



## ***Public Safety & Health Committee - Board of Representatives***

Gloria DePina, Co-Chair  
Chair

Scott Mirkin, Co-Chair

Anabel Figueroa, Vice

# **Committee Report**

**Date:** Thursday, August 26, 2010

**Time:** 7:00 p.m.

**Place:** Legislative Chambers, 4<sup>th</sup> 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 and Giraldo. Absent or excused were Committee Member Reps. Figueroa and Pia. Also present were Reps. Summerville and Taylor; Captain Tomlin, Stamford Police Department; Chief McGrath and Deputy Chief Smith, Stamford Fire and Rescue; Chief Didelot, Belltown Fire Department; Brian Teitelbaum, Stamford Fire & Rescue; Stuart Teitelbaum, representing Chief Bennett, Long Ridge Fire Department and approximately 25 firefighters.

Co-Chair Mirkin called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Committee Action</b>
1. <a href="#">PS28.014</a>	RESOLUTION; <del>for public hearing &amp; final adoption</del> ; increased Health Department fees, including multi-family housing and daycare facilities, pools, liquor stores, condo license fees, etc.	<b>PUBLIC HEARING CANCELLED</b>

Co-Chair Mirkin explained that PS28.014 was cancelled due to confusion between what was contained in the public notice and what was written on the agenda. The item will be re-noticed for next month's meeting in order to avoid confusion to the public. He stated that PS28.011 will also be held until next month's meeting, which is tentatively scheduled for September 23, 2010.

2. <a href="#">PS28.017</a>	REVIEW; of 911 emergency dispatch center issues, including regarding transmitting "tones."	<b>Report Made</b>
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Captain Tomlin explained the process followed when a fire-related call is received by the 911 center. The call is entered and then reviewed. The address is entered into a run card and the tones are then entered into the system. The tones will go out to open the pagers for the volunteers and paid firefighters, and then the the z-tron is sent out, which opens the speakers in the stations. Then there will be an announcement of the call. He

explained that there is an overlaying of announcements. There are three types of errors in the tones or announcements that are due to human error, equipment error, or other undefined error. He explained that he can go back to the recording system to check if tones were sent, but he is not able to distinguish the tones well enough to determine which stations tones were sent.

Representative Coppola expressed concerns about historically poor communications between the 911 center and the fire stations. He stated that these problems have increased with the addition of the new alerting system. He recommended that the 911 center be "civilianized." He noted that an additional problem is the lack of MDTs in all units, because of the cost of obtaining and operating the receivers. He stated that as a result, units going into Belltown from Stamford Fire and Rescue are getting notice before the volunteers.

Captain Tomlin stated that the procedure is that the volunteer tones go out first. The City has discussed using single tones for all stations, but that idea has not been accepted. He stated that there has been an ongoing upgrade to the Z-tron system, which, as of Monday, is fully operational. He thinks this has been a cause of the problems, which should be resolved once everyone has rotated through the new system. In addition, the 911 center purchased a 2<sup>nd</sup> transmitter, which should solve some of the difficulties accessing some of the stations. He stated that the system is difficult, because they have to do 2 different things in order to get everyone out of the houses and that this has been a problem since 1989.

Chief Didelot explained that Belltown was able to get a second MDT unit because they were able to get a grant to purchase the unit as well as 2 more units and to pay for the leases for the next 2 years. In response to questions from the committee, he noted that the MDTs are located within the vehicles, but even if every vehicle had one, it would not resolve the problems with the notice from the 911 center.

Chief McGrath stated that when the system was first installed, the vendor recommended a single tone for all pagers, but this was rejected. In response to questions from the committee, he noted that the volunteer chiefs objected to this because it would open all of the pagers for all of the departments. As a result, they use individual tones. Representative Coppola explained that volunteer firefighters do not live at the stations, thus the tones would be going off in their houses.

Captain Tomlin explained that the primary error is human error – often due to a console being mis-set. He stated that the operators are civilians and there are both police and fire supervisors. The fire supervisors control the fire dispatch. In response to questions from the committee, he described the training process the individuals at the center receive, which is required by the State. He believes that the conversion from the old z-tron to the new z-tron system was the cause of the errors the past month, and that over the next month, as operators learn the new system, the problems will resolve. He also noted that as a result of budget cuts, there have been reductions in staffing of call takers, which may result in problems getting routine calls answered. The staffing reductions do not affect whether or not they can answer 911 calls, although there are only 4 possible places in the center to answer the calls.

Several members of the committee questioned whether or not the use of a single tone system would solve the problems of human error in sending out the wrong tones.

In response to a request from the committee, Captain Tomlin stated that he would provide the committee with an update on the errors as the operators learn the new system.

Chief Didelot stated that if the errors continue, either corrective or disciplinary actions should be taken.

3. PS28.018      REVIEW; East Middle Patent Road call for Long      **Report Made**  
Ridge Fire Company.

Co-Chair Mirkin opened this item by saying that he believed that this situation was different from the incident at Deep Valley Road reviewed by the committee in July. The committee then listened to the recording of the 911 calls for this incident, including the dispatch by Stamford, communications between Stamford and Banksville FD, and the cancellation of the call by the security company. Members of the committee expressed concern that this incident was similar to Deep Valley Road in that the response vehicles from Long Ridge were cancelled before anyone from Long Ridge was on site. Co-Chair Mirkin stated that he believed that the Banksville chief got there because he was closer.

Deputy Chief Smith stated that he traveled to the scene and that it would take 25 to 30 minutes for equipment to have gotten to the site from Long Ridge. He stated that there was nobody on the scene when the units were cancelled. This is a large facility with many expensive horses on site. The facilities manager sent employees to examine the apartment which was the source of the alarm and they found nothing. He stated that in his opinion, Engine 71 cancelled Long Ridge before Banksville got to the scene. Representative Coppola stated that the way the recording sounded to him, the Banksville chief was on-site at the time of the cancellation. The committee then replayed the recording. There was disagreement as to whether the recording indicated anyone was on site at the time the Long Ridge units were cancelled.

Representative Coppola explained that there are strong mutual aid agreements between Long Ridge, Pound Ridge and Banksville, because of their locations. The departments rely on one another to get to each other's locations. He stated that it sounded like a common situation in which the departments work closely together rather than the situation at Deep Valley Road. If the emergency was being handled by a qualified fire company, he does not see a problem. If Banksville had been told not to respond, that would have been negligent, but it is common practice for units to rely on one another.

Committee members expressed concern about the prior representation by the fire departments that no calls would be cancelled until a unit was on the scene.

Mr. Teitelbaum explained that Unit 71 did continue on to the scene. He stated that the policy at Long Ridge is to have the 1<sup>st</sup> engine continue on without lights or sirens when the alarm company cancels the call although the other engines turn back. He further explained that Banksville was not cancelled and that Long Ridge and Banksville have had a mutual aid agreement since 1953.

Chief McGrath stated that Stamford's policy when an alarm company cancels is that the 1<sup>st</sup> engine continues with lights and sirens and the remaining units continue without lights and sirens.

Chief Smith stated that the timeline for the event was as follows: 13:57 – dispatched; 14:01 – cancelled by Engine 71; 14:08 – radio from Banksville Chief that alarm reset. In response to questions from Mr. Teitelbaum, Chief Smith stated he did not know what time the Banksville Chief arrived on the scene.

The committee requested that Chief Smith provide the Board with a copy of the timeline. The Board office was requested to try to determine the timeline with more detail.

4. [PS28.011](#) ~~REVIEW of Fire Protection Plan.~~

**HELD IN  
COMMITTEE**

Co-Chair Mirkin adjourned the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Mirkin, Co-Chair