FIRE TRANSITION STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING MARCH 12, 2020, 6:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL:

By: Pacholski Time: 6:08 p.m. Place: Town Hall Annex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRESENT</th>
<th>ABSENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chuck Beecher</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Boutin</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Eldridge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Malan, Vice Chairperson</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James McLoughlin, Staff</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Pacholski, Chairperson</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh Ziel, Secretary</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is a joint meeting between the Fire Transition Study Committee (Team) and the Board of Fire Officers (BFO).

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:

There was no one present.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:

Motion: The Fire Transition Study Committee approves the minutes of the February 13, 2020 meeting.

By: Malan Seconded: McLoughlin

Motion carried with the following vote:
For: Boutin, Malan, McLoughlin, Pacholski, Beecher
Against: None
Abstain: None

OLD BUSINESS:
a. Follow up on association meetings

Pacholski has met with both stations. NCov did not have a lot of questions or comments. However, the most comments centered on using the point system for officer selection. If the bar is set too high younger people could be prevented from obtaining those positions. Phasing in the point system over time may be an option. How points are accumulated has not been set yet. Malan stated the point system may be helpful in determining between candidates for positions. Pacholski added a major concern of CFVA is what are the checks and balances that positions are not assigned by favoritism under the proposed method of filling the positions. McLoughlin feels the appointments being ratified by the positions above is one way to avoid favoritism. Using a vote system is a form of favoritism. Myers added ideally any one applying for a position will be evaluated and the method to be used is not a singular person making decisions. The top spot is being looked at by the Town Manager. If there is perceived favoritism it may be that certain people work better with others. In an election format if a person is not doing their job there is no recourse. With an appointment if someone is not doing the necessary tasks we can hold them to the requirements and remove them from the position.

McLoughlin stated the BFO decided to move away from the point system. Interested candidates would need to meet the minimum requirements, submit a letter of interest/resume, and meet for the officers above the level of application for an oral panel question and answer session. The top candidates are then given to the Fire Chief; he makes the decision on which candidate to place in that position. A resume can call out qualifications such as certifications and technical training that can be as or more valuable for some fire positions as a college degree. Complaints have been heard that as volunteers we should not have to get all these points. There are close to sixty policies in the manual now as the BFO is making significant progress.

MOUs have or will be expiring soon; these will not be renewed. Contracts will be needed for building use by the associations.

Pacholski asked members to submit a letter of intent and resume to him the day before the regularly scheduled April meeting; to date he has received one. Beecher added this information is worth posting on the I’m Responding app.

b. Member benefits

Malan reported the subcommittee met and used a document from the Policy Manual as a starting point. Active membership is required and the subcommittee have suggestions on what that constitutes.

McLoughlin stated the BFO has a draft Incentive Policy. Boutin and Malan discussed this and added some language, including stipends.

Malan and Boutin suggest an active member is one that accumulates the following points in a calendar year: responds to 40 calls, attends 12 training events, and attend 8 public events, such as parades, but excluding Association meetings. Being on standby service counts as a call. Training points are accumulated when attending training approved by the Fire Chief. The original intent of training points was for mileage reimbursement and we have moved away from hourly point accumulation. The accounting of points should
be a simple as possible. Boutin and Beecher feel one point is earned per training event. We want the tracking of point to not be administratively cumbersome.

Association meetings being excluded from earning points is due to the possibility that one association holds more meetings than the other and the associations will not be part of a Town function any longer, rather they may provide social functions. Pacholski suggesting allow points for association meetings for the time being. If the associations provide any recruitment and retention potential that is a benefit to the Town. Both Associations indicated they will remain active. Myers added if we start seeing abuse of the points system through association activities we can revisit this.

Storm standby was discussed. Malan and Boutin outlined a schedule of event points based on the number of hours a person is at the station. Others felt that providing meal(s) and coffee during standby may be worth more than accumulating points. Perhaps one point can be assigned for the entire standby with nourishment provided.

The subcommittee suggests for those members 18 and older active status and in good standing a year-end will receive payouts. We may see a bunch of resignation letters January 3rd under this suggestion. New members joining after July 1 would be eligible to earn points for the six months remaining of the calendar year with the point earning activities split in half. Myers commented the BFO talked about Junior members getting paid. A mileage check could be an incentive for 16 and 17-year olds. Boutin reported the subcommittee was talking about 14 and 15-year olds when they suggested no point system or payment for these Junior members. Malan added apparel is the incentive for these Junior members. Boutin feels the 16 and 17-year olds should be eligible for points. Malan hesitates on this because there is the potential for them to be very active while learning but they do not technically provide a service. Beecher stated they can be on fire grounds and can do some functions. They will not be staffing the ambulance. Should this be capped and maxed out at $500 for this age group of Juniors?

The subcommittee discussed LOSAP – the pension-like benefit. Members 18 and above earn benefit based on years of service. The benefit maxes out at 25 years of service. They are not suggesting changes to what the policy currently states. Worker’s comp insurance and other benefits come from the Town.

A new section of Officer Stipends is being suggested as there are additional roles for officer positions. There is much administrative work for which one would not necessarily earn a point. McLoughlin suggests adding the Health & Safety Officer to this stipend. This person is going to be doing safety training and the onboarding of new members. McLoughlin will take the suggestions to the BFO for additional discussion. Any position that has a stipend must have a job description. Myers stated the majority of the time the Health & Safety Officer will not be on a scene. There is so much paperwork, maybe take the incident response out of the description. You want that position to be active with the health and safety work. You could do the same with the Chief Engineer.

A tax abatement program was discussed for members that are 18 and older and residents of Coventry. This could be for a total of $1,500 annually. The person would have to be meeting active status. Meyers suggested if someone makes the minimum commitment you get the tax abatement. We can incentivize it by tracking the number of calls you go on and it would be paid quarterly. There is no incentive for signing up for shift times.
The per call stipend is designed to have shift coverage. The number of monthly hours required starting high is not doable in Myers opinion. It was thought the Town Council would not agree to a tax abatement with less than 40 hours per month.

The subcommittee with meet again and come back with a draft document on benefits. Right now the policy will not have tax abatement language in it. Ryan Boutin, VP CVFA, suggested keeping it as simple as possible. Beecher agrees with him.

McLoughlin stated we will have to come up with a means of tracking hours for EMS calls as a requirement for Medicare/Medicaid reporting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

a. **Interim/Positions/Discussion with Joint Fire Board**

The Town Council referred the job descriptions back to the team for refinement to delineate interim positions and length. They will then go back to the Town Council for review and possible approval. It was felt if adding the phrase “substantially comply with the requirements” they could be considered interim positions without have to rewrite the descriptions. The question is what the Team and BFO feels the minimum requirements are for officers. Pacholski stated CVFA feels that mean no lower requirements than required today for the current role. Clearly not required is having the requirement to drive the other station’s apparatus. The preferred items are not required. Malan suggested adding interim at the top and substantially meets the experience listed below. Or one must meet 75% of the requirements for the Deputy Chief slots.

The Team and BFO will collectively discuss the letters of intent and make a recommendation to the Fire Chief. We will not be suggesting a person who is not qualified. The year interim is basically a year-long interview.

**Motion:** I make a motion that we submit the existing job descriptions for the interim roles with the intent that the interim officers would substantially meet the job requirements of the position from which they are appointed to on an interim basis not to exceed a year.

By: Malan  
Seconded: Boutin

Motion carried with the following vote by the Fire Transition Study Committee:
For: Boutin, Malan, McLoughlin, Pacholski, Beecher
Against: None
Abstain: None

Motion carried with the following vote by the Board of Fire Officers:
For: K. Boutin, R. Boutin, McLoughlin, Myers
Against: None
Abstain: None

2. **Ad hoc**
McLoughlin reported he has given the list of financial priorities the Team put together and presented that to the Town Manager. The Manager will bring it to the Town Council.

Myers confirmed the April meeting will be a joint one with the Team and the Fire Board of Officers.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

McLoughlin provided to Pacholski the badge pricing he received from Paul Jackson.

McLoughlin read the resignation he received today from Ray Eldridge. Eldridge stated due to personal reasons he cannot continue to participate on the Transition Team. Pacholski will let the Town Clerk know. Malan can meet with the Station 18 officers and make a recommendation to the Board of Fire Officers of someone to fill the open slot.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion:** I move to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

By: Malan  Seconded: Boutin

Motion carried with the following vote:
For: Malan, Pacholski, Boutin, McLoughlin, Beecher
Against: None
Abstain: None

Respectfully Submitted,

Yvonne B. Filip

Yvonne B. Filip, Recording Secretary

PLEASE NOTE: These minutes are not official until approved by the Fire Transition Study Committee at the next Committee meeting. Please see the next Committee meeting minutes for approval or changes to these minutes.