

**PUBLIC SAFETY STANDING COMMITTEE VIRTUAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2021, 6:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

1. Call to Order

A. The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Chairwoman Carol Anderson Blanks.

B. Attendees – Mayor Shari Cantor, Deputy Mayor Leon Davidoff, Councilor Mary Fay, Councilor Chris Williams, Town Manager Matt Hart, Police Chief Vernon Riddick, Assistant Chief of Police Lawrence Terra, Fire Chief Greg Priest, Assistant Fire Chief Hugh O’Callaghan, Assistant Fire Chief and Fire Marshall Michael Sinsigalli, Battalion Chief Mark Bassett and Emergency Management Deputy Director Robert McCue.

2. Business Items

A. Meeting Minutes August 12, 2021 – Motion was made by Deputy Mayor Davidoff to accept the August 12, 2021, minutes, seconded by Councilor Williams. Motion passed without objection.

B. Fire Department Efficiency and Effectiveness Study – Mr. Hart reported this was a continuation of the Fitch study and their recommendations. The PowerPoint presentation was regarding the Discipline of Emergency Management, the Department’s training provisions and the work done there. Committee members were provided a copy of the presentation, which was also on BoardDocs.

Mr. McCue reported that since the Fitch study was performed, the administrated structure of the Fire Department changed with the addition of a Deputy Emergency Management position, which was created in the fall of 2019. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) helps with natural disasters and other emergencies like an active shooter event or an accident with mass casualties. The OEM assists these situations in four different areas; helping the Town and residents prepare for natural and man-made disasters, coordinating the Town’s response to disasters and large-scale emergencies, assisting with recovery efforts after a disaster hits and calculating ways to mitigate the impact of the disasters. The OEM is a small department within the Town itself and its mission is to facilitate and help coordinate and support other Town departments that do the leg work during an emergency; police, fire, social services, health department, etc. The OEM is responsible for a local emergency operation plan (LEOP), which each municipality is required to have on file with the State of Connecticut and includes a profile of the Town, sensitive locations plans regarding sheltering and evacuation, etc. It is a requirement for OEM to review and update the LEOP every two years.

Another responsibility of the OEM is helping the Town develop and implement a Capitol Region Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is also required to be submitted to the State and is updated every five years. This identifies hazards within the town, areas needing

improvement, and what projects the town is going to work on for the next five years. If this is not on file, West Hartford would be ineligible for several grants. The OEM is also responsible for Tier II Reports, which are annual reports businesses must submit to the Town regarding certain hazardous materials that are kept on-site and the reports are updated yearly. This is vital in case Police and/or Fire receive a call for that location so they are better prepared in their response. The OEM has been heavily involved in the reimbursement process with FEMA for COVID and the tropical storm that hit last August. To date, \$650,000 has been received for the storm from last August. The OEM also maintains a Special Needs Registry, which currently reflects 400 residents who may require special assistance during a long-term disaster. This list was utilized to reach out to those residents during the initial onset of COVID to ensure there were okay. This list is shared with the Police Department, Fire Department, EOC and Social Services. The OEM assists with setting up emergency shelters.

The OEM actively pursues grants. The OEM currently receives a yearly grant of \$30,000, which helps pay for the Everbridge system. Part of the funds goes toward offsetting the salaries of the OEM. There is a grant from the State for \$2200 for the CERT and another \$5000 is expected at the beginning of 2022 to assist with pandemic planning and recovery. The recovery efforts have been very busy, especially after the storm last August; working with Eversource, Verizon, Comcast, FEMA, the Health District, CROG, and the American Red Cross. One of the main goals of OEM is preparedness. There are 50 volunteers on CERT and the final exam for the first 35 to go through the CERT class will be on Thursday. There is continuous work regarding mitigations to reduce the impact of disasters. The most recent examples are the assistance OEM provided with the vaccination clinics and the PPE distribution efforts. OEM's future plans include strengthening the relationship with the Red Cross to include training opportunities at no cost and collaborating with outside agencies.

There are plans for a regional shelter drill later this fall or early next year. There are plans to increase community outreach including another recruitment round for CERT in addition to having a presence in Town parades and getting more information out to the community about preparedness. There has been increased planning opportunities support. There was an intern from the University of New Haven's Emergency Management Program who helped out and CERT volunteers have been helping with the planning process. One CERT member approached the Board of Education about partnering with them to have a preparedness program for high school seniors who are leaving, which would be their CAPSTONE project. As of next year, if you will be graduating, you need to complete a CAPSTONE project and the hope is to get a Junior CERT that students could participate in to meet the criteria for graduation. Another plan is to get all Town departments trained on the Incident Command System (ICS), which provides a universal way to respond to emergencies. The hope is to have that completed within the next year or so. The OEM will pursue grants and outside funding for emergency preparedness. By investing in preparedness planning and training before something happens, the impact of emergency events can be reduced and minimize the amount of time it will take to recover.

Battalion Chief Bassett went over the second half of the PowerPoint presentation regarding training and support services. He began with a brief overview of the Training and Support Services Division regarding what the division does, its responsibilities, where it is currently

with regard to the Fitch study. The Division has built a stronger bond with the community and neighboring municipalities. The Division has adjusted its focus several times to meet the challenges COVID-19 presented. The Division was successful in training its members on new protocols, up-training several members to become certified in vaccine administration. The Division continued to ensure Fire training and skills validation of existing members was upheld to high standards through this unprecedented time. The Division is responsible to ensure all members are trained in Industry Best Practices and Standards, which is done through multiple avenues within the Department including online, classroom and hands-on training. The training models were evaluated and a new training policy was rolled out for this year, which acts as a resource for all members to refer to so training may be more efficiently planned and executed. Due to COVID restrictions, training was done largely at the company level with training conducted at each individual firehouse. As the restrictions eased, multi-company training has been performed as necessary and appropriate.

The major duties and areas of responsibility include identifying training requirements and needs; administering and supervising the training program, EMS program and personnel assigned to training; provide for general logistical support and planning functions of the Fire Department; supplement operational responses as necessary or as requested by the incident commander or chief officer; and other duties as assigned. The types of training provided include onboarding all new hires, OSHA compliance, general continuing education, promotional and new equipment and procedures. The training subjects include firefighting, EMS, apparatus (pump) operator, company officer/leadership and specialty skills such as hazardous materials and technical rescues including vehicle and cold water rescues. The changes made after the Fitch study recommendations include a formal written training program, transition to competency-based training and training is done through a mixture of training mediums (hands-on, online, etc.). Future plans for the division include continued OSHA compliance and officer development. A FEMA grant for \$350,000 was received, which will be used for fire officer professional development. The classes included with the grant are Instructor I, Fire Officer I and Incident Safety Officer. The grant will cover the instruction of 20 officers.

3. Communications

Legislative Proposals to Reduce Juvenile Crime and Recidivism – Mr. Hart shared a letter, posted on BoardDocs, regarding a meeting with four members of the State Delegation with a focus on juvenile crime and recidivism. Several recommendations were made to the Delegation including age criteria for youths to be considered juveniles, establishing more serious consequences for repeat offenders and increasing the maximum number of hours a juvenile can be held to allow more time to connect with a parent, custodian, or DCF. One of the consequences for repeat offenders was utilizing tracking monitors such as an ankle bracelet with the understanding that funding will be needed to track the offenders. The recommendations also included reestablishing protocols for juvenile detention centers to allow officers to bring individuals to the centers without an order to detain as well as permitting information sharing of juvenile arrest records between police departments, allowing an exemption to the State Pursuit Policy to permit expanded use of forced stop

procedures and provide additional assistance such as counseling and parenting classes to the parents/custodians of juvenile offenders.

4. Staff Reports

A. Fire Department – Chief Priest briefly went over his report, which was uploaded to BoardDocs. Chief Priest highlighted the hiring of 10 candidates into the Fire Department from 3 lists (certified FF/Paramedic, certified FF/EMT and certified EMT only). The eligible candidate pool was significantly larger and numerous interviews were conducted. Chief Priest also mentioned working with Human Resources to do a Provisional Offer, which allows the selection of a candidate before there is an open vacancy and is important in sourcing future paramedics. Some candidates have already been identified as ready to be hired once there is a vacancy and after completing their schooling.

B. Police Department – Chief Riddick went over a few events. They are still engaging in panhandling initiatives. Due to staffing and weather events, it has not been front and center as it has in the past. A social worker has been hired, which is coming out of the Police budget, who starts on September 13 and will be working in conjunction with Social Services. The primary focus will be shifting some calls for service police were arriving to solo to Social Services and Police would be there in a supportive role. Regarding the recent carjacking, the victim did all the right things to arrive home safely with her property but was still carjacked. Because the area where this occurred has a lot of activity, an officer was nearby and arrived at the scene after receiving the call in 26 seconds and backup was there in approximately one minute. Regarding the investigative efforts, the car was recovered in Bloomfield. On the same day, a Porsche was carjacked and the perpetrator was on Facebook Live driving up and down the highway holding a gun and then holding a magazine, laughing and trying to engage State Police knowing he was in a Porsche and the likelihood of being apprehended was slim to none.

On August 23, the State Police had hit-and-run off of Exit 43/44 and a 9mm firearm and purse were recovered by the West Hartford Police in the area of 465/South [inaudible 1:26:22] Lane. There were no hits on the vehicle. It was not stolen. The investigation is ongoing. The State Police were notified and West Hartford Police took custody of the firearm. On August 24, there were multiple purse snatchings/robberies. Contemporaneous with that, similar events were happening in Hartford. It was suspected the same crew running around. A couple of days later with the assistance of the State Police, an arrest was made involving several individuals in a stolen car with a weapon inside and during questioning, they confessed to numerous robberies including those in West Hartford.

There was a call on August 26 where officers did an outstanding job dealing with an emotionally disturbed party who had committed an assault. The individual was armed with a bat and knife. The officers were able to distract the individual, use de-escalation, and deploy a Taser without a firearm. They were able to control the individual without injuring themselves or anyone else. Regarding staffing, there were 15 vacancies. There have been two conditional offers, so there are now 13 vacancies. It is anticipated there will be 2 additional conditional offers within the next 2 days, which will bring it down to 11 vacancies. An

academy is starting around September 8 or 9 and there are seats reserved in the Waterbury Academy, which should be starting September 23.

5. Future Agenda Items

There were no future agenda items identified.

6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Williams and seconded by Chairwoman Anderson Blanks. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

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