



City of Manchester Archives
One City Hall Plaza
Manchester, NH 03101
603.624.6455 – mintranuovo@manchesternh.gov
www.manchesternh.gov/archives

Collection Summary

Repository: Manchester City Archives. Office of the City Clerk. City of Manchester, NH.

Creator: Board of Fire Commissioners. City of Manchester, NH.

Title: Board of Fire Commissioners Records

Collection Number: 0405.002

Accession Number: 2007.29

Dates: 1917 – 2016 (non-inclusive)

Volume: 4.5 cubic feet

Languages: Collection materials are in English.

Related Collections: Fire Department Annual Reports (0405.001); Early Correspondence of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 1850-1947 (accession 1998.52).

Access: Access to collection is open to the public. Please contact the archives for an appointment to view materials. Cite the collection number, box and folder numbers when making an appointment. For preservation purposes, access to some record series may be limited to digital images or hard-copies of originals.

Digital Note: Digital images of General Orders and Notices from 1917 – 1955 are available upon request.

Conservation Notes: Not applicable.

Finding Aid Prepared by: Mike Intranuovo, 2015; 2016.

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Historical Note

On October 26, 1839, the town of Manchester held a meeting in which voters adopted certain fire protection measures. There was an appointment of eleven fire wards, a chairman, and a chief. There was also a purchase of some equipment, a new station was built, and there was an appropriation of \$1,000.

In April of 1841, almost a full year after a major fire destroyed the Island Mill building which was located below the Amoskeag Falls, the first hook and ladder company was established in Manchester. The company served as volunteers, without compensation, until 1852.

In 1845, after the original town hall building was destroyed by a fire on August 12, 1844, a Board of Fire Engineers was established. This board replaced the previous organization of fire wards, and was led by Daniel Clark, the first Chief Engineer. At the annual town hall meeting on March 10, 1845, it was voted to pay fire fighters ten cents an hour for actual service at fires.

After Manchester became a city, the department went through numerous organizational changes and experienced different technological advances in its equipment, including motorized vehicles replacing horse-drawn carts.¹ The Board of Mayor and Aldermen approved the establishment of the Board of Fire Commissioners on March 27, 1917, replacing the Board of Fire Engineers. The Board of Fire Commissioners was organized on May 1 of the same year, bringing the department under its auspices.²

¹ Pierson, Charles, and James Burkush. "History – Reflecting the Past." *Manchester Fire Department, 1839-1994*. Manchester, NH: Manchester Fire Dept., 1994. 10-27. Print.

² Annual Report, 1917; pages 3-4. Fire Department Annual Reports. Collection 0405.001, accession 2014.103. Box 01, Folder 19. Manchester City Archives. Office of the City Clerk. City of Manchester, NH.

Collection Description

This collection consists of records created by the Board of Fire Commissioners, with some records being created by the Fire Chief or Deputy Chief under the supervision of the Board.

The collection includes official minutes of meetings; supporting documents of meetings which include a wide variety of document types, such as correspondence, reports, and statistical data; general orders/notices of the Fire Commission, Fire Chief, and Deputy Chiefs; and images. The collection documents the official actions and decisions of the board, as well as the day-to-day management of the department. Collectively, these records show the evolution of the Fire Department from the early 20th Century to today from the perspective of the Board of Fire Commissioners, the Fire Chief, and the Deputy Chiefs. It documents the decisions made by the Board and the Fire Chief and how they affected the firefighters and personnel of the department. Some documents include the public's perspective of the department, such as letters which can be found in the *Supporting Documents of Meeting* and *General Orders and Notices* record series.

Overall, the collection offers a unique insight into the general history of the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Manchester Fire Department.

Series Descriptions and Inventory

Series 1: Meeting Minutes, 1949-2016 (non-inclusive)

Official minutes of the Board of Fire Commissioners' meetings. Minutes record official actions and decisions of the board. A majority of the content covers basic administrative topics, such as financial matters and budgets, personnel matters such as promotions and disciplinary actions, pensions, equipment, etc. Records were handwritten in bound volumes between 1949-1987. Starting in 1988, minutes were typed and were no longer bound.

Arranged chronologically.

<i>Description</i>	<i>Box Number</i>	<i>Folder Number</i>
1949-1963	01	--
1963-1976	01	--
1976-1987	01	--
1988	01	02
1989	01	03
1990	01	04
1991	01	05
1992	01	06
1993	02	01
December 1994 – December 1995	02	02
1996	02	03
January – October 1997	02	04
December 1998 – December 1999	02	05
January – June 2000	02	06
October 2004 – December 2005	02	07
2006	02	08
2007	02	09
2008	02	10
2011	02	11
2012	02	12
2013	02	13
2014	02	14
2015	02	15
2016	02	16

Series 2: Supporting Documents of Meeting, 1917 – 2016 (non-inclusive)

This series consists of documents referred to by the Board of Fire Commissioners during a specific meeting. The series includes agendas, meeting notices, and a variety of document types that often include correspondence, reports, statistical data, budgets, and other related records.

Arranged chronologically.

<i>Description</i>	<i>Box Number</i>	<i>Folder Number</i>
1917 – 1974 (non-inclusive)	03	01
Item Note: This folder contains one document from 1917, created by the Board of Fire Engineers.		
1988	03	02
January – June 1989	03	03
July – December 1989	03	04
January – June 1990	03	05
July – December 1990	03	06
January – June 1991	03	07
July – December 1991	03	08
January – May 1992	03	09
June – December 1992	03	10
January – May 1993	03	11
June – October 1993	03	12
November – December 1993	03	13
January – June 1995	04	01
Jul – December 1995	04	02
February – July 1996	04	03
August – December 1996	04	04
1997	04	05
1999	04	06
January – September 2000	04	07
October 2004 – December 2005	04	08
2006	04	09
2007	04	10
January 2008 - January 2009	04	11
2011	04	12
2012	04	13
2013	04	14
2014	04	15
2015	04	16
2016	04	17

Series 3: General Orders and Notices, 1917 – 2004 (non-inclusive)

This series consists of general orders and notices issued by the Board of Fire Commissioners, the Fire Chief, or a Deputy Chief. General orders are used to establish policy, announce official acts or commands, and to govern the Fire Department in general. Notices were sent to all personnel or specific fire houses depending on the circumstances. Some notices were letters, pamphlets, or memos received from outside entities, such as grateful citizens, the state legislature, etc. Some later years include a summary list of all general orders and notices for the year.

This record series includes subjects which are wide and various; some examples include parade routes, dress codes, personnel matters, etc. Some records include marginalia from unknown sources.

Due to the fragile nature of records in this series from 1917-1955, access is limited to digital images or hard-copies of the original documents for preservation purposes.

Arranged chronologically by year.

<i>Description</i>	<i>Box Number</i>
General Orders, 1917 – 1940	05
General Orders and Notices, 1941 – 1955	06
General Orders and Notices, 1956 – 1999, 2004	07

Series 4: Images, no date

This series consists of images of Board of Fire Commissioners. Included are two negative strips of a fire station, and eighteen black and white photographs of unidentified Fire Commissioners.