

# Cromwell Fire District

1 West Street  
Cromwell, CT 06416  
Telephone 860-635-4420

FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE  
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT  
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

### **Fire and Water Divisions**

**Tuesday, May 21, 2019**

**7:15 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, May 21, 2019, at 7:15 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, David Colligan, Charles Epstein, Mertie Terry and Allan Spotts attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Michael Terenzio, Acting Deputy Fire Chief Jason Brade and Michael Alibrio from BlumShapiro.

The meeting was called to order at 7:49 PM, by President Brow. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Brow. The President held a moment of silence for the firefighter that lost his life in Wisconsin this week.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as presented with the following additions: under New Business, Item G. Letter of Acceptance to Norcom and Motorola for the Radio Project (based on the outcome of the Commissioners' Special District meeting held at 6:30 PM, this evening before this Board meeting.)

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Samantha Slade, 128 Nooks Hill Road, announced that the Memorial Day Parade is scheduled for May 30, 2019, at 6:00 PM, at the Town Green. Commissioner Donohue's wife, Jennifer, will be taking Ms. Slade's spot on Town Council. Ms. Slade announced that she has been deployed to the Middle East effective May 30. She stated that serving Cromwell has been a pleasure.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF  
APRIL 16, 2019

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of April 16, 2019, as submitted. Commissioner Terry abstained.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF  
APRIL 23, 2019

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of April 23, 2019, as submitted.

APPROVAL OF SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF  
MAY 14, 2019

The minutes were not available for review. A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to table the minutes until next month's Board meeting.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

A letter was read by the President from Jennifer Ciancola on behalf of Mark Ciancola. It was noted that the patient is a Town resident and has an outstanding balance for 3 ambulance calls of \$800. Mr. Alibrio has spoken with Quick Med Claims who have stated they have gone through the patient's insurance, and the insurance has paid as much as allowed by the insurance company or Medicaid. Quick Meds does offer payment plans, however, the individual has not reached out to try to make those arrangements. It was noted that Quick Meds will bill three times and if there is no response, the bill will go to collections. The case was just ready to go to collections when this letter was received from the patient's daughter. The Board requested more information on this case such as the number of calls, the bill for each call and what insurance payments were made for each call. The President also wanted to know if these were ALS transports. If so, there may have been a transport service that was paid by ALS. Mr. Neto was asked to provide more details for the June Board meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to table this item until next month's Board meeting.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's Report for April had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Neto added that it has been a busy month. They are in the final stages of moving all of the staff for property insurance to all the new carriers. Tomorrow will be the first employee meeting at 1 West Street. There will be two, 2 hour meetings held with Brown & Brown who are the new insurance agents for the District. Mr. Neto also met today with Guy Russo from Prime AE. The VFD project for Chemfeed will be starting soon. The VFD will be installed within the next couple of months so that the water distribution system can be prepared to deal with draining the tank and doing a full inspection. Mr. Palmieri and Mr. Neto will be planning to give the Commissioners and Water Operations Committee an update at every

monthly Commissioners' meeting. The installation of the VFD's is the first phase of the project. Mr. Neto has been working closely with the Fire Chief in developing the new staffing model that will be implemented July 1.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's Report for April as submitted.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for April had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Alibrio reported that there are some items that are over budget, but others that are under budget. He stated that the budget still remains on track for the General fund and Water.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for April as submitted.

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for April had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Epstein requested that certain items that are timely be published more than a month ahead of time so that Commissioners are not informed of things after the fact. Chief Terenzio reported that the decommissioned 1991 Rescue Truck has been sold for \$14,000 to the REA County Fire District in Tennessee. They were very happy to receive it. They have 12 fire stations in their County, and they operate with \$6,250 per District, per year. He added that they already had to replace the fuel filters after driving back to Tennessee. Chris Logan was able to assist in their repair work over the phone. Commissioner Colligan asked the Chief to get a picture of the apparatus once they have put it into service so that the membership can see the outcome of the sale. Commissioner Terry asked that Chief Terenzio send condolences as a show of support to the Fire Department in Wisconsin that lost a firefighter this week. Chief Terenzio will be honoring Commissioner Terry's request.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for April as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Executive Director reviewed the Operations Report for April since Mr. Palmieri had the night off. Also discussed was painting of fire hydrants.

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

#### REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations Committee. There was no meeting. The President added that there was an informal discussion held in which it was agreed to move things along with the new staffing plan by making an Executive Order from the Office of the President of the Board to appoint Commissioner Colligan as Chairman of the Cromwell Fire Association's By-Laws Committee. Commissioner Epstein will be appointed as Co-Chair of the Committee. The Executive Director and Fire Chief will be ad hoc members of the Committee. The President wanted Melissa Roming to be a priority member of that Committee. He also wanted 4 members of the rank and file so that there will be 7 voting members of that Committee. He suggested using the existing By-Laws as a framework. There may some information in them that will fit, but there needs to be a major rewrite of them as well as a new name.

- B. Executive Committee. There was no meeting.
- C. Fire Operations Committee. A meeting was held on April 16, 2019. 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 Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee Report for April 16, 2019, as submitted. Commissioner Terry abstained.

- D. Pension Committee. There was no meeting.
- E. Personnel Committee. Commissioner Epstein reported that a meeting was scheduled for May 23, 2019, but it has been postponed for 2 weeks, and has been rescheduled for Thursday, June 6, 2019.
- F. Water Operations Committee. The next meeting of the Committee is Tuesday, August 13, 2019.

#### BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

#### CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. Ms. Slade gave her report under Public Comment at the beginning of the meeting.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees

- 1. Public Safety Tower Committee. A meeting was held on May 17, 2019. A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the report of the Public Safety Tower Committee of May 17, 2019, as submitted.
- 2. Safety/Building Committee. A meeting was held on April 11, 2019. 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 Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the Safety/Building Committee meeting minutes of April 11, 2019, as submitted.

- 3. By-Laws Committee. A meeting was held on April 23, 2019. Minutes had been previously distributed for reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. President Brow thanked the By-Laws Committee for all the hard work they have done over the last 3 years. The adopted date will be the date it was approved by the Committee (April 23, 2019) and Board to send it to a Town vote. The effective date will be today's date of May 21, 2019.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the By-Laws Committee meeting minutes of April 23, 2019, as submitted.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Spotts commented on the issues being discussed tonight regarding communications. The Town has also had struggles getting the word out about meetings and referendums. He also noted that his tenure at the General Assembly is almost over. He will be resuming business visitations with the Mayor. He has two "hats" as alternate on the Board of Finance but also as a Commissioner of the Fire District. He will also be going back to doing the Cromwell Chamber meetings every month. He will be representing the Town as well as the District.

Commissioner Terry reminded everyone about the Car Show being held on May 24, 2019, sponsored by the Children's Coalition.

President Brow discussed some concerns citizens have had about parking around the area where a religious establishment has been proposed at the former site of the Knights of Columbus. The Executive Director has followed up on the concerns and learned that inspections and required processes, such as Fire Marshal inspections, were followed to the letter of the law. The Fire Chief and Acting Deputy Fire Chief were invited to a Planning and Zoning meeting last week. It was a walk around and the Deputy Chief had researched the files. All of the square footage is usable. However, it is not clear at this point how much square footage there is. The Fire Department wants to know how the space is going to be used, whether it will be some standing and some sitting, etc. Once they find out how the space is being used, they will be able to determine the capacity. There are two hydrants on each side of the property. They will be able to determine parking capacity once the other information is received. There also needs to be some discussion with the Police Chief to make sure the parking ordinances are enforced in that area. Commissioner Spotts added that the new owners purchased the house next door which has parking in the back of the lot. It is not clear if the plans are to use that property for more parking.

There was discussion regarding participation in the Memorial Day Parade.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to report.
- D. Discussion and Possible Action on Cromwell Fire Department By-Laws. The Executive Director invited Attorney Kevin Deneen to this meeting to address any questions or concerns regarding the By-Laws of the Fire Department. Attorney Deneen began by stating there are a lot of towns and districts in the State that are going through similar situations and issues as Cromwell. The reason issues come up is because the District was created in the 1880's to early 1900's where it was hard to get from one end of town to another in an emergency, and everyone worked and lived in town. Separate districts and firehouses were created to make emergency calls a shorter distance. By-Laws and regulations need to be updated to be in compliance. That also includes the way employees are treated. The By-Laws of the Fire Department were basically created for the volunteers of the department at that time. The checks and balances of a modern system need to be incorporated and determine the different roles of what the association will do at one level, and what the District or Commission will do on their level. Attorney Deneen offered to work with the Committee to help them work

through their By-Laws issues. Commissioner Colligan, as Chair of the Department's By-Laws Committee, appreciated Attorney Deneen's offer to help. Commissioner Epstein asked if the Attorney could forward some examples of By-Laws he has worked on without violating any confidentiality laws. Attorney Deneen will be forwarding some information to the Committee Chair. He explained some of the different ways each town has addressed their membership issues. Many of them have established a corporation type of status.

Commissioner Colligan explained that they will be establishing committee membership first. They will then have their first meeting to review their mission. Commissioner Colligan asked Attorney Deneen if he would be available for the second meeting of the committee to explain the proper procedures to follow.

The Executive Director asked if the current By-Laws should be suspended while the new By-Laws are being created or should they run parallel. Attorney Deneen thought that they should probably be suspended as people are moved into an employee status. If an issue regarding discipline or employment should come up, it will be up to the Fire Chief to address it. Commissioner Colligan asked if he could do what was done previously which was to suspend portions of the By-Laws so that they can still operate. He asked for permission from Attorney Deneen and the Board. Attorney Deneen stated that it would not be a problem to suspend portions of the current By-Laws.

President Brow recommended leaving the current By-Laws intact until the Committee is formed and begin their work and are ready to implement the new model. He suggested tabling this agenda item until the model begins to take effect or there is a conflict between volunteer vs. employee. That would be the time the By-Laws would be suspended and the Employee Handbook would become the governing document.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to table this item until the June meeting.

- E. Resolution – Change in Vested Eligibility of Pension. A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to table this item until the June meeting.
- F. Discussion and Possible Action to Increase Asset Capitalization Threshold from \$1,000 to \$5,000. The Executive Director explained that this was a recommendation from the auditing firm. This has been a recommendation for the last two years. There are assets on the District's books for \$1,000. These would be assets such as computers, and even though we are a small District, the number of \$1,000 is too low.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to increase the Asset Capitalization Threshold from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

- G. Acceptance Letter to Norcom for the Radio/Communication Project. The Executive Director stated that based on the District vote by the Town, the Communication Project is moving forward. The District will be going out to bond soon. It is very advisable that the District draft a letter of commitment signed by the President of the Board so that the District can lock in the pricing structure of the project. This will be forwarded to Norcom and Motorola. Mr. Ambrosino from Norcom has forwarded a formatted letter that just needs to be put on the District's letterhead and signed by the President. This letter allows for the process to begin while the bonding is being secured.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to authorize the President of the Board of Commissioners to sign a letter of commitment addressed to Norcom to lock in the pricing structure of the radio/communication project.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Epstein thanked all the Commissioners for their hard work on the District/Commission By-Laws, the Budget and the Radio/Communication project.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no items to be discussed in Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 PM.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lee Brow, President  
(Acting Secretary due to absence of Secretary)

Nancy Deegan  
Recording Secretary  
6-11-19