

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Fire Operations Committee

Monday, August 15, 2022

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Jason Hanners (Vice-Chairman), Charles Epstein and Robert Donohue. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan and Fire Marshal Harold Holmes. Chairman David Colligan was absent.

I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM, by Vice Chairman Hanners.

II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as presented with the following two changes: moving Item A. under New Business to Public Comment, and adding a new Item B. under New Business, New Fire Engine at Farmers' Market.

III. Public Comment

A. Steve Tyc/Slade Company Inventory Control Presentation. Chief Balletto introduced Steve Tyc to the group. He had a meeting with Mr. Tyc a couple of weeks ago to discuss and review the Slade Company's Inventory Control program. The Chief feels this program would be beneficial to the Fire Department for tracking things such as inventory, fuel, etc. It is able to have information readily available from a mobile device.

Mr. Tyc is the Assistant Fire Chief in Middlefield. He has been working with Slade Pagers part-time for a couple of years and most recently started working with them full-time. The pagers manage information such as assets and inventory. There is multiple software to track just about everything at the firehouses that can be accessed by any member.

The second part of the program is the online dashboard or web portal. Slade Pagers was invented by a company that handles industrial insulation for valves. They created a format as a way to check or follow up on documentation of parts or equipment. The format expanded its use from there. It is easily adaptable.

This company utilizes QR tags. He left samples of tags to view. Scanning can be done on the mobile app. Once a QR code is scanned it will pull up any information on that

item that is needed. Inspection information can also be tracked. It can track things that are in or out of service, air packs, inspections, ISO reviews and water sources. This makes accessing information as easy as a couple of clicks on your phone.

The data entry can be customized. There is nothing that would need the attention of a specialized IT person. Some of the features are tracking expiration dates of medication and date-based notifications. There is a QR code per person that will track their basic information or emergency contact information. It can also track issue dates and expiration dates on gear. Email alerts are sent out to the individuals responsible for that specific equipment or gear. This is useful for onboarding.

It also includes email notifications when performing a function you want someone to be informed of such as taking gear out of service. Things can be looked up by category. You can also track the progress of things, such as when a piece of equipment is getting repaired. Everything is based on the number of QR codes that you have, not by the number of users or devices. It is subscription based with tier pricing. The stickers are customizable. They can work with the District to create a data import. They have safe templates if there are any safety concerns. Views can also be customized.

They continue to work on new features. Mr. Holmes wanted to know if there was anything that the Fire Marshal's office could use. It is possible that they could develop some data for inspections, etc. Anything you can put a sticker on can be tracked. They have authorization codes which gives administrative access to your account. They also have ID numbers to find things instead of using a QR code.

Their smallest client base is up to 200 QR codes. That would be a cost of \$1,000 annually. It is a one time set up or build fee. It will cover all your data and build up the template. Working up to 500 would be approximately \$2,000 annually. They have a one time fee of \$500 to be set up whether it takes one day or 5 days.

Their company is based out of West Haven, CT and has been in existence since 2016. All data is stored on cloud-based servers in the US and is all backed up. Chief Balletto is interested in this service and will discuss with the Committee.

- IV. Communications Report. Mr. Lonergan had nothing to add to his monthly report that was submitted. Commissioner Epstein asked about the State and what is happening with the licensing that the State has held up. Mr. Lonergan plans to reach out to Mr. Zito tomorrow.
- V. Reports of Chief Officers. The Chief has submitted his report for July. There have been no changes. The call volume has increased substantially. There were 4 Task Force activations last month. Within the last two weeks there have been 5. This is putting a significant strain on the Fire Department budget with the amount of staff that have to be brought in. There were also 13 turnovers in the month of June. They are doing light duty activity. They are getting out in the community for Fire Prevention.

The Chief has made an agreement with Habitat for Humanity doing a CPR class October 11 for 7 of their employees. This will be at no cost to them. The only cost will be for their licenses/certificates. This will be good PR for the Department. He plans on asking Commissioner Epstein if he would like to donate his time for this activity. They will be getting the union members and Commissioners involved to certify those 7 individuals.

Channel 3 News wants to sit down with the Chief again regarding the Hero's Grant. The Chief would like to see participation from Local 4662 and a volunteer which would also build morale. The Chief added that the hydraulic tools came in. They will be taking the old tools, cutters and spreaders, off of Tack, 4 and the new tools will be in service tomorrow.

The Executive Director briefly discussed an issue that needs to be addressed which is the demand being put on the Fire Department by activating the Task Force. The demand affects the Fire Dept. budget as well as personnel. Originally it was based on a model involving tiering and supporting mutual aid. The Task Force issue needs to be evaluated to determine what works and what does not work. *A brief discussion on this issue will be added to a future Fire Operations Committee agenda.*

Chief Balletto has signed an MOU with Westfield Fire. The Department also has agreements with Middletown and South District. The Chief met with Portland and Rocky Hill. Berlin will also be submitting a signed MOU. They will not be doing as much investigative coverage as predicted but responding to actual calls. The financial impact ranges from \$800 to \$2,000, with a minimum of 4 hours. Most other Task Forces do not get activated for station coverage. They rely on Mutual Aid agreements. The Task Force role needs to be modified.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for July as presented.

- A. Fire Marshal's Office Report. The Fire Marshal's Office Report for July had been submitted. There were no changes to the report. Mr. Holmes just finished all the school inspections and has forwarded his report to the Board of Education.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Marshal's Office report for July as submitted.

- VI. Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response Capability. The Chief reported that the Department is doing what it needs to do to get by. Strategies they plan to use will be distributed to the Commissioners during Executive Session at the Commissioners' meeting. The Chief is interviewing two part-time firefighters tomorrow. The posting has been up for 2 ½ weeks. Only two individuals applied for the positions. The Executive Director noted that the Department needs to do better. They have lost a significant number of individuals to other Departments. Serious discussion regarding options and strategies which will happen in Executive Session at tomorrow's Board meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the report on staffing hiring and response capability.

VII. Old Business

- A. Update on Back-Up Emergency Generator at Holy Apostles. The Executive Director explained that the Water Department does have a backup generator. The discussion point is a road that has been suggested or recommended by certain Commissioners and some of the Committee. The issue is that it is not the District's land. They cannot dictate to Holy Apostles how to help the District build a ramp or access. They are great supporters of the

District, but there is really nothing in it for them. The main point is that the District does have the ability to get a generator up there.

Justin Lonergan had a discussion with a preferred vendor that gave him some information on the ability to get power to the communications box from the road whether it be a temporary wire or a hard and fast type of solution. That would range anywhere from \$1,000 - \$4,000.

There are 3 solutions on the Holy Apostles site. One is to build a road. Another is a long enough cable that can be stretched out from the generator to the connection. The third would be to bury the cable, put a connection down by the road, and you plug in the connection. Its already pre-wired into the generator or communications box. That would be the preferred method.

There is a neighboring property that has access to a public road. That may be a solution to explore. It was noted that this site is a receiver site, and would not create a situation where this site would shut down the other sites. *The Committee agreed to continue exploring the options at Holy Apostles.*

- B. Update on Court Street/Coles Road Firehouses. The Chief reported that the transition from Court Street to Coles Road is just about complete. He feels that the Court Street renovations are "outstanding." He gave kudos to the firefighters who worked to get things done. Lt. Mike Zadrick has been appointed the House Lieutenant at Court Street. Any concerns or unresolved issues should be brought to Lt. Zadrick to be addressed including purchases. Any unresolved issues will be brought to Chief Balletto.

Regarding Coles Road, Lisa Pandolfini and Ass't Chief Brade had their offices painted. The final moving costs for the equipment have been calculated. The old dispatch room in the front of the building is now the backup dispatch center. Everything is operating per status quo. Commissioner Epstein had put out an invitation to all the Commissioners for a special viewing of Court Street one hour before the Commission meeting tomorrow night.

- C. Update on Brigade Pumper with Town. Chief Balletto reported that this situation is status quo. He requested that the issue be tabled for 90 days.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to table the update on the Brigade Pumper for 90 days.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept all old business on this evening's agenda.

VIII. New Business

- A. Discussion on Promotional Testing Process for Fire Lieutenant. Chief Balletto reported that there had been a request by one of the Lieutenants to be bumped back down to a private. He addressed the concern by approving it. The Chief had to come up with a testing process component to fill the Lieutenant vancancy. The Chief recently hired Mission CIT to manage all the testing requirements for the upcoming lieutenant's promotional exam. Currently there are 5 applicants. The posting was closed last week. The candidates are: Alan Dominy, Tyler Kosterick, Corey

LaFontaine, Nick Schenartz and John Nowik. Wednesday, August 17, 2022, the candidates will be arriving at 11 AM to meet with the testing company. The company will review the testing process. It will be a 100 question test with a written exam which will be 50% of their overall score. There will be an oral exam with subject matter experts. That will be the other 50% of their grade, and it will be controlled by the company providing the test. The Chief participated by providing a reading list for the test. He used two books and 10 SOP's as material for the written exam. One book is Fire Officer Tactics by John Norman and Fire Officers' book. The Chief has allotted 7 weeks for them to study. The written exam is scheduled for September 14, 2022, at 9 AM at the Coles Road station. The following Monday, Sept. 19, 2022, will be the oral exam.

- B. Fire Engine to Farmers Market. Commissioner Epstein is co-chair of the Public Relations/Community Outreach Committee along with Commissioner Darius. They discussed showing off the new Truck before it goes into service at the Farmers' Market in Cromwell which is held on Fridays at Frisbee Park. They discussed the date of Friday, August 26, 2022. If they have the time and manpower, they thought about displaying the Truck at other places. The Chief said that it would be possible to have the new truck at the Farmer's Market.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved that pending approval from the Farmers' Market organizers, the Executive Director and the Fire Chief; the Fire Department will display the new Truck #1 before it goes into service at the Farmers' Market at Frisbee Park in Cromwell on Friday, August 26, 2022. The truck would be accompanied by a firefighter.

- IX. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Hinners discussed his concerns regarding the Fire Department's relationship with the Police Department. There have been situations where the Police Department takes a call that is fire related, and based on their assessment, they do not think it is necessary to follow up with the Fire Department. In the past, these calls happened more frequently, and a process was worked out. Mr. Lonergan reported that Dispatch has a good relationship with the Police Department, especially with the Chief and the Captain. They do have issues with the dispatchers not passing along information in a timely manner or not at all. They try to address those concerns in a mutually beneficial way.
- X. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Hinners, Vice Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary