

Town of Ridgefield
Special Fire Commission Quarterly Meeting
January 13, 2010 – 6:30 pm
Unrevised/Unapproved Minutes

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

Commissioners Attending: Rudy Marconi
Andrew Bodner
Barbara Manners
Di Masters

Representing RFD: Chief Heather Burford
Assistant Chief Kevin Tappe
Volunteer Chief Tim Pambianchi
Volunteer Assistant Chief Mike Gabbianelli
Deputy Emergency Manager Dick Aarons

Meeting Called to order by Commission Chair Rudy Marconi at 6:30 pm.

Fire Department Update

Chief Burford provided an overview of the department's 2009 operations and a current operational status report. (See attached documents.) Call total for 2009 was down slightly from the previous year. Responses in 2009 totaled 3,159 compared with 3,361 in 2008. EMS calls continue to dominate accounting for 63.1% of the department's activity. The year over year decrease in total calls come from fewer assists (residential lock outs, water and animal problems, etc.). EMS call volume remained unchanged.

In response to questions from Commission members, Chief Burford said that training for and discussions with the staffs of acute care facilities have reduced the number of "non-emergency" responses to those facilities. EMS responses to Laurel Ridge & Ridgefield Crossings total 17.3% of total EMS responses.

SAFER Grant staffing savings were less than expected during the final three quarters of 2009 due to one 11-month workmen's comp case and eight back injuries with lost time. Some 28% of shifts were staffed at eight, enough for two ambulances.

In general discussion, the Commission expressed concern over the back injures. Chiefs Burford and Tappe said they have been working with the insurance carrier in search of solutions. The department, they said, already uses state of the art equipment and training to minimize job related injuries. Commissioners Masters and Manners suggested the use of professional trainers with emphasis on strengthening muscles used in lifting might be useful. Chiefs Burford and Tappe will continue to look into the matter.

Engine 2 Response

Commission Bodner led a discussion on response policy as it pertains to apparatus usage, and urged Chief Burford to continue to analyze the best mix of equipment for routine responses. Chief Burford has already modified the Engine 2 response to reduce wear and tear on the equipment. She will work with Chief Tappe to continue to review response options including the possibility of fly cars or responding with two ambulances rather than an ambulance and engine when the second unit is moving only to provide manpower. Chief Burford cautioned that there are operational inefficiencies when crews have to change apparatus during the course of a duty period.

Update Highlights

Budget FY 2010 – On the capital side, the cardiac monitor has been purchased and is in service. The SCBA replacement program has begun with devices ordered to replace 25% of the operational stock. Chief Tappe said the improved design of the new SCBA may help reduce fatigue and back injury. On the operating side, all expense lines are within target. Excursions are explainable.

EMS Billing – Contract has been signed with a new ambulance billing vendor after a bidding process. Charges will be 3% rather than 10% with the former provider.

Training – Chiefs Tappe and Pambianchi said career and volunteer staff have done significant training in the last six months including:

- Quarterly EMS training
- Familiarization with new equipment
- Vehicle extrication on standard and hybrid cars
- Hazardous materials review including visits to local sites
- Chemical terrorism
- Gas utility emergencies
- Technical rescue team development
- Airbags and cribbing reviews
- Driver training and pump operations

In discussion it was determined that there is no need to train all department members on all vehicles. Special care will be taken to designate experienced drivers to tanker operations to save wear and tear on the aging vehicles.

Volunteer Staffing – Chief Pambianchi said the department has added 12 new volunteers bringing total staffing to 63.

Fire Inspection Program – This program, staffed by two part-time inspectors, has generated \$56,110 for calendar 2009. Some 582 inspections were completed. Chief Burford said emphasis is moving from stand-alone commercial establishments to multi-unit residential units. The inspectors are finding an increase in the number of businesses operated from home. Code compliance is good, once the inspectors inform residents of code requirements.

Emergency Management -- Deputy EMD Aarons reported the CERT program now includes over 80 volunteers currently training in specialties including : communications, shelter management, emergency worker rehabilitation, animal rescue and emergency management. Efforts are

underway to harden communications capability within the EOC and to get the video conferencing capability on line with appropriate bandwidth. CERT volunteers have been active in the H1N1 vaccination program including staffing phone banks and assisting at clinics. A full POD drill using Incident Command System staffing and techniques was overlaid on the January 9 H1N1 clinic. DEMD Aarons is working on interim ID systems for CERTs, Fire Police and Firefighters using resources from the state CERT Council and Ridgefield Health Department. The program is based on best practices in departments using Salamander.

Everbridge -- Chiefs Burford and Tappe, DEMD Aarons and several fire dispatchers are attending training at the end of January on the Everbridge Emergency Notification System that is provided by the state to all PSAPS. This system will be used locally for public announcements during emergency situations and paging of career and volunteer emergency response personnel.

Awards Program – Chief Burford is renewing the Awards Program. The Awards Ceremony is scheduled for Monday March 15, 2010 at 7 pm.

Fire Commission 2010 Calendar: (See Attached) **Commissioner Manners Moved that the calendar be approved as drafted. Commissioner Bodner seconded the motion which carried unanimously.**

Adjournment: There being no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Richard N. Aarons,
Deputy Emergency Manager
Fire Commission Secretary