

Cotuit Fire Department

Fire Commissioner's Meeting
March 10, 2026 @ 6:30pm
Freedom Hall and via Zoom

Present at Freedom Hall: Chair Conley, Commissioner Zais, Chief Brown and Deputy Clark

Absent: Commissioner Ross

Public Comment

- No public comment

Previous meeting minutes

The Board deferred approval of February 10, 2026, meeting minutes to the next meeting due to the absence of Commissioner Ross, whose participation was required for the approval process.

Chair Conley expressed appreciation to the Fire Department for their efforts during the recent storm, informally referring to it as the "Blizzard of '26." He commended the team for their hard work and response, and asked that his thanks be shared with all department members.

Fire Chief Report:

February 2026 had a total of 125 responses:

- 2 Fires
- 43 rescue/EMS incidents
- 0 Station Walk-ins
- 4 Dispatched and cancelled en route
- 11 alarm investigations
- 29 public assists
- 4 community risk reduction calls
- 2 reassurance program calls
- 0 false alarms
- 4 good intent
- 20 hazardous materials responses
- 3 motor vehicle crashes
- 2 investigations
- 1 technical rescue

Mutual Aid:

- Provided Mutual Aid three (3) times
- Received Mutual Aid one (1) times
- YTD call volume is up +29%

Call Classification / Reporting System Update

The Department reported that call data is now categorized under the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS), which has replaced the former NFIRS, resulting in changes to call type classifications. Customized reports are being developed to align the new data with prior reporting formats, and the transition remains ongoing as staff adapt to the system.

In response to a question regarding "public assists," it was clarified that the category now includes a broader range of calls, such as smoke detector assistance and storm-related incidents (e.g., wires down or trees in roadways), contributing to higher reported totals.

Administration Update – Storm Response / FEMA Process

Chief reported continued support to the negotiating committee and noted that an after-action review of the storm response had been completed, with a report presented to the Board. The initial damage assessment was coordinated for submission to the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) as part of the process toward a potential federal disaster declaration and FEMA reimbursement. The District compiles damage and cost data across departments, including overtime and infrastructure impacts, and has shared a damage survey for residents and businesses via social media. Reimbursement is not guaranteed and remains contingent upon meeting required thresholds and federal approval. The Board expressed strong support for the report, noting its value as both a public summary and an internal planning tool. Members indicated it was well received and discussed continuing the review at future meetings. Potential public release, including posting the full report or a summarized version, was discussed, with operational details to be reviewed prior to publication. The matter will be revisited at a future meeting with a recommendation on public release.

Personnel and Training Activities

It was reported that Chief Brown, Deputy Chief Clark, and Captain McPherson attended the Cape & Islands Fire Chiefs Association (SITCO) Winter Session for continuing education. Two letters of appreciation were received and placed in the respective personnel files. No further questions were raised.

Apparatus and Equipment

Engine 2 is undergoing additional service, with weather-related delays affecting mechanic availability; completion is anticipated by the end of the week. Engine 1 sustained minor, primarily cosmetic damage from a plow truck while parked and remains in service. Repairs will be completed once Engine 2 is fully operational. Insurance claims are in process.

Follow-Up Discussion and Questions

It was reported that approximately 77 calls were handled during the storm, primarily within a 48-hour period, with additional incidents continuing due to snow melt. The dispatch center managed over 400 calls during that timeframe, and records are being reconciled to ensure all responses are captured. Access challenges occurred; however, firefighters maintained response capability through road clearing and on-foot access. Coordination with Town departments, other fire districts, and Eversource was described as effective, particularly in restoring access and prioritizing power to the water system during a temporary loss of pumping capability.

It was confirmed that Engine 1's damage does not impact safety or operations. Engine 2 requires specialized service due to its age, including use of an out-of-state mechanic.

Facilities

Not discussed.

Sub-Committee Reports

Commissioner Zais and Deputy Clark Website Sub-Committee

No new updates were reported. It was noted that a prototype has been reviewed, and additional, more substantive information, including a timeline, is expected by the next meeting. Members requested to be notified of any significant changes in the interim.

Commissioner Zais - Policy Advisory Committee

Not discussed

Commissioner Ross - By-Laws Committee

Not discussed.

Renovation / Addition Report

It was reported that approximately \$2,979,966 had been expended on the project through the end of February. Construction progress includes completion of the concrete foundation, walls, and backfill, with vertical construction now underway.

A utility pole relocation is scheduled for March 28, with advance notice to be provided to affected neighbors. Furniture selections are expected to be reviewed in the coming week.

Concerns from neighbors regarding mud on the roadway have been addressed through the placement of gravel at the site entrance, which has improved conditions. Additional concerns regarding construction lighting left on overnight were raised and addressed with the contractor.

It was also noted that project finances are reviewed monthly with the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer to monitor expenditures and overall funding status.

Policy Builders

Not discussed

OLD BUSINESS

No old business was discussed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment.

MOTION: To adjourn to Executive Session under Purpose 3 to discuss strategy with respect to the collective bargaining and as such, an open meeting may have an extraordinary effect on that process. And the collective bargaining is with Local 3642, Firefighters Union. The Commissioners will not return to open session following the adjournment of the Executive Session.

Motion made by: Commissioner Zais Seconded by: Chair Conley

Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Gina Gonsalves