

**November 16, 2011**  
**Regular Meeting Board of Fire Commissioners**

The regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners was held on the above date.

President Rosenberg called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Present: President Rosenberg, Commissioners Doris G. Garcia, Klein, Lee, Meszoros and Fire Chief Rooney

Commissioner Rodriguez arrived at 6:25 p.m.

Absent: Vice President Ana Garcia

Commissioner Meszoros motioned to dispense with reading the minutes of the previous meeting; Commissioner Klein seconded and the Board passed it unanimously.

Old Business

1. Entertain a motion to grant a Widow's Line of Duty Disability Pension request to Joan McCullough, Widow of Retired PE James J. McCullough; effective July 13, 2011 and refer to the Board of Trustees, Pension Plan A, for implementation.

Associate City Attorney Mitola distributed a Memo to the Board and represented that based on the information he has, he would recommend that it be denied. He contacted Frank May, the Workers' Compensation Attorney. This file is twenty years old and Attorney May's file was closed out in 2000. He went through his computer notes on it and indicated that the City's doctor, Dr. Krauthimer, indicated that when this gentleman retired in 1989, he did not suffer from hypertension or heart disease. So, even though he was given a disability pension back in 1989, this Dr. Krauthimer, who is the City's doctor, who looked over the file back well over 10 years ago, said he didn't suffer from those conditions back then.

Attorney Mitola represented that the burden was on the family to present the information to support their claim and recommended that the request be denied.

Commissioner Klein motioned to deny the Widow's Line of Duty Disability Pension request to Joan McCullough, Widow of Retired PE James J. McCullough without prejudice and to reopen at a later date if more information becomes available; Commissioner Meszoros seconded and the Board passed it unanimously.

2. Local 834-Grievance 2011-23; FF Josh Benderoth, Article 5, Disciplinary Action.

Chief Rooney requested that this grievance be postponed until Deputy Chief Grace returns to work and he spoke with Union President Whitbread and he agreed with that as well.

Commissioner Klein motioned to table the grievance until Deputy Chief Grace returns to work; Commissioner Meszoros seconded and the Board passed it unanimously.

3. Local 834-Grievance 2011-24; LT Marc Strickland, Retirement Benefits.

Union President Whitbread represented that this was tabled from last month's meeting pending his action with the City trying to figure out final language on the contract. He met with his attorney and he's in the process of contacting the City so there really has not been any progress.

President Rosenberg stated that he didn't believe there was a signed contract yet and it was his understanding that there is a retroactive date on that contract.

Commissioner Meszoros motioned to table the grievance for 60 days to the January meeting; Commissioner Lee seconded and the Board passed it unanimously.

**New Business:**

1. Communications:

a. None.

2. Swearing in of seven Probationary Fire Inspectors: Henry Polite, Charles Dimbo, Hiram Velez, Mark Becker, Autumn Waggoner, Joseph Taylor and Alberto Hernandez.

President Rosenberg welcomed Mayor Finch and turned the meeting over to him to swear in the following Fire Inspectors: Mark Becker, Charles Dimbo, Alberto Hernandez, Henry Polite, Joseph Taylor, Hiram Velez and Autumn Waggoner.

Mayor Finch:

Thank you very much for coming this evening, we don't always have as big a crowd at a Fire Commission meeting so I know many of you are friends and families and I know you've waited many years to see this night and I know that your loved ones have worked very hard to get here and I have to tell you how exciting it is for me as Mayor and it's exciting in many levels.

First off, everyone in the State of Connecticut and beyond knows that the Bridgeport Fire Department is one of the best fire departments anywhere. Person for person we can do what any department can do and then some. So we're very proud of our Department just because it's our Department and it's such a great Department. It's strong in many, many ways. The mark of our wonderful democracy is that there is civilian control over public safety. In other countries that's not the case. In our democracy it is the case and we could celebrate that every time we are able to have our civilian board make a major step and I get the privilege of swearing the seven new fire inspectors, but it was work that was done day in and day out by the Fire Commission, the citizens, the civilian board that is controlling our Fire Department just like our Police Department is controlled by a civilian board. I admire this Fire Commission. These are citizens that serve for no pay. The majority of people in public service, in politics in the United States don't get any pay and they do it on library board, sewer commission, fire commission, civil service commission, city council for no pay and they do it because they love their country and it's the same spirit of public service that we see in our Fire Department and it makes us all very proud especially when we see them in their uniforms. They look pretty good. I think they are great. Bridgeport's Bravest are known worldwide and we are very honored tonight and we are very proud of our Fire Department.

Let me just say why the Chief and I worked so hard to get to this day and we're so honored that you took the test, studied and you learned what you needed to learn to do, but we're growing this great City and we cannot grow it without the work that these fire inspectors are going to do.

Does everybody know about Homes for Brave Homeless female veterans on Elmwood Avenue is a very important street to all of us and we needed to get that open right away. Winter is coming and we know that this Department is backlogged. In order to move this City ahead, we need to have the full complement of fire inspectors. We need that because they'll help move important work through the City and work that will grow the City and of course make us safer, but it will grow the City and grow it in the right way. I'm very honored to be here with all of you tonight because your work is critical to the mission of the City. I cannot do anything without a department like yours. It's a great night for the City and I hope we don't lose sight of how important this is and I'm very honored that you all studied so hard, you took the test, you certified and you're ready now to step into these important shoes.

The oath was given by the Mayor to the seven Inspectors and they were congratulated by all.

Chief Rooney:

Welcome to our ceremony and thank you all for coming this evening. I also want to personally thank the Mayor for taking the time out of his busy schedule and time away from his family to be here. We really appreciate that and of course I'd like to thank our Fire Commissioners here who do a great job who help me run a big Department and they're here every single month helping and guiding me through this process. I want to thank them again as well. I want to congratulate the newly promoted fire inspectors and thank them for taking on new roles in the Department and more responsibility and authority. You all demonstrated an incredible dedication to school for the past several months, studying building codes, life safety codes, fire investigations and there are so many other important topics and I'm sure when you first got there you were overwhelmed, you all came through and I really appreciate and I congratulate you and I'm proud of all of you. You are ready to go out into the community on a daily basis and assure that our multi-family homes and our commercial structures are up to code and safe and I wholeheartedly support you and wish you all the best.

3. Executive Session for attendance review of the following individuals:

a. CAPT Paul Cocca (B) – Full Duty as of November 7, 2011.

b. FF Brian Walker (B) – Fire Fighter Walker represented that he was going for physical therapy. He tried to get a medical report as far as status is concerned and they said they would have to perform a functional capacity evaluation on him and then they could answer the questions. It hasn't been scheduled, but he was going for therapy on Friday and he would get a date for it. His doctor has not released him for light duty.

Commissioner Rodriguez tabled to the December meeting; Commissioner Lee seconded and the Board passed it unanimously.

4. Commissioner Klein motioned to accept the Report of Sick and Injury; Commissioner Meszoros seconded and the Board passed it unanimously.
5. Commissioner Meszoros motioned to accept the Payroll Register; Commissioner Klein seconded and the Board passed it unanimously.
6. Policy and Procedure review.
  - a. None.
7. There being nothing further to come before the Board, Commissioner Meszoros motioned to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Lee seconded and the Board passed it unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.