

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Executive Committee Meeting

Friday, March 29, 2019

5:00 PM

1 West Street
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Roger Rukowicz (Chairman), Charles Epstein, Robert Donohue and Mertie Terry. Also attending was Executive Director Julius Neto and Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:01 PM, by Chairman Rukowicz.
- II. Approval of the Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- IV. Old Business. There was no old business to report.
- V. New Business
 - A. Water Budget 2019/2020. The Chairman stated there will be another meeting next Tuesday, April 2, 2019, same time and place to discuss the EMS/Fire Department budget. Chief Terenzio will be in attendance for that meeting as well as Angel Alvarado. Chairman Rukowicz added that today was Mr. Jarzavek's last day after 47 years of service. The Committee wishes him well.

The Committee had a draft of the Water Enterprise fund budget. They decided to go through it item by item. The first item was on Page 1 of the Water Dept. side of the budget. The first group of items is revenue coming in. There was \$675 earned on the first line item. There were questions on the discrepancy of what had been budgeted back in 2017/2018. Mr. Neto will look into the discrepancy. Commissioner Epstein would like to see realistic income dollars. Since the District is looking at a number of large expenses in the upcoming year, the Committee expressed the need for realistic income dollars.

The next item for review was total payroll. The payroll was \$827 below year over year. Mr. Neto explained what is in the payroll. Mr. Jarzavek and Mr. Palmieri are requesting one Maintainer position and half of an administrative assistant position. There was a

discussion on the positions for the Water Department. When the position in the Fire Marshal's Office transferred to the Water Department, the salary dollars did not transfer. The person vacated the position in January so there was some salary dollars left for the remaining 6 months of the year. However, some of that money was used for legal fees.

The next item: Maintenance of Structures and Improvements. Commissioner Rukowicz asked about having \$5,000 for tree removal. Fire Alarm testing was also in that category. That testing has not been done in quite a while. Mr. Palmieri explained that the \$5,000 was for the Dividend Brook tree removal where there was a really large pine tree that caused the damage to the roof that was recently repaired. The work will have to have Police to direct traffic as well as having a crane there. Commissioner Epstein discussed the pumping station located near there but it does not pump out. He asked if that was the reason why the last street in town does not have Cromwell water, if it was because the Water Division does not pump to it. Mr. Palmieri explained that the water main stops at the old sandpit access road on that side of the street, but it does not stop on the other side and come down to that building. There is no water main that goes that far. Mr. Neto suggested that part of long range planning should be to coordinate some effort with MDC to connect with them on Rte. 99 and Rte. 3. Cromwell is approximately 200 yards from them. This would mean that if there is any type of emergency crisis within the Cromwell water system, the Town would not be without water. MDC would tap in to Cromwell. If there is ever an opportunity where MDC needs water, Cromwell could sell their water to MDC since they are expanding into other towns in the State. At the present time, Cromwell does not have the infrastructure to connect. It would benefit Cromwell more than it would benefit MDC to connect at each site.

Getting back to the tree removal, at that site there used to be old wells there. Mr. Palmieri noted that the wells are still there. They are run occasionally, but they are not being used now. The system is totally disconnected from Cromwell's system. They have been disconnected for 30 years. If it were connected, water samples would have to be taken every day, but there are three wells there that could possibly be used in the future, but the system would have to be redone. The point of the discussion was to advise the Committee that there is a resource there.

The next item was pumping equipment. There was a \$4,000 increase in this budget, due to the pumping and the generator. Last year was \$18,000, this year is \$22,000. Power supply increase. The increase has to do with flow meter calibration, well pump inspections and maintenance for the generators. This year that item was over by \$13,500. \$10,000 was allocated for power. Commissioner Epstein asked if the District should consider solar power for the pumps. Mr. Neto stated that solar power would be a huge project. He stated it would require obtaining a few bids from different companies to obtain the best deal. If solar is considered, the District would need permits from DEEP. Energy consumption of the District is very high. Commissioner Epstein discussed the cost savings he has had at his home with this type of power. It was noted that leasing is another option for solar power. A full energy assessment would need to be done.

Chemicals were the next item. Chairman Rukowicz noted that the numbers are only off by 1 or 2 percent to the good. The only exception was for chlorine. This year's budget was \$87,000 compared to last year of \$92,000.

The next item was transmission and distribution. \$101,230 was last year's figure. This year's figure is \$99,000. It was noted the maintenance of reservoir item refers to the one on top of Shunpike.

The next item was Operating Expenses. The first item was utilities. Last year was \$8,500, this year was \$9,500. Uniforms last year was \$4,000, this year is \$6,000. The truck and garage expense was \$30,000, now it is \$36,000. The three items mentioned are a \$9,000 increase from last year. The previous savings has been used. Mr. Palmieri was asked to explain the increase in the truck and garage expenses. There is more additional fire alarm testing, the generator has not been serviced in the last couple of years so that was added, the garage doors need to be on a schedule for service. Roybal Fire Service was on a schedule for fire extinguishers. They had been doing that but wanted to make sure that was still part of the operating expenses. It also includes gas and diesel for all the vehicles and equipment.

General administration was the next item. This includes dental, medical and life insurance as well as pension. Any insurance has gone up minimally between 8 and 10 percent. After being informed by the Town that they will no longer include the Fire District employees with their employees for insurance benefits, Mr. Neto has done a good job finding reasonable rates. The consensus was that we can only do the best job that can be done for now. If other insurance opportunities become available in the future, this can be revisited. Commissioner Epstein asked if there will ever be an opportunity to go back with the Town for insurance. Mr. Neto said that it could be a possibility in the future, but for now the District has found its provider while the Town is going in a different direction. They are not continuing coverage with Connecticare. The District is going to get charged 29% year over year. In the future the District's commitment is one year. If the District were to go with the State, that would be a 3 year commitment. Medical costs in Fairfield County are 20% higher than this part of the state. The first two years would be 12% increase, but the third year had a lot of unknowns which is why the Town did not go with the State plan. They went with CIGNA. \$47,309 will be the cost for insurance this year for the District.

Mr. Neto added that \$25,000 was added under Professional fees. If there is a need for specialty engineering or other types of services, the Water Department will be supported.

The next section was the Debt Service interest. Last year was \$83,000 and this year was \$66,000. Capital requests were reviewed. \$110,388 at the bottom of page 2, would be a deficit if the Committee accepts this budget. It was noted that the Water Department and Fire Department are two separate budgets and cannot be interchanged. Mr. Neto added that at the end of the fiscal year, if there are funds left in the budget, they will be put into the General fund. Progress on the delinquent accounts will also go into that fund.

The last page to discuss was the Water Capital fund. Meters are an item that is always going to be there. They are short money in this account sometimes so this year Mr. Palmieri took some funds out of hydrants and put them in the meters account. Water meters are always needed including replacements. Well #4 has a spare motor listed. The amount is for half of a motor. If a pump were to go down, it would take 3-4 weeks to order and 3-5 days to install. The next item was a hydraulic breaker for the backhoe. Mr. Palmieri explained that this is an attachment that goes on the back of the backhoe

for breaking through concrete or asphalt. It is safer and more efficient than a jackhammer. The one that the Water Division has is shot and cannot be repaired. The company that Mr. Palmieri received a quote from is very reputable and gave him a good price.


The next item to discuss was a steamroller. The division needs one, but it was decided to wait until next year to purchase. The Town has one and has let the District borrow it. Material bins for the garage. They will be the big concrete blocks. Currently the stone is all on cement pads at the garage. It is an item that is wanted, but not a priority. There was discussion on water rates and costs to replace the tank. Mr. Palmieri and Commissioner Rukowicz explained the project.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Water Department budget as presented with the \$110,000 shortfall. Commissioner Epstein added that he thought it was a good budget with not a lot of fluff.

VI. Public Comment There were no public comments to report.

VII. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Roger Rukowicz, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary