

2/14/22

Selectwoman Ellen Allen
Norwell Select Board
345 Main Street
Norwell, MA 02061

Dear Ms. Allen,

In response to your request for a self- assessment of my first year as Chief of the Norwell Fire Department, I submit the following;

Well what a busy year it has been. As I am sure you can appreciate, a self- evaluation could very well be one of the toughest things to perform. No one wants to overly play the trumpet in their own parade, or admit what has not gone exactly as they wish. For me this process has certainly been interesting.

As you know, following Chief Simpson's abrupt departure, the Board appointed me as acting Chief. During those first few months, there was a lot of uncertainty about the direction the Board would choose in finding its next leader, and for me whether that person was or would be me. The process was slightly extended while a change in leadership of the Board was elected. During those months, I focused on maintaining an even keel within the department, as the noticeable sentiment on the floor was apprehensive, as it always is with change. Having been a direct part and stakeholder in what was already happening under Chief Simpson, I continued to advance those objectives, and ensure the members of NFD, that no matter what the process, we would all emerge as a group in a positive place. I again thank all of the members of the Board, including yourself, for providing me this opportunity.

In June, when I was appointed, I think all of us at NFD breathed a collective sigh of relief. That appointment, meant is was now time to get down to work to continue advancing Norwell Fire. Although I get to take credit for all of the good and bad of NFD, I feel I would be remiss if I did not mention that although I may have spearheaded, consulted, collaborated or directed the projects, there are many members of NFD, as well as other boards and committees, who have invested just as much as I have, to further the goals and objectives, as well as complete projects.

I have built a great leadership team within the NFD, and instituted a bi-monthly staff meeting with those personnel, to ensure that we all remain on the same page and the concerns of the floor and groups are addressed. We have collaborated on some things, and I have delegated some tasks to that leadership team to help them advance their own personal growth as leaders. I feel that the strongest leaders invest in their people and I strive to make them all better every day.

My personality lends itself to a strong disdain of unfinished projects, and in my opinion, Norwell Fire had a few, and I certainly added some personal ones to the list. In my first year, we have accomplished quite a few, and some others are well on their way to being complete.

Each member of Norwell Fire was issued and trained on the use of ballistic vests and helmets. I can honestly say I never fathomed firefighters being outfitted with this equipment, however the calls we respond to and the support we provide to other agencies, necessitates this type of new personal protective equipment. I have written policy and procedure for its use, and hope to never see anyone have the need to deploy it, however we now have it and will be utilizing it when and if necessary.

On our ambulances and advanced life support engines, medication and narcotic security is a prime concern. Each of our ambulances and engines is now equipped with an electronic drug and narcotic locker. The locker requires a unique and individual code to access, and also tracks inventory and expirations. The level of security this provides over the previous system, including automatic logging of who opened the box and what was removed, ensures we are in compliance with all state and federal requirements, and is pretty much unable to be manipulated. During our annual OEMS evaluation, we were given very high marks for our system and have had others inquire about its use and demonstrated our system. This is a positive step in our regulatory compliance and reduces our liability of drug or narcotics being used outside their intended purpose.

A few years ago we changed our reporting software. We are required to file a report monthly, with the Commonwealth of all of our calls. One of the features of this software, which previously we were not utilizing, was the ability to perform and document inspections the department does. I worked hard with technical support to set up our inspectional program and train our personnel. I am happy to report we are 100% electronic with inspections, inspection reports, and tracking of inspections and permits issued to any occupancy as we perform them. We utilize an Ipad to perform the inspection, instantly provide the occupant or resident with an email copy of the inspection report and the inspection is instantly saved to the server. This has cut down on the paper records and should a report be lost or misplaced, we can send a copy from the system to the resident.

The exterior of Station 1 was repaired and repainted, for the first time in over twenty years, and Station 3 is on the docket with the contractor to be started soon, and should be completed in early spring. I have been with the department for over 30 years, and cannot remember it ever being rehabilitated in my career.

Our radio communication infrastructure project is underway. Some of the components have been installed, and others continue to be installed throughout the various sites in the plan. Over the next few months, they should all be installed and we should get our new system up and running. This has been particularly interesting to oversee, as I now have a very good grasp on the overall system, how it is designed to operate, and have been out to each site to confirm the equipment being installed is what is on the quote, and been getting a lot of inside knowledge from the technicians on troubleshooting should we have an issue. This legacy system has been in the process of failing for many years, and has complicated operations for a number of them. In the next few months, we should have a fully operational system, which greatly improves the safety of members and the public when we operate on emergency scenes throughout town.

I continue to provide oversight and mentorship to the repair and maintenance of our department apparatus. As you have heard many times, I take great pride in the apparatus of Norwell Fire, and feel that we have one of the best developed programs in the state. Although I do not physically turn the wrenches anymore, ensuring that our mechanics can consult and ask my opinion on our apparatus is very important. I have had great opportunities to attend

manufacturers training seminars, so passing that knowledge on is very important to me. The safety and reliability of our apparatus will always be one of my focus areas.

As much as I wish the budget was unlimited, I fully understand, probably more now than ever, it is not. We have a lot of things to accomplish in a year, and sometimes balancing the wants and needs is challenging. To that end, I am always searching for alternative funding sources. In the past year, we have received grants which allowed us to provide each member with a personal thermal imaging device. This greatly improves their ability to operate safely in a fire, although a great tool, I certainly viewed it more as a want than a budgetary need. We were also, with Peter Morin's assistance, able to secure a grant to replace the heating system at Headquarters with a much more economical and green friendly system. Currently I have an Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) and a Staffing for Safe Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant submitted to FEMA.

The October Nor'easter certainly provided its fair share of challenges, and in retrospect provided me with a lot of lessons learned of emergency management. I faced challenges I never expected, and to a degree was able to solve many. We had not only power loss, but entire neighborhoods cut off from services, other departments who were in need of help, the loss of all of our internet support systems, which brought a realization of just how much we relied on that need in our day to day operations. Of the biggest lessons of that storm, was the need to delegate more of those operations. You cannot focus on the global view if you are solving all the ground level problems. Additionally, I learned that you need to admit when you have exhausted all your resources to fix the problems, and am grateful to Peter Morin for his assistance when I finally asked. Peter may have known before me that I was going to need support from above, but when I finally made the call to him to ask who I should call, he not only knew, but made the calls for me, and we seemed to turn the corner to normalcy after that.

As I mentioned previously, I believe in bettering my members, but in that I have never lost focus on myself. In February, I graduated from the Chief Fire Officer Management program. This program is a very competitive joint venture between the Massachusetts Department of Fire Service and the University of Massachusetts Edward J Collins Jr. Center for Public Management. The skills and networking done during those 13 weeks, will certainly help in managing the department.

Albeit maybe more than you were looking for, I hope this provides a glimpse into what I have been doing the past year. I feel that the department is in a good place and I strive to continue to make it and all of the members better. I have truly enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in many facets of government and enjoy collaborating with other department heads, the Board and Peter Morin's office. In closing, I would like to thank you, and all the Board members for the support I have received. I hope that the Board feels the direction the department is on is the direction that is in the best interest of the Town, and that me at the helm is an integral part of what I consider some great successes. It is my hope that the sentiment of my performance is positive, and I will continue to strive to make the Norwell Fire Department a premier organization with the fire service and Commonwealth.

I look forward to your comments and hopefully few criticisms of my performance.

Sincerely,

David Kean, Chief of Department, EMD