

**SENSE OF THE BOARD RESOLUTION
COMMENDING FIRE LIEUTENANT WILLIAM O'CONNELL FOR HIS BRAVERY
FOR RESCUING TWO PEOPLE IN A BOATING ACCIDENT IN STAMFORD HARBOR
AND CONGRATULATING HIM ON BEING AWARDED
THE 2013 RAY DOWNEY COURAGE AND VALOR AWARD**

WHEREAS, on April 24, 2013, Fire Lieutenant William O'Connell was awarded the prestigious national 2013 Ray Downey Courage and Valor award, named in honor of Deputy Chief Raymond Downey, commander of the New York Fire Department's Special Operations Command, who died helping others escape the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS, on July 22, 2012, Firefighter Joseph Maida and Fire Lieutenant William O'Connell rescued two individuals from an overturned boat in Stamford Harbor where they had been trapped for approximately 45 minutes; and

WHEREAS, at 11:30 p.m. the crews of Engine 5 and Rescue 1 were called in to assist with the rescue of two people trapped inside the boat's cabin; and

WHEREAS, with limited visibility and in 50 feet of water, Firefighter Joseph Maida and Fire Lieutenant William O'Connell of the Fire Department's Dive Rescue Team entered the water; after assessing the situation and making contact with the trapped individuals, they entered the pitch-black cabin of the capsized vessel through a considerable amount of debris and with a hatchway opening of only 18 inches; and

WHEREAS, once inside the cabin, O'Connell and Maida made the first attempt at the rescue, however, the victims were unable to assist and this attempt was abandoned; and

WHEREAS, after reassessing the situation, O'Connell reentered the capsized boat, coached the victims on the use of the breathing equipment and then was able to guide the first victim to the hatchway, with Maida waiting to assist them to the surface; and

WHEREAS, O'Connell then reentered the cabin and recognizing that the situation was deteriorating rapidly, performed a challenging tactic by reaching underwater to grab the second victim's ankle, pulling the victim underwater and through the capsized boat's hatchway, suffering a laceration to his left hand, and then pushing the victim toward the surface, where a surface diver and Maida were waiting to assist; and

WHEREAS, because of the heroic efforts of O'Connell and Maida, both individuals survived the accident.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the 28th Board of Representatives that it commends Fire Lieutenant William O'Connell for his bravery for rescuing two people in a boating accident in Stamford Harbor; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 28th Board of Representatives congratulates Fire Lieutenant William O'Connell on being awarded the 2013 Ray Downey Courage and Valor Award.

Submitted this 3rd day of June, 2013

By the 28th Board of Representatives

Randall M. Skigen, President

Annie M. Summerville, Clerk