

**TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA  
FIRE COMMITTEE  
Monday, April 1, 2019**

**Municipal Complex, Committee Meeting Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Bob Brimmer, Chair; Jim Owens,  
Kevin Cunnane and Tom O'Rourke

**Staff Present:** Eric DeMoura, Fire Chief Mike Mixon

Mr. Brimmer called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

**1. Approval of Minutes from the March 4, 2019 meeting**

*Mr. Brimmer moved for approval of the minutes; motion seconded by Mr. Owens. Motion carried unanimously.*

**2. Public Comments**

There were no Public Comments.

**3. Budget Review FY 2020**

**a. Fire Department operating expenditures**

Mr. Brimmer recognized Mr. DeMoura to present highlights of the Fire Department FY 2020 Budget being proposed for next year. Mr. DeMoura stated that the Fire Department is requesting an overall increase of \$420,000, which represents about 3 percent, increase over the current year's budget. Included in this amount is the six firefighters that were hired this fiscal year and \$100,000 in grant money that has been applied for and waiting approval. Also included in this budget is the cost of uniforms, radios and other items needed to support the new firefighters. Salaries and other benefits include an on average of 4 percent increase that is being proposed for next year. A mandatory 1 percent for retirement is also included. Mr. DeMoura stated that if this budget is passed, overtime should decreased by \$112,000, which does not reflect a decrease in the

level of service. The Fire Department as well as other departments inflated overtime purposely to deal with what the Town of Mount Pleasant (TOMP) had to do to deal with Hurricane Florence last September. The number that appears now is the same as what it was at the start of the last fiscal year.

**b. Fire Department Capital and Maintenance Expenditures**

Mr. DeMoura called attention to decreases in certain areas of the budget due to adjustments of items being moved into Capital. This included items such as equipment, supplies, general supplies and repairs which is consistent with other budgets brought forward to Fire Committee members today. Mr. DeMoura said that other budget highlights contained four replacement vehicles, including the replacement of a Squad vehicle. The Squad would be the largest and most significant vehicle replaced. Mr. DeMoura explained that other Capital Projects included the replacement of Fire Station 4 and that money had been added to the proposed budget to supplement what has been bonded. Mr. DeMoura stated that when all is done, the Town is prepared to have 6.25 million dollars to support that project. There is \$150,000 added in the proposed budget for the traffic preempted devices including \$312,000 that will be fully funded. The most significant current project remaining is the Fire and Police Training Facility. The Town is moving forward, as best as it can, in piecing together improvements for it. Mr. DeMoura ended the highlights by saying that the Fire Department is increasing the level of service by the addition of more fire service personnel.

Mr. Owens asked if there were any financial contingencies for overtime or unforeseen circumstances. Mr. DeMoura stated there was a general contingency fund for the Town that funds could be pulled from in the state of an emergency, but the proposed budget is what the Fire Department was anticipating for the coming year.

Mr. Cunnane asked if, during the hurricane there was anyone ordered to stay over, that was not paid. Chief Mixon stated there was not. Hourly

employees were paid their regular rate until they hit their overtime threshold, which is 106 hours bi-weekly. After that, they were paid at the overtime rate for the rest of their hours.

Chief Mixon said that salary employees were not paid any additional rate, because that is considered part of their job and they are exempt.

Mr. Cunnane asked if that included Battalion Chief or Captains and above. Chief Mixon replied that it was Battalion Chiefs and above.

Mr. Cunnane asked if there was a delay in firefighters getting their correct pay. Chief Mixon replied there was not. The next pay check received included all time worked.

Mr. Cunnane stated that he felt he must raise this issue every year, whether if gets the support of Council or not. He asked whether there was way to get additional hazardous duty pay for police and firefighters that were working around the clock in comparison to the rest of the Town. Mr. Cunnane stated that he had been told that an increase must be across the board, but he felt the police and firefighters' jobs were more dangerous. He wondered if doing something extra for them, is anything that the Town has ever investigated.

Mr. DeMoura stated that he did not ever recall looking into it and in his opinion, if this were the desire of Town Council, it would be better to just increase the pay for those employees.

Mr. Cunnane asked if this meant to bump up the titles with more pay.

Mr. DeMoura stated, if they felt that the nature of the job warrants additional wages, then it should be straight pay increases. Then it would positively affect their retirement.

Mr. Cunnane said that he would like to put it on the record that people that are at risk of dying at their jobs should be treated differently than the rest of the Town. He stated, he knew that other people might not like him saying that, but that was ok.

Mr. Brimmer thanked Mr. Cunnane and asked if Mr. O'Rourke had any questions on the budget to which he replied, he did not, and the budget looked good.

Mr. Brimmer asked whether the budget included everything such as supplies and training with the six previous firefighters that were hired and the remaining six to be hired. Chief Mixon replied that it was considered, and a line item was added to uniforms to cover protective gear and other daily uniforms, if needed.

*Mr. O'Rourke made a motion that the Fire Department Budget be approved as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Cunnane. After no more discussion, Mr. Brimmer called for a vote. The proposed Fire Department Budget was passed unanimously.*

Mr. Brimmer stated he wanted to thank Mr. Cunnane for bringing the issues forward earlier, during which much discussion was previously held and that made today easier.

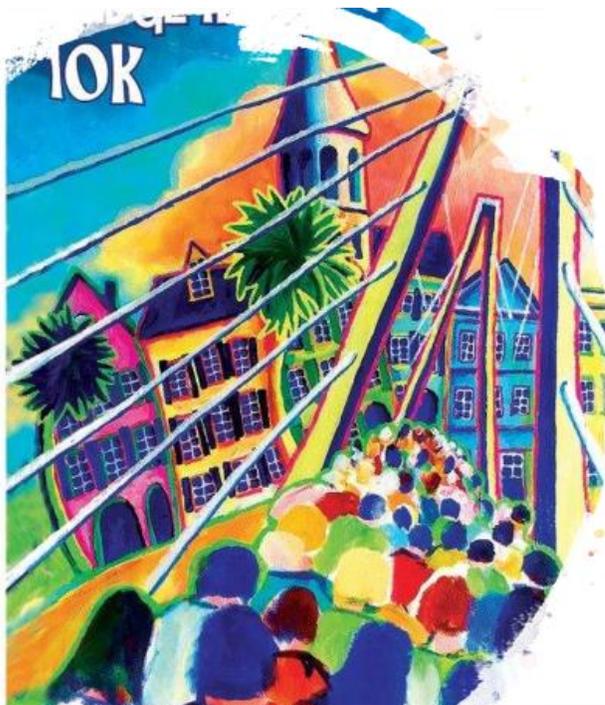
#### **4. Overview regarding the Emergency Management Projects, Initiatives, and General Operations**

Emergency Manager, Amanda Knight presented slides to inform the Fire Committee Members of what the Town was doing and where it stood in terms of Emergency Preparedness.



## Emergency Management Update

April 1, 2019



### Cooper River Bridge Run

- Over 31k runners
- Expo, Kids Run, Taste of Bridge Run, Bridge Run
- 22 partner organizations
- Private, Non-Profit, Local, State, Federal

## Emergency Management Planning Team

- Hazard Identification & Threat Assessment
- Training & Exercise
- Continuity of Emergency Operations
- Continuity of Government
- Hazard Mitigation & Preparedness
- Recovery
- Community Outreach





**5. Consideration of Resolution to support H. 4147 commonly known as the Firefighter Cancer Bill**

Mr. Cunnane gave the Fire Committee an overview of the Firefighter Cancer Bill. He stated this issue has been going on for about 20 years, across the country and there are 6 or 7 states that currently do not have a presumption that cancers in firefighters have occurred in the line of duty. At one point, it was proven, there were 13 types of cancers appearing in firefighters. This was tremendously greater than in the rest of the population. It was decided that if a firefighter was diagnosed with any of those 13 cancers, it was presumed to have happened in the line of duty. This allows Workers Compensation to consider it as any other work place injury. This takes the worry off the shoulders of the firefighters and their family. Because there is the presumption, they do not have to fight to prove it was work related. Mr. Cunnane stated that South Carolina is one of the states that has nothing, and the passage of the Firefighter Cancer Bill in Columbia looks good this year. Mr. Cunnane urged everyone to

adopt a simple resolution saying we support the firefighters and their families when they need us the most.

Mr. Brimmer asked Chief Mixon for his thoughts on this.

Chief Mixon presented slides to the Fire Committee with information on the Firefighters Cancer Bill and the preemptive steps already taken by MPFD.



# Firefighter Cancer

## Risk Factors

- Cancer caused 61% of career firefighter line-of-duty deaths from 2002-2016 (IAFF).
- Firefighters have a 9% higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% higher risk of dying from cancer (CDC/NIOSH).
- Testicular cancer - 2.02 times the risk
- Mesothelioma - 2.0 times greater risk
- Multiple myeloma -1.53 times greater risk



# Cancer Reduction Initiatives

## MPFD

- Hood swap program
- Face and hand wipes
- Two seats of firefighting PPE for each person
- Post-fire decontamination
- Machine washable SCBA straps





Chief Mixon stated that the Firefighters Cancer Bill adds cancer coverage under Workers Compensation, with the stipulations the Firefighter must be continuously employed for 10 years, presumes that death from cancer was job related, unless rebutted by other evidence. Although it has not been defined yet, other states use smoking as a reason that cancer was not caused by job related issues.

*Mr. Owens made a motion to forward this to Town Council to consider this resolution and adopt it accordingly; motion seconded by Mr. Cunnane.*

Mr. Brimmer stated that while he supported spirit of this Bill, he would like to make statements regarding the financial impact it could have on the Town. He stated by adding cancer to Workers Compensation, it could impact the amount of money that the Town is liable for in pay outs. Mr. Brimmer asked Dana Henderson, Risk Manager to relay what she knew about Workers Compensation and the financial impact the Firefighters Cancer Bill could have on the Town.

Ms. Henderson stated that the difference in having cancer covered as a presumptive injury under Workers Compensation instead of the health plan, would be the firefighter would be due loss wages for the time they are seeking treatment or permanently disable. It could be a maximum of 500 weeks of wages or approximately 10 years. Mr. Henderson went on to say, if they have a permanent, partial or total disability from the injury, whether it's scarring, loss of a body part, or loss of function of a body part; it would go into Workers Compensation calculations for the state and the injured firefighter would be entitled to a disability award that is based on a certain number of weeks of wages. Ms. Henderson stated that even though the Town pays anyway, if it is Health Insurance or Workers Compensation, they are some additional costs associated with it being under Workers Compensation and statutory benefits that the firefighter would be entitled. The firefighter would be entitled to lifetime care as that would reduce his period of disability as determined by an authorized medical physician. It would be an ongoing care, the Town would cover for life.

Mr. Brimmer thanked Ms. Henderson for the information and stated that he supported this.

Mr. Cunnane stated that in his experience, this would get firefighters into Workers Compensation quicker, if a career ending injury occurred and there was a safety net through Workers Compensation available.

Mr. Brimmer stated that part of what the Firefighters Cancer Bill ensures is, if a physical is not done when the firefighter is hired, then it is presumed that things were fine when they were hired. Mr. Brimmer asked if all firefighters get a physical upon being hired so that the Town has that information.

Chief Mixon responded that all town firefighters are required to have a physical, but he would have to investigate as to whether the current physical that is required, meets the requirements needed in relations to the Firefighters Cancer Bill.

Mr. Cunnane stated he was involved in crafting this somewhere else 20 years ago. He stated if there was a blood test administered during the physical and the firefighter was hireable, there was a presumption that they were healthy, because nobody would hire a firefighter whose blood results were showing cancer. That gives the firefighter the stamp of approval, that they are cancer free and if they end up with cancer after 10 years, then they got it on the job.

Since there was no more discussion, Mr. Brimmer called for a vote to send this to Town Council. *The motion passed unanimously.*

## **6. Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Minutes submitted by:

Terri Chadwick

4/3/2019