

City of Shelton Fire Department
Board of Fire Commissioners
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Commissioners Present

Robert J. Araujo, Chairman
David Sekelsky
Merle Chase
Justin Sabatino
Bruce Kosowsky

Also Present

Chief John Millo
Assistant Chief Michael Ullrich
Captain Tim Hongo
Captain Nick Verdicchio
Lieutenant Shaun Wheeler
Training Coordinator Fran Jones

Chairman Araujo called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners to order at 7:35 P.M. All those present rose for the pledge of allegiance.

Public Participation

Chairman Araujo asked if there was anyone wishing to speak at this time:

Wayne Travers addressed the Board. He discussed House Bill #6927 – **An Act Concerning Volunteer Service by Paid Emergency Personnel or Paid Firefighters:** to allow paid firefighters and paid emergency personnel to serve as active members of a volunteer fire department during their personal time, and to hold the employing municipality harmless from any liability arising out of such service to a volunteer fire department.

Mr. Travers would like to see the Commissioners draft some letters to our local representatives fully supporting this bill.

On December 14, 2006, Public Health and Safety Council had a meeting. One of the items on the agenda was the Communications System of the Shelton Fire Department which in Mr. Travers opinion and many others feel has one of the worst receptions. During the meeting a draft of the proposal was given out to all of the members of the Public Safety Committee. At that meeting, Fire Marshal Tortora and Chief Millo were both present. They were asked to review the situation and report back at the next meeting. The next meeting didn't take place for quite a while, it was in March. At the March meeting, in the minutes it said that the Fire Marshal asked what we were trying to improve and Chief Millo said that we should fix what we had. At the December meeting all that information was handed out. It is just another month of just prolonging something that has been neglected for 30 years.

Last item Mr. Travers spoke about was the Draft of the proposed job description for the Fire Chief that was formulated by Sandy Nesteriak. On the very first page it says please review the job description, it has been reviewed by Counsel – however, it doesn't say what he recommended, if he accepted it, if he didn't accept it. In the first paragraph, his question would be that it looks like the Chief is in charge of the Fire Marshal, Deputy Fire Marshals, Fire Prevention and all of the operations of the Fire Marshals Office. Second paragraph says that along with some of the duties that the Chief Elected Official as prescribed by municipal procedures. Mr. Travers has looked everywhere and he can not find anything that pertains to municipal procedures, there is a Charter, the Charter clearly spells out some of the items, but doesn't understand what they refer to as municipal procedures.

The next paragraph – Supervision Received, works under the direction of the Board of Fire Commissioners pursuant to Chapter 6-9-3-2, and Charter Section 3-2. In section 3-2 nowhere does the word Fire Chief appear. In Section 6-9-3-2 nowhere does it say that the Mayor has any control over the Fire Chief as far as day to day decisions. Continuing on with the job description it says prepares written evaluations of supervised subordinates – who are his subordinates? Does the Fire Marshal and Deputy Fire Marshals fall back under the Board of Fire Commissioners? Under education it states currently serves as a member of the Shelton Fire Department, his question would be in the future is it possible that the Board may consider a full-time chief who may or may not be a member of the Shelton Fire Department. The very last sentence under appointment states this is an appointed stipend position and is not a City employee position. He was under the impression that everyone was covered under workers compensation by the fact that they are all employees of the City of Shelton. Mr. Travers would like the Board to look into all these questions he has raised very seriously before any of this proposed job description that was formulated by somebody who in his opinion shouldn't be formulating a job description is voted on.

Public Participation continued:

Assistant Chief Ullrich addressed the Board with some serious concerns that he feels it is time for the Board to step up to the plate on. There are a lot of issues that remain unresolved in this Department, which I'm sure you are well aware most of them stem from a lack of leadership. There is a total lack of communications between the Fire Chief, and the Officers of the Department and it is a total slap in the face to the Officers in the Department who struggle to keep morale up. Morale is a low point from all the problems that continue. It is time to request that the Chief step up and perform the job of Fire Chief or sit down as the politics that plague this Department. Politics has its place, (budgets etc.) but does not have to affect the operations of this Department, and it has been coming to that, where we cannot perform our jobs without worrying about politics and what's going to happen and that has to stop.

No one was notified that a possible asbestos exposure occurred at a structure fire at Valley Fitness in October of 2006. The Chief said it was minimal concern in the letters that were received, the pictures that were taken during remediation of asbestos were wearing full suits, respirators, the whole area cornered off, there was a full dumpster full of asbestos that was tagged and taped. If it was in the flashing of the building, that is where our guys were, and were exposed, there needs to be something done. Everyone should be notified that there was an exposure problem, and need to get tested or at least be notified that it has been documented.

The Radio System- We should fix what we have? You all know that there is a serious issue here. We really need to get moving and get this done. I know that we are probably not going to get cooperation from the other side.

New policies or directives – apparently if the fire department arrives at the scene of a City building, and no key holder is available and force entry they will be arrested. Does anyone know about this? His guys were all threatened on Sunday, that if they forced entry to a door that they had to wait over 35 minutes for a key holder to arrive because there was no officer available with a Knox box key that day, they called the Chief and Assistant Chief Osiecki of whom were not available, but never called him. They called the Fire Marshal to do that. Well if they are going to get arrested, maybe someone should look into State Statute that gives the authority of a fire officer for a potential fire in the building, mind you the High School is a window-less building, the cop told them if you don't see smoke or flames you are not forcing the door. Well you can't see into the High School, it's under construction, and we have already had fires there, so there is a serious concern.

Public Participation Continued:

Air Packs – apparently several air packs were out of service and the Training Division is replacing them. If this many packs were out of service, this could jeopardize the firefighters safety.

Mutual Aid Agreement – well over a year and half that it was handed to the Board and the Fire Chief, there has been nothing done.

Keys to Assistant Chief Ullrich's Office – he has asked for at least two years now for keys to his office which is supposedly in the Fire Marshals Office but hasn't gotten confirmation on this. He was told a year ago that there was a computer installed in that office for their use, but still no access to it. Also, in order to perform the duties assigned to him, which is pre-plans, he needs a computer with firehouse software in it. He will no longer use his personal computer for City business, since all fire department records should be kept in City Hall on a City computer.

Goals and Plans – for many years now, the chairman has stated that we all meet and develop short long range plans and develop goals and objectives. This has not happened. He found back in 1998 where it said that this would occur by the current chairman.

Again I feel that in order to restore morale back in the department, we need to start at the top.

Captain Tim Hongo of Co.#3 addressed the Board – Captain Hongo stated that the Fire Chiefs job description is the same one that was voted against the last time and doesn't know why it has come back again. Your asking the Chief to have two bosses, and everyone knows that if you have two bosses it doesn't work. You should have the Board in charge and the Mayor should go through the Chairman of the Board if he has any issues or concerns with the Chiefs work and responsibilities. You asked for comments, my membership has given me an earful of comments in which they think the job description is a joke. His membership does not like the job description and he was asked to come down and put in his two cents.

Lieutenant Shaun Wheeler of White Hills Co.#5 addressed the Board – just to confirm what both Assistant Chief Ullrich and Captain Tim Hongo stated, Co.#5 is behind Commissioner Kosowsky 100% as far as the job description goes, it is garbage. As far as the communications system, you have two commissioners who are working hard trying to get things started by getting the licenses and you have three commissioners voting it down. We need to get going, this radio system stinks.

Public Participation Continued:

David Collings of Pine Rock Co.#4 addressed the Board – from two of the previous people you have heard comments about communications, why doesn't that get mentioned at all in this job description? Where does this leave both the status of both the Fire Marshal and Fire Commissioners Offices? Prerequisites for special training - Pump Operator does not seem to be about managing, supervisory or administrative work and he would like to see something like certifications in a public educator series that is directly dealing with people and dealing with the public which is more in the lines of what the Chief would do. There are a lot of deficiencies in this job description that need to be corrected before it gets improved and put in place.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky to approve the minutes of April 3, 2007 Regular Meeting as printed and distributed. Seconded by Commissioner Chase and approved unanimously.

Communications

Chairman Araujo reviewed the following communications with the Board:

- Letter from Captain Paul Wilson of Co.#1 re: Concerns with the Chief (letter attached to minutes)
- E-Mail to Chairman Araujo in reference to Meadow Street
- Letter from Mayor Lauretti – Discipline by Board of Fire Commissioners (letter attached to minutes)
- Letter from Mayor Lauretti re: Payment Authorizations (letter attached to minutes)
- Letter from Officers Council, re: Dispatch Training
- Letter from Officers Council, re: Gear and Equipment Study
- Approved letter from Mayor Lauretti, re: Ben McGorty and Robert Albert were approved by the Mayor from inspectors to Deputy Fire Marshals.

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky to move to Old Business Item #6 DEP Trailer. Seconded by Commissioner Kosowsky and approved unanimously.

Old Business**G6 – DEP Trailer**

There was a lengthy discussion on the Memorandum of Understanding between the DEP and the Shelton Fire Department. The gentlemen from the DEP stated that normally they do not have to do this with municipalities, everything is done on a handshake. This was put together at the request of the Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners.

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky to send the Memorandum of Understanding to both the Board of Aldermen and Corporation Counsel for their review. Seconded by Commissioner Kosowsky and approved unanimously.

MOTION made by Commissioner Kosowsky to return back to the reports part of the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

Reports

Fire Chief John V. Millo – Chief Millo submitted his report for the month of April 2007. In that report contained information on the fire at 6 Todd Road, asbestos found at the scene, and an Opticom system for Nichols Avenue. There was discussion on Radio and Blue Lights, SCBA, FD Units and repairs to Ladder 1 at a cost of approximately \$7500.00.

Commissioner Sekelsky showed Chief Millo pictures of the asbestos clean up at 6 Todd Road. Chief Millo requested that those pictures be forwarded to the Administrative Assistant for her file. There was also discussion that Commissioner Sekelsky would like to have all the firefighters that were at that scene checked out. Commissioner Sabatino agreed that the firefighters should use the Departments health care facility.

Fire Marshal James Tortora - submitted a fire service calls report for April and an activity report for March 2007. There were questions on why administrative hours are not being put into the reports.

MOTION made by Commissioner Kosowsky not to accept the Fire Marshal's Report for March 2007 for it is incomplete. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to move to Additions to the Agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

Additions to the Agenda

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky to add to the agenda under NEW BUSINESS Items #11 – Nichols Avenue/Opticom System, and #12 – Ladder 1. Seconded by Commissioner Chase and approved unanimously.

Old Business**G1 – Dual Responses**

Captain Hongo addressed the Board with a request with regards to having dispatch training done. This was brought up to the Commissioners last year, and they were waiting on the new (last years) budget, to get the police dispatchers re-trained. Officers Council is just concerned because there have been some dispatch errors, mistakes and there is changes to the dispatch protocol. Fran Jones spoke about the cost to bring in the police dispatchers because there is an overtime cost for them for the training.

Chief Millo stated that if there is some training that needs to take place, and hasn't been coordinated, that he will speak to the Police Chief and take care of it and will get the Board answers tomorrow.

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino that the Board approve the spending of up to \$300.00 to revise the training books. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to allocate out of the training account, up to 16 hours of overtime to the Administrative Secretary of the Fire Department to put together books for training. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

G2 – Medicals

Fran Jones stated that June 1st is the last date that the medicals were extended to. He passed out the most updated records that he had received from the records keeper today, they were given to the Company Captains. Things are moving forward on this.

Old Business Continued

G3 – Radios

Captain Hongo stated that Officers Council has raised major concerns with the inactivity that is going on with the radio system, that it is going to take a firefighter injury or worse, killed, before anything gets done and Officers Council made a motion that I send a letter to the Board requesting the Board to do something about it. Whether it means to get a radio system on our own for the fire department and forget the emergency services, which is not the way we want to go, but it is getting worse. At the Ivy Brook Drill, only half of the guys could talk to each other. You can't even talk to a guy next to you sometimes. If that had been an actual scene, someone could have been hurt or killed because they couldn't talk to each other.

Chairman Araujo and Commissioner Kosowsky went to Public Safety with this issue, and it is in their hands right now. The information has been provided to them.

Commissioner Sabatino discussed that maybe a form should be filled out for equipment that is not working properly.

The Officers Council would like something in writing advising them what is going on.

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino that a letter be sent to Officers Council and the Fire Chief that we did receive their letter and that the Board is diligently working on the problem, and for the Fire Chief to come up with a document to report all broken or inoperable radio systems to the Board. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky with the addition that the Chief does the document himself and that it not get handed out to anyone but the Chief. (The Chief stated that Commissioner Sekelsky does not have the authority to do that)

Those in favor – Commissioners Araujo, Chase and Sabatino
Opposed – Commissioners Sekelsky and Kosowsky

MOTION CARRIED

Old Business Continued

G4 – Transfer of Funds

Commissioner Kosowsky discussed the transfers of monies out of different accounts to cover the turn out gear for the firemen and also the replacement hurst tool and fire suppression items.

G5 – Radio System

MOTION made by Commissioner Kosowsky to send a letter to Public Safety stating that the Board of Fire Commissioners is in approval of the radio study that was done. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

MOTION made by Commissioner Kosowsky that the Board spend money out of the professional account to apply for radio frequencies. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

G6 – DEP Trailer

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to table that item. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

G7 – Chairman's Duties

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to remove this from the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Chase and approved unanimously.

G8 – Job Description – Fire Chief

MOTION made by Commissioner Kosowsky to table this item until the May 15th Meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Chase and approved unanimously.

New Business

H1 – Cell Phones

MOTION made by Commissioner Kosowsky to send a letter to the Mayor asking that the Superintendent of Apparatus's phone be reactivated. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

New Business Continued:

H2 – Dispatching Protocols

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to remove that item from the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Kosowsky and approved unanimously.

H3 – Awarding of Bids – Testing of Hose and Turnout Gear

MOTION made by Commissioner Kosowsky to award the turnout gear to Shipmans Fire Equipment for \$952.00 per coat and \$717.00 per pants for Cairns gear. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to go with the low bidder, Fire One, for the testing of hose. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

H4 – Dispatch Training

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky to take this item off the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Chase and approved unanimously.

H5 – Gear and Equipment Study

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky to allow Officers Council to take care of this and that any gear that they are going to test must come before the Board before testing. Seconded by Commissioner Kosowsky and approved unanimously.

H6 – Administrative Secretary Fire Department

Commissioner Sekelsky wanted to remind everybody, that under the Administrative Secretary's Job Description Supervision Received – states she works under the general supervision of the Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners, and the Fire Marshal and that day to day supervision will be done by the Administrative Assistant of the Mayors Office. We need to keep this in mind, that she does not work for everybody under the sun other than the Fire Marshal and the Board.

H7 – Public Safety Council Minutes

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky to ask the Public Safety Council for copies of the minutes of the last three years as well as from this point on. Seconded by Commissioner Chase and approved unanimously.

New Business continued:

H8 – Outside Job Policy and Report Policy

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to table this item. Seconded by Commissioner Chase and approved unanimously.

H9 – Fire Department Appointments

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to follow our policy. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

MOTION made by Commissioners Kosowsky that posting of job descriptions be placed on the next agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

H10 – Hydrant Request – Walnut Tree Hill Road

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to approve the hydrant request. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

H11 – Nichols Avenue – Opticom System

There was a lengthy discussion on the pre-emption system for Nichols Avenue. There is a grant which would allow the City to buy into the system at a cost of \$930.00, and then an additional \$200.00 per truck.

MOTION made by Commissioner Chase to send a letter to the Chief of Police and Mayor approving the recommendation from the Fire Chief for the Opticom System. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

MOTION made by Commissioner Kosowsky to send a letter to the Mayor stating that there is funding available for this project. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky that we add any vehicle that does not have the Opticom System on it now to the list. Seconded by Commissioner Sabatino and approved unanimously.

H12 – Ladder 1

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky to fix the radiator, exhaust and oil leak on Ladder 1 after quotes are handed in. Seconded by Commissioner Sabatino and approved unanimously.

New Business Continued:

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky to remove the LED Lighting Purchase Order until next years budget. Seconded by Commissioner Chase and approved unanimously.

Executive Session – Homeland Security

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to go into executive session at 9:35 P.M. to discuss Homeland Security with Chief Millo. Seconded by Commissioner Chase and approved unanimously.

MOTION made by Commissioner Sabatino to return to regular session at 10:05 P.M. Seconded by Commissioner Sekelsky and approved unanimously.

Remarks/Comments for the Good of the Commission - none

Adjournment

MOTION made by Commissioner Sekelsky to adjourn at 10:06 P.M. Seconded by Commissioner Chase and approved unanimously.