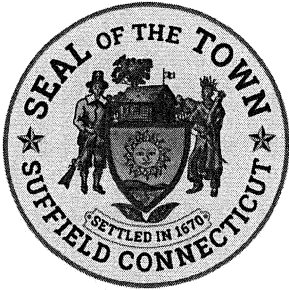


2026 FEB 17 PM 1:00

REC'D BY: EWB



TOWN OF SUFFIELD

Meeting Minutes
Fire Commission
Regular Meeting

Meeting Date: February 10, 2026

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Hybrid (In-Person and Zoom)
Suffield High School, Media Center, 1060 Sheldon Street, West Suffield, CT 06093

In Attendance: Commissioner Bucior, Commissioner Christian, Commissioner O'Hurley, Commissioner Prusi, Commissioner Thibedeau, Commissioner Vindigni, Chief Cunningham, Recording Secretary Shannon Foley

Others In Attendance: First Selectman Colin Moll
Approximately 20 attended via Zoom
Approximately 11 attended in Person

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Commissioner Thibedeau.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Public Comment

Scott Gilmartin, 759 Hale Street
Kristin Keane, 820 Copper Hill Rd

Election

At the January meeting, it was noted that several Commissioners were not familiar with the three documents referenced by Commissioner Thibedeau which included Special Act 89; the Suffield Fire Commission Laws and Regulations (Revised 2024); and the Suffield Fire Commission Laws and Regulations (original 1998 version) and did not have access during discussion held. To ensure all members had access to the same materials for this month's meeting, Commissioner Thibedeau distributed a prepared packet to each Commissioner, and a few were also available for the public.

Commissioner Thibedeau specifically referenced Section 4 of Special Act 89 and reminded Commissioners of their responsibility to educate themselves regarding the Commission's governing authority. Commissioner Thibedeau read aloud the provisions outlining the scope of authority and responsibilities vested in the Fire Commission.

It was further stated that, with no Chairman currently appointed, Commission business is at a standstill, including matters related to hiring, termination, discipline, budget approvals, equipment refurbishment, and other administrative actions. Commissioner Thibedeau emphasized the importance of electing a Chairman to refocus on the Commission's priorities to effectively serve the Fire Department and resume regular operations.

Commissioner Thibedeau began the Election of Chairperson.

Commissioner Christian discussed having previously tried to schedule meetings in December after cancelling the Regular Scheduled Meeting and was unable to have a quorum and therefore no meetings were held. He further expressed his displeasure that Commissioner Thibedeau proceeded with the February 6, 2026 Special Meeting.

Commissioner Thibedeau stated the reason a Zoom link was provided was to best accommodate all schedules and specifically allow remote participation for the Special Meeting.

During the discussion, Commissioner Christian demanded an apology from Commissioner Thibedeau regarding the scheduling matter. Commissioner Thibedeau declined, stating that the Zoom option had been intentionally provided to accommodate all members and to ensure participation if physical attendance was not feasible.

Commissioner Vindigni read a statement of support for Commissioner Prusi to be nominated for the position of Chairman (see attached).

Nominations for the position of Chairman

Commissioner Vindigni nominated Nathan Prusi for the position of Chairman.

Vote of Nathan Prusi for the position of Chairman

Vote: 3 in favor (Prusi, Thibedeau and Vindigni) and 3 opposed (Bucior, Christian and O'Hurley).

Commissioner Bucior nominated Paul Christian for the position of Chairman.

Vote of Paul Christian for the position of Chairman

Vote: 3 in favor (Bucior, Christian and O'Hurley) and 3 opposed (Prusi, Thibedeau and Vindigni).

Commissioner Vindigni for a second time nominated Nathan Prusi for the position of Chairman.

Vote of Nathan Prusi for the position of Chairman

Vote: 3 in favor (Prusi, Thibedeau and Vindigni) and 3 opposed (Bucior, Christian and O'Hurley).

Commissioner Vindigni for a third time nominated Nathan Prusi for the position of Chairman.

Vote of Nathan Prusi for the position of Chairman

Vote: 3 in favor (Prusi, Thibedeau and Vindigni) and 3 opposed (Bucior, Christian and O'Hurley).

Commissioner Christian referenced Town Attorney Donnelly's emailed option to nominate First Selectman Colin Moll as Interim Chairman of the Fire Commission in order to allow the Commission to continue conducting Town business and to provide ongoing support to the Fire Chief, Fire Department, and residents.

Commissioner Prusi requested the opportunity to ask several questions of First Selectman Moll for the record. First Selectman Moll agreed.

Commissioner Prusi asked whether, if appointed temporary Chairman, First Selectman Moll would honor any Commissioner's request to place an item on the agenda, and that such requests would be added in good faith. First Selectman Moll responded that he would.

Commissioner Prusi further asked whether, if appointed temporary Chairman, First Selectman Moll would ensure that an executive session be scheduled at the next Fire Commission meeting with the Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association Board of Directors and a representative of the Police Department to discuss a personnel matter. It was noted that the Board of Directors had previously requested such a meeting; however, the request was denied on the basis that there was purportedly, "insufficient interest." First Selectman Moll agreed.

Commissioner Prusi also requested confirmation that the budget would be placed on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting, and that at each subsequent meeting until a permanent Chairman is elected, an election would be held for Chairman. It was acknowledged that First Selectman Moll serves as a non-voting member of the Commission. First Selectman Moll agreed.

Discussion ensued among the Commission members regarding their input on future agenda items and a potential future meeting with the SVAA.

Commissioner Christian nominated First Selectman Colin Moll for the position of Interim Chairman.
Vote of First Selectman Colin Moll for the position of Interim Chairman
Vote: 5 in favor (Bucior, Christian, O'Hurley, Prusi and Thibedeau) and 1 opposed (Vindigni).

Adjournment

First Selectman Colin Moll made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:49 p.m. Commissioner Prusi seconded the motion.
Vote: 6-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Shannon Foley
Recording Secretary

Amanda Thibedeau
Fire Commission Secretary

See Attachments:

- (1) Special Act #89
- (2) Suffield Fire Commission Laws and Regulations (Revised 2024)
- (3) Suffield Fire Commission Laws and Regulations (Original 1998)
- (4) Email from Town Attorney Derek Donnelly regarding the option of Ex Officio/Temporary Chairman First Selectman Colin Moll
- (5) Commissioner Vindigni's Read Statement of Support

It is further noted that upon request of Lisa Walters with the IT Department for the Zoom meeting recording of the February 10th, 2026 Fire Commission Meeting by Shannon Foley for the purpose of transcribing the minutes, Recording Secretary Foley stated Lisa Walters informed her the Zoom recording had been lost and was deemed unrecoverable.

To: Colin Moll, First Selectman
CC: Suffield Board of Fire Commissioners
From: Derek Donnelly, Town Attorney
Re: Board of Fire Commissioners Chairmanship
Date: February 3, 2026

As the Board of Fire Commissioners ("Fire Commission") is at a stalemate with respect to the election of a Chairman, you asked that I look for other options.

As background, at its last meeting, the Fire Commission failed to elect a Chair. The Fire Commission has six voting members and the vote for Chairman ended in a 3-3 tie. Despite the stalemate, the Fire Commission did elect a secretary. If no elections had taken place, the Chair would continue to preside over future meetings until new officers were elected. However, since a secretary was elected, the Secretary as the only officer, must call and preside over future meetings until a Chair is elected.

Unfortunately, until the election has taken place, future meetings can only have the limited purpose of electing a Chair. The Fire Commission can do no other business until that occurs. See Robert's Rules Ch 10. Sec 47 duties of the Secretary #11 "In the absence of a President (Chair) and Vice President (Vice Chair), to call the meeting to order and preside until the immediate election of a chairman pro tem."

As the stalemate is likely to continue, you asked that I look at other options for electing a Chair. First, the officers must be members of the Fire Commission. Thus, the Fire Commission cannot elect a non-commissioner as chair. However, in certain circumstances, a commission does have the power to elect an ex officio member as Chair, unless otherwise restricted by law.

Under Connecticut General Statutes § 7-12a, the First Selectman is an ex-officio member of all Boards and Commissions unless otherwise restricted. The Town Charter also follows this statute (See Charter at §501).

Robert's Rules of Order § 49 makes clear that ex-officio members of a board have the same privileges as the other board members (provided that no other authority limits these privileges). These privileges include serving as an officer of a board. Here, General Statutes § 7-12a divests the First Selectman of any voting privileges, but that statute is silent as to the First Selectman's ability to serve as an officer of a town board or commission.

The question then becomes whether there are any other authorities pertaining to the Fire Commission that would restrict the election of a non-elected member as an officer.

The Suffield Fire Commission was created by Special Act of the General Assembly in 1945 (No. 89). Special Act No. 89 (1945) provides little guidance with respect to the election of officers (Section 3. "Said Board shall elect one of its number to serve as a chairman."). Of note, at the time it was created, C.G.S. § 7-12a did not exist and was later passed by the General Assembly in 1959.

Without clarity from the Special Act, we next turn to the relevant statute¹, the Town Charter and the Fire Commission Bylaws. Neither the statute, nor the Town Charter enlighten this issue. However, the Fire Commission Bylaws, while they do not directly address the election of officers, do incorporate Robert's Rules of Order by reference. Robert's Rules of Order is particularly helpful here.

Robert's Rules of Order § 49 pertains to ex-officio members. Under Robert's Rules, an ex-officio member has the same privileges as the other board members (provided that no other authority limits these privileges). These privileges include serving as an officer of a board. Here, General Statutes § 7-12a only divests the First Selectman of any voting privileges, but that statute is silent as to the First Selectman's ability to serve as an officer of a town board or commission. Absent language to the contrary from any other authority, there is no specific restriction on electing an ex-officio member as an officer of a board.

One could argue that the language in the Special Act that discusses six members of the Fire Commission and restricts the election of officers to "one of its number" could imply that only the six elected commissioners may serve as an officer. However, the Act must be read contextually with applicable law. To put it another way, when the legislature enacted C.G.S. § 7-12a, the result was that the number of commissioners was *de facto* increased to seven, and thus the "one of its number" provision, does not otherwise restrict the election of an ex-officio Chair.

In light of the foregoing, the Board of Fire Commissioners may, should they choose to do so, elect the First Selectman as its Chair. The First Selectman would serve on the board as its Chair but in an ex-officio, non-voting capacity. While General Statutes § 7-12a precludes the First Selectman from voting, it does not restrict the ability to hold an internal office of the board. As Chair, the First Selectman may preside over meetings, manage procedural matters, and exercise other leadership functions consistent with the Board's bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order, without exercising any vote.

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¹ In 1949, the General Assembly passed C.G.S. § 7-301, providing municipalities with the power to create their own Fire Department and Commission, however, it provides no further instructions on the election of officers.

SPECIAL ACT NO. 89 (1945), AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FIRE DEPARTMENT IN THE TOWN OF SUFFIELD.

SECTION 1. There is created in and for the Town of Suffield a board to be known as the board of fire commissioners of the Town of Suffield which is authorized to organize and maintain a town fire department in said town. Said board shall consist of six electors of said town, all of whom shall be resident taxpayers. Said commissioners shall be sworn to the faithful performance of their duties and shall serve without compensation, but their actual expenses and disbursements incurred in the performance of their duties shall be paid from the town treasury.

SECTION 2. At the next regular election to be held in the Town of Suffield the town shall elect by ballot in the same manner as other town officers three members of said board of fire commissioners, not more than two of whom shall be of the same political party, who shall serve for terms of two years and until their successors are elected and have qualified and three members of said board for fire commissioners, not more than two of whom shall be of the same political party, who shall serve for terms of four years and until their successors are elected and have qualified. At each biennial election thereafter the town shall elect by ballot in the same manner as other town officers three members of said commission, not more than two of whom shall be of the same political party, who shall serve for terms of four years and until their successors are elected and have qualified.

SECTION 3. Said board shall elect one of its number to be chairman and one of its number to be clerk and shall hold regular meetings and keep a record of the same. A majority of the members of the board shall constitute a quorum. Meetings shall be held upon the call of the chairman or of a majority of the members of the board. In the event of any vacancy upon the board, the board of selectmen may by majority vote fill such vacancy until the next biennial election at which a member shall be elected for the unexpired portion of the term of the member with respect to whom such vacancy has occurred.

SECTION 4. Said board shall have all the powers given by law to boards of fire commissioners and shall have general management, supervision and control of the fire department of the Town of Suffield and of the property and equipment used in connection therewith. Said board shall make all needful rules and regulations for the government of the fire department of the town not contrary to law and may prescribe suitable penalties for the violation of any of its rules and regulations including suspension or removal from office of any officer or member of said fire department. Said board shall have, within the limits of appropriations made for the purpose, exclusive authority to acquire and purchase apparatus, equipment and supplies for said department and to alter, repair and, with the consent of the board of selectmen, to sell or exchange such property. There shall be a chief and a deputy chief of said fire department and such other officers and such

FIRE DEPARTMENT

number of regular and supernumerary firemen as said commission may deem necessary. Said board shall have the sole power of appointment, promotion and removal of officers and members of said fire department under such rules and regulations as it may adopt for the purpose except that the first named chief and first named deputy chief of said fire department shall be appointed from the present personnel of the Suffield Volunteer Fire Department and in the appointment of regular and supernumerary firemen, preference shall be given to active members of the Suffield Volunteer Fire Department. The chief, deputy chief, other officers and firemen shall hold office during good behavior and until removed for causes upon written charges and after hearing.

SECTION 5. The fees, salaries, expenses and all costs of maintenance and equipment of said fire department shall be paid by the Town of Suffield in the same manner as other expenses of the town government. Said board shall have sole power to prescribe the manner in which the chief, deputy chief, other officers and the regular and supernumerary firemen shall be compensated for their services and may, in lieu of or in addition to salary, provide that compensation shall be determined by actual attendance at fires at such rate as said board and board of finance may fix.

SECTION 6. This act shall take effect when approved by the electors of the Town of Suffield at a regular or special meeting of said town duly warned and held for the purpose.

APPROVED, APRIL 25, 1945.

TOWN OF SUFFIELD
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
RULES AND REGULATIONS

I. BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

- A. The Board of Fire Commissioners shall carry out all the duties and responsibilities as granted in Special Act No. 89 and Act establishing a Fire Department in the Town of Suffield and by Town Charter.
- B. The Board of Fire Commissioners shall have general management, supervision and control of the department, shall have sole power of appointment, promotion and removal of officers and department members and shall establish such policies and procedures as needed for the smooth and efficient operation of the department.
- C. The Chief of the department shall be the senior official at the scene of an emergency. Commission members shall have no operational authority on an emergency scene and should not attempt to direct or control an emergency operation or fire.

II. RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

A. Types and schedules of meetings

- 1. **REGULAR MEETINGS** - The Commission shall establish its schedule of meeting dates, times and locations at or before its Regular Meeting held in November each year.

Regular Meetings may be suspended by vote of the Commission.

Annual schedule of Regular Meetings shall be posted in the Town Clerk's office by January 1st of each year.

- 2. **SPECIAL MEETINGS** - Special Meetings may be convened either by the Chairman or, upon the request of a majority of the Commission members.

Special meetings may be called up to 24 hours before the time set for the meeting by posting a notice in the Town Clerk's office. The notice shall state the time, place and business to be transacted. No other business may be transacted.

Commission members shall be notified no later than 24 hours before the meetings. Notice must be made by verbal contact or written notice.

3. **EMERGENCY MEETINGS** - Emergency Meetings may be convened either by the Chairman, or upon the request of a majority of the Commission members.

Emergency Meetings may be held to address critical matters without complying with the preceding notice requirements. However, minutes, including the reason for the emergency must be filed with the Town Clerk within 72 hours after the meeting

B. AGENDAS

1. A written agenda shall be made available by the Chairman, and posted in the Town Clerk's office of all Regular and Special meetings at least 24 hours before the meeting.
2. A copy of the agenda shall be transmitted to Commission members and others who have requested the same prior to the meeting. A fee may be established by the Commission to recover the cost to such individual requests.
3. Any Commission member desiring to have a topic listed on the agenda shall contact the Chairman at least 2 days prior to the meeting.
4. Any item can be added to the agenda at any Regular Meeting by 2/3 vote of the Commission members present and voting.
5. The order of the agenda may be modified, if necessary, by vote of the members present and voting.
6. Relevant public input regarding agenda items shall be allowed under the direction of the Chairman.

C. ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call to order.
2. Roll Call.
3. Minutes.
4. Expenditures.
5. Department Activity.
6. Old Business.
7. Election - Following the bi-annual Town Election, at its Regular December Meeting, a Chair and Secretary shall be elected. Terms of office shall be effective immediately.

Committees may also be established and committee chairs appointed

8. New Business.
9. Equipment.
10. Housing.
11. Personnel.
12. Adjournment.

D. MINUTES

1. Minutes shall be taken by the Commission secretary or such individual as designated.
2. The secretary or their designate shall prepare type-written minutes and file them in the Commission's official minute book and with the Town Clerk within 7 days following the meeting.
3. The minutes must contain the record of each member's vote upon any issue and be made available to the public on request within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays.

E. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

1. The Commission shall follow "Roberts Rules of Order" in conducting its meetings.
2. A majority of the members of the Board shall constitute a quorum.
3. The Chairman shall rule on points of order, and such ruling shall be final.
4. Meetings shall be held in accordance with the "Connecticut Freedom of Information Act."

F. CORRESPONDENCE

1. Correspondence shall be handled by the Chairman or in his absence a Commission member as designated by vote of the Commission.
2. No Commission member shall generate any official correspondence on behalf of the Commission without the knowledge and approval of the commission Chairman or vote of the commission.
3. Correspondence received by the Commission or its members shall be brought before the next meeting of the Commission.

G. FINANCIAL

1. The Commission members, with the assistance of the Chief, shall formulate an annual operating budget for each fiscal year.
2. The proposed budget shall be submitted in accordance with procedures and times specified by the Board of Selectmen, but not later than February 1 for the year.
3. The Chief of the Department shall be authorized to approve and expend funds within the approved budget as required in the daily operation of the department.
4. All policies and procedures adopted by the Town Treasurer and the Board of Fire Commissioners relative to expenditures shall be strictly adhered to.
5. The allocated budget shall not be exceeded except with approval by the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Board of Finance.
6. In the Absence of the Chief, the chief, with prior approval of the Commission Chairman may delegate some or all of his administrative duties to other department personnel, or the commission Chairman may assume the administrative duties of the Chief.

III. AMENDMENTS

- A. Any proposed amendment to the rules and regulations in Article I and/or II shall be submitted in writing at a Regular Meeting of the commission. Such proposed amendment shall thereupon be read and without further action shall be laid upon the table until the next Regular Meeting of the Commission when the same may be considered and acted upon, and such proposed amendment shall become part of these rules and regulations when adopted by vote of 2/3 of active members of the commission. All members shall receive a copy of the proposed change(s) before before voting thereon.

Approved: September 18, 1989

revised: November 18, 1993

Richard F. Miner, Chairman
Board of Fire Commissioners

&doc&

October 20, 1998

Town of Suffield
Board of Fire Commissioners
Rules and Regulations

I. BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

- A. The Board of Fire Commissioners shall carry out all the duties and responsibilities as granted in Special Act No. 89 and Act establishing a Fire Department in the Town of Suffield and by the Town Charter.
- B. The Board of Fire Commissioners shall have general management, supervision and control of the department, shall have sole power of appointment, promotion and removal of officers and department members and shall establish such policies and procedures as needed for the smooth and efficient operation of the department.
- C. The Chief of the department or his designee, shall be the senior official at the scene of an emergency. Commission members shall have no operational authority on an emergency scene and should not attempt to direct or control an emergency operation or fire.

II. RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

A. TYPES AND SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

- 1. REGULAR MEETINGS-The commission shall establish its schedule of meeting dates, times, and location at or before the Regular Meeting held in November each year.

Regular Meetings may be suspended by vote of the Commission.

The annual schedule of Regular Meetings shall be posted in the Town Clerk's office by January 1st of each year.

- 2. SPECIAL MEETINGS-Special meetings may be convened either by the Chairmen or, upon the request of a majority of the Commission members.

Special meetings may be called up to 24 hours before the time set for the meeting by posting a notice in the Town Clerk's office. The notice shall state the time, place, and business to be transacted. No other business may be transacted.

Commission members shall be notified no later than 24 hours before the meetings. Notice must be made by verbal contact or via email.

3. EMERGENCY MEETINGS-Emergency Meetings may be convened either by the Chairman, or upon the request of a majority of the Commission members.

Emergency Meetings may be held to address critical matters without complying with the preceding notice requirements. However, minutes, including the reason for the emergency meeting must be filed with the Town Clerk within 72 hours after the meeting.

B. AGENDAS

1. A written agenda shall be made available by the Chairman and posted in the Town clerk's office of all Regular and Special meetings at least 24 hours before the meeting.
2. A copy of the agenda shall be transmitted to Commission members and others who have requested the same prior to the meeting. A fee may be established by the Commission to recover the cost of such individual requests.
3. Any Commission member desiring to have a topic listed on the agenda shall contact the Chairman at least 9 days prior to the meeting.
4. Any item can be added to the agenda at any Regular Meeting by 2/3 vote of the Commission members present and voting.
5. The order of the agenda may be modified, if necessary, by vote of the members present and voting.
6. Relevant public input regarding agenda items shall be allowed under the direction of the Chairman.

C. ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call (silent)
4. Introduction of New Members
5. Secretary's Report
6. Minutes:
7. Financials:
8. Correspondence:
9. Calls & Activities:
10. Public Comment:
11. Old Business:
12. New Business:
13. Chief's Report:
 - Fire Apparatus:
 - Fire Stations:
 - Equipment:
 - Personnel:
 - Applications:
 - New Recruit Status:
 - Change in Member's Status:
 - Training:
14. Incident-Commander's Report:
15. Chairperson's Report
16. Adjournment:

D. MINUTES:

1. Minutes shall be taken by the Commission secretary or such individual as designated.
2. The secretary or their designate shall prepare type-written minutes and file them with the town Clerk within 7 days following the meeting.
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4. Meetings shall be held in accordance with the "Connecticut Freedom of Information Act."

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3. The Chief of the Department shall be authorized to approve and expend funds within the approved budget as required in the daily operation of the department.
4. All policies and procedures adopted by the Town Treasurer and the Board of Fire Commissioners relative to expenditures shall be strictly adhered to.
5. The allocated budget shall not be exceeded except with approval by the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Board of Finance.

6. In the Absence of the Chief, the chief, with prior approval of the Commissioner Chairman may delegate some or all of his administrative duties to other department personnel, or the commission Chairman may assume the administrative duties of the Chief.

III. AMENDMENTS

- A. Any proposed amendment to the rules and regulations in Article I and/or II shall be submitted in writing at a Regular Meeting of the commission. Such proposed amendment shall thereupon be read and without further action shall be laid upon the table until the next Regular Meeting of the Commission when the same may be considered and acted upon, and such proposed amendment shall become part of these rules and regulations when adopted by vote of 2/3 of active members of the commission. All members shall receive a copy of the proposed change (s) before voting thereon.

Revised: June 2024

Approved: July 2024

Paul Christian, Chairman

Board of Fire Commissioners

I wish to nominate Nathan Prusi to serve as Chair of the Suffield Fire Commission.

Commission Prusi has served on the Fire Commission since his election in 2023. Additionally, he has served on the Town's Social Services Commission since 2022 and is currently Vice Chair of that entity.

Commitment to service is a defining feature of Commissioner Prusi:

- He served our country as a United State Marine from 1998 to 2004, rising to the rank of Sergeant as an infantry assault section leader and was deployed to the Middle East.
- He presently serves as our community's youth as both an Assistant Scoutmaster of Troop 66, and Den Leader with Cub Scout Pack 266 in West Suffield.

Commissioner Prusi earned a Bachelor of Science degree, Magna Cum Laude in criminal justice from Sacred Heart University prior to enlisting in the Marine Corps.

Professionally, Nate has over 20 years of experience in the private sector in loss prevention, claims adjustment, human resources, and ethics and compliance.

All of these assets, make Nate eminently qualified to serve as Chair of the Suffield Fire Commission.

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