



MASSACHUSETTS FIRE DISTRICT 7

Chief Matthew Belsito, Sutton
Chairman
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Chief Robert Parsons, Spencer
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Treasurer
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Chief Richard Hamilton, Millbury
Secretary
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District 7 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes March 11, 2021 11:00 am Zoom Meeting

Present: Chairman: Chief M. Belsito, Vice-Chairman Chief R. Parsons, Treasurer: Chief W. Kessler, Secretary: Chief R. Hamilton; Chief B. Hickey, Chief M. DiFronzo, Chief M. Lavoie, Chief S. Coleman, Chief D. Kochanowski, Asst. Chief R. Silver

Fire Investigation Unit: Chairman Belsito explained the main purpose for the meeting was to discuss the District Fire Investigation Unit (FIU). He thanked Chief Silver for attending. Chairman Belsito previously discussed the issues with Chief Silver which included concerns regarding the team's social media pages. Chief Silver started off and explained he took down the Facebook and Twitter accounts set up for the FIU. It had been up for about 2 years and he didn't realize he should have asked the district first. Chief Kessler felt there were two parts; the social media and the release of fire causes. The causes should only be released through the chief of the department. He thought the team had a support role but it has taken off beyond that. Chief Silver explained they always discussed the cases with the troopers before releasing anything. Chief Kessler felt the troopers are probably in the believe that the team was acting with the OK from the district. Even if the troopers are involved, DFS sends a press release to the Chief for approval before using it. Chief Coleman stated we went through this 5 years ago, special teams would not have separate accounts, everything would go through the district PIO. Chief Silver agreed with doing that.

Discussion on a patch took place. Chairman Belsito explained there were many Chiefs that didn't realize a patch existed. Chief Kochanowski said he would take the majority of the blame. Chief Silver stated the patch is not on anything yet. The team discussed it and was planning on bringing it to the district for approval. They had planned on putting it on the helmets and maybe on jackets. Chief Kessler felt it was a unit of the district and shouldn't be separate. Chief Silver felt they are a support unit for the district and didn't want to take it too far. Chief Kochanowski wasn't in favor of a vehicle but felt other teams have patches. Chief Coleman felt the patch was harmless, it builds camaraderie, his groups each have their own patch. The trailers for the tech and dive each have a patch on them. He also didn't want to minimize the team's function. They provide a level of expertise, more than just support. Chief Kessler agreed they are good to have, but they need to work withing the IC structure. Chief Silver stated they don't always call the troopers but when they do, it gets turned over to them.

Discussion on a vehicle took place. Chairman Belsito referenced a letter received from Chief Silver that was forwarded to everyone. Chief Silver ran into Secretary of Public Safety Tom Turco through a mutual friend. In discussion the possibility of a vehicle came up.

He stated Auburn has a vehicle they bring and Millbury has one available they are working on putting some tools in. He felt a separate vehicle would add to that. Chief Coleman explained how a district vehicle works. Chief Kochanowski felt its not a bad idea, the district is scattered, if a host town doesn't send an investigator the truck doesn't roll, we should really be focusing on individual gear to assist the investigator. Chief Silver agreed with that. Chief Hamilton stated the towns with members could help the investigators with tools, as they have for other special team members. Chief Kochanowski had concerns with the levels of response, they don't need too many at an incident, maybe a split response per area, or have an on-call system, they need to discuss it at an FIU meeting. Chief Coleman suggested they look at how the hazmat team does it, they wait to see if someone close is responding before further members respond. He felt every team should look at their response, if someone hasn't attended in a long time, what are they doing to help. Chief Kochanowski felt some group trainings would be good, they do CFI trainings online individually. Chief Silver stated every member has responded to at least one activation and they did a training in Worcester. Answering Chief Coleman's question, Chief Kochanowski stated training is through the State Police, need basic and advanced to be a lead investigator, need to get police officers involved in trainings. Chief Silver stated everyone on the team is advanced and beyond except two members that are only basic. Chief Coleman questioned the cost to host an advanced class, and maybe invite D8 and/or D14. Chief DiFronzo suggested hosting a basic class to get more started and then an advanced class later and maybe have more ready. Chairman Belsito asked Chief Silver to compile everything and get back to the EBoard. Chief Silver agreed to do that and thought Chief DiFronzo's idea was good to get the number of members up and eventually split the team. Chief Hickey wanted to be sure becoming a member of the district team would not be a requirement to take the classes and Chief Silver assured him it would not.

Unforeseen Business: Chairman Belsito brought up a change in the practice of "holding the wall" at emergency rooms and asked Chief Coleman to explain the newest developments. Chief Coleman explained the average wait times of an hour, he described an incident with an Auburn crew that had to wait with a patient and were told to hold the wall, if the beds were still there the patient could have been transferred, they waited more than one and a half hours with a covid positive patient, they have been meeting with a working group monthly, about a dozen people on the call, Dr. Stacy Weisberg was on the call, Chief Coleman explained the situation with the hallways in the ER, Dr. Weisberg said it wasn't the covid issue why the beds are not back but a hospital flow issue, Chief Coleman responded back strongly and explained how this practice is tying up emergency response personnel on the ambulances keeping them away from their own communities, Auburn is going into Worcester every day now to handle calls because the city trucks are being held up the ER, there is never a vice president on the call, he explained representatives from districts 7, 8 and 14 decided to write a joint letter to the President of UMass with the concerns, there is more mutual aid due to crews being tied up in hallways, Westborough Chief Purcell has cost figures for them due to this practice, Chief Purcell will draft a letter for each district to review, Chief Lavoie backed up Chief Coleman's statement and had called for a meeting with UMass to discuss this, they agreed to set up a tent or something, Worcester Fire stopped responding to priority 3 calls unless a mutual aid ambulance is coming into the city, Chief Coleman mentioned St V's and Memorial Hospital still have hallway beds, only UMass removed them, he stated Chief Purcell stated a federal law which prohibits hospital from refusing patients, EMS has been continuing to treat the patients in the hallway, Chairman Belsito asked Chief Lavoie if the City Manager should be involved, Chief Lavoie will bring the draft letter to him, Chairman Belsito will wait for the draft letter and then move on.

Motion to adjourn by Chief Kochanowski and seconded by Chief Kessler: Unanimous
Adjourned 11:52