



Town of New Castle, NH

Approved Firewards February 9 2016 Meeting Minutes

Present: Fireward Dennis Dinsmore Chair, Fireward Reg Whitehouse, Damon Frampton, Bill Stewart, Selectboard.

1. Call to order
 - a. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll call of members present
3. Review of instruction
 - Welcome, please sign in with your first and last name, identify yourself as a resident or non-resident of New Castle, and provide your email address or telephone number.
 - The Firewards are conducting a public meeting and it is your “Right-to-Know” what occurs at this meeting, but, you do not have the right to speak during this meeting without the recognition and invitation to speak by the Chair’s as stated in RSA Chapter 91-A.
 - Only during the Public Deliberation period is the public invited to speak. One can obtain the floor by raising your hand when the session begins or when the person speaking has finished;
 - Once invited to speak, stand, state your name and address and direct your question to the Chair. You will have thirty (30) seconds to ask your question or state your point.
 - After your question has been answered you have fifteen (15) seconds for one follow-up question directed to the Chair.
 - No one can speak twice on the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has spoken to it once.
 - Remarks must be courteous in language and attitude.
 - The Chair will attempt to follow Robert’s Rules of Order and will rely on its guidance throughout the meeting.
 - The Chair’s goal is to address all agenda items and adjourn the meeting at or before 5:00 PM.
4. Approval of minutes from last meeting
 - a. A motion was made by Frampton to approve the draft minutes from the January 10, 2016. Seconded by Whitehouse. Motion passed.
5. Fireward’s Report – Condolences were made to the Tarbell’s and to the residence of the Tarbell units.
 - a. 152 Portsmouth Ave. Fire Timeline
 - i. 911 Call – 2110
 - ii. Rescue 7 Dispatched – 21:18:50 (8:50) Onsite – 21:20:40 (1:50)
 1. With 3; Capt. Golter, Capt. Golter and EMT Qureshi
 - iii. Engine 4 Dispatched – 21:20:19 (10:19) Onsite – 21:22:04 (1:45) (On Ramp 2116)
 1. With 6; Deputy Chief Wooley, Chief Engineer Whitehouse, Capt. Cronin, Lt. Naugle, FF LaMontagne and FF Arik
 - iv. Command Request 1st Alarm – 2123 (13:00) Alarm Struck – 2126 (3:00)
 - v. Rye Engine 3 Dispatched – 21:26:40 (0:40) Onsite 21:32:27 (6:27)
 - vi. 20 NCFD, ~75 Personnel and ~650 to 700 Man-hours
6. New Castle Fire Department’s Monthly Report – January 2016

- Calls for service in January: 17
 - Types of calls in January: 7 Medical Aid calls, 1 Carbon Monoxide Alarm, 2 Water in Basement, 1 Assist Other Agency, 2 Fire Alarms, 1 Smoke Investigation, 2 Public Assist, 1 Structure Fire.
 - Average response time: 4.43 minutes.
 - Average # personnel per incident in January: 6.44
 - Apparatus responding to incidents:
 - Rescue 7 responded to 9 incidents in January.
 - Forestry 1 responded to 4 incidents in January.
 - Engine 1 responded to 5 incidents in January.
 - Engine 4 responded to 3 incidents in January.
 - Hose 1 responded to 1 incident in January.
 - Marine 2 responded to 0 incidents in January.
 - Training in January: 128 Man Hours of department in-house training plus:
 - 3 members attended Radiological Defense (RADEF) training in Portsmouth.
 - 4 members attended Web Based Emergency Operations Center (WEB EOC) training in Hampton.
 - 5 members attended a "Stroke Care" class at Portsmouth Regional Hospital.
 - Public Outreach Activities in January: None.
 - Mutual Aid Given in January: None
 - Mutual Aid Received in January:
 - Units from 16 area departments during the Tarbell House fire.
 - 6 Engines
 - 3 Ladders
 - 1 Tower
 - 9 Tankers
 - 2 Ambulances
 - 1 Breathing Air Unit
 - 1 SMART Unit
 - 6 Fire Chiefs
 - Budget remaining on 1/13/16:
 - Fire Department: \$175,458.05
 - Emergency Management: \$5,959.82.
 - Staffing:
 - 2 Career members
 - 28 Volunteer members.
 - Other activities: None
 - Areas of Concern: None
7. Select Board's liaison report
- a. Stewart stated that the selectmen had a debrief meeting with Chief Blanding after the Tarbell House fire and they met with the NCPD and DPW. There was discussion about town water pressure and ongoing discussion with Portsmouth Water District.
 - b. Dinsmore asked Stewart to elaborate on the discussions with Portsmouth;
 - i. He mentioned ongoing talks regarding water and sewer infrastructure (W&SI) status and repair/upgrade costs. Possibility of a town vote for Portsmouth to take over the W&SI.
 - ii. He also spoke about additional things the town could do, in the short term, to make the residence more aware of alternatives in fire prevention and notification.
8. Recruiting update: None
9. Unfinished business: None
10. New business: None
11. Announcements

- a. Pancake Breakfast will be held on Saturday, April 16, 2016

12. Public Deliberation

- a. C. Strehl asked about past published Fireward's meeting minutes.
 - i. Dinsmore replied that after the meeting minutes have been voted upon and approved the minutes are sent to Cullen at the town hall for posting. Whitehouse added, once the minutes are sent to the town hall, the Firewards have no control the distribution and posting.
- b. VJ. Strehl asked what is the role and obligations of the Firewards and there is not much cooperation and consensus building between the treasury dept., the select board and the Firewards.
 - i. Dinsmore stated that for many years, previous Firewards and Fire Chiefs have made several statements to the town and select board siting water infrastructure problems (2006 Flow Test) and has followed up with specific recommendations for upgrading more serious problem areas. Quoting a newspaper article from May 2014 where Chief Blanding stated, "The water supply is lacking and is insufficient, and it has been for years. I've written letters but nothing seems to get past the Town Hall. Nothing is being done."
- c. VJ. Strehl follow-up question; if the select board will not listen to the recommendations of the Chief and Firewards what is the alternative?
 - i. Dinsmore stated that the Budget Committee has rejected numerous recommendations for years by several different chiefs and Firewards, and, suggested that the concerned residents need to develop warrant articles to be voted on by the residents at town meetings allowing a majority decision.
 - ii. Stewart added that Portsmouth has a Master Plan on their website that could have some impact on Sewer & Water discussion in New Castle.
- d. R. Rais suggested that the town escort monies into the budget for future water upgrade cost to make it easier on the residents of New Castle.
 - i. Stewart said the town is looking into options and agreed with Rais.
- e. T. Smith was concerned about having answers to eight written questions.
- f. A. Irish spoke to the human aspects of losing his home to a fire.
- g. C. Strehl suggested placing above ground water tanks and pumps is several location throughout the town to augment inadequate water supply for firefighting producing 167,000 gallons of water with the addition of foam would equate to 835,000 of usable water. Think about ways to become independent of Portsmouth's water supply.
- h. W. Kingston suggested utilizing the Piscataquis River as a water source for firefighting.
- i. D. Borden suggested forming a small group of individuals to study the water supply issue and involve Portsmouth in the discussions.
- j. D. McGuckin stated that the Selectboard has become complacent to firefighting requirements in the event of a major structure fire in town, and now, because of a catastrophic event (Tarbell House) the Selectboard has a new found interest in addressing the long standing water shortage, suggesting the firefighting community develop several short term solutions.
- k. W. Zuckerman suggested focusing on early detection with off-site monitoring, fire education, up to date smoke detectors and CO detectors.
- l. W. Cronin stated that we all have moral obligations for your neighbors, firefighters and first responders.
- m. Write in Questions and answers
 - i. Is there an ongoing investigation about the fire?
 - ii. Was the Fire Marshall called and did he return the call?

- iii. Who was the Fire Marshall on duty?
- iv. Did the Fire Marshall do an investigation on the cause of the fire?
- v. Why was the building knocked down so quickly?
- vi. Who called in the fire?
- vii. Why did caller wait over half hour to call in fire?
- viii. Where there any interviews of the tenants by the Fire Chief?
- ix. Could the party that night at the residents have anything to do with the fire?
- x. How many people were at the party?
- xi. Was there enough water to fight the fire?
- xii. Was there enough water to fight fire after pipe broke?
- xiii. Will there ever be enough water to fight fires?
- xiv. Is the Fire Department capable of drawing water from the ocean/river to fight fires and if not, are you addressing this issue to solve this problem?
- xv. Is there any negligence on part of the New Castle Fire Department on how the fire was handled?
 - There is no ongoing investigation being done by the NCFD. If there had been fatalities, injuries or if the fire was suspicious there would be an investigation by the State Fire Marshal's Office. It was expressed to Stewart that if the selectmen want an investigation, there would a need for substantial assistance by the police. Stewart never responded back to the Chief.
 - NCFD does not have the resources to do investigations, NCFD is a small volunteer fire dept. operating on a shoestring budget. NCFD does not have investigators and does not conduct investigations. Investigations were conducted by fire investigators contracted by the insurance companies.
 - The Chief called the on duty fire marshal. Chief told the FM that he was calling in an excavator to help extinguish the fire and overhaul the scene after the fire was out. Chief told the FM that the remaining walls were swaying in the wind and the three chimneys were unsupported and needed to come down. This was a safety issue.
 - The log from Rockingham has the name and number of the person that called 911. That person was at the fire apartment.
 - There is no proof that there was a significant delay in notification. There is hearsay that approximately 15 minutes went by before someone called 911. NCFD would hesitate to accuse someone without being able to prove it beyond a reasonable doubt.
 - The Fire Chief does not conduct any formal interviews. His time was consumed at the scene from the beginning of the fire at 21:40 Saturday night until to the end of the fire at 8:28 Sunday morning and visited the scene numerous times during the week after the fire.
 - The water supply was insufficient and unreliable. The water mains are old and under sized. The New Castle water system is supplied by 8" pipe. One new hydrant near the scene was frozen and never provided water. That hydrant was needed by the ladder truck for an elevated master stream and didn't work when they opened it, causing a significant delay in knocking down the fire while they had to find another water source and move the supply hose.
 - At some point during the fire, it appears that the water main cracked and was leaking water in the mud flats near Goat Island. The hydrant near the KPYC opened and worked but couldn't be closed. The Chief

has serious concerns about the condition of the hydrants in the New Castle Water System and the Commons. These concerns have been communicated to the Firewards, McGuckin and to the residents of New Castle in the past. Last year NCFD fought to get the hydrants fixed in the Commons and at the Rec Center. NCFD had to call in Tankers to set up a tanker shuttle to bring water from South St. in Portsmouth throughout the night.

- Drafting water from the ocean is not something we train on because we usually can't get the pumper a close enough to the water to get suction. It is also very corrosive to the pump, piping and appliances. If NCFD were to start relying on drafting from the ocean we would have to start training the crews to become proficient. It is manpower intensive and slow. Pumping seawater through a \$400,000 fire engine will certainly reduce the service life and increase the maintenance costs and complexity. The trucks certainly wouldn't last for 25 years like they do now.
 - It is inconceivable that a question of negligence is being raised. It is an insult to all of the members that volunteer their time and risk their lives and wellbeing to serve their neighbors.
- n. D. McGuckin stated to the Firewards and Chief Blanding, now is the time to develop budgets for solutions to the water shortages in town that could reduce the chances of another incident like the Tarbell fire from happening.
 - o. D. White recommends that the town's civil engineer write a warrant article to develop a budget for investigating water systems upgrades for New Castle.
 - p. P. Rice responded to the following question asked by T. Smith, "Is there any negligence on part of the New Castle Fire Department on how the fire was handled? It is insulting to the NCFD and to the other 16 fire departments that responded to NCFD's mutual aid call and wondered if an apology is in order.

13. Upcoming Fireward's meeting is March 8th at 4:00pm

14. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 17:20 hours by Whitehouse and seconded by Dinsmore. The vote was unanimous.

Reggie Whitehouse, Secretary
New Castle Board of Firewards
Draft Minutes Submitted: Mon 2/22/2016
Minutes Approved: Tues. 3/8/2016