

**MINUTES OF POLICE AND FIRE COMMISSION
MEETING OF MARCH 16, 2023**

4:00 p.m.

Council Chambers (203 South Farwell Street)

MEMBERS PRESENT: Daniel Kincaid, Disa Wahlstrand, Stephanie Finn, Kimberly Cronk, Selika Ducksworth-Lawton

STAFF PRESENT: Police Chief Matt Rokus
Fire Chief Chris Bell
Deputy Fire Chief Al Bertrang
Deputy Fire Chief Jon Schultz
Human Resources Director Colleen Schian

The Commission convened in open session at 4:19 p.m. Meeting was called to order by President Kincaid. President Kincaid asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the Police and Fire Commission meeting held on February 8, 2023. No corrections or additions were noted, and the minutes stand approved as circulated.

Discussion was held with regard to which candidates to place on the Firefighter eligibility list based on interviews held prior to the meeting. Based on the discussion held and interviews, a Firefighter eligibility list was created. Motion was made by Commissioner Cronk, seconded by Commissioner Ducksworth-Lawton, and passed unanimously, to adopt the eligibility list, which shall remain in effect for one year.

Chief Rokus provided a personnel update. Since the November 17, 2022 meeting, there have been four new hires, with one of them resigning after two weeks of training, and three separations. Two of the separations were expected retirements, and one was a resignation to work in the private sector. There are currently 11 vacancies. Of these vacancies, five are natural due to retirements and resignations, and six are due to the referendum. There is also one current new hire in process, with a start date expected in May. There are currently two overlapping Police Officer hiring processes. One process currently has six candidates in the background step, and the other is currently accepting applications with the written and physical testing date scheduled for April 15, 2023. There are no more anticipated retirements for this year.

A discussion was also held regarding the promotion of Officer Olivia Erl to Sergeant, a position added via the referendum, from the promotional eligibility list adopted by the Police and Fire Commission in 2022.

Chief Rokus also provided an operational update. A discussion was held regarding the recruitment status of the other positions added via the referendum. The Law Enforcement Associate recruitment was successful, and was filled in March. The two full-time Community Service Officer positions recruitment is underway and the interviews will be conducted in two weeks.

A discussion was held on the status of the Mental Health Co-Response Coordinator. 2022 was the first full year it was active. In that year, there were 273 documented responses. Of those 273, only 4% resulted in an emergency situation, and less than 1% resulted in arrest, all of which were due to situations that legally required an arrest. The Mental Health Co-Response Coordinator has also recently expanded due to a partnership with the Department of Human Services. This expansion began last week and added nearly double the hours of coverage.

Chief Bell provided a personnel update. Since the last meeting in November, there have been two expected retirements. In February, five new Firefighters were hired. There are currently three vacancies, with two conditional offers with a tentative start date for June. There are two more anticipated upcoming retirements, one of them being the Fire Chief. The Department also expects two to three more retirements by the end of the year.

A discussion was held regarding the promotion of Captain Jamie Burkhardt to Battalion Chief. Commissioner Ducksworth-Lawton made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Wahlstrand, and passed unanimously, to approve the promotion of Jamie Burkhardt. Chief Bell also recommended Lieutenant Jeremy Stary be promoted to Fire Captain, a vacancy created by Jamie Burkhardt's promotion to Battalion Chief. Commissioner Ducksworth-Lawton made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Finn, and passed unanimously, to approve the promotion of Jeremy Stary.

A discussion was held regarding the upcoming promotions of Firefighter Nick Ledin and Firefighter Taylor Quinnell to Lieutenant, based on the promotional eligibility list already adopted by the Police and Fire Commission. Commissioner Cronk asked why two of the promotions required approval and the other two did not. It was discussed that it was previously decided that only positions Captain and above require a motion, while the others are promoted via the eligibility list already approved by the Police and Fire Commission.

Chief Bell also provided an operational update. A discussion was held regarding the Station 6 remodel. The plan is to fill the referendum positions by June in order to staff the remodeled station fully. The Department also intends to hold an open house for the public in June so that they can see the new station. Chief Bell asked if anyone had any questions, and Commissioner Wahlstrand asked if there were any updates on the Altoona Fire Department. None were noted at this time. Commissioner Ducksworth-Lawton also asked if the Department had any desire to add personnel for robots or drones in the future. It was discussed that our Police Department has access to this technology, so no stand-alone personnel are expected to be needed in the foreseeable future.

At 5:02 p.m., motion was made by Commissioner Finn, seconded by Commissioner Wahlstrand, and passed by unanimous roll call vote to go into closed session to discuss the Fire Chief recruitment process.

Police Chief Matt Rokus, Deputy Fire Chief Al Bertrang, and Deputy Fire Chief Jon Schultz left the meeting at 5:02 p.m.

At 6:57 p.m., motion was made by Commissioner Finn, seconded by Commissioner Cronk and passed unanimously to move into open session.

President Kincaid announced that, during closed session, it was determined that the Interim Fire Chief is not able to apply for the position of Fire Chief. Secondly, the timeline for the Fire Chief recruitment was finalized. Lastly, it was determined in closed session that Deputy Fire Chief Al Bertrang will serve as Interim Fire Chief until a new Chief is hired.

President Kincaid asked if there are any future agenda items and none were noted.

Motion was made by Commissioner Ducksworth-Lawton to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Wahlstrand and the meeting was adjourned at 7:03p.m.

The next regularly-scheduled Police and Fire Commission meeting is May 18, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Kelsey Brunner, Police and Fire Commission Secretary.