

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Fire and Water Divisions

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

7:00 PM

Coles Road Firehouse

105 Coles Road

Cromwell, CT

The Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District held their monthly Board of Commissioners' Meeting on Tuesday, March 15, 2016, at 7:00 PM, at the Coles Road Firehouse, 105 Coles Road, Cromwell, CT to discuss and act upon Fire and Water Division business.

Commissioners Frank Seidl (President), Julius Neto, David Colligan, Donald Swanson, James Bellamo, Charles Epstein and Mark Langton attended. Also attending were Acting Fire Chief Michael Salonia, Executive Director Michael Dagostino, Operations Director S. William Jarzavek, Fire Marshal Todd Gagnon, Communications Manager Rick Andersen, Assistant Chief EMS William Clare and Premier Accounting staff Michael Alibrio and Bob Davis.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM, by President Seidl. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Seidl.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Neto, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Before speaking, members of the public were asked to state their name and address, and they were given a time limit of two minutes. Also, it was requested that comments remain civil.

Mark Chadsey, 26 Oakwood Manor, Cromwell, CT. In review of the status of Steve Pendl and his leaving, he asked the Commission how they had the right to spend \$20,000 on an investigation and the extra money involved in his separation without going before the taxpayers to let them know where their money is going. He does not think that is right. He can't believe the Commission has that kind of authority. He would really like an explanation. He would also like to see why the Commission is not answering to any of this to the Town. They are the taxpayers, and the money is coming out of their pockets. There has not been any really good explanation as to why this all came about. The \$20,000 that was spent on the investigation could have been spent more wisely on investigating the Commission. He believes a wrong doing was done here, not just to the taxpayers, but also to Steve Pendl.

Ernest Blaney, 4 Ryan Court, Cromwell, CT. He stated that as he understood it, on October 7, 2015, the Cromwell Fire District financial books were left unattended in the third floor conference room at the West Street Firehouse. Later that afternoon Mike Dagostino, Julius Neto and Frank

Seidl went into the same room for a Union meeting. After this meeting the books were left unattended overnight. He asked if those 3 people should have reported the breach. He asked for any comment. President Seidl had no comment. Mr. Blaney continued that on October 8, 2015, 2 firefighters find the book, take a picture with employees' names, social security numbers and salaries on it. On October 22, 2015, Chief Pendl learned about this breach from another firefighter, and within the hour Chief Pendl notifies Mr. Dagostino about this document. Chief Pendl advises the document must have come from the mail or slipped under the door of the Chief's office to protect the whistle blower. The Cromwell Police Department was called and did an investigation. On October 23, 2015, Chief Pendl stops the investigation providing the name of the whistle blower. While Steve may have lied to protect the whistle blower, was he the only one that was punished? He did not see how Steve could be punished, but not anyone else. The way he sees this, it should have been taken care of on October 7, not 15 days later where Steve was put into the position he was put in. As a taxpayer, Mr. Blaney would like to see Steve reinstated as Chief and the people accountable be held accountable.

Ashley Delbone, no address was provided. She was not in attendance at last month's meeting, however, she mentioned an incident that occurred on February 4. She wanted to know if a comment will be made today about this incident. President Seidl stated that there would be a statement later in the meeting. She asked what the going rate would be for a HIPA violation - \$100 - \$50,000. She was taken by ambulance by this Town and as a Cromwell Fire Department EMS employee and her records are in the cabinet noted in the breach of February 4.

Nicole Laterra, 13 Hicksville Road, Cromwell, CT. She didn't know what the normal protocol was for the agenda for this meeting, but she stated she was waiting on line to see if the Commission had an agenda, because at the last meeting it was asked that the issues discussed be addressed, and certain things request to be put on this agenda for this meeting. She stated that it has not been on line or available to the public. She asked if that could happen in the future, to have the agenda posted prior to the meeting and on line. She stated the minutes from last month's meeting were on line, done very well and accurate but the actual agenda has not been posted. She believes that it is part of the Connecticut State Statute to have the agenda posted before the meeting.

Thomas Franklin, 1 Woodside Road, Cromwell, CT. Regarding the minutes from the last meeting, he believed the person from East Berlin, Thomas Farr, presented some letters to the Commission in support of Chief Pendl. Mr. Farr had asked that the letters be included with the minutes for the meeting. Mr. Franklin wanted to inform the Commission that the letters were not published on line with the minutes.

President Seidl read a statement regarding an incident on February 4, 2016. It reads as follows: A member of the Fire District staff propped open a door to a file room on the basement floor of 1 West Street, but failed to close the door upon leaving. The file room door was open for a total of 2 hours. There was no indication that any documents were viewed or removed from the File Room. However, in an exercise of prudent caution, the Fire District has self-reported to the State Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights, and we are awaiting guidance and instruction.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
FEBRUARY 16, 2016

A motion was made by Commissioner Neto, seconded by Commissioner Swanson and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the Board of Commissioners' Meeting of February 16, 2016, as submitted. Copies of the letters of support for Chief Pendl submitted for inclusion in the minutes from this meeting will be added to the minutes on line, and the Commission meeting files for February 16, 2016.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

Commissioner Neto had one communication dated February 17, 2016, from Mrs. Cynthia Hamlin, 27 Evergreen Road, Cromwell, to the Board of Commissioners, Cromwell Fire Department. The letter stated that she wished to file a formal complaint against one of the Cromwell Fire Commissioners. She attended a meeting of the Board of Commissioners, with citizens and non-citizens on the evening of February 16, 2016. At that time she had an opportunity to speak as a taxpayer of the Town of Cromwell to address the Board. While she was speaking one of the Commissioners made a strange face at her. Almost in a way in an attempt to throw her off balance and intimidate her. As if to communicate, "what are you talking about?" She wanted to express her intense offense to this. This typical ploy of manipulation and intimidation to something easily recognizable by herself considering the high stress, high powerful professionals she works with. She can accept that she can be humored in the work place, but will not tolerate it as a taxpayer in Cromwell by someone who by definition, an elected servant, that has chosen to be interested in their own agenda and seek to serve themselves. This became quickly evident to her during this time at the meeting. When public servants no longer see themselves in light they should no longer be public servants. This person was identified to her as Mark Langton. She is a taxpayer in Cromwell, and expects to be heard and be treated as one of respect while speaking. She hopes that the Board will take the matter seriously. This type of dysfunctional attitude rarely exists in isolation and is clearly a problem that is plaguing the Cromwell Fire Department.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's report for the month of February had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Neto, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's report for February as submitted.

- B. Financial Report/Treasurer's Report. The Financial Report/Treasurer's Report for February had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Neto, seconded by Commissioner Bellamo and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report/Treasurer's Report for February as submitted.

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for February had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Swanson added that in seeing the photographs and the report submitted on the fire of February 13, the information submitted was excellent. Commissioner Colligan added that they never received a report like that. The level of reporting was excellent.

A motion was made by Commissioner Swanson, seconded by Commissioner Neto and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for February as submitted.

- D. Fire Marshal. The Fire Marshal's Report for February had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Neto, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Marshal's Report for February as submitted.

- E. Water Operations. The Operations Report for February had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made Commissioner Swanson, seconded by Commissioner Neto and unanimously approved to accept the Operations Report for February as submitted.

- F. Communications Report. The Communications Report for February had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Neto, seconded by Commissioner Swanson and unanimously approved to accept the Communications Report for February as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations Committee. There was no report.
- B. Executive Committee. There was no report.
- C. Fire Operations Committee. A meeting was held on March 2, 2016. Minutes had been distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. It was clarified by Commissioner Bellamo that the items for purchase requested by Assistant Chief EMS Clare during that meeting were approved for purchase (AED's) by the Committee as they were already budgeted for. It was agreed that the purchasing request did not need to come before the full Board for approval.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Swanson and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of March 2, 2016, as submitted.

- D. Pension Committee. There was no report.
- E. Personnel Committee. A Special Personnel Committee meeting was held on February 23, 2016. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Neto, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Special Personnel Committee meeting of February 23, 2016, as submitted.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

President Seidl noted that today was the closing date for applications to be received for the position of Fire Chief. A Search Committee will be appointed tonight at this meeting. Those appointments are: Commissioners John Hamlin, James Bellamo, Donald Swanson, Charles Epstein and Executive Director Michael Dagostino.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. Councilwoman Slade was not present.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
1. Public Safety Tower Committee. There was no business, so the meeting was canceled.
 2. Building Committee. There was no meeting. A meeting will be scheduled in 2 to 3 weeks to review some items.
 3. Safety Committee. Commissioner Langton reported that a meeting is scheduled for this Thursday.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Langton asked what the date was of the complaint about him. Commissioner Neto noted that the letter was dated February 17, 2016. He asked how the Board was planning to proceed with that. President Seidl responded that he does not plan on taking any action at this time. Commissioner Langton had not heard anything since that time although he knew there were a few emails that came to the Board on February 17. The Commissioners had received them by email.
- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to report.
- D. Hardship Letter. It was agreed at the last meeting that the two hardship letters received prior to this meeting and the letter received and placed on the agenda for this meeting will be forwarded to the Executive Committee for action.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Eileen Pendl, 18 Oakwood Manor, Cromwell, CT. She wanted to add a comment after Commissioner Neto read the letter from Ms. Hamlin. She hoped the Commission was not going to take any action on that letter. She was at the meeting where Ms. Hamlin spoke. Ms. Pendl stated that she thought everyone did an excellent job of handling everything. She believed that Ms. Hamlin is the wife of a Commissioner which seemed quite ironic. She also reported that Ms. Hamlin came in at the end of that meeting so she did not understand how Ms. Hamlin could have picked up on any type of tone from the meeting. She felt that the Commissioners handled themselves well. Ms. Pendl was not quite sure where Ms. Hamlin's comments were coming from.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Neto, seconded by Commissioner Langton and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 PM.

ATTEST:

Julius Neto, Secretary

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
3-23-16