

Town of Somers
Legal Notice

The Board of Selectmen of the Town of Somers will hold a public hearing on Thursday, January 21, 2016 beginning at 6:00pm in the Town of Somers Town Hall Auditorium, 600 Main St. Somers, CT. Residents may be heard regarding the repeal of "Somers Fire Commission" ordinance.

Dated at Somers, CT this 7th day of January 2016

Somers Board of Selectmen
Lisa Pellegrini, First Selectman
Kathleen A. Devlin, Selectman
Clyde G. Knorr, Selectman

Publication: January 8, 2016

**TOWN OF SOMERS
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
JANUARY 21, 2016
6:00PM
TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM**

Call to Order: First Selectman Lisa Pellegrini called the Public Hearing to order at 6:06pm.

Members Present: First Selectman Lisa Pellegrini and Selectman Kathy Devlin. Also present were Operations Manager Kim LaFleur (recording), Town Attorney Carl Landolina and seven interested residents. Selectman Knorr was not present.

Somers Fire Commission Ordinance: Ms. Pellegrini began by reading the Legal Notice and explained the purpose of the meeting was to repeal the Somers Fire Commission Ordinance and listen to all concerned residents. Ms. Pellegrini asked Attorney Landolina to explain the history as to how the Town came to this point in time. Attorney Landolina explained the process, summarizing the time line of the Fire Commission Ordinance from its creation to this public hearing and how it was linked to the process of hiring a full time paid Fire Chief. The Fire Commission was needed when the Town had a volunteer Fire Chief. Now that residents have voted to eliminate Section 5-10 "Board of Fire Commissioners" from the Charter and the Town has hired a paid Fire Chief there is no need for the ordinance.

Ms. Pellegrini asked the residents if there were any comments:

Fire Chief Gary Schiessl 26 Harvest Hill Drive, Somers, CT 06071 – *Chief Schiessl was surprised that the Town had to go through this Public Hearing after the Charter change in November.*

Attorney Landolina explained that this is part of the process. A public hearing must be held to repeal or modify and ordinance. The ordinance replaced the Charter until such time the Town hired a full time Chief. The Fire Commission was needed until the chief was hired. The only way to officially disband the Fire Commission is to repeal the Fire Commission Ordinance.

Jackie Haas of 12 Haas Road, Somers, CT 06071 - *How does this affect the Volunteer department?*

Attorney Landolina explained the Town entered into an agreement with the Volunteer Association. The Volunteer Association is still an invaluable part of the Fire Department and was involved with the hiring process of the Fire Chief. The Volunteers have agreed to elect the Chief chosen by the Town as part of the agreement. Chief Schiessl explained that this change has no impact on the Volunteer Association as their interactions are mainly with the Fire Chief not the Fire Commission.

Ms. Haas asked how much experience the Selectmen have knowing what the Fire Department does and was concerned about letting the Fire Commissioners go.

Chief Schiessl explained that one person on the Fire Commission has experience with Fire Service and that this change does not have a major impact on the Fire Department. He explained having the Fire Chief directly reporting to the Board of Selectmen is a plus. Ms. Pellegrini said that she was very happy that Ms. Haas asked the question and told her that was why so many, including representatives from the Volunteer Association, the Career Staff and the Fire Commission, including a consultant were involved in the entire process. While it took some time, all voices were heard and all concerns dealt with.

Ms. Pellegrini read an email from Fire Commission Chairman Keith Burger in support of repealing the ordinance and disbanding the Fire Commission. See attached letter.

Ms. Pellegrini asked if there were other comments and none were raised.

Adjournment:

Chief Schiessl made a motion to close the Public Hearing at 6:21pm, seconded by Ms. Pellegrini. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly LaFleur
Recording

Lisa Pellegrini

From: Keith Burger <keith@recoveryzone.biz>
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2016 5:47 PM
To: Lisa Pellegrini
Subject: Fire Commission

First Selectmen Lisa Pelegrini,

Lisa,

The past two years have been quite a journey with the reorganization of the Fire Department. I am pleased to say that you have done an amazing job in revamping the Town Charter, hiring the new Fire Chief and bringing all the parties together. Our last step in this process is to disband the Fire Commission. As chairman of this commission, I wholly support disbanding. The commissioners have served the town with honor and dignity but it is time to reorganize and have our newly hired paid Fire Chief report directly to the First Selectman and the Select Board. Please call on me in the future if my services to the town can be utilized in any manner.

Keith G. Burger
Chairman Fire Commission