

BURLINGTON FIRE COMMISSION

Minutes of the Meeting

April 2, 2024

These are the minutes of the April 2, 2024, Meeting of the Burlington Fire Commission. The meeting convened at 08:30 hours via Zoom and in person with Commissioners Bond, Perkinson, Sheehey, and McLaughlin. Chief Lachance, Deputy Chief Petit, and Administrative Assistant Meghan Sweeney were also present. Members of the department were present for the commission of Captain Nathan Perkins.

Call to Order

Commissioner Bond called the meeting to order at 08:30.

Motion to Adopt Agenda

Commissioner Bond asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. Motion moved by Commissioner McLaughlin, seconded by Commission Sheehey.

Commission Award

Commission award presented to Captain Perkins. Captain Ferris was unable to attend the meeting. On and off-shift members joined for the presentation. Afterwards, all on-duty crews left the meeting.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

Review and Accept Minutes from the February Meeting

Commissioner Bond made a motion to accept minutes from the February meeting with no corrections, seconded by Commissioner Sheehey.

Chief's Oral Report

Chief Lachance's report was sent to the commission via email. Discussion of topics included:

Personnel – Along with the four current openings, we expect to retire an additional two members before the end of June. An interview process is underway with a remote option for testing and interviews to make reaching candidates from further away easier. The next recruit academy will start on May 28th with six new employees. Recruitment efforts will be focused more around this time of year to encourage interested people to start working on EMT certifications. Since this course takes time, it will prepare those interested in the next hiring process.

Commissioner Perkinson asked if we were doing any recruiting with local schools. We have attended job fairs in schools and elsewhere. A tech class teaching EMT certifications has had some ridealongs, and we are interested in building more collaboration with them.

Responses—As seen in the charts, call volume has gone up overall 11% in the last year. CRT responses are going up as the weather gets nicer. At this time, Chief Lachance is looking at the future of the CRT for FY25. Current funds should allow it to continue through the month of June. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak seems to want it to continue, as she is already exploring ways to fund the program.

Eclipse—In addition to the 22 members normally on shift, the department will hire back an additional 29 members. Day shift chiefs will also help in different capacities. Road closures for that day will allow for emergency vehicle access. Chief LaChance and DC Petit will work with dispatch from the Emergency Operations Center as needed. DC Petit has confirmed with the dispatch supervisor that all consoles will be staffed that day.

Fleet—The new Ladder 4 has arrived, but it still needs outfitting, and members need training on it before it can go in service. Chief Lachance is hoping to keep the old Ladder 4 as a spare aerial. Currently, we have one spare firetruck that is often in use, and the need will continue with a deteriorating fleet that has no replacement budget. It's also beneficial to the training division to have another truck to use when working with new hires instead of taking something that is in service.

Commissioner Perkinson asked what the current process is for purchasing new fleet. Fire trucks are purchased through bonding, and ambulances and other vehicles are purchased through the fleet committee. Currently, there is no funding for the fleet committee to use for these purchases. Many years ago, money was in individual department's accounts for vehicles, but that money was moved to be used as a centralized purchasing system. Bonds have been used to purchase larger vehicles, but that money source ended a few years ago. Impact Fees have covered leases, which is not what that money is meant for. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak is aware of this budget deficit.

Buildings – DC Petit is working on getting maintenance contracts so the stations can be more proactive with possible issues that may arise versus reactive when they do. In addition to the updates in the Chief's report, a sewage cast iron pipe at Station 1 with a completely open top was replaced. Capital is working on a grant option for replacing the windows at Station 1. Station 3's boiler needs replacement, and work is being done to get quotes for a new generator at Station 2. Commissioner Bond also recommended looking into a Northern Borders grant, which is for window replacement.

Commissioner Sheehey asked what the plan would be if the station consolidation moved forward with Pine Street as a location for a new station, given the traffic patterns they are looking to create. Chief Lachance is open to conversation about moving the fire station. Still, most calls happen close to Station 1, and the Pine Street location would delay our response times to our busiest locations. He isn't interested in moving very far from the downtown district.

Overtime—We continue to have members covering in dispatch during open shifts for the fire department. DC Petit is working with Scot Barker to move our CAD system to a cloud-based system.

EMS—BC McCombie created and ran an EMS recertification class for members up for renewal this year. She's also working on an SOG for the Buprenorphine initiative.

Commissioner Bond asked if the report of calls being down 25% was the overall incident count or just down for the other units because the CRT was taking those calls instead. Chief Lachance explained that the total number of calls for the department is up. Calls for overdose have gone down 25%, which corresponds with CRT being staffed and the community resources they are providing.

Old Business/New Business

- The 2024 Recognition Night is scheduled for June 20th at City Hall. We hope it will be set up similarly to last year. Chief Lachance would also like to hold another bagel and coffee morning for retirees sometime in June, but the date has not been finalized yet.
- The FY25 Budget is looking better thanks to the citizens passing the Public Safety Tax. This helps with the building maintenance contracts DC Petit spoke to, training for members, EMS supplies, and mental health services for members, among other things. The budget still needs approval and has not been finalized. The department is also applying for four different grants and using capital funding for items such as air packs and defibrillators.
- CRT Future: BC McCombie is working on a grant to receive money to keep this project going. Chief Lachance thinks members working the position overtime will continue to add to the burnout and fatigue that members already face. Ideally, he would like to see additional positions hired to allow a few people to work the CRT as an assignment. Operational details need to be discussed.
- The December meeting is being moved from Tuesday, December 3rd to Monday, December 2nd.

- Commissioner Perkinson asked if the Commission could do another tour of the stations. He thinks it would be beneficial if the Commission conducted its own observations and drafted a supportive letter for needed work on the stations' infrastructure.
- Commissioner Perkinson also asked if division heads could take turns coming to the meetings to update on what they are accomplishing. The mentions in the Chief's reports are helpful, but it would be nice to have a presentation from them occasionally. Chief Lachance agreed. He will ask them to join in future meetings.

Executive Session

- Commissioner Bond: Pursuant to Title 1, Section 313 of the Vermont Statutes, upon the affirmative vote a majority of the members present, a motion to go into executive session is carried to discuss matters where general public knowledge would place the Department at a substantial disadvantage. The Commission went in to executive session to discuss the appointment of the Chief Engineer by motion made by Commissioner McLaughlin and seconded by Commissioner Sheehey at 09:34 am

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 09:41 with a vote to approve Chief Lachance as Chief Engineer.