

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS **Fire Department Operations Committee**

Tuesday, July 16, 2019

5:30 PM

**105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT**

Present: Commissioners Johnathon Hamlin (Chair), Allan Spotts and Robert Donohue attended. Also attending were Fire Chief Michael Terenzio and Deputy Fire Chief Jason Brade. In addition to committee members, also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto and Commissioners Roger Rukowicz, David Colligan and Lee Brow (President).

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM, by Chairman Hamlin.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted with the following addition under New Business, Item B. Discussion and Recommendation on the Fire Department Uniform Policy.
- III. Approval of Meeting Minutes of June 18, 2019. A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Department Operations Committee meeting minutes of June 18, 2019, as submitted.
- IV. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- V. Communications Report. Chief Terenzio reported that the Subcommittee is actively working on identifying sites and getting them established through the consultant. Mr. Neto added that the District met with the Bond Counsel. They also met with Mr. Ambrosino to identify the sites. Mr. Neto spoke this afternoon with Fr. Ed. Fr. Ed is from the Mission of Holy Apostles, USA. The Mission of Holy Apostles, USA, are the landowners of Holy Apostles College. Since Holy Apostles College does not own the land, prior to Mr. Neto working for the District, if there was any work that was done regarding sites, the District may not have been communicating with the landlord. The landlord will be calling Mr. Neto either tomorrow or Thursday to schedule a meeting. Mr. Neto is looking forward to a meeting to establish a relationship from ground zero, similar to the discussions held with the developer for the Nike site.

Attorney Deneen has advised that he will be forwarding documents this week which will be draft agreements between the Fire District and the landlords of these sites so it is documented what the District plans to do at these sites. The rights for the right-of-way are being researched. Attorney Deneen is aware that the District has access to the right-of- way to use

to walk onto the site. Mr. Neto has had discussions with Paul Zito as the Clerk of the Works for the Communications Project. He has also given Attorney Deneen pictures of the sites, to see structurally what they will look like. Commissioner Colligan reported that he would like to have a Communications Subcommittee meeting in a couple of weeks. By that time Mr. Neto and Mr. Zito will have more information to discuss at the next meeting. Norcom has a picture of the tank with the unit. Mr. Neto has it already and will be sharing it with the land owners.

Chairman Hamlin reported he had been up to the tower site and saw the installation of the new air conditioning there. They will be finished tomorrow. They discussed getting a quote for air conditioning in the far room which is considered the third room. Mr. Neto added that currently there is no back up air for that room. Once the District's new equipment goes in there, they will have a backup. Right now there is only a single point of failure. Mr. Neto added that he was not aware that the unit was not functioning. Commissioner Colligan asked if the units were combination air conditioners and heat pumps. Mr. Neto has asked that question, and no one has ever had a need to use the heat. Even in the wintertime the air conditioning is still used.

- VI. Reports of Chief Officers. Chief Terenzio began by reporting they are in the process of redoing the SOP's to reflect the new staffing model. The new model should be in place and operational on Monday, July 22. Also, now voted into law is PTSD as a compensable workers' compensation injury/claim. It was signed into law last week. The Police Department has requested the use of the Fire Department's burn buildings for active shooter training at the end of August. President Brow stated that after being involved in this type of training where he works, the Fire Department should be involved because they will have to also work with victims or shooters. If Cromwell does not have a plan for this, President Brow offered to get the information that he has available from the East Hartford Fire Department, SWAT leader. Other departments in the area do the same type of training. The Chief had considered purchasing six bulletproof vests, but the cost was not in the budget. At a scene of an active shooter, the Police Department wants the Fire Department to hang back until they render the scene safe. They are not including the Fire Department in any of this training. Chief Terenzio will reach out to the Police Chief as requested by President Brow. The Chief also reported that he had submitted three grants at the end of last year. One was for a fire truck rechas, another was for the radio project and the third was for a Safer grant. Chief Terenzio received three separate emails for three different grant applications. The emails were a notice to make sure that the SAM account (the System for Awards Management.gov) is up to date. That is where the grant award will be forwarded. There were three separate emails for three separate applications. He inquired with people "in the know" such as Motorola Solutions. The Chief was advised by them that those emails mean that Cromwell has made it through the first and second phases of the process. There is one more phase to go. The Executive Director and Finance Manager verified all the information in the SAM.gov account.
- VII. Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response Capability. Chief Terenzio has shared with the Deputy Chief and the Executive Director, a definite hard stop of Monday, July 22, 2019, to have a predictable response on board. The Chief will address this in any way he can. Last week Cromwell did not have enough of their own staffing internally to cover. There are 35 part-time unscheduled (PTU's), and five internal part-time scheduled. The Department did some advertising. They have received 11 responses from outside the Department who are in the process of being onboarded, this week. All payroll technology and scheduled processes are in place to effectively begin on Monday. The Chief noted that 11 is not enough. This

week they have received 10 more applications from people who are interested in becoming part-time scheduled. That puts the numbers at 21 part-time scheduled plus five internal part-time scheduled. There are 17 volunteers, and 35 part-time unscheduled participants in the program. The Chief feels this is enough staff to effectively staff without violating or going over any limits. The career staff has done a great job in assisting with getting the program in place. The career staff is very excited about what is to be occurring and are showing it through their participation and dedication to the process being a success. There are a lot of SOP modifications still to be done to reflect the changes taking place.

Commissioner Donohue asked how the volunteers will be affected by all of this. The Chief stated there are costs involved in any type of response, so there will be response criteria established. The thought is 15% to 20% response to toned-out alerts. Not all calls, but when additional staff is needed beyond the initial on-duty staff, volunteers will be alerted. The Chief stated that the Department still needs volunteers. That has not changed, and the Chief has never said otherwise. Volunteers are still a benefit to the Department and its operation. The EFD will identify what type of call it is to determine who is needed. The Chief suggested having a meeting with Commissioner Donohue and his crew to discuss all their questions and concerns. Commissioner Hamlin asked about having officers amongst the volunteers. The Chief stated that there can be officers with the volunteers and unscheduled staff. He does not know if he will need the officer level that they have currently. Commissioner Colligan explained that the Court Street station will be the staffed, career station. Coles Road and West Street will both be volunteer stations. There will need to be officers in charge of those stations. The Chief plans to implement putting numbers on helmets identifying which station that staff member works from. Regarding career, part-time and volunteer at a fire scene, the officers on scene will be in charge. The responders will work as a team. ICS recommendations will be followed.

Deputy Chief Brade explained how the operations worked for the recent Arborio call. Lieutenants will be doing the training. The Department is working with the Union to get the inspection program started with the two certified Fire Marshal full-time career people. The Chief explained that there will be night training and day training. The Deputy Chief will be the training coordinator. Every month there will be monthly training topic evolutions. During one month there will be various training sessions to meet that evolution. So everyone will have an opportunity to attend. The sessions will be repetitive over the course of a month. President Brow will be forwarding all of his training information from the East Hartford Fire Department to Chief Terenzio. Unscheduled staff will be paid for the time they are in training. If they are attending and getting paid, they will be doing something, not sitting around. President Brow noted that it should be made clear that people will have their classes paid for but they will not be sitting around while in the class. There was discussion regarding training and qualifications. They all agreed there are a lot of moving parts with the new staffing model. It was also agreed that this topic will be revisited monthly.

VIII. Old Business. There was no old business to report.

IX. New Business

A. Discussion and Possible Decision on Blue Light Permits. The Executive Director had put this item on the agenda. He has had discussions this week with the Chief. They are looking for guidance. Blue lights are typically associated with volunteers that are unscheduled and not paid. Do we provide a blue light permit to a person who is an unscheduled, part-time employee to be on-call when the pager goes off. It would not be

any different than it was two months ago when staff was compensated volunteers. Chief Terenzio has made a decision and has done research on this issue. Chief Terenzio was asked to explain his position. They are looking for clarification as to whether the decision made will become policy or not. Mr. Neto stated there are three choices. They can provide a blue light permit to unscheduled part-timers as well as volunteers, or provide only to the volunteers which will give pushback from the unscheduled or eliminate the blue light permits. There is always the issue of aggressive driving to respond which was not necessary. Some Departments have opted out of blue lights to minimize severe vehicle accidents when responding to a scene or to the firehouse.

Chief Terenzio stated they received declarations from a number of the internal staff, but a request for a blue light permit was forwarded to the Chief by an EMT only member. Blue lights belong to volunteer members or as stated in the statute, "active members of a volunteer fire department." There have been some legal opinions on this as well. Cromwell is a combination paid and volunteer fire department. The question becomes what is an active member of a volunteer fire department. Is it a volunteer or someone who is compensated. The Chief is trying to find out the intent of the Statute. He has reached out to the DMV. He has not heard back from them. He also found an old memo he had which had the actual Act and not the General Statute. Vehicles by emergency service volunteers be permitted only by a joint committed fire policeman. The Deputy Chief looked into the Legislative Research report, "Use of colored and flashing lights on vehicles generally prohibits the use of flashing lights on privately owned vehicles, unless vehicles driven by specified individuals such as volunteer firefighters or emergency medical technicians." It is an ambiguous law. It is not an exact science, it is all about interpretation.

It is done through the Chief Fire Officers or the Executive of the District or the Town. Questions that will be asked of the Chief are: What is the reason for it and does it provide us with anything more than if they did not have a blue light. It does not automatically give someone the right of way. It does not allow someone to violate traffic laws. It is a courtesy. The original intent was that it be used for identification to get through police lines. Commissioner Colligan stated that unscheduled paid part-time should be considered, but scheduled people should not have them. Commissioner Colligan also suggested that training or education of the law be given to members. The Chief can also limit blue lights. It was agreed that with a blue light, you cannot get to a firehouse any quicker. If it is decided that blue lights will be permitted, a policy needs to be drafted and everyone needs to sign for it that stipulates one offense is permanent removal. Fire Police are allowed to use red lights on a stationary vehicle. Fire Police are defined differently than firefighters in the Statute. Chief Terenzio does not think staff will get to the firehouse any quicker with a blue light. He stated that if the Commissioners desire, they will develop an SOP which will include a written test for anyone seeking a blue light permit that will test their knowledge.

Commissioner Spotts commented that he doesn't see that blue lights are needed if they do not make a difference in response time and does the public even know what blue lights mean. It was also noted that anyone who has a blue light is not permitted to turn it on until they reach the town line. The only personnel allowed to go on the highway with a blue light are fire officers including the Safety Officer. It has been thought of as just a status symbol. Chief Terenzio is willing to do whatever is required according to the law because his name is the one that appears on the permit. If it is decided that blue lights are

needed, there will be a much stricter process to obtain one. Chief Terenzio is waiting for a ruling from DMV.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Brow and unanimously approved to table this item until more information is received.

- B. Discussion and Recommendation on the Fire Department Uniform Policy. Copies of a draft of the Uniform Policy were distributed and reviewed. It covers dress uniforms and work uniforms. This was driven in part because of contract negotiations that have been ongoing with the firefighters union. The union has tentatively agreed to this document as written. The biggest changes from the previous uniform are the Class A's. It was agreed to go to a standard, off-the-shelf, navy blue uniform. The cost will be between \$400 and \$800 vs. the current uniform with the custom made fabric. The last price update on that was between \$1,200 and \$1,500. The work uniform is standard. Everyone will be in the same color shirt, which is dark navy blue. This is because with officers responding to fires in their white shirts, they became soiled. In order to differentiate between officers and staff, they will have helmet shields or reflectsite instead of a different shirt color. Regarding badges, Class A's will have a silver name plate and badge, Class B's will be an embroidered name plate and badge. They also entertained the use of shorts during the summertime. Summertime would be Memorial Day through Labor Day. It also noted on the first page that the Chief will have overall control and authority to make changes to the summer/winter changeover to operationally driven. On page 27 and 28 regarding special events, the Chief will decide what type of uniform will be required for a special event for all categories of staff, i.e., part-time scheduled, part-time unscheduled, etc. The last page allows any past member, lifetime member, active reserve and current members who have been issued the classic grey uniform will still be allowed to wear it. If a person is considered a part-time scheduled person, they will not be allowed to wear the uniform with their previous ranks. It was noted by Commissioner Colligan that the District does have a bolt of the custom fabric from the old uniforms should any member need to repair or replace a piece of their old grey uniform. President Brow asked the Fire Operations Committee to approve these changes so that they may be passed on to the full Board of Commissioners for approval.

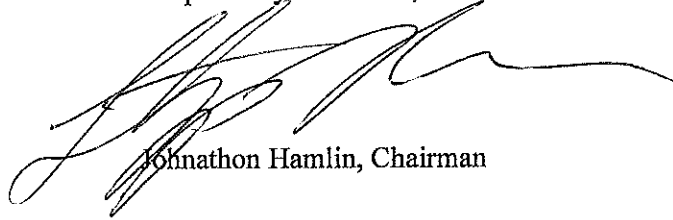
A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the changes to the Cromwell Fire Department uniform policy as submitted.

- X. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Colligan asked if the Fire Operations Committee wanted to receive progress reports from the Committee formed to develop the volunteer Fire Department association. It was decided that the progress reports will be forwarded to the full Board of Commissioners. They cannot raise funds under the Fire Department umbrella. It was agreed that the newly formed association will provide updates to the Fire Operations Committee when milestones have been met.
- XI. Public Comments. There were no public comments to report.

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- XII. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Johnathon Hamlin", written in a cursive style.

Johnathon Hamlin, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
7-29-19