



TOWN OF SUFFIELD

Meeting Minutes Fire Commission Regular Meeting

Meeting Date: April 14, 2026

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Hybrid (In-Person and Zoom)
Suffield Police Station, 911 Mountain Road, Suffield CT 06078

In Attendance: Interim Fire Commission Chair, Colin Moll, Commissioner Bucior, Commissioner Christian, Commissioner O'Hurley, Commissioner Vindigni, Chief Gauthier, Recording Secretary Shannon Foley

In Attendance Via Zoom: Commissioner Prusi, Commissioner Thibedeau

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Moll.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Public Comment

None.

Discussion and Approval of March 10, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes

Chair Moll made a motion to approve the March 10, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes. Commissioner O'Hurley seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 4-2 in favor (Prusi, O'Hurley, Thibedeau, and Vindigni) and 2 opposed (Bucior and Christian).

Discussion and Approval of March 26, 2026 Joint Special Meeting Minutes (Fire Commission and Permanent Building Commission)

Commissioner Prusi made a motion to approve the March 26, 2026 Joint Special Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Vindigni seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 4-1-1 in favor (Prusi, O'Hurley, Thibedeau, and Vindigni), 1 abstained (Bucior), and 1 opposed (Christian).

Election of Fire Commission Chair

Chair Moll began the Election of Chairperson.

Nominations for the position of Chairman

Commissioner Thibedeau nominated Nathan Prusi for the position of Chairman. Commissioner Vindigni seconded the nomination.

Commissioner Bucior nominated Paul Christian and Nathan Prusi for the positions of Co-Chairs. Commissioner O'Hurley seconded the nomination.

Vote – Nathan Prusi for Chairman

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

The motion failed.

Vote – Paul Christian and Nathan Prusi for Co-Chairs

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

The motion failed.

Commissioner Thibedeau requested a legal interpretation from Attorney Donnelly regarding the feasibility of a co-chair structure and any applicable bylaw requirements. Commissioner Prusi and Vindigni opposed the co-chair concept, Commissioner Prusi stating that the public voted for change and that their intent should be honored.

Continued Discussion of Fire House HQ in regards to the Facility Master Plan

Chair Moll shared that programming needs and wants were compiled from Commissioner feedback for discussion. Most Commissioners expressed preference for either Option 1 or Option 2 (approximately 15,000 sq. ft.), with no preference indicated for Option 3. Responses varied regarding additional spaces, including public restrooms, a shared administrative office, Captain’s office, conference room, study/library area, exercise room, and training tower.

Commissioner Prusi deferred undecided programming items to the Chief and firefighters, noting they are best positioned to determine needs based on daily operational experience. Commissioner Thibedeau advocated for a shared administrative office/workstation model to support officer development, training, and future departmental needs.

Tecton Architects and Colliers Project Leaders met with firefighters on Monday, April 6, 2026, and conducted a QR code-based survey. The results will be presented at the Permanent Building Commission meeting on April 24, 2026. Chair Moll noted that Fire Commissioners are welcome to attend the meeting.

Updates from Task Forces

Career Recruitment: No updates reported.

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention: Commissioners Thibedeau and Vindigni plan to meet with Chief Gauthier and staff to review the volunteer recruitment packet and discuss recruitment strategies. The task force will schedule a meeting with Chief Gauthier.

Facilities: Commissioner Thibedeau reported that a meeting was held on April 7. The group is focusing on defining appropriate square footage requirements. All site options remain under consideration, and feedback from the firefighter meeting was positive. It was noted that approximately 70% of calls occur in the east and central districts. Facilities planning is progressing with continued site analysis and cost refinement.

New Apparatus: Chief Gauthier reported that the department will not be moving forward with the purchase of a new quint ladder truck. The task force will instead focus on acquiring a new engine to replace Engine 4.

Discussion on Review and Updating of By-Laws

Commissioner Prusi made a motion to table the discussion to the next month’s meeting. Commissioner Vindigni seconded the motion. Vote: 6–0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion on Review of Policy and Procedures

Chief Gauthier presented priority policy areas requiring development, noting gaps in onboarding, mutual aid agreements, long-term requirements, and disciplinary procedures. He prioritized the development of a new applicant procedure SOG, a probationary member policy, and disciplinary guidelines. He also reported meeting with Thompsonville Fire Department Chief Deskis to formalize a mutual aid agreement. He noted that Squad 21 will respond automatically to structural alarms and technical rescues.

Chair Moll identified additional policy needs, including callback procedures, promotional procedures, minimum call requirements, and disciplinary guidelines.

Commissioner Thibedeau requested consistent documentation of processes related to hiring, termination, and status changes in alignment with Special Act 89; and proposed forming a subcommittee to develop a Commission- driven framework so decisions are aligned with the Statutory responsibilities of governance guidelines.

Commissioners Thibedeau, Prusi, and Bucior volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Chief Gauthier offered to assist in drafting policies to ensure consistency with Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs). Commissioner Vindigni requested clarification regarding application requirements and disciplinary procedures for both volunteer and career firefighters.

Fire Chief's Report

Correspondence: None reported.

Financials: Chief Gauthier reviewed the current budget status, noting that all accounts are approximately 75% expended, which is appropriate for the fourth quarter. Facility repair and maintenance costs are primarily associated with Station 4 improvements. The Fire Academy tuition line reflects a \$8,285 expenditure for a cadet class. Additional funds remain available within the fire equipment budget for gear purchases. Chief Gauthier reported efforts to secure the remaining \$18,900 from the Zak Foundation grant; the department applied for \$25,000 and has been approved for \$6,100 to date. Overall, the department remains on track financially, with continued flexibility for equipment needs.

Personnel

Career – Approval of Recommended Full-Time Hires:

Chief Gauthier presented four career firefighter candidates for approval:

1. Joseph Griffin – Five years of firefighting experience, Firefighter I and II certified, Q endorsement, and Hazmat Technician certification.
2. Tyler Tabellione – Recommended for promotion from part-time to full-time, with 1.5 years of service and strong performance.
3. Nicholas Redick – Currently serving part-time in North Thompsonville and fully certified.
4. Zachary Corrado – Expected to complete recruit class on May 17; self-funded Fire Academy tuition.

Commissioner Prusi commented that he was able to participate in Joseph Griffin's interview and found him to be an excellent candidate.

Chief Gauthier reported that two of the approved hires have already begun employment, with the remaining two expected to start next month. He explained that Firefighter Tabellione's promotion to full-time creates one part-time vacancy, and a second part-time position has been approved for July 1, pending budget approval. He further noted that the new staffing schedule allows for immediate deployment with experienced partners and will ensure two firefighters per shift 24/7. Chief Gauthier stated the department is approaching its full staffing goal.

Commissioner Bucior made a motion to approve the hiring of all four career firefighter candidates. Commissioner Vindigni seconded the motion. Vote: 6–0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner O'Hurley revisited concerns regarding firefighters leaving after the department invested in training, referencing recent resignations following Fire Academy training paid for by the Town. He noted that he is researching Torrington Fire Department bylaws related to reimbursement requirements if members leave within a specified timeframe and stated he would report back with findings.

Volunteer-Approval of Recommended Volunteers: Chief Gauthier presented seven volunteer applications, in addition to three new applications recently received. He also reported that a task force of career and volunteer members is working to streamline the application process, and that the department is experiencing strong volunteer recruitment interest. Commissioner Vindigni commended Chief Gauthier and the fire department for their volunteer recruitment efforts.

Commissioner Vindigni made a motion to approve the hiring of volunteer candidates, concluding the vetting process outcomes of each applicant. Commissioner Thibedeau seconded the motion. Vote: 6–0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Calls and Activities: Chief Gauthier reported 24 calls for service in March, including 10 Squad 1-only responses. He stated an intent to discontinue Squad 1-only responses due to firefighter safety concerns, emphasizing that a partner is required for all responses. The department received mutual aid on four occasions.

Notable Incidents included:

- Motor vehicle accident at Mountain Road and North Grand due to a malfunctioning traffic signal
- Kitchen fire at 35 Cross Street; coordinated response with Suffield and Thompsonville
- Smoke investigation at 951 Riverview Terrace caused by a ballast failure
- Cross Street fire response with mutual aid from Windsor Locks and East Granby
- Smoke condition at 187 South Main Street
- Oven fire at 585 Thrall Avenue
- Grill fire with explosion at 570 Warnertown Road
- Chimney fire on South Street handled by Suffield crews
- Large brush fire at 219 Poole Street requiring mutual aid from East Granby, Windsor Locks, and Warehouse Point; no property damage reported

Chief Gauthier noted that while overall call volume was relatively low, several significant incidents were handled effectively, demonstrating strong mutual aid partnerships.

Apparatus: None reported.

Stations and Facilities: None reported.

Equipment: None reported.

Incident Commander Reports

None reported.

Chairman and Secretary Reports and Updates

None reported.

Executive Session: Review of Disciplinary Matter Continued

Chair Moll entertained a motion to enter Executive Session for review of a disciplinary matter. Commissioner Christian seconded. Vote: 3 in favor (Bucior, Christian, and O’Hurley) and 3 opposed (Prusi, Thibedeau, and Vindigni). The motion failed.

Commissioner Prusi requested to table the matter to the next meeting to allow for in-person discussion and stated his desire to meet with the SVAA prior to further consideration.

Chair Moll noted that no action was taken on the matter at this time.

Adjournment

Commissioner Bucior made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. Commissioner O’Hurley seconded the motion. Vote: 6–0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Foley
Recording Secretary

Amanda Thibedeau
Fire Commission Secretary