

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Fire and Water Divisions

Tuesday, January 15, 2019

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, January 15, 2019, 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 Lee Brow (President), Roger Rukowicz, Jason Hinnens, David Colligan, Robert Donohue, Mertie Terry and Charles Epstein. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Michael Terenzio, Operations Director S. William Jarzavek, Deputy Fire Chief Michael Salonia, Michael Alibrio from Premier Accounting, Fire Marshal Todd Gagnon, Dispatcher/Union President Andrew Cooke and Dispatcher Richard Loza. Commissioners Allan Spotts and Johnathon Hamlin had excused absences.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by President Brow. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Brow.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Epstein thanked Commissioners Colligan and Donohue, Jolie Hinnens and the Executive Director for their help in feeding the firefighters on January 7. Commissioner Colligan spent a lot of time cooking, and Commissioner Epstein thought that the food was excellent. He expressed his gratitude to those who helped and encouraged the Commissioners to help out when their time permits.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 18, 2019

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnens, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of December 18, 2019, as presented.

READING OF COMMUNICATONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

There were no communications or appeals to report.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's Report for December had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. He began by reporting that the Water Department welcomed Scott Clinton. He has "hit the road running." He will be a great addition to the Water Department staff. The Personnel Subcommittee on Non-Career Staffing Solutions continues to meet. Some progress is being made, and they are moving forward. The Deputy Chief has been doing some research for the Subcommittee which is appreciated. Mr. Neto continues to meet with the Communication Center staff. The sessions are going well and are productive. He added that the Communication Center has been known as the Dispatch Center when it really does more than that. The group does more than just dispatch. It is more of a monitoring center. He suggested identifying the center as the Communication Center. By changing the name it better represents what the staff does and as well as solidifying the role of the center as the District seeks to improve communication systems. This concept is the perspective of the staff, and Mr. Neto asked that the Commissioners give it some thought. Next week the property casualty insurance representative will be meeting with Mr. Neto to do a "walk about" through every firehouse, facility and building that the District is responsible for including the water tank. He will provide feedback to the Commissioners. They also have free services available to the District, Fire and Water Divisions. The services include OSHA and Hazmat. Mr. Neto reported that he has received a letter from Town officials regarding separating from some of the joint ventures we have with the Town. Part of this decision is based on CIRMA recommendations. There was no reason given for the recommendation. In the past the District has partnered with the Town on certain ventures as a cost saving measure. Those ventures include the workers' comp. policy, Town's liability policy, long term disability and health and dental. It will be the District's responsibility to find alternatives. He was not prepared to present any alternatives at this meeting. He is planning to investigate alternatives. The financial impact is unknown at this time. It was noted that the letter from the Town officials was received after the District officials had a meeting with the Town to see where they could consolidate things. Mr. Neto assured everyone that the District will figure it out.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hiners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's Report for December as submitted.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for December had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Albrio reported that the budget is still on target even though there are a few line items that are over budget. Mr. Albrio and Mr. Neto have identified items that will be under budget. There may be some budget amendments going forward but he does not want to jump the gun on that yet. They will be monitoring closely over the next couple of months. He referred to both Water and General Fund accounts. Mr. Albrio has received a draft of the audit from the auditors. He will review it and send it back to them. They will be published once they are finalized. He announced that budget season has begun.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hiners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for December as submitted.

C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for December had been previously submitted and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Chief gave an update on the pagers stating that 60 pagers were received that were approved. The Department is transitioning between the two radio systems. In order to get them out in the field as soon as possible they are going to program 30 into the current/old system and get them out to as many staff as we can. The other 30 will be held in reserve until the new system is up and running. Once it is, they will program those 30 into the new system, taking the first ones back to reprogram and redistribute. The Chief reported that he applied for two small grants this week. One is through the Firehouse Subs restaurant chain. The closest restaurant to Cromwell is in Glastonbury. He is applying for reimbursement of the pagers that were just purchased. He should find out within 6 to 8 weeks if it was approved or not. In addition, the Chief has requested funds from the Firefighters Support Foundation. He requested \$10,000 for the chest compression units to partner with the \$3,500 donation received last month. Assistant Chief Brade and the Chief inspected some training buildings that have been offered to the Fire Department from Covenant Village. They will be available within the next few weeks. Ass't Chief Brade has been working with the Tactical Company officers to develop some training. There are seven buildings, four are on West St. There are also 3 quads inside the property. Seven of Cromwell's Mutual Aid partners will be participating as well. He added that the Department has received some positive comments from Heather Polk's Cromwell Residents Positive Events page after the Department's participation in the Tree Lighting Ceremony and Wreath sale. The site is on Ms. Polk's facebook page.

A motion was made by Commissioner Terry, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for December as submitted.

D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for December had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. They pumped 10 million gallons more than they did in 2017. 193 meters were installed in 2018. 177 of those were radio upgrades. 16 new accounts were added. The Roof repair at Dividend Brook station was completed in December. This had occurred at the beginning of 2018. He reported that the Executive Director sat in on a meeting with Mr. Jarzavek and Guy Russo from Prime A/C, who is the vendor for the project at Wells 3 & 4 with the VFD's. There will be a site visit on January 24 to get final measurements. The installation should be completed by May 2019 and the VFD's will be in. Some testing will be done at that time to make sure the system can be run without any backup from the storage tank. The inspection will be done in late fall when heavy consumption is down. They will be taking the tank off line, getting inspectors in the tank and evaluate what needs to be done for repairs. The goal is to have everything back on line by early summer of 2020.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinnens and unanimously approved to accept the Water Operations Report for December as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

A. District Operations. A meeting was held on December 20, 2018. 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 Hiners, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the District Operations Committee meeting minutes of December 20, 2019, as submitted.

- B. Executive Committee. There have been no meetings, but one will be scheduled soon since budget preparations have started.
- C. Fire Operations Committee. Commissioner Colligan reported that the Committee was scheduled to have a meeting this evening before this Board meeting, but there was no quorum. He wanted the Committee to vote on the investigation that was completed on the live fire training session. It was tabled until the meeting next month. It was noted that the conclusion of that report was that the building did not move and there was no damage to the building. All the welds were inspected and photographs were taken.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hiners and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee report for December.

- 1. Communications Subcommittee. Commissioner Colligan noted that the Subcommittee is trying to meet with the vendor again to see if they can get a reduction in cost. The Subcommittee is aware that the cost of the project needs to be approved at a District meeting by voting on a resolution.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hiners and unanimously approved to accept the Communications Subcommittee report for December.

- D. Pension Committee. There was no meeting.
- E. Personnel Committee. Commissioner Epstein stated that the next meeting will be Thursday, January 24, 2019, at 5:30 PM, at 1 West St. It will be the first meeting with Commissioner Epstein as Chairman.
 - 1. Subcommittee for Non-Career Staffing Solutions. Mr. Neto reported they have been meeting since the middle of December on a weekly basis. There has been some research done by Mr. Neto and the Deputy Fire Chief. There have been some healthy debates and strategies discussed, but there is still work to do. A meeting was held last evening with the non-career membership. Within the next 6 to 8 weeks, Mr. Neto is hopeful that the Subcommittee will have something to present to the Commissioners. The Commissioners will be the ones to make the final decision on whatever options are presented. He discussed one of the concepts presented that has the career staff covering a certain number of hours. There is a need to provide service to the taxpayers consistently. There may be a need to hire a part-time workforce to cover a certain amount of hours. There is also a need to have volunteers. The struggle with the subcommittee is that there are different perspectives on what a volunteer is. It has been interesting in comparing compensation for volunteers in other towns. Many have less compensation than Cromwell.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Hiners and unanimously approved to accept the report of the Non-Career Staffing Solutions Subcommittee.

- F. Water Operations Committee. Commissioner Rukowicz stated that the next meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2019.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. The Town Council Liaison was not present at the meeting.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
1. Public Safety Tower Committee. A meeting was held on December 14, 2019. Minutes were not available, but Commissioner Rukowicz gave a verbal report at the last meeting. He stated that the Committee is looking at a joint venture with the Fire Department and Police Department on a tower at the Nike site. Commissioner Colligan gave the Committee permission to investigate and take an inventory of what is there. Mr. Alvarado has been doing the work. At the March meeting there should be more information available on specifications on size, cost and any permits that might be needed.
 2. Safety/Building Committee. A meeting was held on January 10, 2019. Minutes were not available. The minutes were tabled until next month.
 3. Bylaws Committee. Commissioner Epstein noted that the next meeting of the Bylaws Committee will be January 24, 2019. It will follow the Personnel Committee meeting held at 5:30 PM. The Bylaws Committee is scheduled for 7:00 PM that evening. He would like to get the Bylaws work done in a short period of time because they are going to need a Town/District vote on a resolution in addition to the Communications Subcommittee for their project. He would like to have both items on the Call for that Special Meeting rather than two separate town meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. A motion was made by Commissioner Hiners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to rename the Dispatch Center the Cromwell Fire District Emergency Communications Center. Commissioner Epstein asked that it be tabled until next month until the firefighters and communication people have a chance to hear about it, and see if they agree or not. Mr. Neto noted that the dispatch staff is supportive of the change. Mr. Neto did not ask the firefighters. The people in the Center are supportive of it. They have made the suggestion before, but it was never done. Mr. Neto noted that it is the Board's Fire District, and the Board's decision. The word "emergency" should be removed because the center also takes water calls. They coordinate on-call coverage for water main breaks, sink holes reported and security access to water facilities, even on the weekends. It was added that the center is a monitoring facility of sorts. It monitors all of the District's resources.

Commissioner Hiners rescinded the first motion and made a motion to rename the Dispatch Center the Cromwell Fire District Communications Center, removing the word “emergency.” Commissioner Donohue seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

President Brow presented a plaque to Mr. Richard Loza for his retirement recognizing his years of dedicated service to the Fire Department and Communications Center.

Commissioner Colligan congratulated the Fire Department for communicating to the public the types of calls and alarms they go on. The Deputy Chief has been assigned to get the word out, and is doing a great job. The objective is letting the public know what the Fire Department does. Also, informing the public of the Water Department activities.

Commissioner Epstein asked that in the future when there are items to be voted on, the Board be given a heads up so that they are not expected to vote on something at the last minute without being aware of it.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hiners and unanimously approved to be it resolved that the Board of Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District consider and act upon a resolution to approve budgetary adjustments to the Equipment Reserve Fund budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, as reflected in the worksheet provided by Blum Shapiro at the Board of Commissioners’ Meeting of January 15, 2019. To re-allocate available funds for purchase of a PA System for the Court Street Firehouse; \$7,925.44 from Login Recorders, Pagers & Cases (31807-5740) to PA System at Court St. Station (31807-5740).
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to approve.
- D. Joint Independent Audit Study with District and Town. The Town Council has agreed that this would be a good thing to investigate with the District. Mr. Neto asked if the Board wished to continue down that path or whether or not there were concerns based on some discussions this evening. The objective is to get an independent body to do the evaluating and provide recommendations. No cost has been determined. There was discussion regarding approval to continue with the Town. Other Commissioners wished to have more information in order to make a decision. It seemed that after the first meeting with the Town and the District there was a common ground of both entities working together. After that meeting a letter was sent to the District from the Town regarding a separation with the Town for employee benefits, i.e., insurance.

The Board voted in the negative for the District to continue to participate in a joint independent Audit study with the Town. Mr. Neto will follow up and request a second meeting with the Town to clarify the Town’s intentions on working together.

- E. Establish a Process to Manage Employee-Related Issues. Mr. Neto has had a discussion with the Chair of the Personnel Committee as well as the President of the Board reiterating the fact to all the staff including non-career staff that there is a complaint procedure in place that is outlined in the Handbook. He noted that complaints should be resolved at the lowest administration level possible. The complaint can be verbal or written to the immediate supervisor or officer. If it is not satisfied with a decision or solution, the issue will need to go to the next level up the chain of command including the Personnel Committee and then the full Commission. The non-career and non-bargaining unit staff has that right. The Collective Bargaining Agreement is very clear. This has been a clouded issue for the non-career, non-

bargaining unit staff. Staff needs to know that their concerns will be heard. Mr. Neto wanted to assure that the Commission supports/endorses/demands that the process is non-negotiable. Everyone should be entitled to due process. It was suggested to make it a blanket statement for both paid and volunteer members. Mr. Neto added that there are Bylaws that govern the Fire Department. The procedure in place now does not supersede that. It is in conjunction with it. The handbook stipulates the process. President Brow suggested tabling this issue until the Subcommittee for Non-Career Staffing solutions has completed their mission. There was a discussion regarding the differences between volunteers, career, bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit. It was agreed to table this matter until after the subcommittee business is taken care of.

- F. Modification of District Recruitment Process. Mr. Neto wanted to propose a small change in the recruitment process. He explained the current practice to be when a Division Head needs to fill a budgeted position, that Manager will go before the Personnel Committee for permission to advertise. Mr. Neto would like to have the opportunity to advertise or post the position without having to get permission from the Personnel Committee. This would just be the elimination of one step in the recruiting process and would not affect any other part of the process such as selection or interviewing. This practice would only be for budgeted positions, and it is being suggested to minimize the wait time for posting or advertising a position. Currently it takes a minimum of 2 to 3 months to get anyone hired in the District. There is usually a wait time of a month to seek permission from the Personnel Committee to post a position since the Personnel Committee meets monthly.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to allow the Executive Director the flexibility to start the recruitment process once there is a vacancy for budgeted positions, and give the list to the Personnel Committee, and the Committee will act on it.

- G. Executive Director Employment Contract. It was noted that a final draft of the contract had been emailed to all the Commissioners. Commissioner Colligan added that when he was Chair of the Personnel Committee, the Committee had voted to give the President the authority to negotiate this contract. The contract has a notation that reads “approved by the Board,” and a date needs to be inserted. That is why this issue was placed on the agenda.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and approved 5 to 0 to accept the employment contract that was negotiated between the District's attorney, President Brow and Julius Neto to hire Mr. Neto as Executive Director of the Cromwell Fire District at an annual salary of approximately \$115,000 with a benefit package. The salary is less than that of the former Executive Director. Commissioner Epstein abstained.

Mr. Neto asked for clarification regarding a new hire practice of the District which is that when the new employee's HSA account is established for non-collective bargaining agreement employees, the account is pro-rated according to when the person is hired. The annual amount is \$1,800 that is deposited in July. Past practice is to pro-rate that amount based on when the person is hired. President Brow felt that the practice is fair and should continue. It was noted that this practice is not documented in the handbook. There is no policy in place in the handbook that addresses this issue.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hinnens and unanimously approved to implement as an official practice that when hiring non-collective

bargaining agreement employees, their HSA deposits be pro-rated according to their month of hire.

President Brow presented Commissioner Epstein with a plaque to acknowledge his service as Secretary/Clerk of the Cromwell Fire District Board of Commissioners from Oct. 2015 to Oct. 2018. He also served the Cromwell Volunteer Fire Department in different capacities.

There was also an announcement that the Communication Center staff will be recognizing Richard Loza with a luncheon on Thursday, January 24, 2019, 12 Noon to 3:00 PM, at the Court Street firehouse.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hiners and unanimously approved to adjourn the regular meeting and enter into Executive Session at 8:58 PM after a 10 minute recess.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hiners and unanimously approved to adjourn out of Executive Session at 9:40 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Hiners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to adjourn the regular meeting at 9:41 PM.

ATTEST:

Jason Hiners, Secretary

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
2-12-19