Cotuit Fire Department

Board of Fire Commissioner's Meeting
October 13, 2026 @ 5:30pm
Freedom Hall and via Zoom

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

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Recording

Chair Zais provided audio disclosure.

Call to Order

Chair Zais called the meeting to order at 5:30pm

Public Comment

No public comment.

Review & Approval of any previous meeting minutes

September 8, 2026, Meeting Minutes

It was noted that the subcommittee report concerning the fire station addition and renovation project was not included under Old Business – Subcommittee Reports and appeared under Facilities instead. Members reviewed the second paragraph under Facilities, which referenced door hardware, flooring, patio work, epoxy coating, and apron work. The discussion acknowledged that the paragraph provided a high-level summary of the report and that future reports should appear under Old Business – Subcommittee Reports.

MOTION: To approve the September 8, 2026, meeting minutes.
Motion by: Commissioner Ross Seconded by: Commissioner Conley
VOTE: Chair Zais – AYE; Commissioner Conley – AYE; Commissioner Ross – AYE.
Motion passed unanimously.

June 9, 2026, Meeting minutes

Chair Zais directed members to the section of the revised June 9, 2026 minutes beginning with the election of Chair through the end of the meeting. He explained that additional detail had been included in response to his understanding that the first draft was too brief and had missed several items. Following his review of the video, he believed the second draft substantially represented the discussion and asked whether it addressed Commissioner Conley's concerns. Commissioner Conley requested time to review the section. During the review, a question arose about whether a vote had been unanimous. Chair Zais stated that his review of the video confirmed that it was. Commissioner Conley stated that he had reviewed the draft that day and had not seen a significant change, while acknowledging that he might be missing something. He suggested taking a vote, and Chair Zais invited a motion regarding the second draft.

MOTION: To accept the June 9, 2026, revised second draft.
Motion by: Commissioner Ross Seconded by: Chair Zais
VOTE: Chair Zais – AYE; Commissioner Ross – AYE; Commissioner Conley – NAY.
Motion passed 2-1.

Following the vote, Chief Brown clarified that the Deputy Chief's only involvement with the minutes was forwarding them to the Recording Secretary.

Fire Chief Report

Chief Brown presented the Fire Chief Report covering September 2026.

Incident Report

September 2026 had a total of 96 responses:

· 1 Fire incident
· 1 Hazardous situation
· 53 EMS calls
· 1 Station walk-in / medical incident
· 24 Alarm investigations
· 9 Public service calls
· 2 Reassurance Program visits
· 2 Community Risk Reduction visits
· 2 Rescue responses
· 1 Motor vehicle crash

Mutual Aid

· Provided Mutual Aid: 2 times
· Received Mutual Aid: 3 times

Administration

Deputy Chief Clark, EMS Officer Gardner, and Chief Brown continued working with Policy Builders. Chief Brown expressed appreciation for the project and believed all existing policies had been revised into its format, with work beginning to address policy gaps.

Chief Brown attended one of two courses offered to Barnstable leadership staff in preparation for developing a local emergency operations plan. Deputy Chief Clark had completed both courses in the spring. Deputy Chief Clark also attended an updated HIPAA and information-sharing presentation provided by the District Attorney's Office.

Chief Brown and Deputy Chief Clark continued participating in the Cape Cod Regional Emergency Communications Center's working groups, focusing on policy development and shared technology, respectively.

They were also collecting data for the ISO re-evaluation and preparedness reviews supporting grant opportunities. Chief Brown explained that the ISO rating influenced residents' insurance costs and that improvements in training, policies, staffing, and equipment supported efforts to improve it. He thanked Deputy Chief Clark for sharing the substantial workload.

Department personnel continued supporting the Barnstable High School internship program, with two new interns expected. Chief Brown noted ongoing program improvements, strong staff participation, and opportunities to review basic skills while working with young people interested in the profession.

Chief Brown and Deputy Chief Clark attended a September 28 district staff meeting at Freedom Hall addressing long-term capital planning, budget preparation deadlines, and operational efficiencies.

Chief Brown reported that a dirt bike collision near Sampson's Mill left one individual significantly injured. He described difficulties locating patients on the trails and moving them to an ambulance. The hospital commended personnel's care, and police assisted with moving the patient. Chief Brown sent the Police Chief a thank-you letter and placed a copy in the Commissioners' folder.
Chief Brown reported that the Reassurance Program helped save a resident who did not call in or answer a follow-up call. Responders found the resident experiencing a significant medical event. Chief Brown stated that the resident likely would not have survived without the program's intervention.
Chair Zais emphasized the importance of these incidents and asked that personnel be thanked. Other members agreed. Commissioner Conley praised the team's additional effort and asked Chief Brown to convey his appreciation. Chief Brown agreed and noted the Department's extensive activity alongside summer response demands.

Technology
Chief Brown reported that EMS Officer Gardner was facilitating the Department's transition to MassPOLST (Massachusetts Portable Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) and deferred questions to Deputy Chief Clark.
In response to a request for an explanation, Deputy Chief Clark stated that patients' advance directives were being streamlined into an online portal accessible to healthcare and EMS providers. He explained that families might know their loved ones' wishes but have difficulty producing the documentation during a stressful emergency. The portal would allow responders to access that information on scene and better honor patients' wishes.
Deputy Chief Clark reported that EMS Officer Gardner was working with the Commonwealth to establish the Department's portal access. He believed the system would go live in the spring. When asked whether it was similar to MOLST (Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment), he described it as the next generation of that system, available online.

Personnel and Training
Captain McNamara and his son, John, removed the American flags from the telephone poles and the bunting from Freedom Hall, marking the end of summer. Chief Brown reported that three thank-you notes had been received and placed in the Commissioners' folder.
Captain Amento and Firefighter Lee participated in the annual Town of Barnstable Adult Safety Day.
Captain Staggs was scheduled to attend facilities management training that month through the Massachusetts Facilities Administrators Association. He would take the lead on facilities program area management as the fire station addition and renovation came into use.
Captain Amento presented at the 31st Annual Fire and Life Safety Education Conference, held September 16 and 17 in Southbridge. He discussed the successes and progress of an intervention team for which he served as one of the managers.
Deputy Chief Clark was coordinating an Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC) for November 3 and 4. Chief Brown described the training as a best practice that also addressed an identified gap in the Department's risk management.
As part of the Department's continuing collaboration with the Cotuit Library, Department personnel would offer cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) classes on October 27, November 24, and December 18. All classes were scheduled for 9:00 a.m. at the library.
Commissioner Conley asked about the location and arrangements for the Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC). Deputy Chief Clark explained that a North Shore company would provide classroom instruction and set

up and oversee a standardized obstacle course to help the Department meet National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. A church would provide classrooms and parking space for training with fire apparatus and ambulances.
Commissioner Conley thanked the Chief for the CPR course information and the email update provided during the previous month.
In response to Chair Zais's question about maneuvering apparatus through cones, Deputy Chief Clark described forward and reverse maneuvers, parallel parking, angle docking, and serpentine driving, evaluated using criteria including cone contact and time.

Apparatus and Equipment
Chief Brown reported that Marine 1 was back in the water and in service following replacement of its ignition switch. He thanked the personnel responsible for the marine unit.
Firefighter Melanson was leading the detailing of Engine 2. Chief Brown commended the restoration of its red finish and chrome, describing the apparatus as looking ready for a parade despite its age. He noted the substantial effort and funds invested in keeping it operational and stated that it was now running very well. Chair Zais reported observing the work on the apparatus, acknowledged the considerable effort involved, and asked that appreciation be extended to everyone who assisted.

Facilities
Chief Brown reported no new updates regarding facilities.

OLD BUSINESS

Sub-Committee Reports

Chair Zais and Deputy Chief Clark Website Sub-Committee
No new updates provided.

Chair Zais – Policy Advisory Committee
Chair Zais reported that he believed he would be assuming the chairmanship of the Policy Advisory Committee from John Havel. A meeting was being scheduled for the first week in November. He stated that the Committee appeared to be moving forward but had no further updates.

Commissioner Ross – By-Laws Committee
Commissioner Ross reported no new developments.

Commissioner Conley – Fire Station Renovation
Commissioner Conley reported that plumbing and electrical sign-offs had been obtained for Phase One. The fire sign-off had also been obtained following difficulty reaching the appropriate people. The final temporary certificate of occupancy (TCO) remained pending. Work continued on outstanding punch list items, with move-in and completion of Phase One expected within the next two weeks.
Commissioner Conley stated that Phase Two would follow, with demolition beginning immediately and remediation taking place in the lobby area. The entire building would then be gutted before further work proceeded to determine what was inside and identify potential challenges. He noted that those unknown conditions had been his greatest concern from the beginning.

Asked whether significant asbestos or other hazardous materials were anticipated, Commissioner Conley indicated that asbestos was known to be in the lobby. He stated that he did not suspect asbestos in the walls but did not believe anyone could definitively say what was inside them.

SkillBridge Update

Chief Brown reported that paperwork for the SkillBridge program was still being prepared for submission to the Department of Defense (DOD). He anticipated completing the paperwork and bringing the prospective participant to the Board's December meeting. He clarified that the program itself was not expected to begin until approximately the end of February and would cover the final six months of the participant's enlistment.

Discussion addressed the possibility of employment after the program, contingent upon the participant working out, a position being available, and the Department wishing to proceed. Any such opportunity would follow completion of the six-month program. A September or October timeframe was mentioned as an approximate estimate.

NEW BUSINESS

Open Meeting Law Complaint

Chair Zais reported that an Open Meeting Law (OML) complaint had been received on October 1. Under his reading of the District bylaws, the Prudential Committee was responsible for responding and would meet October 14 at 6:00 p.m. at Freedom Hall.

Although it had been assumed that the Prudential Committee's posting covered the Board's participation, the Board had not separately posted the meeting. Chair Zais planned to attend because the complaint concerned him and asked Commissioners Ross and Conley not to attend to avoid a potential posting issue. Chief Brown clarified that he had only identified the missing posting, not recommended a course of action. Chair Zais acknowledged that the attendance proposal was his own. A member expressed agreement.

Chair Zais also proposed checking with Ryan Ouellette about OML training documentation and whether updates were needed. He recalled completing OML training when first elected, but only conflict-of-interest certification subsequently. He agreed to request that Ryan distribute the OML training links.

Potential Additional Firefighter Position

Commissioner Conley suggested exploring the addition of a thirteenth firefighter to address current staffing challenges related to employee availability. He referred to the ability to do so under the contract and emphasized beginning the review proactively rather than reacting to future staffing needs.

Chief Brown stated that he would welcome the opportunity to explore a provisional employee position within the collective bargaining agreement. He noted that the matter had been discussed in executive session the previous month. He also stated that he did not anticipate an executive session that evening because he had not completed preparations for the injury-on-duty (IOD) status update.

Chief Brown and Deputy Chief Clark were asked to return at the next meeting with a recommendation on whether to pursue the position and, if so, the proposed parameters and conditions. They agreed to provide that recommendation for the Board's public discussion and potential vote.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Other business/topics not anticipated by the Chair

None discussed.

Executive Session to discuss employee IOD status. The Board does not anticipate returning to open session at the conclusion of the executive session.

The Board did not enter executive session. Chief Brown stated that he had not completed preparations for the IOD status update.

MOTION: To adjourn.
Motion by: Commissioner Conley Seconded by: Commissioner Ross
Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at approximately 6:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Gina Gonsalves

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