



Town of Ridgefield Fire Commission Minutes

APPROVED

December 10, 2025 at 5:00 pm

Town Hall – Large Conference Room, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Commissioners Present: Sean Connelly, Maureen Kozlark, Barbara Manners (remotely), Rudy Marconi, Geoffrey Morris

Commissioners Absent: None

Rudy Marconi called the meeting to order at 5 pm. Chief Duckworth reported the following;

1. Staffing and personnel updates - Two new fire fighter paramedics, Torres and Carlson, are working regular shifts as probationary firefighters. Two more, Linzante and Ellis, are completing the recruitment process and will also serve as paramedics. There are two more candidates starting the recruitment process in January.

Rudy Marconi asked for a FD staff chart with photos to be able to identify the firefighters.

2. Training and professional development - New hires join as recruits and go through onboarding and training in all the different roles served by Ridgefield firefighters including fire truck and ambulance handling, hose management, paramedic services, etc. Once training is completed, they become probationary and serve in a specific role during a regular shift. After several years of experience, a candidate can pursue career development such as a specialization in rescue, hazardous materials handling, emergency management services, and leadership. Each employee has a plan identifying skills development and roadmap for professional development that is Ridgefield relevant.

Rudy Marconi asked if there is an educational program in the state where we could recruit. Chief Duckworth explained that many recruits do in fact come from such programs because Ridgefield gets the students rotating through because it's a clinical rotation site. Students spend entire shifts shadowing Ridgefield firefighters. Other programs request that the firefighters serve as mentors to students. These opportunities allow Ridgefield FD to observe the student's soft skills to determine if they could be recruitment candidates.

Maureen Kozlark asked how the student rotations impact our staff. Chief Duckworth explained that there is no impact because students don't count as staff, are not paid, and serve under whoever is already on duty. No personnel are brought in for the students and all staff are trained during their recruitment and probationary periods to serve as mentors and evaluators.

3. Administration - Turnover is approximately 3 firefighters leaving the department annually for a variety of reasons. That is on par with industry standards.

Once the 8-person minimum policy went into effect, the BOS decided to comply with the requirement using overtime instead of new hires. Therefore, overtime expenditures are due only in part to staffing shortages following retirements and resignations, but also due to the decision to fill staffing needs with overtime instead of new hires. Now the FD is working to hire more staff to achieve 9-person shifts. The minimum remains 8 persons so that when 9 are on, and one calls out, there isn't an instant staffing crisis. The operating budget already funds 9-person shifts. But with the new hires, there is a projected reduction in overtime. \$82,000 overtime costs because of 7.5 unstaffed positions went down to \$65,000 after 2 hires; we expect quarterly decreases to \$43,000 then \$22,000.

The civilian dispatch expense is a separate line item but because a firefighter was sent to fill the vacancy, that expense was charged to the FD instead of Dispatch which artificially inflated the FD overtime. The new Dispatch manager and FD are working to bring dispatchers to train with the FD and have a fire officer available as a resource.

Sean Connelly asked to address response times. Chief Duckworth stated that two major factors contributed to tracking times. The first is that dispatch clocks show different times because some are not connected to the internet. The solution is proper clocks. The second issue is an inconsistency with the timer starting mechanism. Does the timer start when the call is answered? Does it start when dispatch sends the alert to the firehouse? Does it start when the firefighters leave the station? Does it start upon arrival at the address, or at the patient? The new dispatch manager will be creating protocols to ensure consistency.

Average response times for an ambulance to get from a firehouse to an address is less than 5 minutes 30 seconds; fire engines 6 minutes 44 seconds.

4. Apparatus and equipment – required maintenance is being completed as needed, and vendors are servicing the equipment. There appears to be a software issue with the minipumper but we are working with the vendor under warranty. Danbury had previously proposed combining the Danbury and Ridgefield truck maintenance facilities, but proposed

costs went beyond the desired scope. They are reviewing their proposed numbers in hopes of opening discussions again.

5. Facilities – Station 2 looks good.
6. Community engagement – 46 candidates are interested in serving on the new safety building committee and the FD is looking forward to working with the committee. The FD is working with the Boy Scouts and the high school on CPR, defibrillators, and other training. They will also work to help nursing home staff to improve safety responses in situations where someone has fallen and requires assistance to get up. There is an automatic response of calling 911 but it's unclear if it's lacking skill with lifting techniques.
7. Budget planning – Rudy Marconi reminded Chief Duckworth that the last week of January will be budget discussions and the BOS will need a list of financial needs for the existing buildings to sustain the department for a few years.

Maureen Kozlark motioned to adjourn the Fire Commission at 6:31 PM. Geoffrey Morris seconded. Motion carried 5-0.