

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Fire District No. 1 was held on Friday, May 2, 2025 at 6:00 P.M.

Commissioner John C. Kenny called the meeting to order.

Maria Bucsanszky – All the requirements of the “Open Public Meeting Act” have been complied with by advertising in the Home News Tribune and Star Ledger. Copies of the meeting notice have been sent to the Municipal Clerk’s Office and posted on the bulletin board of the fire house and the post offices of Woodbridge and Sewaren.

Commissioner John C. Kenny led a pledge to the flag.

A moment of silence for our departed members.

PRESENT: Commissioner John C. Kenny, Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr., Commissioner Patrick Kenny, Commissioner Jeffrey Moran, Commissioner Jay Barcellona

ALSO PRESENT: Chief Michael Balog
Deputy Chief Mark Minkler
Deputy Chief Steve Worth
Maria Bucsanszky, District Clerk

Commissioner J.C.K.: I need a motion to suspend the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting to the next meeting.

Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr. made a motion to hold the minutes of the previous meeting until the next meeting which was seconded by Commissioner Jeffrey Moran and carried unanimously.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Good evening, everyone. Thank you for coming out tonight. I’m very sorry about this. It was supposed to happen about a month or so ago but due to illnesses of certain members we wanted to take the safety measures to extend this until tonight. I want to introduce the Board. To my right is Commissioner Moran, Commissioner Barcellona, Commissioner Minkler, Commissioner Kenny, Chief Balog, Deputy Chief Minkler and Deputy Chief Steve Worth. At this time, I’m going to ask Commissioner Patrick Kenny if he would say a few words.

Commissioner P.K.: Good evening, everyone. Today we come together to celebrate the achievements of the newest leaders of the firefighters of Woodbridge Fire District No. 1. It is with great pride that we recognize the newly appointed Deputy Chief Mark Minkler and Michael Mastanduno, our Battalion Chiefs Robert Fizer, Michael Barcellona and Keith McGrath and our new firefighters Michael Coman, Alexander Reyes, Juan Velez and Timothy Meehan who have stepped into their new roles with unwavering dedication. Leadership in the fire service is not about recognition it is about responsibility, courage and brave commitment to protect the people who live,

work, shop and visit the community. Each of you have demonstrated the skill in part and integrity to make this department the very best it could be. As Chief Edward F. Groger once said “firefighters do not regard themselves as heroes because they do what the business requires.” His words remind us that true service comes not from senior recognition but from answering a call without hesitation. Today you take on that view not for glory but because it is who you are. To our new firefighters, welcome to the family built on trust, sacrifice, and shared mission. You have chosen a path that demands resiliency and courage and we have no doubt that you will serve with honor. To our new leaders who will experience a guidance will shape the future of this department. Your mentorship and decision making will ensure that Fire District No. 1 remains a pillar of strength always ready to protect and serve. But tonight, we also recognize and extend our deepest gratitude to those who have spent years dedicating answering that call. To the firefighters on exceeding for years of service, Todd Howell for 60 years; Tommy McAuliffe for 50 years and Tommy Hines for 50 years.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner P.K.: For your bravery in the moments when commitment moved in the most and for the steady past commitment to protecting lives, we thank you. Your dedication has built the very foundation upon which this department stands. You have paved the way for the next generation passing down the invaluable recipes, the resiliency, sacrifice, and leadership. Also following tonight is a unit citation award for Chief Michael Hapstak, Deputy Chief Robert Minkler, Jr., Deputy Chief Mark Minkler, Battalion Chief Michael Barcellona, Captain John Kenny, Captain Ryan Horvath, Firefighter Robert Minkler, III, Firefighter Eric Seniakevgh and Firefighter Rebecca Haggerty.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner P.K.: On behalf of this community, we thank you for all your years of service past, recent and future and we stand behind you every step of the way. Congratulations to each of you on the well honored achievement that you continue to lead, protect, and inspire. Stay safe, stay strong and together we will make Fire District No. 1 the best it can be, thank you.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Good evening, everyone, I am Chief Michael Balog. I am thankful that we are all here tonight to finally get to celebrate the honors and some of our members. It was a long time coming but there were reasons unfortunately to delay it but here we are today. Like Commissioner Kenny said we are here to congratulate those who have spent hours, weeks and months studying for achieving the positions that we currently have, honor those for their dedication who served the community and also honor the ones that have been here for a very long time paving the way for all of us so tonight we are going to start off with our swearing in of our

Deputy Chiefs so first up is Deputy Chief Mark Minkler. Mark started as a volunteer at the Woodbridge Fire Company in February of 2001. He was appointed as a career firefighter with the Woodbridge Fire Department in August of 2005, promoted to Lieutenant in January, 2015 and Battalion Chief in January of 2019 where he would be responsible for our Grievance and Planning Division. Deputy Chief Minkler now serves as the department's Training Division, thank you. Mark, can you come on up and administering the oath will be Battalion Chief

Audience applauds.

Len Minkler: Okay Mark, repeat after me. I Mark Minkler.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: I Mark Minkler.

Len Minkler: Do solemnly swear.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: Do solemnly swear.

Len Minkler: That I will faithfully.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: That I will faithfully.

Len Minkler: And conscientiously.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: And conscientiously.

Len Minkler: Discharge the duties.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: Discharge the duties.

Len Minkler: Of Deputy Fire Chief.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: Of Deputy Fire Chief.

Len Minkler: Of Fire District No. 1.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: Of Fire District No. 1.

Len Minkler: Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey.

Len Minkler: According to the best.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: According to the best.

Len Minkler: Of my ability.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: Of my ability.

Len Minkler: And render full service.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: And render full service.

Len Minkler: To the District.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: To the District.

Len Minkler: And to the Fire Department.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: And to the Fire Department.

Len Minkler: And I will at all times.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: And I will at all times.

Len Minkler: Be subordinate.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: Be subordinate.

Len Minkler: To the orders.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: To the orders.

Len Minkler: And the directions.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: And the directions.

Len Minkler: Of my superiors.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: Of my superiors.

Len Minkler: And in conformity.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: And in conformity.

Len Minkler: With the rules.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: With the rules.

Len Minkler: I further solemnly swear.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: I further solemnly swear.

Len Minkler: That I will support.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: That I will support.

Len Minkler: The Constitution of the United States.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: The constitution of the United States.

Len Minkler: And the Constitution of the State of New Jersey.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: And the Constitution of the State of New Jersey.

Len Minkler: And that I will bear.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: And that I will bear.

Len Minkler: True faith and allegiance.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: True faith and allegiance.

Len Minkler: To the same.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: To the same.

Len Minkler: And to the government established.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: And to the government established.

Len Minkler: In the United States.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: In the United States.

Len Minkler: And in the State of New Jersey.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: And in the State of New Jersey.

Len Minkler: So help me God.

Deputy Chief Mark Minkler: So help me God.

Len Minkler: Congratulations.

Audience applauds.

the same and to the government established in the United States and in this State so help me God.

Battalion Chief Robert Fizer: I do.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Next we have Battalion Chief Michael Barcellona. Mike started as a volunteer at the Woodbridge Fire Company in February of 2005. He was appointed as a Career Firefighter with the Woodbridge Fire Department in June, 2012 and promoted to Captain in January of 2020. Michael now serves as Battalion Chief on Tour 3 in charge of our pre-incident planning division. Administering Michael's oath is his mother, Dina.

Audience applauds.

Dina: I, Michael Barcellona.

Battalion Chief Michael Barcellona: I, Michael Barcellona.

Dina: Do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge the duties of Battalion Chief for Fire District No. 1, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey according to the best of my abilities and render full service to the district and to the Fire Department and will at all times be subordinate to the orders and directions of my superiors and in conformity with the rules. I further solemnly swear I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the government established in the United States and in this State so help me God.

Battalion Chief Michael Barcellona: I do.

Audience applauds.

Captain Michael Balog: Next we have Battalion Chief Keith McGrath. Keith started as a volunteer with the Woodbridge Fire Company in 2006 and was appointed as a Career Firefighter to the Woodbridge Fire Department in June of 2012. He was promoted to Captain in January of 2020 and now serves as Battalion Chief of Tour 2 in charge of our compliance division. Administering Keith's oath is Retired Chief of the Department John Hogan.

Audience applauds.

Retired Chief John Hogan: I, Keith McGrath.

Battalion Chief Keith McGrath: I, Keith McGrath.

Retired Chief John Hogan: Do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge the duties of Battalion Chief for Fire District No. 1, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey according to the best of my abilities and render full service to the district and to the Fire Department and will at all times be subordinate to the orders and directions of my superiors and in conformity with the rules. I further solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the government established in the United States and in this State so help me God.

Battalion Chief Keith McGrath: I do.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Next we'll move on to our recruit class from January, 2024 that recently completed their year in the probationary period. Their courage began with a four-week pre-academy training program in house which introduced them to equipment and tools that they would be using in order to set them up for success at the Fire Academy. They were allowed to complete ten weeks of Firefighter One and Firefighter Two training at the Middlesex County Fire Academy. In addition, post casualty training has been ongoing which has included motor vehicle extrication, industrial firefighting, swift water rescue, emergency medical response in addition to basic firefighting skills. So, among this class we have Fire Inspector Michael Coman. Michael is a graduate of South Amboy High School, Middlesex County College and the Middlesex County Fire Academy. Michael started as a volunteer with the Woodbridge Fire Company. Also partnered with Shell sent two people in here down to their Industrial Firefighting Unit in Texas AM. Two of our recruits were able to go Michael and Juan. During that time, they both were recognized by the instructors for their professionalism, capability, and leadership during the four-day program so to them both, congratulations on that.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Administering Michael's oath is his brother Tommy.

Tommy: I, Michael Coman.

Fire Inspector Michael Coman: I, Michael Coman.

Tommy: Do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge the duties of Firefighter for Fire District No. 1, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey according to the best of my abilities and render full service to the district and to the Fire Department and will at all times be subordinate to the orders and directions of my superiors and in conformity with the rules. I further solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New

Jersey and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the government established in the United States and in this State so help me God.

Fire Inspector Michael Coman: I do.

Chief Michael Balog: All four of these individuals for the first time are seen here.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: I forgot to mention Michael is currently assigned to our department here as a Fire Inspector. Next, we have Firefighter Alexander Reyes. Alex is a graduate from Colonia High School, Rutgers University, and the Middlesex County Fire Academy. Alex is currently assigned as a Firefighter on Tour One. Administering his oath will be his mother, Mary.

Audience applauds.

Mary Reyes: I, Alexander Reyes.

Firefighter Alexander Reyes: I, Alexander Reyes.

Mary Reyes: Do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge the duties of Firefighter for Fire District No. 1, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey according to the best of my abilities and render full service to the district and to the Fire Department and will at all times be subordinate to the orders and directions of my superiors and in conformity with the rules. I further solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the government established in the United States and in this State so help me God.

Firefighter Alexander Reyes: I do.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Next we have Firefighter Juan Perez. Juan is a graduate of Bloomfield High School and Middlesex County Fire Academy. Juan is currently assigned to the Firefighter on Tour Two. Administering his oath is his girlfriend, Leslie.

Audience applauds.

Leslie: I, Juan Perez.

Firefighter Juan Perez: I, Juan Perez.

Leslie: Do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge the duties of Firefighter for Fire District No. 1, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey according to the best of my abilities and render full service to the district and to the Fire Department and will at all times be subordinate to the orders and directions of my superiors and in conformity with the rules. I further solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the government established in the United States and in this State so help me God.

Firefighter Juan Perez: I do.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Next we have Firefighter Timothy Meehan. Timothy is a graduate of Colonia High School, Rowan University and Middlesex County Fire Academy. Tim is currently assigned as a firefighter on Tour Four. Administering his oath is his mother, Debbie.

Debbie Meehan: I, Timothy Meehan.

Firefighter Timothy Meehan: I, Timothy Meehan.

Debbie Meehan: Do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge the duties of Firefighter for Fire District No. 1, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey according to the best of my abilities and render full service to the district and to the Fire Department and will at all times be subordinate to the orders and directions of my superiors and in conformity with the rules. I further solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the government established in the United States and in this State so help me God.

Firefighter Timothy Meehan: I do.

Chief Michael Balog: As it takes a tremendous amount of studying and time dedicated to the studying but it also takes away from your family time that all these individuals put in whether it was the entry levels exams and Fire Academy or all the promotional exams that everyone took so again thank you guys on all your dedication to do it and congratulations on the positions you achieved today.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: I'd also like to thank the Board of Fire Commissioners for their commitment to our strategic plan we had in building our departments in the needs of our growing community. Again, this class is for firefighters that recently graduated that we currently have and a recruit class that's close to Academy training and we do have a new class that will be starting at the end of the month so thank you

for your commitment to taking care of the citizens and visitors of the district, thank you.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: And now we have the unit citations so we have Chief Hapstak, Deputy Chief Robert Minkler, Jr., Deputy Chief Mark Minkler, Battalion Chief Barcellona, Captain Horvath, Captain John Kenny, Firefighter Robert Hilliard, Firefighter Eric Seniakevgh and Firefighter Rebecca Haggerty. Can you please come up. So, on November 4th, 2024 the Woodbridge Fire Department was dispatched to the structure fire at 14 Woodbridge Terrace. Upon arrival the responding units encountered heavy fire on the second and third floor balcony of the Woodbridge Terrace Apartment that was reported with people inside. Captain Horvath and Firefighter Hilliard made entry into the building to search for the unaccounted occupants. Firefighter Seniakevgh then moved on to the extinguishing of the fire while Officer Kenny began engine pumping operations to the steps of 200 feet from the hydrant to establish the water supply. As additional members arrived, they assisted with service and fire suppression. Due to the conditions in the common hallway the residents of the apartment building could not make it out that way so they had to respond to the balcony where the police were able to get the residents off the balcony. To the members who responded to the emergency operated on cohesive duty to accomplish suppression operation, coordination, and rescue efforts to achieve the safety of the occupants. These men are hereby recognized for their dedication to public safety as far as this unit citation award before the members of the Woodbridge Fire Department, fellow fire fighters, community, and family. Thank you for your devotion to duty and public safety.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: I'd just like to ask (inaudible) Barcellona who was the initial incident commander at the incident to say a few words.

Battalion Chief Barcellona: I'd just like to thank the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Board of Administration for recognizing the men and women of the Woodbridge Fire Department for a job well done. I'd also like to personally thank (inaudible) and Captain Horvath for doing a great job for their quick action in receiving (inaudible) and proper management, thank you.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: We pull up these incidents something from Human Resources and we have no choice so obviously the video comes in and we try to search the department and traffic officers and fire suppression so I would just like to thank you for your dedication to this growing department, thank you.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Chief Michael Hapstak.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Deputy Chief Robert Minkler, Jr.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Deputy Chief Mark Minkler.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Battalion Chief Barcelona.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Captain John Kenny.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Firefighter Robert Hilliard.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: I'd just like to point out that Firefighter Hilliard received the Knights of Columbus Fire Shield Award for his dedication to the members of the department and engine company.

Chief Michael Balog: Firefighter Eric Seniakevgh.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: And Firefighter Rebecca Haggerty.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: I'd like to thank you all for your dedication that night, thank you.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Over the last few years we've had some members of the Volunteer Fire Company and Chiefs with milestones with the Volunteer Fire Company. First up I have Thomas McAuliffe for his recognition of 50 years with the Volunteer Fire Company.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Next we have Thomas Hines for his dedication of 50 years.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Next we have Todd Howell for being recognized for 60 years.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Todd would like to say a few words.

Retired Commissioner Todd Howell: The Chief has graciously given me a moment and I won't take a lot from him. This is very important and very meaningful to me. Someone said to me, does it get any better than this. No, it doesn't. I have enjoyed every single moment of 60 years of being a member of this department and it's taxpayers and work with my fellow volunteers. As I said before, if it wasn't for Chief Balog's father it never would have started and I'm deeply indebted to his father and I thank you all for attending. Thank you very much.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: All three of these gentlemen are still intrigant at serving in our elite association and positioning efforts in the contributions today. You're still greatly appreciated. Also we have Ed who is not here tonight. We have William Toth 50 years of service and Joe Karnas with 70 years of service. All these names will be put on the wall in the lobby for you to view at all times.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Commissioner John Kenny.

Commissioner John Kenny: I'd just like to recognize a few people tonight. I'd like to recognize our retired Chief John Golden.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner John Kenny: Councilwoman Debbie Meehan.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner John C. Kenny: Councilwoman Sharon McAuliffe.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner John C. Kenny: Assistant Chief Brian Fee.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner John C. Kenny: And President of Local 290 in the IAFF David Hines.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner John C. Kenny: And we have our retired Fire Official, and he's undercover right now, Keith Repace.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner John C. Kenny: And listen most important every day you don't see this and you folks know there is one person that really keeps the community better for us and is able to get our daily activities done and make sure that the paperwork goes down to Trenton. Making sure that everybody's paperwork is right, making sure that this appointment for Fire Prevention have been taken care of so I'd like to thank Lisa Lanza.

Audience applauds.

Chief Michael Balog: Lisa has put up with this place for 35 years now and also on a daily basis so thank you Lisa.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner John C. Kenny: There is cake and refreshments in the back, thank you.

Chief Michael Balog: Thank you all for coming.

Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr. made a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting at 6:45 P.M. which was seconded by Commissioner Jay Barcellona and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria Bucsanszky
District Clerk