

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Subcommittee for Non-Career Staffing Solutions

Tuesday, January 22, 2019

6:00 PM

1 West Street
Cromwell, CT

Present: Executive Director Julius Neto, Deputy Fire Chief Michael Salonia, Curt Anderson, EMS; Nicole LaTerra, EMS. Also attending were Jennifer Anderson, EMS; and Commissioner Robert Donohue. Firefighter William McKnight arrived during the meeting.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM, by Executive Director Neto.
- II. Approval of Minutes of December 27, 2018 & January 3, 2019. A motion was made by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Ms. LaTerra and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the December 27, 2018 meeting as submitted. The minutes from January 3, 2019, were tabled for further review and approval at the next meeting.
- III. Public Comment. Mr. Neto introduced a document sent to him from Chief Terenzio. The document addressed some of the issues surrounding FLSA that were also discussed at a membership meeting at the beginning of December. Mr. Anderson had some comments on the Chief's document. He referred to pg. 2, paragraph 5, line 2 where it states, "they are paid by the hour," and "people pulling shifts such as 12 hrs., 24 hrs. a week." Mr. Anderson confirmed that they are called shifts, and they are divisible by 6. Therefore, it is 12 hours, 24 hours a week. They are paid by the hour, and sometimes they have split shifts or 3 hours each. They are paid for football games by the hour. Timecards are signed for football games. Any other types of EMS coverage such as road races, football games, etc. are also paid by the hour. Ms. LaTerra noted there were facts brought up at that meeting to confirm that the FLSA issue was known about for a period of time before it went into effect. Ms. LaTerra stands by her statements, and she confirmed that some information about FLSA was stated at the Fire Department meeting referred to in the Chief's document.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Continue Discussions for Non-Career Staffing Solutions/Possible Approval of Specific Suggestions Related to Solutions. Mr. Anderson distributed copies of his model. He began by stating at the top of the page, the first line referred to coverage for 60 hours a week, weekdays from 6:00 AM – 6:00 PM. The next line referring to fire coverage (in-house) for career staff. He did not know the pay rate of the career staff so it was not calculated in terms of cost for 6 hr. coverage for Fire staff, 6 hr. coverage for EMS Ambulance or the cost to the District. In his model, the career staff could be

supplemented with volunteer fire, part-time fire, volunteer cross-trained or part-time cross-trained. He showed the cost for each. A volunteer person cannot be paid by the hour, but can be 3 pay-per-calls whether they go on a call or not. It would be \$90 for 3 people for a 6 hr. shift. They would stay in station with the career staff. The cost to the District would be \$15 an hour. These calculations would apply to any of the coverage options listed for Fire Coverage (in-house) at the top of the sheet distributed.

The next section was EMS/First Ambulance coverage (in-house). The first line on the chart was career staff. There are always two people on the ambulance. It can be supplemented with volunteer EMS, part-time EMS, volunteer cross-trained or part-time cross trained. Volunteers will get 3 pay-per-calls whether they go or not. Part-timers will get \$90 or \$15 an hour, then volunteer cross trained and part-time cross trained. The question was raised as to why there are volunteers or why there are part-time. They get paid the same. The reason obviously is because of the FLSA. How do we manage time so that no one goes over the FLSA limit. It is the same way we would manage a part-time person not going over their 29 hrs. a week. There are schedule changes that have been made. Schedules have to be approved. Staff has to apply for their shifts.

The next part of Mr. Anderson's model was coverage at night and weekends. This will be supplemented by career staff. It is the same practice being done today only it is hoped not to the extent that is being done today.

For Fire coverage they will have Volunteer Fire or Part-Time Fire or Volunteer cross-trained or Part-Time cross-trained. If four people are put in the model, it would show each person, but they do not have to be in house, they can be on stand-by. They would get paid one pay-per-call for a 6 hour shift. Part-time Fire also get paid \$30 or one pay-per-call for a 6 hour shift. Volunteer Cross and Part-time Cross would be the same. This means that people will be paid \$30 or \$5 an hour to be available.

For ambulance coverage it is a little different because the staff is in-house. It would be paid out at the same rate if someone came in during the day to supplement the career staff. It would be \$30 pay-per-call for volunteers, and \$90 for a 6 hour shift. It can be done with volunteer EMS, Part-time EMS, Volunteer Cross or Part-time Cross. A 6 hour cost for fire coverage would be \$120 to have 4 people on stand-by. This pays everyone \$5 an hour to stay home and be available.

There were notes/thoughts Mr. Anderson added to his model on the bottom of the page which were things to consider going forward. One thought is that time is needed to recruit and train new personnel. Another is that new minimums and maximums need to be established for fire and EMS non-career personnel (part-time and volunteer). The volunteer force needs to be looked at for coverage, what are their minimums and where should they be. The same is true for Part-Time. For Part-time the expectation would be more than 360 hours a year. Part-time will be \$15 measured in shifts/hours, and a 2-hour flat rate for pay per call (29 hour maximum/week). The volunteers are \$30 pay-per-call (FLSA limited, adjusted each year). Fire and EMS minimum certifications must be established and personnel allowed necessary time to get there. EMS non-career candidates are much more abundant than is fire. Mr. Anderson had that noted because at the same membership meeting there were people that were not cross trained. It is felt that if the Department goes part-time, it will not be with the existing people. It was assumed that meant that people that are not cross-trained and cannot do both functions will not be allowed to be part-time. Mr. Anderson thought it was important to have people that are

just EMS as well. If it was just Fire, there wouldn't be any concern for people being part-time. It is a good idea to stock the ambulance with only EMS people because if there is a fire, the ambulance crew wouldn't have to lose any people that need to respond to a fire.

Deputy Chief Salonia did not have any significant comments to make. He wanted to digest the document some more. He understands the 6 person crew with 2 EMS and 4 for fire response. That would be a benefit.

Ms. LaTerra responded to comments regarding responding from home. Until recently everyone (non-career) responded from home. Ms. LaTerra stated that going forward, she does not see response from home as an issue or problem. There is accountability. If someone signs up for a shift, they will get paid that amount of money to be at home and/or on a call. If a person signs up for a duty shift, they are required to show up. If they are not signed up, they are not required to show up. There will be some type of action or consequence if the person is signed up and doesn't show up. They have never had an issue, especially on the EMS schedule. Deputy Chief Salonia stated that there are ways to establish a check and a balance for duty shifts.

Mr. Anderson stated that his model is a "baby step" in terms of ways to find a workable model. He has stated before he would like to see small steps towards change rather than getting into something that they cannot get out of. The key with these new models is to get the right combination of skilled personnel.

Ms. LaTerra reported that she has been working on her model, but she is not tech savvy, so she has been working on putting her document into a spreadsheet or power point document. She believes she has come up with a worthwhile model. It is similar to Mr. Anderson's, but she is confident the coverage can be handled with career and volunteers only, and her plan will stay within budget.. It would be cost effective and volunteers need to be held accountable and shifts maintained. Ms. LaTerra needed more time before she presents her model even though it is in draft form. Mr. Anderson offered to help her put her information into a spreadsheet.

The Subcommittee discussed when they would like to present a final model to the Personnel Committee. It was agreed to prepare something to present at the Personnel Committee's next regular meeting in February (February 28). There was a discussion about having a workshop with the Personnel Committee before their regular meeting to review the final draft and allow an opportunity for questions and concerns to be discussed.

Ms. LaTerra requested some information to complete her model. She asked for an updated, completed list of the membership. The list should include active members, active reserve, on leave, etc. She also needed a copy of the firefighter career contract. Ms. LaTerra asked for information regarding guaranteed coverage. There could be a need for guaranteed coverage with the volunteers supplementing the 60 hrs. a week for fire coverage when there are not six people on. There was a question of how often that would be needed. There was a lengthy discussion regarding coverage during the days.

Ms. LaTerra asked whether or not the Department is taking in new people. She has learned since their last monthly meeting, January 7, they are not able to onboard new people in an orientation. New personnel can do physicals, backgrounds and interviews, but are not able to have an orientation. It was noted for any of the models to work, the

Department should be actively recruiting. Mr. Neto guessed that the holdup might be the legal document that makes a person a member instead of an employee. All new members will receive 1099's (classified as independent contractors) and not W-2's. They will be required to sign a document stating that they are volunteers. There will be no employee/employer relationship. This will only be applicable to new members. Deputy Chief Salonia received a message from Ass't Fire Chief Brade that he is planning to meet with the Chief's assistant to begin planning an orientation. Emails have been sent to previous applicants to determine if they are still interested in volunteering, and if so, a new application form will be available for them to complete.

Mr. Neto requested that all Fire Department documents presented six months ago needed to be reviewed with no reference to employee/employer. Mr. Neto just wants to have a legal document for any member coming onboard. True volunteers will be required to do 1099's and be required to sign a legal document. Insurance benefits are being reviewed, but volunteers will be covered for workers' comp.

Mr. Neto discussed Deputy Chief Salonia's document/model to present for consideration. He asked if the Deputy Chief could share it with the rest of the Subcommittee. The Deputy Chief had worked on this report/project for school. It has been updated since, but it is a staffing plan to cover the issues the Subcommittee is dealing with now. The report was a recommendation to come up with a duty covered program for the Fire side such as what the Department has for EMS now. Shift coverage pay for in-quarters coverage is a recommendation at the end of the document. There is a lot of statistical and factual information noting what issues the Department is faced with and why they need to be addressed. There are references to OSHA standards and NFPA standards. The Deputy Chief will send electronic copies to the Subcommittee members for review. It is a large document. It was noted that there will be a copy available in the District Office should anyone be interested. It was agreed that the subcommittee will review once Deputy Chief Salonia has electronically sent it to them.

The Subcommittee discussed how many models should be presented to the Personnel Committee. There is no right or wrong answer, but Mr. Neto suggested presenting one plan. It will be easier than presenting more than one. The Subcommittee will need to come to some consensus on one plan.

There was some discussion as to whether or not Chief Terenzio had drafted a Strategic Plan. The document they were referring to was a report from a consultant who specializes in Strategic Planning & Management Systems. The report was dated November 2016. Mr. Neto will research to find the report. If it is located, he will make copies for the Subcommittee members. Ms. LaTerra would find the report helpful in preparing her model to be framed within the guidelines of that report. She wondered if there was any information that would be helpful from DOL. Mr. Neto has not received any word from DOL as to complaints or findings.

- V. Public Comment. Ms. Jennifer Anderson, EMS, was present and had some comments to make about various points discussed. Regarding orientation, approximately Jan. 3, she received a message from Deputy Chief Salonia that orientation would be coming up shortly. She was offering to help out with it, and DC Salonia referred her to Ass't Chief Brade because he is in charge of training. The Assistant Chief was given the green light on orientation at that time and was having the Chief's assistant categorize who needed what for training. She stated it was after the green light was given at the next membership meeting

that they were told the orientation would be put on hold because the application process was being reviewed. She also discussed their flow chart which shows a parallel process. The chart shows that the power point presentation can be done any time during the application process from the beginning to second tech. She stated that if the subcommittee was interested, they could view the power point to get more information for themselves. She also added that the \$30 pay per call, from home will be the rate whether the person does not go on any calls or goes on 4 calls. The rate will be the same. She also discussed a process that was in place where non-career staff would decide amongst themselves who would cover if something should happen. They were informal agreements.

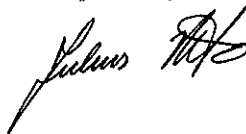
She commented on response and accountability from home. She stated it happens rarely. She supported what Ms. LaTerra had stated earlier regarding not having any problems with response from home.

Regarding managing part-time and volunteers if there were both, if part-time they would have to manage to make sure no one exceeded the threshold of hours (under 30 hours), and volunteers not to go over the FLSA limit. She noted that if volunteers are getting close to their limit, they should be notified and given the opportunity of a part-time slot. There was a discussion also about housing or lodging needs. Whatever is decided will need to meet NFPA Standards. One of the standards is that any type of lodging or bunk room needs to have two means of egress because they are rooms that are available 24/7. There were also some comments regarding cross training when discussing volunteers supplementing the career staff. It was thought that cross trained individuals are not always necessary.

Firefighter McKnight asked what level of certification the supplemental staff during the day will have. He felt that if they are going to be supplementing the coverage during the day, they should be equally certified as the career staff in case of a hazmat situation. There still needs to be issues worked out. It depends what positions have to be filled during the day. Different levels of training need to be considered and defined by a staff member's role. Mr. Neto added that compensation should be recognized based on a person's skill set and certification. Training should also still be an important component to certify staff at various levels.

- VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Ms. LaTerra and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Julius Neto, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
2-6-19