

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

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2021, 7:00 p.m.  
Via Zoom Meeting I.D. 830 8600 0764**

**MINUTES**

Present: Commissioners Bartolotta, Kleckowski, Thazhampallath, Giuliano, and Penney; Chief Howley, Deputy Chief Jacobs

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Chairwoman Bartolotta called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** was recited.
3. **ACCEPT/AMEND AGENDA**  
**MOTION** to amend the Agenda to include with Item 13 C. under *Public Safety Telecommunications* the discussion of the recent letter from Captain Fischer by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.
4. **OPEN PUBLIC SESSION** Chairwoman Bartolotta opened the Public Session at 7:03 p.m.  
*Nicholas Fischer – President, IAFF Local 3918*  
On behalf of IAFF Local 3918, President Fischer read into the record a letter of concern dated February 4, 2021 addressed to Chief Howley, which was also emailed to the Commission (copy attached).
5. **CLOSE PUBLIC SESSION** Chairwoman Bartolotta closed the Public Session at 7:08 p.m.
6. **MINUTES TO BE APPROVED**
  - A. **REGULAR MEETING OF JANUARY 11, 2021**  
**MOTION** to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2021 regular meeting by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.
  - B. **SPECIAL MEETING OF JANUARY 14, 2021**  
**MOTION** to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2021 special meeting by Comm. Kleckowski/Comm. Giuliano. Unanimously approved.
7. **TAX COLLECTOR'S REPORT**  
The Commission reviewed the Tax Collector's reports submitted by Tax Collector Cindy Gotta.
  - A. **TAX REFUNDS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY - \$77.34**  
**MOTION** to approve the tax refunds for the Month of January in the amount of \$77.34 by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.
  - B. **MOTION** to approve the Tax Collector's report for the Month January by Comm. Kleckowski/Comm. Giuliano. Unanimously approved.
8. **MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS** were reviewed by the Commission.  
**MOTION** to approve the Monthly Financial Reports for the Month of January by Comm. Giuliano.

**MOTION** to add the dates of 12/2020 and 1/2021 to the financial reports detail line by Comm. Penney. Commissioner Giuliano accepted the amendment.

**MOTION** to accept the amended motion by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved as amended.

**9. CHIEF'S REPORT**

The Commission reviewed the report for the Month of January submitted by Chief Howley.

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

**10. DEPUTY CHIEF'S REPORT**

The Commission reviewed the report for the Month of January submitted by Deputy Chief Russ Jacobs.

**MOTION** to approve the Deputy Chief's for the Month of January by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

**11. FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE REPORTS**

The Commission reviewed the Fire Marshals' Office reports for the Month of January submitted by Fire Marshal Mastroianni and Deputy Fire Marshal Hurlbut.

**MOTION** to approve the Fire Marshals' reports for the Month of January by Comm. Kleckowski/Comm. Giuliano. Unanimously approved.

**12. CAPTAIN'S REPORT**

The Commission reviewed the report for the Month of January submitted by Captain Fischer.

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

**13. COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

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

Commissioner Thazhampallath provided an update on the project and answered questions of the Commission.

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

Commissioner Kleckowski advised there was nothing new to report.

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

Commissioner Giuliano advised that the Public Safety Telecommunications report was attached to the meeting packet for review.

**MOTION** to waive the rules to allow the Chief, the Deputy Chief, and the Union President to participate in the discussion of this item by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

A very lengthy conversation took place about the letter from Local 3918 to the Chief regarding COVID-19 modified dispatch protocols and the best and fastest way to move forward with resolving the situation. The bottom line is that the Union is prepared and eagerly willing to revert back to pre-COVID practices to ensure the District's residents receive prompt and professional fire, rescue and emergency medical

services. It was agreed that action needs to be taken as soon as possible to avoid further situations where residents might not receive proper treatment.

Further discussion took place regarding the best way to handle the situation - sending a letter to Dr. Zanker requesting that the policy be suspended immediately and who should receive copies of the letter and/or following through with Chief Howley's efforts to schedule a meeting with Dr. Zanker and other agencies.

**MOTION** to have the Commission endorse a letter to be sent to Dr. Zanker with the potential to carbon copy the Mayor and other appropriate officials and agencies, time limited based on a possible meeting of appropriate officials by February 22<sup>nd</sup> by Comm. Thazhampallath/Comm. Kleckowski.

Details of the proposed letter was discussed at great length.

**MOTION** to call the question by Comm. Kleckowski. Motion was not seconded. Motion failed.

**MOTION** to amend the motion to include carbon copies of the letter to OEMS and the State of CT Public Health Department by Comm. Penney. Motion was not seconded. Motion failed.

**MOTION** to amend the motion to include sending the letter within five business days and include the language that the letter is to support the Chief reaching out, the reasons why, and to share what's been shared by the Union by Comm. Bartolotta.

Commissioner Thazhampallath accepted the amendment.

Voting was as follows: Commissioners Bartolotta, Kleckowski, Thazhampallath, and Giuliano – Aye; Commissioner Penney – Abstain. Motion as amended passed with 4 Ayes and 1 Abstention.

Commissioner Giuliano will work together to draft the letter.

#### **14. OLD BUSINESS**

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

Chief Howley reported no changes to date.

##### **B. SOLAR PROJECT UPDATE**

Chief Howley gave an update on the project.

**MOTION** to have Attorney Summa review both contracts under consideration and to deliver his opinion at the next regular meeting to be voted on by Comm. Kleckowski/Comm. Giuliano. Unanimously approved.

Chief Howley will send the proposals to Attorney Summa and provide the Commission with copies of the proposals prior to taking action.

#### **15. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. BRUSH/FORESTRY APPARATUS BID AWARD – APPROVAL OF APPARATUS PURCHASING COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION FOR NOTICE OF AWARD**

Chief Howley advised the Commission of the Purchasing Committee's recommendation for notice of award to Specialty Vehicles, Inc./Boise Mobile Equipment. \$39,700 needs to be expended from CNR to cover the difference in the FEMA grant and the purchasing price.



**MOTION** to move authorize the purchase and to expend \$39,700 from CNR by Comm. Giuliano/Comm. Thazhampallath. Unanimously approved.

Chief Howley will advise the Commission of the plan for the existing Brush Truck once it is taken out of service.

**B. SET AND TIME FOR SPECIAL MEETING-PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

**MOTION** to schedule a special meeting for the performance review of the Administrative Assistant for February 16, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. by Comm. Bartolotta/Comm. Kleckowski. Unanimously approved.

**16. ADJOURNMENT**

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

Meeting adjourned 9:21 p.m.

Submitted by,

Alyse McEwen, Recording Secretary

**Approved 3/8/21**



# **SOUTH FIRE DISTRICT FIREFIGHTERS**

**IAFF Local 3918 • AFL-CIO**

**445 RANDOLPH ROAD • MIDDLETOWN, CT 06457**



February 4, 2021

Fire Chief Michael Howley  
South Fire District  
445 Randolph Road  
Middletown, CT 06457

Dear Chief Howley,

On behalf of the Executive Board and membership of Local 3918, I am writing to you to voice our concern with the memorandum from Middlesex Health and Dr. Zanker, extending the Covid-19 Modified Dispatch Protocols. This policy was originally put in place last spring, at the beginning of Covid-19, with the intent of mitigating the exposure risk to fire department personnel across the City of Middletown, by dispatching fire department first responder resources to life-threatening medical emergencies only. We fully understand and appreciate that this policy, which as was jointly crafted between Middlesex Health and the collective Fire Chief's in the city, was created to conserve our health and safety during this pandemic.

However, in recent months, it has become apparent to us that this policy is not benefiting the residents of the South Fire District, and that there are multiple factors creating frequent breakdowns in communication, and in our opinion, situations where life threatening situations did not receive appropriate responses.

At the beginning of the pandemic, most aspects of Covid-19 were unknown, and changed nearly every day. It was also difficult to determine and acquire the appropriate PPE. Today, thanks to the collaborative efforts of District leadership, our members have the safest PPE available, in addition to plentiful quantities of it. Also, as of this month, the overwhelming majority of our members have received both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine. We feel the risk of illness to our members, while not eliminated, is considerably low.

Additionally, it has become widely known that our commercial ambulance provider was recently bought out by a large hospital network. Since then, the ambulance response times seem to have grown exponentially, leaving residents to wait longer than normal for

medical assistance to arrive, particularly in cases where there is no fire department first responder. Frequently, calls for service are being answered by out of town agencies due to the commercial provider being unavailable. While this is not necessarily the sole responsibility of the South Fire District, it leaves us unable to render service to our residents, which they pay taxes for, which is unfair and unsafe.

On multiple occasions, medical emergencies have occurred in the District that did not meet the current dispatch criteria to send a response from South Fire District. In at least 2 of these instances, the patient's condition deteriorated before the arrival of the ambulance. One of them was transported by private vehicle to the hospital because the wait time was too long, and the family was fearful that the patient would stop breathing while having an allergic reaction. The other, who had called 911 himself, collapsed and was in cardiac arrest when the ambulance arrived, over 10 minutes later. By the time South Fire District units were called to assist and arrived on scene, over 20 minutes had passed. In these instances, and many more, South Fire District units could have intervened with life saving measures, had the normal dispatch protocols been in place.

Each time one of these situations have been brought up in the past, we have been told that it was either due to the discretion of different dispatchers, or that the protocol extension would be coming to an end, or that alterations to the dispatch protocols can't be made without agreement from other city agencies. We vehemently disagree with all of these reasons.

The South Fire District has a responsibility to ensure its residents are provided with prompt and professional fire, rescue and emergency medical services. It is also the District's responsibility to advocate for its' residents if those standards are not being met. It is our opinion that our dispatch protocols should revert back to "pre-covid" practices, and that the District implore Middlesex Health, and any other involved agencies to enact this change immediately. Our residents expect and deserve better service, and our members are ready and willing to provide it.

We are open to any discussions you would like to have to further explain our position.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas Fischer  
President  
IAFF Local 3918

Cc: UPFFA, Union, Deputy, SFD BOFC