

RTM Public Health and Safety Committee

April 23, 2018

Darien Town Hall Room 213

MINUTES

Committee Members in Attendance: Colin Kelly, Lois Schneider, Nina Miller, Holly Giordano, Jennifer Woodbury, Brian Rayhill, Linda Terhune, Laura Mosher, Sara Parent, Mac Patrick, Susannah Lewis, Gary Swenson

Committee Members Absent: Mia Handler

PH&S Chair Mac Patrick called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The committee unanimously approved the 2/26/18 meeting minutes.

Darien Fire Marshal, Robert J. Buch, joined the PH&S Committee to discuss the various duties of the office.

Mr. Buch discussed his background. He has been Fire Marshal for almost 22 years and has been with the fire service in Darien for 38 years.

In order to be a fire marshal you must be certified by the state of CT. Mr. Buch has been certified since 1986. A fire marshal must also complete at least 90 hours of training every 3 years.

The Fire Marshal is responsible for all fire investigations in town, as well as inspections of all commercial properties and residential properties of more than two families (including Avalon and assisted living facilities).

The Fire Marshal's office also provides public education programs, mostly at the nursery school level.

Mr. Patrick asked about fire marshal's involvement with the town's new blight ordinance/hoarding conditions. Mr. Buch responded that the Fire Marshal's office works closely with Human Services to deal with blight/hoarding issues.

The Fire Marshal's office works well with three volunteer fire departments in town. The Fire Marshal's office now has 4 part time and 2 full time staff members. All staff members are certified.

Mr. Patrick asked about Fire Marshal's involvement with issuing liquor permits. Mr. Buch stated that since restaurants are places of assembly, the local fire marshal is required to inspect premises and certify that they are safe.

Mr. Rayhill asked about the responsibility of the town Fire Marshal with regards to I-95. Mr. Buch stated that the service areas are state owned property and inspected by the state,

but any incidents that occur on I-95 (including those within the service areas) are handled by the town fire departments.

Ms. Terhune asked how often houses are burned down in a controlled environment? Mr. Buch stated that this doesn't ever really occur.

Mr. Patrick asked how decisions are made about which fire departments respond to calls. Mr. Buch replied that these decisions are made through the fire commission, but the policy is "mutual aid" – for any structure fire 7am-5pm on weekdays, all 3 departments will respond. After 5pm and on weekends, only the department where the fire is located will respond, and they will call for additional assistance if necessary.

Mr. Rayhill asked about how fire dispatch works in town. Mr. Buch stated that they are dispatched through Southwestern Regional Communications Center. All 911 calls still come into the police department.

Mr. Patrick asked about false alarms. Mr. Buch replied that his office manages the appeals and fines for false alarms. The goal of false alarm fines is to reduce instances of false alarms and make sure systems are maintained properly. Contractors working on homes cause most false alarms. If there is a false alarm and the homeowner shows proof that system was serviced after the false alarm, the fee will be waived. Money collected through fines is used to run training programs and purchase equipment.

Ms. Miller asked about the town's fire boat. Darien's fire boat has been in service since 1989.

Mr. Rayhill asked about emergency preparedness. Mr. Buch stated that when a storm is coming, town departments get together to discuss. If needed, the emergency operations center is opened (in police department).

Jennifer Schwartz, a Darien resident, joined the PH&S Committee to discuss the Ox Ridge property. She read a letter she wrote on behalf of a number of town residents advocating for more passive than active recreation at the Ox Ridge property. She also provided a presentation to the committee.

Joanne Hennessy, Chair of the Planning, Zoning & Housing Committee, also joined the PH&S Committee to respond to Ms. Schwartz' comments.

Ms. Lewis announced a presentation on May 15th @ 7pm in the Darien Library auditorium, where she will be presenting the findings from the recent Darien Opioid Community Needs Assessment.

Mac Patrick adjourned the meeting at 7:53pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Woodbury