

# **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, November 19, 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, November 19, 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 Roger Rukowicz (Vice President), Mertie Terry, Jason Hinnners, Johnathon Hamlin, Allan Spotts, Robert Donohue and David Colligan attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Michael Terenzio, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri and Michael Alibrio from Blum Shapiro. Commissioners Lee Brow and Charles Epstein had excused absences.

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

A moment of silence was held by Commissioner Colligan, as requested by President Brow, for the fallen firefighter in Worchester, MA last week.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Nicole LaTerra, 13 Hicksville Rd., stated she has not been to a meeting in a while. She wanted to make comments and have them documented. She had a certified letter delivered to her this morning and wished to make some comments about it. She started by saying she is very disappointed by the lack of communication or a heads up regarding staffing issues. She is tired of feeling like the volunteers are being pushed out. There has been a conversation about things not changing and making everyone fit in. She feels there has been nothing but road blocks to prevent the volunteers from fitting in. This was stated as Ms. LaTerra's opinion. She has been positive and open minded since the staffing changes began. She has done calls, events, shifts and training, some with no pay. It is not about the money. She has stayed silent through the transition and has not been coming to meetings. To her, the certified letter was the last straw. It is disheartening to

find all the changes that have been put into place. She has tried to accommodate them, but now with the changes of 6 hr. shifts to 8 hr. shifts, it is not conducive to people that work or run a business and have a family. She used to be able to fit her schedule into the model, but she does not see the model as being modified at all. She was interested in split shifts, but learned it is the individual's responsibility to find someone to split the shift with, and the individual is responsible for finding someone who is able and qualified. She also added that trying to come in if there is a call back is difficult in terms of finding out where to go and the communication of how it is going to work. She has had the responder app taken off of her phone so she is unable to get the calls. She is not able to reactivate that app. The letter she received stated that 10% minimums are now up to 20% on a monthly basis. It does not take into consideration the credit they do above and beyond that she still continues to do without the monthly pay. She has done tree sales, Honor Guard and Santa Run. None of those events are taken into consideration. There was an active reserve which meant that after a person was vested after 10 or 15 years... Ms. LaTerra's 3 minute time limit was up. She was not allowed to continue.

Ms. Jen Anderson also had comments. She picked up where she left off from last month when she was cut off. She quoted sections of the Dagle investigation. "Throughout the course of this investigation, a pattern of making unsubstantiated claims against members emerged which is clearly demonstrated in the February 7 letter." "The investigation disclosed sufficient evidence to determine that Chief Terenzio created a hostile work environment and violated the Department's policies regarding Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics based on his actions against Candace DiVizio. Chief Terenzio's collection of serious and significant actions against Ms. DiVizio following the October 2018 FLSA meeting and Ms. Divizio's complaint with the Department of Labor which clearly indicates a pattern of harassment and retaliation against Ms. Divizio to constitute a hostile work environment." "The investigation revealed a pattern of behavior in which Chief Terenzio threatened insubordination and severe discipline against department members who took no steps to conducting an investigation. To continually allege acts of insubordination but not follow up with an investigation shows that the allegation is being made for the sole purpose of intimidating or threatening the individual. Chief Terenzio's leadership style, makes threats of severe discipline, falsely accuses members by email and cc's other members of the administration repeatedly and falsely claims that members are insubordinate." Chief quote in the Dagle report regarding Ms. Divizio, "I just wanted to admonish her." Dagle quote regarding Chief Salonia, "when Chief Terenzio sent a copy of the letter to the Executive Director and Commissioners, he ensured that the admonishment of Salonia was done so in a very public manner. Quote from Chief Terenzio's email to Capt. Anderson, "and after a lengthy investigation and threats of severe discipline, I determined that a behavior modification has been made." This is not what most people would call a positive leadership style. Chief Terenzio appears to prefer a very disciplinary style of leadership by admonishing, threatening, demeaning, falsely accusing members, retaliating and just being a bully. An individual can brag repeatedly about all the certifications they hold but that is not what makes a good leader. Dagle quote, "as this investigation progressed, a pattern of conduct and common thread behavior emerged on the part of Chief Terenzio. Although this may be the leadership style of Chief Michael Terenzio, when this leadership style creates an environment in which the Cromwell Fire Department members feel bullied, harassed and/or threatened, and when that style shows a manner of unprofessionalism, it is no longer an acceptable practice." Ms. Andersen's 3 minutes expired.

Roger Thompson, 16A Country Squire Dr. He began by stating that everyone in the room knows him because he along with the others have spoken before. He stated that they enjoy doing it, because they keep coming back to speak over and over again. Everyone keeps saying the same thing in order to get people to listen to them. He added there are no volunteers and no part-timers. Everyone is being chased away. It looks like it has been designed to be that way from

their perspective. He again stated they are being pushed out, and it really sucks. He said that being someone who grew up in the Department and brought up on, "brotherhood has no bounds." He added that clearly it does because they have found it.

Brian Petrocelli, 24 Cedar Lane Court, is an employee of the District and a member of the Fire Department. His comments went contrary to the previous public comments. He spoke on a positive note. He thanked the Commission, the Executive Director and the Fire Chief for all their hard work in making the Department run. There have been timeless accounts where he has worked with the Commissioners along with the Chief and the Executive Director. They have been putting a lot of work and time into the District to provide the public safety that the community deserves. He knows and cares very much about the community. His family started in this community in the 1700's, and he is now a transplant back in Cromwell. He has enjoyed living in this community, his children were educated here and his family has made residence here. Being a District employee working on the public safety side of getting personnel to the scene, he knows for a fact that services have been well documented to be top notch. Services are being provided in a timely manner. They have made many opportunities for new training. He personally enjoys knowing as a resident that a truck is coming when 9-1-1 is called. People are not waiting. He knows there are dedicated volunteers still in the community. Those volunteers do respond to calls, they come out when they are asked to come out. They have made a point to come out when they are requested to. He can name them all. He looks at those and thanks those people individually every time they respond to calls. He thanks them for their time. Commissioners will come out time and again when he calls with issues. He has bothered the Executive Director when he is out of the country and the Fire Chief in the middle of the night. These individuals respond. He was speaking as an individual, but as an employee of the District, he thanked them for hearing all of their concerns. As a resident he thanked them for hearing their concerns. He also thanked them for taking care of the public in the community that they serve. He thanked them for their time tonight.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF  
OCTOBER 15, 2019

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes of October 15, 2019, as submitted. Commissioner Hinnners abstained.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF  
NOVEMBER 12, 2019

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes of November 12, 2019, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & 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 October had been previously submitted and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. He asked if there were any questions. He gave an update in his written report on the Fire Ops

Communication Subcommittee's Communication Project. The audit is in its final stages. They are waiting for some additional information from the pension side. He did not have a timeline for completion. They did ask for a continuation just in case something comes up at the last minute. But usually the pension information is the last leg of the audit process. There is no reason for any concern. The audit will be completed.

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

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for October had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Alibrio did not have anything to add. He noted that as the Executive Director mentioned, the audit field work has been completed. They are just waiting for the final pension reporting to finalize the audit. Mr. Alibrio added that they did file an extension which is what they have done in the past, but never needed it. The extension was filed just in case it is needed. Vice President Rukowicz asked how things are looking since next month will be the halfway mark of the fiscal year. Mr. Alibrio noted that there are a few accounts that are over budget or getting to that point, but they are working with the staff and management to monitor the accounts. There have been a few more budget amendments at this time in the budget cycle than in years past so they are monitoring things closely and are working to cover any areas that need it.

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

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for October had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Chief had nothing to add to his report.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for October as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for October had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri had nothing to add to his report.

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

#### REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations. A meeting was held on October 24, 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 Donohue and approved 5 to 0 to accept the District Operations Committee meeting minutes of October 24, 2019, as submitted. Commissioner Terry abstained.

- B. Executive Committee. There was no meeting.

- C. Fire Operations Committee. Meetings were held on September 17, 2019, and October 15, 2019. The meeting minutes were previously distributed and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The September meeting minutes were tabled from the last Board meeting. No one had any questions of Chairman Hamlin.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and approved 5 to 0 to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of September 17, 2019, and October 15, 2019. Commissioners Hinnners and Terry abstained.

1. Communications Subcommittee. Commissioner Colligan reported that a meeting was held on Oct. 30 with Motorola, Norcom and Cromwell staff involved with the radio project. The meeting started at 1:30 PM and ended at 6:30 PM. There were a few changes that were made to get the project moving in the right direction. They were all positive changes at no cost to the District. One of the items discussed was a UEN system that will manage the radio system so the Dispatchers know if there is a problem immediately. This will help to maintain Cromwell's ISO. They also re-analyzed how many portables need to be purchased. They went from 87 portables down to 53. They are all going to be multi-bans. Today the Executive Director, Fire Chief and a group of approximately 11 people from Norcom and Motorola toured the voting sites. They were inspected, and all questions were answered. He added that hiring Paul Zito as Project Manager/Clerk of the Works was a very wise decision. Mr. Zito has saved the District a lot of money so far. He has found things that are not needed, but can still make the system work better. They have created a second dispatching center as a backup if anything should happen to the Court St. headquarters. West Street could not be used because it is in a flood zone. A backup station has been set up at Coles Rd.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Communications Subcommittee report as presented.

- D. Pension Committee. There was no meeting.

- E. Personnel Committee. Meetings were held on September 26, 2019, October 24, 2019 and a Special Meeting on October 31, 2019. Minutes were previously distributed and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Hamlin asked if there were any questions.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and approved 5 to 0 to accept the Personnel Committee meeting minutes of September 26, 2019, October 24, 2019 and October 31, 2019. Commissioner Colligan abstained from the vote for the meetings on October 24 and 31. Commissioner Terry abstained from the vote for the meetings on September 26 and October 31.

- F. Water Operations Committee. Meetings were held on October 2, 2019 and November 12, 2019. There was no quorum on November 12. Minutes from the October 2, 2019 meeting had been distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and unanimously approved to accept the Water Operations Committee Meeting minutes of October 2, 2019, as submitted.

### BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

### CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. Commissioner Rukowicz congratulated Ms. Donohue on her election to Council and appointment to Deputy Mayor as the highest vote-getter. Ms. Donohue did not have anything to report because Council has not had a meeting other than an organizational meeting. She added that the Mayor will be sharing the liaison role with her for these meetings. If she is unable to attend, Mayor Faienza will attend for her.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
1. Public Safety Tower Committee. There was no meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 6, 2019.
  2. Safety/Building Committee. There has been no meeting. The next meeting will be sometime in January.
- C. Vote on the CBA of the Cromwell Professional Fire Fighters' Association Union, Local 4662. Mr. Neto explained that the reason this item was tabled after the last Special Board meeting was due to a sentence on pg. 13 that needed to be clarified. The sentence was related to the Connecticare insurance plan that was used prior to the District changing insurance plans. This was an oversight. Mr. Neto apologized for the oversight. Mr. Neto suggested that if this is voted on in the affirmative, he asked to make this retroactive to last Sunday, so that the week that was lost in researching the clarification will not have any financial burden. Commissioner Rukowicz noted that the Commissioners received copies of the contract three weeks ago either electronically or hard copy. A Special Meeting was held last week to review and clarify. Commissioners were asked to forward any questions to the Executive Director.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the CBA of the Cromwell Professional Fire Fighters' Association Union with the edit to page 13 as noted, retroactive to last Sunday, November 10, 2019.

### NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Terry stated she was very proud of the Honor Guard at the Veteran's Day service at Town Hall. It was a tribute to the Fire Department to support the veteran's that were there. She went to a football game of smaller children and noticed there was an EMS representative there. It made her feel good to know that the Fire and EMS personnel were there and serving the community. It made her feel really proud to see them there and have the community see them there.
- B. Budgetary Adjustments – General Fund, Water Enterprise Fund & Equipment Reserve Fund. A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Spotts, 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 General Fund, Water Enterprise Fund & Equipment Reserve Fund budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, as reflected in the worksheet provided by Blum Shapiro at the Board of

Commissioners' Meeting of November 19, 2019. Re-allocate available funds to cover cost increase for network server replacement: \$1,734.90 from General Fund – Computer Operations – Non-Capital Equipment (01103-5680) AND \$1,734.89 from Water Fund – General Administration – Computer Operations (05907-5805); totaling \$3,469.79 to Equipment Reserve Fund – Network Server Upgrade (31753-5740).

C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to report.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Terry asked if the administration had sent a letter to the Fire Department in Worcester, MA who lost a firefighter. She hoped that we would send a letter of condolence or a sympathy card. She had hoped our department can do something. The Executive Director was tasked with sending a letter.

Ms. Jennifer Anderson continued where she left off from the beginning of the meeting. “until the leadership style effects the working environment of Department members or creates the risk of litigation against the Department and the Town.” Litigation, does that term “litigation” raise a red flag? The Commissioners have determined that a hostile work environment has not been created. \$40,000 of taxpayer money for a report that is totally ignored. A District quote, “the Board would like to acknowledge that the Chief has made many positive changes in the District including initiating a system of service delivery which improves the fire and EMT responses to the District.” Ms. Anderson stated this was not true. It might be true for fire but not EMS. There are many new cross-trained employees, most of who are experienced, but some are newly certified and have little or no experience in the field. In the past, the Department has always provided extensive training. She stated that is no longer. With the new staffing model, the Department sent out an employee their first day on the job who is not from the Cromwell area, to drive the ambulance without any EVOC training. An EMT while providing patient care on the way to the hospital had to be yelling directions to the driver through the porthole. A new crew arrived to an unresponsive, but breathing patient. When they began to initiate CPR, the police officer already on scene convinced them to assist the patient’s breathing instead. There are delays in sending an ambulance to a medical call while Dispatch tones for a second crew and subsequently Hunter’s Ambulance. While our ambulance is just sitting in station quite often the new staff snicker about the foolishness of the Department, and they are getting paid for it. District quote, “the Chief will be required to attend any training directed by the Executive Director and/or the Personnel Committee. It is anticipated that the Chief will make positive changes to his management style.” Is this the best choice for the Chief to improve his leadership skills? These are the same pals who choose to overlook the Dagle report. There is quite a history of poor decision making.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no items for Executive Session.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Hinnars and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 PM.

CFD Bd. Of Cmsr.'s mtg. 11-19-19

ATTEST:

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Jason Hinnars, Secretary

Nancy Deegan  
Recording Secretary  
12-6-19