

FIFTEEN ROPE FERRY ROAD
WATERFORD, CT 06385-2886



PHONE: 860-442-0553
FAX: 860-442-0554
www.waterfordct.org

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Robert Tuneski
TOWN CLERK

Fire Services Review Special Committee

Minutes—Special Meeting June 18, 2025

Members Present: Robert Tuneski (BoF); Susan Driscoll (RTM); Tim Condon (RTM Public Protection & Safety Comm.); Matthew Keatley (RTM); Richard Muckle (BoS); Ronnie Williams (WFD); Chris Haley (Director, Fire Services); Steven Sinagra (Director, Emergency Management)

Members Absent: Todd Patton (Chief, Goshen Fire Co.); Mark Greczkowski (WAS Director of Operations)

Also present: John Mariano (Chief, Cohanzie Fire Co.)

1. Call to order: Chair Tuneski called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. Public comment:

3. Previous Minutes: Motion by Condon, second by Driscoll, to approve the May 1, 2025, minutes as presented.

Voice Vote: Unanimous.

Motion by Condon, second by Driscoll, to approve the May 29, 2025, minutes as presented. Voice Vote: Unanimous.

4. Consideration of FSRSC's charge from the RTM (6/7/21):

a. Review/discuss Director's comments: Haley read from his brief written statement (*attached*) and promised ongoing communications and feedback as work continues on the final report. He and the Chair are both optimistic that the final version will be complete by the end of this fiscal year (FY25).

Brief discussion on the 300+ pages of response time records Williams received just before the meeting. He explained that the records show response times and the number /names of responders for each fire incident during the last six years. The system does not allow for creation of electronic files, so Condon will scan the pages so the committee will have a searchable pdf. Sinagra confirmed that the data in the hard copy also exists online in other town systems.

Haley cautioned that earlier recordkeeping was not as accurate as that done in the past year, the years around Covid present anomalies, and that in his first weeks on the job, he put Fire Services on the townwide Fleetio system. Sinagra noted there are changes planned for the federal incident reporting system (NFIRS) that will incorporate EMS into the system, and while the transition will take some time, the updated system will allow users to ask specific questions and customize reports to provide relevant information.

Haley also offered to provide information promised by his predecessor during meetings last year—the latest ISO report (either 2016 or 2021), amended volunteer incentive plan quarterly reports that will include the number and type of calls responded to by incentive payment recipients, and updated records for rolling stock, including the volume of budget transfers required for unexpected repairs in the second half of FY25.

In response to questions about our current status, Haley noted that we have 22 apparatus but three are out of service and one of them is a ladder truck that's been out of service, with costly repairs, for the last 7 months. He added that with our current staffing setup that restricts 24/7 coverage and the bulk of responses to just two stations, there are great deviations (of up to 800%) between usage and mileage of individual apparatus. As an example, he cited two apparatus of similar age that are stationed at Jordan and Goshen, with mileage of 88,000 and 33,000 respectively. He is looking to

extend life and replacement timelines by rotating lower-mileage apparatus into the core stations and fleet management, and believes we can meet ISO standards by utilizing other "elevatable" apparatus as temporary replacement. As we move forward to staffing a third station 24/7, he would like to utilize the certified mechanic on staff in Public Works for annual inspections and smaller repairs/maintenance to save dollars and reduce down time. Committee consensus to Condon's suggestion that Haley's rolling stock plan be included in the final report and that QH be named as the third core station since it is the furthest from the others and Oswegatchie is crossed by four district coverage lines. Haley will write up his rolling stock plan, and added that he is talking to New London about establishing automatic mutual aid to QH. Condon cautioned that such accreditation aid (requiring response by certified crews) would be billable to the town.

Discussion segued to the town's fleet management plan overall, with Condon and Driscoll noting that the plan was a huge improvement over previous practices and provides some budget stability but it has not been reviewed or updated since its implementation in 2011. Cost projections have not kept up with inflation, presumed lifespans and repair cycles have not been validated, allowances for higher costs and delivery timelines for fire apparatus have not been incorporated, and the annual \$1 million budget allotment may no longer be sufficient or realistic. Condon explained to Haley that a case for revision could be part of the final report and that FSRSC members would advocate to their respective boards for fleet management plan revisions.

Sinagra provided an update on the progress of the communications/radios upgrades. The town submitted a bonding request for the balance of the upgrade costs; at this time, he's hoping the State Bonding Commission meeting scheduled for June 27 will not be cancelled—and that Waterford's request will be on the agenda. He explained that we will only need three towers with the new and the state will be upgrading the tower on Miner Lane, which will provide a boost in service to Goshen and that while the new system requires a contract with Motorola, which tends to have higher prices, the \$800,000 for the new mobiles is offset by \$570,000 incentive for the Motorola package. He also explained that we are building a separate system that will tie in to the state system, so that we'll still be okay if the state system goes down.

5. Next meeting: Consensus to tentatively schedule next meeting for Wednesday, June 25, at 6:00 p.m. Location tbd.

6. Adjournment: Motion by Muckle; second by Condon to adjourn at 7:55 p.m. Voice vote: Unanimous.

Submitted by
Susan Driscoll, FSRSC Secretary

encl: Haley Comments

I have had the opportunity to review the report prepared by the Fire Services Special Review Committee. I commend the Town of Waterford for its commitment to look internally, and as an industry professional, I look forward to continued discussions.

In my opinion, the report best serves as the start of a conversation, not the end. I applaud the committee's efforts to produce the report despite a number of challenges, including turnover of department leadership and committee membership. This is coupled with a department that is navigating a very dynamic period and has continued to evolve out of necessity throughout the period the committee has been in session.

The report is a general commentary that can be used to explore the department and its operations further. In the spirit of prior internal reviews of the Waterford Fire Department, I would recommend that the document be revisited, reviewed, and reissued on an agreed-upon number of years.

As our office continues in its transition, amidst the department's overall transition, we are working to improve reporting and tracking modalities, bring a new perspective on many of the topics reported in the document, and begin to train our sights on the future while continuing to navigate the present.

Most importantly, I view this report as a compass, more so than a map. I am grateful that the report signals a general belief that coincides with mine: that while much progress has been made, we have many more opportunities ahead of us and that pursuing those opportunities should remain constant.

As I am joining the team in the fourth quarter, I feel it would be inappropriate to restructure the entire report based on my feedback. Instead, I offer my openness to questions from the committee members on the topics that they would like further feedback on as you conclude this report in these final meetings.

Christopher M. Haley
Director of Fire Services
Town of Waterford