

**Public Safety Committee
Wednesday, February 21, 2024
Remote via Zoom
Burlington, Vermont
APPROVED MINUTES**

Members Present: Karen Paul (Chair), Melo Grant

Staff Present: Jared Pellerin (Acting City Attorney), Stephen Petit (BFD Deputy Chief)

Public Present: None

Meeting called to order at 5:34 PM by President Paul.

**1. Adopt the Agenda
1.01 Adopt the Agenda**

Motion to Adopt Agenda as written.

Motion by Councilor Grant, Seconded by President Paul

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

**2. Adopt Minutes
2.01 Motion to Adopt Minutes from January 24, 2024**

Motion to Adopt Minutes from January 24, 2024, amending the word “buy” to “bond” in the sentence “If firetrucks were part of the budget, the City would not need to buy for them...” on Page 3.

Motion by Councilor Grant, Seconded by President Paul

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

**3. Public Forum
3.01 Verbal Comments**

No public comments. Public Forum closed at 5:38 PM.

**4. Deliberative
4.01 Chief’s Report: Fire February 2024**

Deputy Chief Petit addressed the Committee’s questions regarding Chief LaChance’s latest report:

- Referring to the report’s mention of counseling efforts within BFD, Councilor Grant wondered if this was part of the wellness program published in the news recently.

Deputy Chief Petit clarified counseling entailed supervisor training on how to conduct effective conversations with coworkers and subordinates, and that BFD is in the process of ensuring collective understanding of the training among all personnel.

- Councilor Grant inquired about the Chief's initiative to track multiple responses to specific addresses and high users of services for all incident types. In the report, Chief LaChance identified this data being important to developing more service solutions and an improved service model. Deputy Chief Petit agreed to follow up with Chief LaChance on when that data would be available but knows it is a top priority and believes this will provide important perspective on current challenges.
- Regarding recruitment and hiring, Councilor Grant asked Deputy Chief Petit to follow up with Chief LaChance on whether or not BFD was utilizing digital advertising as part of its recruitment strategy. Deputy Chief Petit shared he is directly involved with recruitment and hiring and acknowledged the Department is currently behind on those efforts due to reevaluation of the existing hiring process and his relative newness to the position. Deputy Chief Petit expressed that one of his goals in reevaluating the hiring process is to identify how BFD can broaden its applicant pool. Ways in which to achieve this may be to prioritize candidates with certain skills or experiences that are transferable as opposed to targeting candidates who have direct firefighting experience. Deputy Chief Petit mentioned he has also been prioritizing lateral transfers because the demographic of BFD is predominantly young and would benefit from onboarding experienced candidates. Strategies to target these kinds of candidates would most likely include some form of digital advertising. Deputy Chief Petit added there are financial limitations to consider, but that other ways BFD has sought to reduce hiring barriers include hosting the entry-level exam online instead of in-person, interviewing online, and looking into targeting applicants with EMT certifications and no firefighting experience, as opposed to just searching for applicants with both.
- Councilor Grant asked what trends would cause a 44% increase in incident types coded as Incident Type 600 – Canceled, good intent. Deputy Chief Petit responded he would need to look at it more closely to determine a cause, but that based on experience, it could be due to calls received where someone is believed to be unresponsive or overdosed but the individual is found not to be in a state of emergency.
- President Paul noted appreciation for mention of the upcoming solar eclipse on April 8 in the latest report, a once-in-lifetime event projected to bring 150,000 to Burlington.
- President Paul highlighted a statement from Page 6 regarding the CRT pilot program, which reads: "October, November, and December are the only months in 2023 that show reduced overdose responses from the prior year." President Paul expressed this positive news should be moved to the beginning of the report, as it demonstrates that CRT is making a significant impact and is something the public would want to know but may not read the full report.

- President Paul inquired about the status of the CRT budget, specifically grant funding Chief LaChance mentioned exploring and whether the anticipated \$200,000 from the Legislature was intended to fund the program through the current fiscal year. Deputy Chief Petit stated his understanding was that based on Chief LaChance's projections, BFD expects to be able to fund CRT through the rest of the year but is not able to speak to potential grant funding. President Paul and Councilor Grant agreed that discussing the CRT budget and strategies to supplement the funds for CRT provided by the opioid settlement amount allocated to the City could be a follow-up item with Chief LaChance at the next meeting, especially as budget season gets underway for the City and given the unknowns around the Public Safety Tax increase. Councilor Grant emphasized the need to prioritize funding for this program as it evident from the data that CRT is working, helping to free up BFD resources and healthcare resources. For instance, CRT distributing items like wound care items for those affected by Xylazine mean less people overwhelming the emergency room at the hospital. Councilor Grant also added being able to point members of the public to these reports has been very helpful. Deputy Chief Petit added an unanticipated benefit of the CRT program is it has helped responders form relationships with individuals in crisis on the streets, increasing empathy and improving the quality of care and general interactions, which is helping to combat some of the compassion fatigue emergency responders are prone to experiencing in their profession.

5. Future Business

5.01 Other Committee Business

The Committee decided to plan the next meeting's date and agenda items offline, targeting the end of March. Councilor Grant requested some items for follow-up with Burlington Police Department: online report submission data, online drug tip submission data, and the number or percentage of incidents to which Community Service Officers and Community Service Liaisons respond. Councilor Grant emphasized obtaining this data would be important for a number of reasons, including a fuller understanding of drug activity in the community, the public's engagement, and overall consistency.

6. Adjournment

6.01 Motion to Adjourn

President Paul adjourned the meeting with no objection at 6:05 PM.