

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Apparatus Committee Meeting

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse

105 Coles Road

Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Charles Epstein (Chairman), David Colligan, John Sokolowski, Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Brade and Mechanic Chris Logan. Also attending were Commissioners Robert Donohue and Roger Rukowicz (President).

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM, by Chairman Epstein.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. The Executive Director received an email from the President of the Firefighters' Union at 5:17 PM. The Union President, Lt. Hallden, requested the email be read under Public Comments because he could not attend the meeting. Mr. Neto read the comments. Mr. Hallden noted that at the last Apparatus Committee meeting a vote was taken on an agenda item that only counted the votes of the Commissioners on the Committee. The voting rights had been stripped from the Union representative and the Fire Chief. This means that the Commissioners are deciding on the specs of an apparatus instead of the people or staff that use it. He believes it is the duty of the Commissioners to be the policy makers and guardians of the checkbook. The Commissioners need to let go of their operational reins, and let the members, employees and administration do their job. It seems that the Commissioners do not trust the membership or employees when purchasing apparatus or equipment. He feels that the Commissioners should be making sure that the District is being fiscally responsible. The Apparatus Committee not getting any feedback from the Chief's office is disrespectful to the officers. He gave an example of the Committee spending extra money to have the color of the cab roof white instead of red, yet the officers do not have sufficient gear for their crews.

Commissioner Colligan pointed out that the gear issues have been addressed whenever they have come up. The Commissioners have been doing their best to give the members the gear that they need. There is gear that is out of date, but it is from the previous administration.

Commissioner Epstein explained that the Apparatus Committee meeting the Union President was referring to was under the old Committee roster before the election. There were committee reassignments that were done by the former President of the Board at a District

Operations Committee meeting in June. Memberships changed during that time due to new Commissioners being voted in and incumbents leaving. The makeup of most of the Committees has changed a bit since the election. The District Operations Committee had met after the election with the new President as the Chair. A few changes were made at that time to give the new Commissioners some committee assignments.

Commissioner Sokolowski asked why certain people were removed from the Committee. No one on the Committee knew the answer to that question. They all thought it was something that happened during the old administration. Changes were made by the President of the Commission at that time through a District Operations Committee meeting with the President as Chair of the District Operations Committee.

It was pointed out that although the Union President was unable to make this meeting, there is a Vice President that could have attended in his place in order to have union representation. Commissioner Colligan also mentioned that the Commissioners have done everything in their power to get the Fire Department members what they need. Everything they bring before the Board is addressed. Commissioner Epstein noted it is time to move forward from this point.

The Executive Director noted that the members of the Committee are: Commissioners Epstein, Donohue and Sokolowski, the Executive Director, the District's mechanic, one union representative, and the Fire Chief. The challenge is whether or not all Committee members vote and if all their votes count. He suggested that the recommendation be that all members of the Apparatus Committee have equal voting rights.

IV. New Business

A. Update on New Vehicles/Apparatus in Production. Chief Brade reported the Fire Department has an agreement with MHQ in Middletown to purchase a 2022 Ford Explorer as the Chief's vehicle. They are having a difficult time finding pickup trucks. After some discussion with the Executive Director, they decided on another Explorer. There was a choice between the colors, either silver or white. They decided on white. This vehicle is in the works and will probably be ready by the end of February. The company is in Massachusetts. This vehicle will be fully equipped with everything the Chief will need. Once it comes in, the red car will be stripped of any equipment and will be repurposed to the Chief's new vehicle.

The new Engine 1 is in service. The Chief had an officers' meeting after the engine was received. Everyone had a few weeks of training when it was delivered. During the meeting there was a unanimous decision by all the officers to put Engine 1 at West St. They did not want to move apparatus around once the Rescue/Pumper is received. If Engine 1 went to Court St., it would become a last due piece. It was felt the Rescue should go out first because of all the equipment that is on it. They did not want it to be a spare piece at Court St. that does not get utilized. It will be the first due out for the volunteers and unscheduled at West St. The career staff and part-time scheduled staff will have Squad 1 when it comes in. This was a joint decision by the officers that the Chief gave final approval of, and it was in the best interest of operations.

Squad 1 is in production. It is due to be completed by the end of the first week of December. Pierce has been notified that Cromwell will not be coming out to Wisconsin for the final inspection. They will be doing the same type of final inspection that they did with Engine 1 which was high-definition videos and photos. The Chief will call a

meeting of the Apparatus Committee to review. Once reviewed, it will go to Firematic in Rocky Hill for a final inspection.

Commissioner Colligan thought that Chris Logan could do the final inspection at Firematic when the piece comes in. Mr. Logan has been very busy and trusts the people at Firematic to do the inspection. They can perform that function as well as Chris can. They do their own pre-inspection of all apparatus that comes in. Chris thought that the Rescue Pumper was spec'd with not a lot of custom compartments or anything.

The Chief added that a lot of the equipment for this piece was already ordered. It is sitting in the bay. They repurposed a couple of tools to be on the primary piece until the rescue/pumper comes in. They have ropes, equipment and hurst tools. Mr. Logan will need to do some of the mounting. Hose was never purchased for the Rescue. The Chief discussed this with Chris, and they will be de-commissioning Tack 4. They plan on taking the usable hose off of Tack 4. It was tested last week and is good hose. There are no trash lines or rubber hoses because the previous Fire Chief did not want them. Mr. Logan will be ordering 3 new ones for car fires.

The Fire Chief reached out for a quote to put the apparatus number on the front of the apparatus. He had not heard back yet. Pierce can have it painted on, or the Department has a sign person they can check with. The Chief will be checking with the members to find out what they would like to have displayed on the Rescue/pumper.

There is an ambulance on order. It is due to be received in March 2023. So far there have been no issues to address. The ambulance was purchased with no power load or stretcher. They plan to move a power load and stretcher from a current ambulance into the new ambulance. Some of the Fire Department's equipment is getting dated. The newer stretcher is 2020. The other two are 2011. The company stops maintaining them after 14 years. They are recommended for replacement after 7 years.

They have the same issue with the power load. One is a 2014 and another is a 2013. There is another company he is looking into named Ferno, but has not received a call back yet. With service plans, the Chief is looking at \$57,000 for a power load and stretcher with Stryker. It includes a very extensive maintenance program for 7 years. It could possibly be cut down by \$15,000. The power load is the most expensive.

The Chief distributed information about a new power load and stretcher from Stryker. The Commissioners asked about funding in the budget or transferring money around. The only option the Executive Director could think of was leftover funds in the bond money because the new engine came in under budget, but there is money that was used out of that for the Rescue, and the Chief's car was a little more expensive than budgeted. Mr. Neto will have to look at the numbers. Commissioner Colligan suggested that the Chief, Executive Director and Mechanic get together to come up with the best option. Everyone was in agreement about getting a new power load.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to have a new power load installed in the new ambulance once the Executive Director and Fire Chief have figured out the funding. It was also decided to recognize the votes of the Fire Chief and Firefighter Union Rep. since it was discussed earlier in this meeting to recommend to the District Operations Committee to

change the status of the non-voting members of the Apparatus Committee to voting members of the Committee.

- B. Discuss the Responsibilities of the Apparatus Committee Separating Committee Business Between Fire Operations and Water Operations. Commissioner Epstein had asked that this item be placed on the agenda. He feels that this is a good time to disband this Committee. The suggestion is to move fire operation business to the Fire Operations Committee, and water operations business to the Water Operations Committee. This would eliminate one committee. Commissioner Epstein noted that the District Operations Committee from the old regime had some discussions about eliminating committees. Right now there are 12 committees. He feels that some resources are being duplicated. There needs to be representation from the firefighters union and the volunteers. There needs to be representation from all groups that use the apparatus. He would agree to dissolving the Apparatus Committee, but there should be a subcommittee that would address any new purchases of apparatus, similar to the Communications Subcommittee. It was suggested to reinstitute the Apparatus Committee whenever the District is interested in buying apparatus.

The Executive Director was asked for his opinion on this issue. It would be less complicated to have the purchase of fire apparatus under the Fire Operations Committee and the purchase of water vehicles under the Water Operations Committee.

The Fire Chief would like to be able to meet with his team which would consist of the mechanic, the officers and the Union. He would present their proposals to the Committee, and then discuss it together. He would be willing to invite the mechanic, the Union and any others that were part of the Chief's team in drafting specs to a Committee meeting if necessary. He is in agreement to dissolve the Apparatus Committee. All of the purchases for the Department have already been made.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to forward to the District Operations Committee a proposal to dissolve the Apparatus Committee and to forward all issues regarding purchasing fire apparatus to the Fire Operations Committee and purchasing water vehicles to the Water Operations Committee.

- C. Discussion on the Makeup of the Apparatus Committee; Policy Makers vs. Operations. This was discussed under the last agenda item.
- D. Arrange Future Scheduling for 2023 Calendar Year. This item will not be necessary if the Apparatus Committee is disbanded.
- E. Begin Discussions on Long-Range Planning for Apparatus. This no longer needs discussion as long-range planning for apparatus will be forwarded to either the Fire Operations Committee or the Water Operations Committee depending on which department has the need. Chris Logan added that the Department needs to start looking for an ambulance chassis. Things that get put on the list for planning keep getting pushed back. They are using ambulances now that have 12,000 hours on them and are running all the time. Originally they were supposed to be changed out every 5 years. They are running ambulances that are 13 years old and nothing has been done to them. Although Cromwell is buying a new one, the newest one in the lot is 2015. It has between 80,000 and 90,000 miles even though what matters is hours used rather than mileage. The

younger members coming into the Department don't really care about what they are driving and abuse the apparatus.

Per the discussions at this meeting, Commissioner Colligan asked Mr. Logan when they would be starting to work on the request for a chasis. It should be up to the Chief, Union, Officers and the Mechanic to discuss and come up with a proposal to present to the Fire Operations Committee. These comments will be forwarded to the Chairman of the Fire Operations Committee per request of Chairman Epstein. The Executive Director distributed copies of a list of apparatus with information on their history and replacement schedules. It shows what is needed and what is budgeted for the next 8 or 9 years. It needs to be updated. This plan will be used in the budget process.

- V. Commissioners' Comments. President Rukowicz was in attendance. He thought that this was one of the better meetings he has attended since becoming President because things are moving in the right direction. Regarding the budget, shortly after the first of the year all the department heads will be sitting down with the Executive Committee to review their budget list and requisitions. He thinks that this budget will need to have an increase in the mil rate. He also thinks a decision on Truck 1 needs to be made. Commissioner Colligan suggested that the new Chief re-evaluate the need for Truck 1. The District does not have the money to purchase a new tower, but he feels that the Town still needs one. The Department is relying on mutual aid for a tower right now, especially at 101 West St. The President stated that things are going to be looked at differently. The Board cannot change the past, but can learn from things that were done in the past.
- VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles R. Epstein, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary

DRAFT