

CITY OF WEST HAVEN FIRE DEPARTMENT ALLINGTOWN  
October 2, 2018  
Minutes

A Meeting of the City of West Haven Fire Department Allingtown was held on Tuesday, October 2, 2018 at City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT.

Present were Commissioners Robert Lathrop, John Panza, Aaron Haley, Iris Diaz and Frederick Brown. Also present was Deputy Chief Esposito.

Commissioner Panza called the meeting to order at 6:41 pm.

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1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Roll Call

Business Manager Brooks called the roll and declared a quorum. Commissioners Palumbo and Pimer were absent.

3. Approval of September 4, 2018 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Lathrop made a motion to approve the minutes for the September 4, 2018 meeting, seconded by Commissioner Haley and approved unanimously.

4. Public Session

Peter Massaro of 8 Chris Jon Circle, West Haven, CT spoke to Commissioner Panza about the emails stating that on July 12, 2018 you said that you had emailed the Mayor numerous times. He said that he got them over 90 days late. There was only one email to the Mayor.

Teddy Brown of 56 Highview Avenue, West Haven, CT stated that first of all I don't know if this panel discussed it or no but we can't afford the fire department. We don't have the population in Allingtown to support a fire department. UNH has taken up one half of the property and Yale has taken up the other half. The citizens are in the middle. We just can't afford it. You have Orange that two or three times our population, Derby and Ansonia they are volunteer departments. We signed the department over to the city to take care of it because we can't afford it. So the city takes over and last week the Mayor comes up and says they disown the fire department. They tell us what to do but we have to pay for it. Not that you all are doing a bad job here. She paid the Acting Chief more money. Where did that money come from? Can I come up and write out a check to pay someone that I like more money in the fire department. What does this board do? Did we ever get paid for the buildings, the fire trucks and all the other equipment? How does the city own it? Acting Chief Esposito replied that no, we didn't get paid. They assumed all our assets. Ted said so they own it, but it something goes wrong we pay for it. The city has a voice in our fire department but we don't have a voice in their fire department. I don't understand they have one union and they can turn around and dictate to us and we have no say so. We have to go through city council but who's sitting on the council people from other districts that can vote on our things but we can't vote on their things. You can't say this is a city department and then the Mayor comes and says you can't do by laws and you can't do this or that. If the city owns it then they should pay for it. I don't know how they got ownership they didn't pay for one thing. I paid for the trucks and the firehouses. We are worse off now then we went over. Why didn't we go over to New Haven? Acting Chief Esposito responded that they can barely keep up with their own station they are not going to take us. We have to help them do you think they are going to help us. Ted said how about the Center District or Orange. Acting Chief Esposito explained that they are a volunteer department they can't take a paid department over. Ted added that his taxes are going sky high I don't care who owns it. How much population in Allingtown? Acting Chief Esposito answered 15,000. More discussion followed on the population of the different areas including West Haven. Ted went on to say this is a board and I assume

they are here for my benefit. I witnessed something last month that I was ashamed. Brief discussion about who should approve paying Acting Chief Esposito for doing three jobs. Commissioner Diaz replied that we have line items. The money comes from there. Commissioner Panza stated that you can't touch the line items. Apparently she may be taking it from the Chief's salary line item. She did say here for the record that you can't take money from one line item and pay for another line item. She also said at the end if there is money left over it goes back in but I'm kind of confused how it's done. That's just the way it is. Ted asked when the city took the department over who wrote the rules. Commissioner Panza replied that the ordinance was written by a lawyer. They wrote this section 106. This is what we go by. We are trying to add some bylaws to it. Ted said so you are a city fire department. So who pays? Commissioner Panza replied that the money comes out of the Allingtown pool. Acting Chief Esposito explained that we are a separate entity of the city and the tax payers of Allingtown cover our budget. Ted said he has a separate tax that pays for a city fire department. Business Manager Brooks stated that when we were taken over one of the issues that the taxpayers had when they voted for us to be taken over by the city was that they did not want to pay double taxes. That was for the Center and West Shore Districts. They didn't want to pay us over here in Allingtown even though we became part of the city. Now if we all became part of the city at once, consolidated then you would have an across the board payment. It would be with your city taxes but because we still have two separate fire departments, those areas are paying for their departments and Allingtown is paying for their fire department. Ted responded which is a city fire department. Business Manager Brooks replied but we are an entity of the city so we still have our own budget and it's still a separate tax base. Brief discussion followed on the different mill rates for the different areas. Ted asked about the pilot money. Acting Chief Esposito explained that the pilot money is gone and it would have to be up to the legislative body to bring it back. Ted asked about the VA in Allingtown. Acting Chief Esposito replied that they pay their taxes. Brief discussion about a few other properties in Allingtown followed.

Robbin Hamilton of 92 Bedford Street, West Haven, CT stated that she understood Mr. Brown's frustration. The area is made up of hard working people. When we go into New Haven for mutual aid is there any kind of reimbursement that we get from them. Acting Chief Esposito explained that they are medical calls and if the billing company can collect the money we get about \$100.00. Commissioner Panza explained because we have an ambulance that transports we have to respond. It's under the licensing of the state. Acting Chief Esposito replied that it's usually a call they don't want. Robbin asked how far into New Haven do we have to go. Acting Chief Esposito stated that he believed it was State Street and we have gone a few times into Fair Haven. Robbin asked what happens if there is an emergency while you are away. Acting Chief Esposito explained that were spinning the wheel. The state has told us that we have to go, we can't say no. Robbin asked if we go to Orange when needed. Acting Chief Esposito explained that maybe six times a year between the three departments. No billing involved, we have a mutual aid agreement with them. Robbin asked if they come to our rescue. Acting Chief Esposito replied that they will if they have to. New Haven has covered several times. In our station and the Center station. Milford comes into West Shore if needed. Two weeks ago Saturday when we had the big fire, we had New Haven in our house and Milford in West Shore. Robbin asked is it just New Haven that is a problem. Acting Chief Esposito explained it's just a game. Its profits above people. When they had that overdose incident on the green, none of us went to New Haven to help. That day however they were getting paid, they didn't call any of us for help. What changed that day so something happened where they found a way that they could bill and get reimbursed? Brief discussion followed on transporting and licensing.

John Carew (Volunteer Chief) of 20 Carlson Road, West Haven, CT asked what's going on with the city. I understand that they brought an agent or developer around to look at the fire house. There were no volunteers around. Commissioner Panza asked if acting Chief Esposito had any information on that. Acting Chief Esposito replied that yes he did, Fred Messoro called one day, left a message that he needed an appointment to come here one day with an appraiser as something that is part of the city. I called him back and asked him where he wanted to start. He told me it was just for Admiral Street and the library. He told me it had to do with the MARB. He showed up with Property Tour Assessment. They went through the firehouse, took some pictures and said they would be in contact. That was about six weeks ago. John stated that he has two legal documents that

states who owns the fire house. One is the deed. It states clearly that when the city took over the fire department they assumed that contract. It clearly states that the volunteers have to be involved in the process. Not that we are going to fight but we have some things that are due to us, for us giving up the property and giving it to Allingtown in 1928; prior to that the volunteers owned that property. So there are some requirements that have to be met. When the city took over the fire department they assumed that responsibility. I just want to make sure it's on the record again because it's been two months since it's been brought up. When we see people around the city doing different things I want to make sure it's still there. So it appears there is a development issue. Last week in Firehouse Magazine there was thing from Alexandria, VA that a private developer put up a firehouse and they rent space out of it. I know the Acting Chief had a whole plan on it. It was all spelled out. How the fire department was involved and who's paying what in the bills. Being that there is some development going on, I think it would be in our interest to meet with the developers to see if we can get one of those plans in place. This could solve a lot of problems in parking and everything else. It's been quiet for awhile but it seems there are still people lurking around without coming to us. I still want to know what's going on. Commissioner Panza replied that as you know from our conversation after the special meeting last week I have no knowledge of what is going on with the city. Acting Chief Esposito replied that it was in his report from last month. Commissioner Panza stated that as he has said in the past I want the volunteers and wherever we go you come with us. John replied that he hears that city is doing something to the district and not knowing about it on our end. I'm as dumb founded about it as you are when there is a legal document filed in city hall that says they have to meet certain requirements on our side. John said that something refreshed his memory from the last meeting. The lawyers said they would have something for this meeting. Did you get anything from them? Commissioner Panza responded that he emailed them just before the meeting, that's why we were running a little late, I asked if he was coming tonight. Commissioner Haley asked if the volunteers cost us anything. John replied it depends on how you look at it. You have to provide us space, lights, heat and insurance. Commissioner Haley replied as a taxpayer I'm looking in keeping expenses down. I'm tired of paying high taxes. John agreed. Brief discussion followed about necessary expenses and unnecessary expenses. John stated that it will cost a lot more to get out of this agreement than it will every month. Acting Chief Esposito reiterated with before we jump to conclusions here, we really don't pay but we use their truck when ours is out of service. If the city is going to get rid of them everything goes with them. We really have to think this through.

Business Manager Brooks asked to speak in public session. Commissioner Panza replied that she could. Debbie started by saying that she was absent from the meeting last month. In doing the minutes I noticed there was a lot of misunderstanding here. I don't want to give any disrespect to the commissioners or anyone else here and I don't want anyone to take offense. I've never called a commissioner and just hung up on them, and said I've got to call the other commissioners I've got to go. I've never done that. When this Whole debacle came about with the pension payments I got a little nervous myself. I've been here for twenty two years and I've never seen a late payment to the pensioners. So I did get a little nervous and I will admit that. I did get on the telephone and I called Commissioner Panza first and left him a message. I proceeded on and I believe I called Commissioner Diaz, she asked me for some additional information, which I said I would get for her. Then I did go on to call Commissioner Lathrop and I explained the whole thing to each one as I called each person and Commissioner Lathrop told he was uncomfortable in signing something that he wasn't versed in. So I asked him if he wanted to talk to someone else about it and he told me he did. So I said commissioner who would you like to talk to Commissioner Diaz, he said no she's working, so I said maybe you can talk to Commissioner Panza, he said no he's working, he's up on a ladder doing a roof, I said well you can talk to Kevin Losty if you would like to or you could talk to the Assistant Finance Director Robert Zyskowski, so /I do rest my case on that. Then also it was said that I knew about this, that I got an email in February, which I did. At the January pension meeting and I did check back with Kevin and he did say not going into big detail about it, he said that the city would like to do quarterly payments instead of monthly payments. Kevin did mention at that time that he needed to change the account to a different company instead of continuing to use Mass Mutual. In doing that he had to get all your signatures to open up that new account; which he did in May. So there were things that were done in a timely fashion. It just happened that it was going to be the first withdrawal from the new bank and it was the actual

bank that wanted all your signatures at the last minute. Now the city stepped in and afforded us an extra payment and sent it over to the payroll company that makes the pension payments and that's why everything was made on time. But I just think it was a little lack of our communication to each other and I don't want to see that happen again. So I want to make sure when something like this is coming about new we have to sit down and discuss it even if I have to call for a special meeting. I understand that all the commissioners can't always make it to the office. Sometimes I email and you don't have time to get them. I know a couple of the commissioners don't even have email, but I'd like to keep everybody abreast of what is going on and that's what I have tried to do for twenty two years. I don't want it to stop now. In saying that that's all I really have to add to it.

Public Session closed at 7:32 pm.

5. Finance: list of processed invoices was reviewed and accepted.
6. Communications: Business Manager Brooks read a thank you card from the Ocampo family for the funeral basket that was sent for Gustavo Ocampo.

Business Manager Brooks read an invitation from the West Shore Fire District for their annual Firefighters Memorial and to celebrate Their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on October 14, 2018 at 11:00 am. at 860 Ocean Avenue, West Haven, CT.

Business Manager Brooks read a thank you note from Dani, who is a dog, belonging to Katherine who dropped off four loaves of stuffed bread to each of our stations. She thanked the firefighters for saving their home on September 6, 2018 and for treating them so kind.

7. Report of the Chief: Acting Chief Esposito gave a verbal and written report which will be kept on file.
8. Report of Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal: Deputy Chief Esposito gave a written report. Written report will be kept on file.
9. Old Business:  
Parkview Commons Project –Acting Chief Esposito explained that they have just about reached a settlement of the pipe relocation and they should be starting at the end of this month.

Budget for Fiscal Year 2018-2019- Business Manager Brooks stated that as of right now the mill rate is 13.08. We have to wait and see what the MARB is going to do when they are done with their study. She stated that she has been working on different items with the Mayor. The two major items that are being looked at are the pension and the medical insurance.

Headquarters Roof-Acting Chief Esposito explained that there are more leaks and when it rains it smells horrible in the station. He explained that we need to get this fixed.

Chief's Position-Commissioner Panza stated that this will be addressed in December or January.

Headquarters Exterior Repair- Acting Chief Esposito said that this needs to be fixed. I have some prices for the repair. When they start the construction next door it will only get worse. I don't want the bricks to start falling out. This could turn into a big liability. Commissioner Panza asked Acting Chief Esposito to do a report on this issue.

10. New Business: Discussion and vote on by laws- Commissioner Panza asked if the board had read the updated version of by laws. He explained that the board had a special meeting with Attorney Lee Tiernan and he explained that you do have to approve the bylaws within 100 days of an organizational meeting. He had a brief discussion about the bylaws and why they wanted to put them in place. Attorney Tiernan was looking into it further and was going to get more information over to Commissioner Panza for the board to review.

Commissioner Brown congratulated Commissioner Diaz on reappointment to the board. He stated that as far as the volunteers go, we need to know who owns what. They own an antique engine and Engine 8. Commissioner Brown thanked all who attended the Brent Watt fund raiser. He made mention that fire consolidation has been taken up many times. Commissioner Brown stated that there was an incident when our truck was in New Haven that Chief O'Brien had to go to. The other stations were all busy as well. We need to deal with AMR on this issue.

A motion was presented to close Regular Session at 8:26 p.m. and go into Executive Session by Commissioner Lathrop, seconded by Commissioner Diaz and approved unanimously.

A motion was presented to close Executive Session and return into Regular Session at 8:44 by Commissioner Diaz, seconded by Commissioner Lathrop and approved unanimously.

A motion was presented to adjourn by Commissioner Lathrop, seconded by Commissioner Diaz and approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

All minutes are subject to the final approval of the City of West Haven Fire Department Allingtown Commissioners.

Minutes recorded by Business Manager Brooks