

**TOWN OF MONTVILLE -- PUBLIC SAFETY COMISSION
FIRE DEPARTMENT STAFFING SUBCOMMITTEE
Special Meeting Agenda – July 22, 2020-- 5:30 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES**

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On March 14, 2020, Governor Ned Lamont issued an Executive Order 7B suspending in-person open meeting requirements, and to hold such meetings or proceedings remotely by conference call, videoconference or other technology.

Link: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-7B.pdf>

For all publicly broadcasted meetings, public comment on agenda items or topics in accordance with the Town charter may be submitted in writing in advance or by live audio via GoToMeeting.

Written comments must be emailed to the Town Clerk's Office at townclerk@montville-ct.org at least **1 working day in advance** (if the meeting is on a Monday the questions must be submitted by close of business the previous Friday).

Written comments may not be read in their entirety, but rather similar messages may be aggregated or paraphrased for submission to the Public Safety Commission.

Live audio comments may be made via GoToMeeting by calling from your telephone.

Comments will only be accepted at times designated for public comment by the Chair of the meeting. The Public Safety Commission Rules of Procedure, decorum, timeliness, and suitability shall be followed and enforced in the same manner as if the meeting were held in person.

MINUTES

1. **Call to order**

Commissioner Leonard called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

All stood and pledged the flag.

3. **Roll Call**

Present were Commissioners Jon Leonard, Jim Moran, Karen Perkins, and Stephen Stewart. Also present were Mayor Ronald McDaniel and Town Councilor Lenny Bunnell (5:40 p.m.). Present via remote access Oakdale Fire Chief Micah Messer, Chesterfield Fire Chief Keith Truex, Fire Marshal/EMS Director Bill Bundy, Robert Forrester, Mark Battista, Dave Nelson, and Dominic Grillo.

4. **Remarks from the Public regarding items on the Agenda (three-minute time limit).**

Commissioner Leonard asked three (3) times for remarks. Rob Forrester had questions concerning the role of the Subcommittee, the mission statement agenda item, lack of coverage at Chesterfield, and the job of the Fire Marshal. Dave Nelson spoke of incorrect treatment by the Commission and Town Council over the past two (2) years to Chesterfield which he recommended they support. Mark Battista explained a staffing scenario at Chesterfield regarding response time stating the station deserves the same coverage as the others. Keith Truex stated the minutes of the last minute were not accurate and should be tabled, the Subcommittee was all over the place, and clarification of agenda items. Gary Murphy spoke of the Town Council distinction of the fire departments; complaints, unanswered calls, full-time firefighter duties; purpose of the mutual aid agreement; overreaching of the Subcommittee on volunteers; operational control by fire chiefs. Melissa Truex said what people are saying is important and asked those to listen. Tim Condon remarked on the firefighter complaint about the amount of work; Saturday coverage being the purpose of the Subcommittee; the issue of time to call; and creation of a work environment for everyone.

5. **Consideration and action to approve minutes:**

a. The Special Meeting Minutes of June 30, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Perkins; seconded by Commissioner Stewart to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of June 30, 2020. Discussion: Commissioner Stewart noted correction in Item #4—change Route 32 to *Route 85*, and Cathy Herrmann to *Connie* Herrmann. Motion by Commissioner Perkins; seconded by Commissioner Stewart to amend the June 30, 2020 minutes. Discussion: none. Voice vote; 4-0, all in favor. Motion carried. Voice vote on Original motion, as amended; 4-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

6. **Old Business**

a. Continuation of discussion of the Career Firefighter staffing.

Commissioner Leonard spoke to the spirit of the comments and stated no one was trying to remove volunteers. He commented on why the subcommittee was formed and the charge given by the Commission explaining the need for sufficient data to determine whether

metrics were being met referencing data from CAD. Questions posed by the Subcommittee included the number of staff showing up per call, the number of volunteers and/or mutual aid responding to calls; quantifying staff on an ambulance call versus a truck call, how the fire houses are obtaining their data, and meeting the requirements for stipend and the statistical breakdown for it. Commissioner Leonard spoke with the Finance Director about the Firefighter Relief Fund scheduled to meet next Thursday. Commissioner Perkins spoke about asking the fire chiefs for a monthly report as they have been added to the Commission agenda. The Subcommittee then discussed career staff needed; the need for more volunteers; the number of staff who have received stipends; the number of active volunteers, and the request by the Fire Marshal for six (6) additional staff under the current budget and the three (3) who were hired as well as support for the other three (3). Commissioner Stewart proposed a staffing plan for a 4-person shift that would include coverage for Chesterfield day and night and mentioned complaints by volunteers of working nights and having to work the next day. Calls not being missed were attributed to having mutual aid that is called upon under certain situations previously determined when a dispatcher knows help is not available. Commissioner Stewart said the hiring of female firefighters came up during interviews and whether accommodations for them would be available, something the fire chiefs should consider. It was clarified that the three (3) new hires were for the contract effective July 1, 2020, and increased staff needs to address staffing levels and recommended needs for the safety of individuals.

b. Consideration and action of strategic planning concerning firehouse agreements (contracts) and policies for next Public Safety Commission Fire Department Staffing Subcommittee Meeting.

Commissioner Leonard stated questions were to be considered for review by an attorney. He said research was done on two (2) of the four (4) agreements that were virtually verbatim. Town Councilor Bunnell commented the contracts were not part of the Subcommittee's mission and should come under the purview of the Commission as a whole. Staffing numbers for the fire departments falls back to Resolution 2019-54 to which the fire departments need to comply. Commissioner Leonard read clause #8 of the resolution into the record and it was noted that motor vehicle, criminal, and background checks were not covered while the second paragraph in Section C addresses the license standard, per Town Councilor Bunnell. He said if the resolution needs addressing, he will follow through with it and although he had spoken to individuals there had been no feedback as of yet. He added the resolution became effective as of July 2019 and said it was a means for obtaining information and if it was not being changed how could it be enforced.

c. Consideration and action regarding Town of Council Resolution 2019-54 and review of reference materials—Almont Study and Fire Department Agreements.

Commissioner Leonard spoke of his review of the Almont Study and towns highlighted in it and to having one (1) person, an administrator for the towns, who would be responsible for specific tasks and who benefits the town. He said the fire department agreements point to the Town having ultimate responsibility for everything and that calls are being acted upon. Town Councilor Bunnell suggested the information be taken to the Commission, but Commissioner Stewart commented the Commission did not deal with operational

concerns. Commissioner Leonard said the issue was a shared response that he understood was not being followed.

7. New Business

a. Review and discussion of “Volunteer & Combination Officers Section,” “A Call For Action – The Blue-Ribbon Report.

Commissioner Leonard reported there was a lot of good information in the report from the International Fire Chiefs Association but Town Councilor Bunnell asked how the report effected staffing. Per Commissioner Leonard, there was information on how to increase volunteer numbers and things towns can do to retain staffing. Town Councilor Bunnell suggested this item be brought back to the Commission to come up with ideas for the same.

b. Consideration and action regarding a Mission Statement.

Commissioner said information needs to be provided to increase staff and spoke to having a mission statement to promote cohesiveness. Commissioner Perkins suggested the handout from Commissioner Leonard with his highlighted comments be sent to the Commission prior to its next meeting.

c. Review and discussion of Fire Rescue article of July 14, 2020 titled, “Volunteer Shortage.

Commissioner Leonard commented the article was written by the City of New London Fire Chief that he described as good reading.

8. Remarks from the Public of Non-agenda item (three-minute limit).

Gary Murphy remarked on the complaints by firefighters and the good job they do: the hiring of a fire safety director and of laws in effect giving the fire chiefs ultimate responsibility for districts; as well, that concerns must go to the Mayor as chiefs must respond to his directives. Rob Forrester spoke of requested reports as a push to retrieve monies back from ambulance calls and as destructive to volunteers and spoke of meetings/recording starting sooner. _____ spoke of having the three (3) additional paid firefighters to be taken under consideration regarding staffing; to advise the Town Council of the need for more firefighter staff; to provide marketing and an incentive program; and to not having heard any ideas for more volunteers. Tim Condon remarked about fire department suggestions; injuries subject to reporting on the Town’s workers compensation record; having spoken with Commissioner Stewart; and of the Commission being charged with having a long-range plan as implied in the Almont Study. Keith Truex remarked on corrections to last meeting minutes; metrics and the Town’s need for better software; of Town Resolution 2019-54 that does not work; Chesterfield staff move-up; mutual aid; why accommodations for females was brought up; and to comments by Gary Murphy.

9. Remarks from Mayor

Commissioner Leonard said Mayor McDaniel was unable to attend the meeting.

10. Remarks from Commissioners

Commissioner Perkins remarked she reaches out and will continue to reach out to the fire departments and spoke of a monthly report from the fire chiefs she proposed earlier in the meeting. She said she wished all could work together stating she had lived in Town all her life and said she would step away from the subcommittee to bring attention to concerns. She asked that continued comments about issues be made through calls to the next Public Safety meeting, on July 27. Commissioner Stewart hoped all were doing well and spoke of his understanding of the fire chiefs providing the matrix regarding ambulance dollars. He addressed “people yell[ing] at us” but said the Subcommittee needed numbers. Commissioner Moran said he had little to say but stated the Public Safety Commission charged the Subcommittee to focus on staffing only. Commissioner Leonard commented on software mentioned by Chief Truex; said he was confused by questions broached by M. Battista and spoke of a call from Asst. Chief Forrester; and spoke of his respect for Chief Murphy and thanked him for his input. Town Councilor Bunnell spoke to the need for a written mission statement, the purpose of the Subcommittee, and of providing written feedback to the Commission. He spoke of his 15-year request for additional staffing for policing and the cost associated for it stating, “someone has to pay for it, and anything more needs to be justified.”

11. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Perkins; seconded by Commissioner Stewart to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m. Discussion: none. Voice vote; 4-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by
Gloria J. Gathers/Town Recording Secretary

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