire Marshal's report be combined into one line item. The amendment was seconded by Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

**17. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** to adjourn by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Penney. Unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Submitted by,

Alyse McEwen, Recording Secretary

**Approved 12/14/20**