



Public Safety & Health Committee - Board of Representatives

Gloria DePina, Co-Chair
Chair

Scott Mirkin, Co-Chair

Anabel Figueroa, Vice

Committee Report

Date: Thursday, January 21, 2010

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Republican Caucus Room, 4th Floor Government Center,
888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford CT

The Public Safety & Health Committee met as indicated above. Present were Co-Chairs Mirkin and DePina and Committee Member Reps. Adams, Caterbone, Coppola, Giraldo and Pia. Absent/excused were Committee Member Reps. Figueroa and Martin. Also present were: Reps. Day and Taylor; Fire Chief Robert J. McGrath; Tom Alessi, Asst. Fire Chief; Chief Frank Jacobellis, Turn-of-River FD; Claudia Puff, resident; Robert Bennett and Stu Teitelbaum, Long Ridge FD; John Didelow, Belltown FD; Johnnie Lee, MD, Director of Health; Troy Jones, Erik York and Frank Passero, Glenbrook FD.

Co-Chair Mirkin called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and stated that Item No. 2 would be taken up first.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
2. PS28.003	REVIEW; radio patch issues.	REPORT MADE

Tom Alessi, Assistant Chief at Belltown (and a FCC licensed radio engineer and a Motorola certified radio systems engineer) gave a history of the radio communications system in Stamford:

- In 1989-90, the City put in a General Electric trunk radio system. The volunteers agreed to put the radios in the vehicles as long as they could hear the transmission through their pagers.
- The same configuration was used when the 2008 system was installed.
- In the summer of 2009, the ability of the pagers to transmit dispatch information was removed because the City's radio transmissions were interfering with a town in New Hampshire.

- Changes to the system have now been made, the interference has been eliminated, but the patch (to provide the transmission to the pagers) was never reactivated.
- This patch is extremely important to the volunteers because it allows them to hear what is going on at the fire site.
- Mr. Alessi spoke to Capt. Tomlin (who is in charge of the radio system and who was unable to attend the meeting), and Capt. Tomlin stated that he had been instructed by the prior administration to not re-install the patch. Now that there is a new administration in place, Mr. Alessi requested a letter from the Committee asking that the Mayor instruct Capt. Tomlin to re-install the patch.
- Mr. Alessi concluded by saying that turning on the patch is a simple process, he has a letter from the FCC confirming that this will not create a problem, and this is a critical issue to the volunteers.

Mr. Alessi provided copies of an email he sent to Mayor Pavia which describes the situation in further detail (see attached).

Mr. Teitelbaum stated that the patch is not the only problem. When the interference problem was solved, the power was lowered at the Sterling Farms tower, and now Long Ridge is unable to hear all transmissions. Mr. Alessi responded by saying that the power cannot be increased because the tower is operating at its maximum licensed power limit. Mr. Alessi added that there are dead spots, and this is a separate issue from the reactivation of the patch. Mr. Bennett added that before the Sterling Farms tower was installed, everything worked fine because prior to the new system, the City could operate simultaneously between downtown and Sterling Farms.

Co-Chair Mirkin stated that the agenda item involved the patch reactivation, and the issue of dead spots, power levels, etc. should be discussed at another time.

Rep. Coppola moved to approve the issuance of a letter to the Mayor, signed by Co-Chair Mirkin, requesting that the patch be reactivated. Said motion was seconded.

Fire Chief McGrath stated 1) the Police Department is in charge of the radios and Capt. Tomlin would be able to respond to these issues; 2) the patch has been removed, and the volunteers cannot listen to what is going on; 3) the Sterling Farms tower does not have enough power to open up the pagers at Long Ridge; and 4) in the interim, each Fire Department involved has been issued numerous hand held radios so that they can listen in.

Mr. Alessi responded that it is inconvenient for the volunteers to carry around large, awkward \$5,000 radios. They previously carried small, \$500 pagers. Chief McGrath noted that the technology is not there to make a small pager-sized handheld radios.

Co-Chair DePina asked why the prior administration would not reactivate the patch. Co-Chair Mirkin stated that he doesn't think it would be productive to look backwards, and that the Committee should just hear the issue and make a decision today.

An additional problem was mentioned with dispatchers forgetting to "hit a button" that opens up communication to the volunteers. Co-Chair Mirkin stated that this is another issue that will be taken up at a future meeting.

Rep. Coppola stated that the reactivation of the patch is a public safety issue that needs to be addressed. He does not know why the prior administration refused to reactivate the patch; reactivation would only allow the volunteers access to the radio transmissions. While some members may want to hear both sides of the issue, there is no other side – there is no downside to reactivating the patch. The Mayor asked that this Committee review the matter and issue a recommendation.

The Committee discussed including several items in the proposed letter: 1) requesting immediate reactivation of the patch; 2) including other issues that revolve, such as the Sterling Farms Tower power levels; and 3) asking the Mayor to set up a task force to look at the ancillary problems associated with the new system. Co-Chair Mirkin stated that the letter was going to be very simple – merely asking that the patch be reinstated immediately and advising the Mayor that other problems with the system will be taken up by the Committee in the future.

Rep. Caterbone stated that this is a bigger issue in that it appears that prior to the new 2008 radio system, we had a system in place that operated better than the new system. Millions of dollars were spent on this project, and it has created new problems. Mr. Caterbone requested that a review of the entire project be placed on next month's Steering Committee agenda.

Co-Chair DePina stated that she would abstain as she is not familiar with and has not received enough information behind the reasoning for turning the patch off in the first place.

The motion was approved by a vote of 4-0-3 (Reps. Mirkin, Caterbone, Coppola and Pia in favor; Reps. DePina, Adams and Giraldo abstaining).

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| 1. PS28.001 | PROPOSED ORDINANCE; <u>for publication</u> ;
prohibiting the burning of garbage, refuse, or
waste of any kind within any dwelling unit or on
any residential property. | COMMITTEE
APPROVED
6-1-0 |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|

Rep. Day stated that he and Rep. Mirkin have a constituent who is burning all kinds of trash and refuse (most likely refuse related to his business activities). The refuse is being burned in both an outdoor and an indoor fire place.

While searching for solutions to this problem, major inadequacies in the current outdoor burning ordinance were identified. The burning of garbage is not included at all in our ordinance; our ordinance is also not aligned with State statutes/regulations.

The proposed ordinance contains exemptions for outdoor recreational fire pits and barbecuing. Rep. Coppola mentioned outdoor smoking of meats and other similar situations are a problem under the current ordinance, requiring firefighters to extinguish the fires when complaints are received. Rep. Day explained that the proposed ordinance better addresses these types of situation as it provides a clear exemption for cooking food for human consumption.

A motion to amend the proposed ordinance by increasing the fine from \$90 to \$250 was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 6-1-0 (Reps. DePina, Mirkin, Caterbone, Coppola, Giraldo and Pia in favor; Rep. Adams opposed).

The main motion, to approve the ordinance (attached) for publication was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 6-1-0 (Reps. DePina, Mirkin, Caterbone, Coppola, Giraldo and Pia in favor; Rep. Adams opposed).

A brief discussion was held regarding how, or if, the City could address burning improper items in an indoor fireplace. Dr. Lee stated that unless criminal activity was occurring, he cannot see how he could access the inside of anyone's home. Rep. DePina stated that the Committee should not venture into violating residents' privacy; what someone is doing inside their home should be a private matter.

As Secondary Committee

Chair Mirkin stated that the Appointments Committee will interview both candidates on Tuesday, January 26, 2010.

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| 1. A28.002 | <u>Camera Review Committee</u>
Rev. Leroy G. Parker (D) New Appointment
817 Newfield Avenue
Stamford, CT 06905
Term expires: No expiration date | CONCUR WITH
APPOINTMENTS
COMMITTEE
5-1-0 |
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A motion to concur with the action of the Appointments Committee was made and seconded. Upon questioning by Co-Chair Mirkin, Parliamentarian Rep. Day ruled that this motion is valid. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-1-0

(Reps. DePina, Mirkin, Adams, Caterbone and Pia in favor; Rep. Coppola opposed).

2. A28.011

Chief of Police

Robert A. Nivakoff
c/o Stamford Police Department
805 Bedford Street
Stamford, CT 06901
Term expires: 11/30/13

**CONCUR WITH
APPOINTMENTS
COMMITTEE
5-1-0**

A motion to concur with the action of the Appointments Committee was made and seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-1-0 (Reps. DePina, Mirkin, Adams, Caterbone and Pia in favor; Rep. Coppola opposed).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Mirkin, Co-Chair