

Minutes of the June 4, 2007, Michigan City Fire Merit Commission Meeting
(as amended)

Vice-President Chris Chatfield called the meeting to order. Commissioners present were Chris Chatfield, John Stimley, Louise Mock, and Bart Lombard. It was noted that a quorum was present. Others present included Randy Novak, Angie Starks, Virginia Martin, Paul Przybylinski, Phil Jankowski, Mark Baker, Chuck Oberlie, Dave Koss, Jeff Bruder, Pamela Krause, and Kathy Dubie.

Regarding the minutes, Bart Lombard said they should be corrected to reflect that John Skierkowski was not present. With this correction, on a motion by Bart Lombard and a second by John Stimley the minutes of the May, 2007, meeting were approved as amended.

Communications: Secretary Louise Mock read a letter from Captain James Young regarding a potential problem with the current evaluation process. After some discussion, it was agreed that Randy Novak will contact Capt. Young to explain that corrections in the process have been made. It was agreed that no action by the Commission is needed.

New Business: The Commission agreed that the budget for 2008 should be prepared using the same dollar amounts as in the 2007 budget. On a motion by Bart Lombard and a second by John Stimley the budget was approved and will be submitted to the Office of the City Controller for further action/consideration.

Bart Lombard suggested that the RFP for 2008 commission attorney should be put out now. Chris Chatfield agreed.

In response to a question from Paul Przybylinski, Chris Chatfield explained that the commission has not selected dates advertising for applicants. It was added that the current list does not expire until 2008.

Councilman Jankowski reported that Pat Boy will have codification information available at the July meeting.

Old Business: Attorney Krause stated that only the Commission has authority to hire new firefighters. A lengthy discussion regarding the recent hiring of three firefighters followed. Comments were made by Mayor Oberlie as well as several commissioners. John Stimley moved that Duane Harrigan, Joseph Zerbes, and Ryan Smith be hired as probationary firefighters. The motion was seconded by Bart Lombard and the motion passed.

Each new firefighter made a self-introduction and made brief comments.

The person ranked third on the hiring list was not accepted by PERF. Also, the fire academy will be held in August.

Commissioner Lombard asked Attorney Krause about the status of the member of the police department seeking transfer to the fire department. She reported that the ordinance clearly states the required process for hiring and does not include transfer from one department to the other. Commissioner Lombard asked if the commission would like to put this person at the bottom of the hiring list; however, Attorney Krause said that action would require a change in the existing ordinance.

Virginia Martin asked about the hiring process and was told that the fire chief usually advised the commission when a vacancy will be occurring so that the background check and other steps can begin. All hirings must be specified as being contingent upon passage of all required parts, including the PERF physical. No one should be sworn in until final authorization by the commission. Bart Lombard then moved that the motion made earlier by John Stimley be amended to reflect that the hiring of the three firefighters would be retroactive to May 29. The motion was second by Louise Mock. John Stimley agreed to the amendment. The amendment passed.

Bart Lombard moved that the person ranked #5 on the hiring list be contacted so that the process can begin. Chris Chatfield seconded the motion which failed by a 2 – 2 vote.

Angie Starks and Wes Scully asked how many people are on the eligibility list. They were told there are 50. Ms. Starks read from the consent decree regarding the hiring process and the number of blacks to be hired. She would like this issue addressed further at the July commission meeting. John Stimley said that the consent decree became null and void upon adoption of the fire merit ordinance in 1987. Mr. Lombard added that was one train of thought. Ms. Starks said it would be pro-active to resolve this question. In response to comments from Wes Scully, Mr. Lombard suggested that he address his concerns to the City Council as well as Judge Sharpe.

Firefighter Baker, present at today's meeting, is recovering from injuries sustained while riding on his motorcycle.

Randy Novak reviewed the contents of his Chief's report, including a suggestion that James Young, Rob Watkins, Mike Jasnieski, and Mike Drubert be given the "Life Saving Award." On a motion by Bart Lombard and a second John Stimley the crew, as listed above, be cited for this award. The motion passed.

Regarding Bart Lombard's question on whether or not the department is equipped to fight a 22 story fire, Randy Novak said there currently is a task force working on situation and additional money is being requested. Additionally, they are looking at possible new equipment.

There being no further business, on a motion by Bart Lombard the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Mock, Secretary
by: Kathy Dubie, Recording Secretary

