

2023 OCT 27 PM 4: 01

TOWN OF COLCHESTER
PUBLIC HEARING – Town Ordinances
October 26, 2023
MINUTES

Gayle Furman
GAYLE FURMAN
TOWN CLERK

Present: First Selectman: Andreas Bisbikos, Fire Chief Steve Hoffman, Brad Bernier, John Knapp, Richard Berkman: Gayle Furman.

First Selectman Andreas Bisbikos called meeting to order at 6:32p.m.

Gayle Furman, Town Clerk read the warning of the Hearing.

Motion to move Item #1, To modify Town Ordinances, Chapter 129 Article VIII. Colchester Tax Exemption Ordinance for Volunteer Firefighters as recommended by the Colchester Fire Chief. The Board of Selectmen at their October 5, 2023 meeting recommended sending the revisions to a Public Hearing on October 26, 2023 at 6:30pm at Town Hall 127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, CT for public comment and subsequent approval by the Board of Selectmen was made by R. Berkman and seconded by A. Bisbikos MOTION PASSED.

Discussion:

- J. Knapp stated he felt the proposed ordinance was a drastic change and takes away a lot of the credits that the volunteers do that incorporates more than just calls and shifts.
- R. Berkman stated that he does not get credits for taking a shift as a firefighter.
- After much discussion, A. Bisbikos asked Mr. Knapp what he was looking for. J. Knapp stated that he would like credit toward the meetings and activities that the Volunteers participate in.
- A. Bisbikos asked if the proposed ordinance was discussed with the volunteer firefighters. J. Knapp stated that it was discussed on an individual basis. S. Hoffman stated that it was mentioned at meetings and that everyone had access to it.
- A. Bisbikos asked if there was ever a vote or discussion on the ordinance. J. Knapp stated that there was not.
- A discussion was had on the age of retirement after 25 years of service and if they stay on, they will have to earn the credits to get the retirement pay.
- A. Bisbikos clarified with J. Knapp that he wants the volunteers who attend meetings and activities should get credit.
- A. Bisbikos asked J. Knapp if he wanted to recommend tabling this and come back with a more unified approach. He also asked if there are things he was okay with. J. Knapp responded that there were many things he was okay with. He also stated that the proposed ordinance only gives credit if you go on calls.
- S. Hoffman stated that it does not matter who goes to what call they will all earn points. J. Knapp was concerned that the older people cannot take certain calls.
- S. Hoffman stated that when he began there were many people signing in but not going on calls and would not get out of their seats. Since then things have changed drastically and people are getting up and taking calls. The proposed ordinance is to incentivize people to go on calls. He also mentioned that they do not have to retire after 25 years of

service, still get the \$1,000 incentive, and still take calls. His main concern is to staff the station and provide emergency services to the public.

- B. Bernier spoke to recommend the new ordinance.
- A. Bisbikos stated that he has heard from people concerned about the lack of response and the tax abatement for people not out on the scene. He stated that his first week in office he visited the Fire House and it was packed with volunteers. When a call came in no one got out of their seats to take the call. He also stated that he sees the importance of the meetings and maybe a percentage of them can earn points. The overall goal is to serve the public.
- B. Bernier suggested that the pieces the Company wants added could be met in the negotiations of their contract.
- Much discussion was had on people being able to volunteer for the Fire Department and not be a member of the Company.

A motion to bring the proposed ordinance to the Board of Selectman for final approval was made by Brad Bernier and Seconded by Richard Berkman. MOTION PASSED.

A motion to adjourn was made by Brad Bernier and seconded by John Knapp. MOTION PASSED.

The hearing adjourned at 7:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Gayle Furman
Town Clerk, CCTC, CMC