

Town of Hamden
Fire Commission Regular Meeting
Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.
Memorial Town Hall at 2372 Whitney Avenue, Hamden

A regular meeting of the Hamden Fire Commission opened on March 11, 2020 at the Hamden Memorial Town Hall, located at 2372 Whitney Avenue, in MTH-111 conference room.

Commissioners in Attendance: Oswald Brown, Henry Candido, and Eric Curtis. Absent: James O'Brien. Also in Attendance: Fire Chief Gary Merwede and Clerk for the Commission Patrice LeMoine.

1. **Call to Order:** Mr. Candido called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. For the record, a quorum was present.
2. **Public/Media Comments on the Fire Commission:** Fire Chief Merwede received two letters complimenting the fire department for their outstanding and compassionate service. The two residents wrote to the Fire Chief to praise each crews' response time, professional and expert attention to their cases.
3. **Message from the Chair of the Fire Commission:** Last month, Mr. Candido and Fire Chief Merwede received a call from a resident complaining that the department has been neglectful to following the hiring policies and best practices. One complaint was regarding the recent new hires. There were assumptions and accusations made; however, they were incorrect with those assumptions. Both the fire department and the commissioners take the town's equal opportunity hiring practice very seriously. A second remark was made regarding the fire department lending their time to support a major nonprofit organization. The department participates in an annual event with the national firefighters' union and of course, the department does not place any fundraising projects before their work responsibilities.
4. **Executive Session: No request.**
5. **Approval of Minutes:** Mr. Candido requested a motion to approve the January minutes. Mr. Curtis moved to approve the minutes of the January 8, 28, and 29, 2020 meetings as presented. Seconded by Mr. Brown and passed unanimously.
6. **Department Reports from the Fire Chief:**

Fire Chief Merwede gave a report on the recent hires. He said the two new fire inspectors are at the state training center three days per week and the remainder of the week they are shadowing Fire Inspector B. Nelson in town.

The four certified firefighters are assigned to their shifts and fire stations. The training officer at the Connecticut fire academy provided the Fire Chief a weekly report and said they are doing a great job.

Fire Commission Regular Meeting

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Fire Chief Merwede has drafted a hiring policy. This policy has been in the works for a while where he has collaborated with the personnel department and the mayor's office. The current hiring policy does not encourage applicants of diversity due to the constraints that were too costly. The policy that the department adopted was for effective measures and required education, certifications, which are prerequisites before one can apply. Fire Chief Merwede did some research on demographics between 2003 to 2014 and discovered that the diversity was the same number in the field of certified EMTs across the United States.

So, the fire department worked together and created a work force development program. The program consists of a partnership with AMR for the EMT training and is designed to attract junior and seniors from the high school and introduce them to what is required to become an EMT. This will promote awareness in the field, build diversity, the fire department will work in the classrooms at the high school to educate and mentor those students who may be interested in learning to become an EMT or a firefighter. The fire department wants to contribute \$1,500 annually to the Sam Jones Career Firefighters Scholarship. We will raise funds through the billing services every year. We would like to use the scholarship to help support a student to attend the EMT training program.

Fire Chief Merwede presented the response calls for February. The total number is 781 for the month and the report indicates the various types of calls. He noted the fire emergencies and one recently occurred on the corner of School Street and Whitney Avenue where only the apartment was damaged, did not affect the entire building and only one family was displaced.

The maintenance budget is coming close to being fully expended. We are making an effort to reduce the ordering for parts and reduce inventory, order parts only when needed.

Updates regarding the department's budget for fiscal year 2020-2021. Fire Chief Merwede met with the newly appointed finance director and Mayor Leng. He hopes the department's budget will be passed.

7. New Business:

- a. COVID #19: Fire Chief Merwede is the director of emergency management and is working closely with Mayor Leng to implementing the safety protocols for the town. He spoke about the issues and concerns and that the town is planning to close the schools; all public meetings and hearings are cancelled for at least one month; he is addressing risks and concerns for the public library, senior center, community center and Hamden housing. They will do whatever they can do to break the cycle of person-to-person contact with the hope of the disease to level-off by the summer.

The Commission will continue to communicate via by email. Mr. Candido and Fire Chief Merwede will try to schedule a health and safety meeting with the residents of the Dunbar-Davenport building.

Fire Commission Regular Meeting

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

8. Old Business: Nothing to report.

9. **Next meeting:** Due to the state of emergency, it is **tentative** if the next regular meeting will be Wednesday, April 8, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

10. **Adjournment:** With nothing further to discuss, Mr. Candido requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Brown moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m. Mr. Brown seconded, and all were in favor.

Submitted by:

s/Patrice A. LeMoine

Clerk for the Commission