

BURLINGTON FIRE COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting
June 4, 2024

These are the minutes of the June 4, 2024, Meeting of the Burlington Fire Commission. The meeting convened at 08:37 hours via Zoom and in person with Commissioners Bond, Perkinson, Chapman, Sheehey, and McLaughlin. Chief LaChance, Deputy Chief Petit, and Administrative Assistant Meghan Sweeney were also present.

Call to Order

Commissioner Bond called the meeting to order at 08:37.

Motion to Adopt Agenda

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

Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

Review and Accept Minutes from the April and May Meetings

Commissioner Bond asked if there were any questions or comments on the minutes submitted for the regular meeting in April and the special meeting in May. With no comments or concerns, she asked for a motion to accept the minutes as submitted. Motion made by Commissioner Sheehey and seconded by Commission Perkinson.

Chief's Oral Report

Chief Lachance's report (attached) was previously emailed. Additional discussion of topics included:

Personnel—BC Ruggles has begun leading the current recruit class. Different members will assist throughout the academy, but no members have been reassigned from their current positions. Josh Porter has been promoted to Lieutenant following Lieutenant Sean Ploof's retirement. LT Ploof was able to pass along lieutenant bars, which is a tradition Chief LaChance would like to start.

Responses - As seen in the charts, call volume only risen about 1% from last year. Chief LaChance thinks outreach efforts have helped prevent the trend from continuing to rise. The department is struggling with staffing the Community Response Team (CRT) along with the other overtime members are covering. Chief LaChance is continuing to look at different staffing models for this. BC McCombie is working with another city department to get access to electric bikes for long-term borrow for optional use while on the CRT.

FY25 Budget—Thanks to the passing of the Public Safety Tax, we are able to increase some budgets that have needed additional funding. Our Training Budget was significantly cut in the past, and it is back to what it was a few years ago.

Fleet - The new Ladder 4 is now in service. Capital funding had been planned for some air packs, but the money wasn't used for that project. Chief LaChance changed the plan for the money to go to new truck iPads. He is also using the money towards outfitting the old Ladder 4 so that we can have it as a backup ladder if one of the others goes out of service, and it allows the Training Division to use it for training without taking an apparatus out of service. The current wait for purchases of new trucks is so long that Chief LaChance wants to maintain current vehicles and have a plan for vehicles that go out of service instead of getting a small return on the sale of current vehicles.

Commissioner Perkinson expressed concern that by keeping the old Ladder 4, the importance of purchasing new trucks would be minimized, as the excuse would be that we have older trucks available for backup. While he is happy that there is a plan to help keep the old truck for more use and that it can be used if other trucks are out of service, he doesn't want the city to forget the importance of budgeting for the new vehicles. Chief LaChance would like to see a budget planned for every year for the Fire Chief to identify what vehicle should be purchased each year. The current turnaround time is about five years, so ideally, having a budget would allow for the purchase sooner than waiting for a bond to be approved when the truck is already needed and then having the process for approval to get the opportunity to purchase a truck. Commissioner Perkinson agrees that it would be more efficient and likely to save money to have a planned budget for truck replacement. Commissioner McLaughlin expressed concern that having a budget for a truck would also allow the City to look at that as something they could cut when they are looking for money to fill in the gaps.

Fire Marshal's Office—The Fire Marshal's Office hopes to increase community engagement. One item they have requested to purchase is a fire extinguisher prop for training purposes.

Commissioner Perkinson asked what agency typically handles intoxication calls at this point. Historically, it was a police response, but now there is no ACT I or Chittenden County Corrections for detox, and it has transitioned to becoming a medical call. Chief LaChance said that unless the call elevates a person to be a danger to the public, the police department may not respond. At one point, the department tracked when police assistance was requested but unavailable. While that is still something Chief LaChance is trying to track, he thinks our members have requested them less, knowing that it's likely they will not be available. He has instructed companies not to respond to encampments for open fire burning if there is a concern for safety and police are unable to respond. The department is much more involved in city public safety meetings and other meetings around public safety.

Commissioner Bond thanked Chief LaChance for engaging with different groups and saying what needs to be said to committees. She acknowledged the positive spin he can even put on negative topics, allowing his voice to be continuously heard.

Old Business/New Business

- The 2024 Recognition Night was rescheduled to Tuesday, June 25 at 6 pm.
- Following the tours of the stations, Commissioner Bond would like to draft a letter to the Board of Finance and Mayor's Office supporting the capital plan for replacing the flooring at stations 1 and 2 and support for continued plans to remodel station 3.
- Commissioner Perkinson is the only commissioner up for renewal this year. He indicated he reapplied to continue to be on the board.
- Commissioner Bond wanted to recognize the department's efforts and acknowledge the Roots of Prevention Award we received.
- The new BRYX mobile app for incident alerting is operational. Each commissioner will be set up with login information for notifications if they request to be.
- Commissioner Bond and the rest of the commission want to recognize DC Libby for his service and dedication to the department.
- Commissioner Perkinson would like to add an agenda item to the next meeting to discuss further bonding versus budgeting for future fleet purchases.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by motion from Commissioner McLaughlin and seconded by Commissioner Sheehy at 09:47.