

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Regular Meeting via ZOOM App

Wednesday March 10, 2021

7:00 PM

Committee Members Present: Alderman Mark Bettencourt, Alderman Joseph DeLucia and Alderman William Nash.

Committee Members Absent: None.

Administration and Staff Present: Mayor Peter Nystrom, City Manager John Salomone and Alderwoman Stacy Gould, City of Norwich; Eric McDermott, Norwich Public Utilities; Robert Rautio, American Ambulance; and Chief Patrick Daly, Norwich Police Department.

Volunteer/Central Fire Departments and Others: Norwich: Chief Tracy Montoya; East Great Plain: Chief Keith Milton; Laurel Hill: Deputy Chief Corey Aanerud; Yantic: Chief Frank Blanchard and Taftville: Chief Timothy Jencks.

Citizens Present: None.

I. Call to Order and Quorum: Alderman DeLucia called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. There was a quorum present.

II. Adoption of Previous Meeting Minutes: Alderman Bettencourt made a motion to approve the February 10, 2021 meeting minutes. Alderman Nash seconded. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

III. Citizen Comment: None.

IV. Old Business:

- a. COVID-19 Update:** City Manager John Salomone reported that the City is in holding pattern with a substantial drop in the per 100,000 case numbers. City Manager Salomone stated the City is currently at 22-24 cases per 100,000 opposed to the surge point where there were over 100 cases per 100,000 people. City Manager Salomone continued that the City was not above the red zone level and that city hall would remain at appointments only until early April. City Manager Salomone stated they would reevaluate the situation at that time but until then the City would maintain a caution approach to things.

V. New Business:

- a. Fire Service Monthly Report Process:** Alderman DeLucia explained that moving forward he would request chiefs to submit their monthly reports via a fillable PDF document prior to the regularly scheduled meeting to be included with the meeting minutes.
- b. Department Updates:**

- i. **NPU Update:** Eric McDermott reported that NPU's PPE levels are adequate and have no COVID cases in their workforce currently. Eric McDermott stated that NPU would be moving into phase 2 of its 'return to work' plan per state guidance, which would remain at appointment only. Eric McDermott stated that NPU has been providing IT and statistical support to the senior center vaccination point and that some NPU members have become accessible for vaccination. Eric McDermott reported that reservoirs are at full pond.
- ii. **American Ambulance:** Robert Rautio reported 636 medical incidents for February which was an increase from 2019 and noted that emergency responses were currently outpacing routine responses. Rober Rautio reported no COVID impacts to their workforce currently and that nearly 90% of full time staff had been fully vaccinated. Rober Rautio stated that AA's PPE storage is adequate and that they too had been supporting the vaccine effort at Rose City Seniors Center and UCFS, as well as being in contact with Foxwoods in regards to a vaccination site there.
- iii. **Police Department Update:** Chief Patrick Daly reported no COVID impacts at that time and that NPD continues to assist at local food distribution sites and at the vaccination clinic at Rose City Senior Center wherever needed.
- iv. **Emergency Management Update:** Chief Tracy Montoya reported an MIS meeting had occurred the past week regarding funds that were secured last year for updates to the fire department headquarters training room to bring it online as a secondary emergency operations center; including communications, computer networks and physical space needs. Chief Montoya stated they were currently distributing some PPE that was collected previously and had a good stockpile for any departments in need.
- v. **Fire Department Updates:**
 - **Norwich:** Chief Tracy Montoya submitted the following report:

Responses: The department responded to a total of 160 incidents over the past month. 53 fire and 107 EMS with 20 (12.5%) overlapping where there were multiple incidents responded to at the same time. Mutual or Automatic Aid was given 4 times and received none. The average apparatus response time on all calls was 3:06 (which includes an average turnout time of 2:01 for fully staffed apparatus). (See ER Doc ID #1645).

Significant responses: Mutual aid call to Preston, grass fire with exposure to a structure.

Critical Needs: Replacement of Squad A.

Staffing: Acting Director of Training and Safety still in place, Oral boards for external candidates will be held next week. There were 7 applicants, of which 4 will participate in the oral board. LT Kannas (acting DTS) will be retiring early next month. I thank him for his 20 years of professional, commendable service to the Norwich Fire Department and to the citizens of Norwich. LT Steve Fricke will be assuming LT Kannas' duties regarding iPad and other City technical programs. After 4 weeks of remote learning, Firefighters Markey and Girard began the residential portion of the Connecticut Fire Academy Recruit Program this week.

Facilities: Both stations remain closed to the public. Window project – phase 1 is almost complete at Fire Headquarters, just

awaiting a final walk through and some paint touch up.

Training: Company training continues. All training is being conducted with COVID safe practices. Currently we are hosting a 5-day Confined Space Rescue Technician Course that was secured through an IAFF grant. We have 18 members scheduled to attend the course which will result in Confined Space Technician certification.

COVID-19: We continue taking extra precautions around stations and during incidents due to COVID. We constantly review our operations and the measures we take to protect personnel. To date there have been 14 positive COVID cases in staff, all have returned to work with no issues. We are closely monitoring the ever changing recommendations from CDC and State agencies as the vaccination becomes available to more people. Most recommendations are geared towards the general public and not those of us as EMS providers.

- **Taftville:** None.
- **Yantic:** None.
- **Occum:** None.
- **East Great Plain:** Chief Keith Milton submitted the following report:
EGP responded to 55 emergency incidents for the month of February.
Continuing our online training. We will be starting our hands-on training with members wearing masks and appropriate social distancing.
Apparatus – ET51 was out of service for a few days having some radio wiring replaced that was damaged.
Routine maintenance on all other apparatus.
Members are still remaining vigilant with the virus. Members are still wearing masks on all emergency calls and at the station.
All members who signed up for the COVID vaccine have received their 2nd vaccine.
The asbestos abatement work will be hopefully starting the end of this month or beginning of April. The vendor has started the permit process.
I mentioned last month that we were applying for the assistance to firefighters grant, but unfortunately, we were unable to as we needed to renew and/or revalidate department info. We reached out to SAM (system for award management), they responded back to us with the info that was needed from us to continue. We submitted the info that was needed and they never responded back to us, which caused us not being able to apply for the grant.
- **Laurel Hill:** None.

c. 2020 Fire Study:

- i. **Discussion and Possible Action - Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) aka Dispatch Cost Resolution Referral:**
Alderman DeLucia discussed amending the resolution to the City Council, per their recommendation, to read that a final report with 'the preliminary estimates of the potential cost of equipment and software improvements suitable for upgrades to the dispatch system' be presented at the first August City Council meeting as well as including monthly updates to the Council via the City Manager's report, in order to meet the goal of a November referendum. Mayor Peter Nystrom stated he felt the set of goals in the amendment were

workable and that as long as the information was bonded by the bond counsel and to the Secretary of State by September 1, 2021 it could make the November ballot. Alderman Mark Bettencourt stated he felt aiming for the second July council meeting, or as soon as possible, was more desirable to give sufficient time for a public hearing and for the council to review. City Manager Salomone agreed that the end of July would be a good time frame as it would take time to get estimates in. Discussion ensued on the estimate process versus issuing RFPs and the future of the radio system update. Alderman DeLucia questioned if it was feasible to present a resolution requesting funds for changes that may not be decided by November. Chief Daly suggested that if the fire departments considered moving onto the state radio system, which infrastructure was already in place for, he could provide budget numbers within 90 days. City Manager Salomone stated the Committee could work towards the July meeting goal and if approaching that date things were not coming together the Committee could approach the Council early enough to make adjustments. Alderman Bettencourt made a motion that the Public Safety Committee make a favorable recommendation of the proposed amendment to the resolution. Alderman Nash seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

- ii. **Discussion on Stakeholder Input Request:** SEE ADDENDUM. Alderman DeLucia asked for thoughts and impressions on the stakeholder input request that was distributed and that the plan moving forward is to continue to solicit feedback from all stakeholders on specific issues as they appear on the Public Safety Committee agendas. Discussion ensued on discrepancies in the study that were noted by the stakeholders and other questions to present to stakeholders in the future.
- iii. **Discussion on the Fire Commissioner Concept:** Alderman DeLucia opened the floor for thoughts and questions on the concept and recommendation in the 2020 Fire Study for the City to create and fill a position of fire commissioner. Alderman Bettencourt stated he felt there was not system integration in place, which had not been a goal of the City. Alderman DeLucia stated he held many discussions with various community members on how to effect positive improvement and resolve the issues that the 2020 Fire Study highlighted; which brought the suggestion of the six chiefs and City Manager as a sole commission, creating a civilian commission which would oversee the buyer service, and/or creating a three-person commission including the police chief, fire chief and a volunteer fire department representative. Discussion ensued on pros and cons of suggestions. Alderman Nash suggested reinstating the Assistant City Manager, or similar, position as a primarily fire orientated personnel. Alderman DeLucia agreed in finding a person who is accountable for goals being achieved. Alderman Bettencourt agreed that a better organizational structure was needed.

VI. Public Safety items for future discussion: None.

VII. Next Meeting: April 14, 2021, via ZOOM App, unless otherwise notified.

VIII. Adjournment: Upon a motion by Alderman Bettencourt, seconded by Alderman Nash, the meeting was adjourned at 8:31 PM. All voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Katherine Rose*