

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting
Tuesday, April 23, 2019
7:00 PM
Coles Road Firehouse, 105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

A Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting was held on Tuesday, April 23, 2019, at 7:00 PM, at 105 Coles Road, Cromwell, CT to consider and act upon Special Fire District business.

Commissioners Lee Brow (President), Roger Rukowicz, Jason Hinnners, Johnathon Hamlin, David Colligan, Robert Donohue, Allan Spotts, Mertie Terry, and Charles Epstein attended. Also attending was Executive Director Julius Neto and Fire Chief Michael Terenzio.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM, by President Brow.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Presentation/Discussion and Possible Decision on the Staffing Solutions for Non-Career/Volunteers. A power point presentation was given which outlined the new staffing model proposed by the Work Group assigned by the President of the Board. The Work Group consisted of the Chairmen of the Personnel Committee and Fire Operations Committee, a representative from each of those committees and the Fire Chief and Executive Director which sat Ad Hoc on the group.

President Brow read the power point presentation, slide-by-slide. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. President Brow proceeded to read through the Staffing Model Flow Chart that was also presented on the overhead projector. A copy is also attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

It was noted that the first phase of the model explains the volunteer status. The main difference from the old plan being no compensation as a volunteer.

The second phase is categorized as part-time, on-call which has members that could be fire only, EMS only or cross-trained. They become "at-will" employees per their hiring authority and are non-volunteer.

The third phase is part-time scheduled which applies only to cross-trained individuals. They are also "at-will" individuals per their hiring authority and are also non-volunteer.

The last phase is full-time career, cross-trained Fire/EMS. Their employment is governed under a CBA.

Training requirements were reviewed under all four categories. The new staffing model implementation plan was reviewed next. The implementation timeline was also reviewed. All phases of the process will be implemented in May 2019.

Commissioner Donohue had concerns regarding the Pension cutoff. The Executive Director explained that there will be a drop dead timeframe at which time the pension will stop. It can be any date the Commissioners wish to set. It would make sense to use the fiscal year end date. If that is the case each fiscal year ends June 30. On that date a pension can be frozen or stopped. Anyone vested into the plan stays. Those that do not have the 10 years or some other number yet to be determined by the Commission, will not be vested or eligible for a pension. It was noted that the pension is fully funded at this time. The Commission can review each case to determine if that individual pension will be vested.

Commissioner Hamlin questioned the issue of officers as volunteers going into the next position if they are not paid, on-call or part-time. Do they oversee those firefighters or what are their responsibilities? Chief Terenzio noted that it would involve members of the CBA and would have to be discussed. An on-duty officer would be assigned, the Department officer would have to relinquish that time while they are on staff to answer to the on-duty officer whoever that may be. There are still some issues to work out with this issue. The Chief has had a discussion with one of the Captains and Chiefs on this very issue. While they are on duty they are subject to the supervision of the on-duty officer whoever that may be after it is determined through negotiations. This would be following a different chain of command if the person is filling a scheduled part-time position.

President Brow responded to Commissioner Terry's concerns that a person that is available at a certain time every week would not be a volunteer but rather a part-time employee and will receive an hourly rate which has yet to be determined by the Commission. Everyone will have the possibility of making money without the possibility of violating wage and hour law or FLSA.

The Chief stated that there are approximately 27 active EMS only. Seven of those are cross-trained to fire. There are approximately 18 certified firefighters that are able to don a CBA and affect any kind of mission they need to respond to.

Commissioner Spotts asked about the thought process for coming up with a budgeted number for this new process. The Executive Director reported that currently there are dollars for on-call, stipend and a bucket for all the services our staff provides. If pension goes away, those funds will be added to the other bucket. Those are the base dollars to compensate the hourly

rate that needs to be established for coverage. Once the hourly rate is set, Mr. Neto will do an assessment to determine what the impact will be to the budget. It was noted that this plan, if approved can be modified as it is a work in progress. It is a new process that can be modified based on learning curves. The Executive Director suggested status reports be requested periodically. It was suggested to have the updates added to the Board's monthly meeting agenda until it has reached a point where there are no changes to be addressed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Staffing Model for the Cromwell Fire Department as presented at the Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting on April 23, 2019.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Epstein stated that the group has looked long and hard at this proposed plan, it is hoped they have come up with the right solution, but it will not be known until it is implemented. There has been input from many people, but the goal is to have the right coverage. Commissioner Hamlin thanked all those that have worked on the proposal to get it to this point. Everyone has worked hard to get to this point, and he feels it is the best that can be done and still follow the law.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Samantha Slade, 128 Nooks Hill Road, did not wish to speak under the capacity of her Town Council position. She stated that she hopes that the Board has looked at this proposal really hard, and knows they have. She had been gone for 6 weeks as the District's liaison, which she apologized for, but wanted them to take into consideration the membership. She does not receive a pension or any benefits, but that is not why she joined. She did not know anything but a career department coming from East Hartford. She joined Cromwell as a volunteer. It was an added benefit if she were to get any kind of compensation. She noted that some individuals have come to expect that. The compensation is an incentive because there is the expectation that a person is giving of their time. She requested that the Board take that into consideration. She did not care about compensation when she joined, and still does not. It is not a supplemental income, but it does incentivize people to come out on calls. She understands the Board's position from being on Town Council. It is a tough job. She noted that not everyone is trying to gain by the FLSA. There were many members in attendance because of their concern about what will happen. Ms. Slade stated these people are her constituents, and they are her concern. She asked that the Board keep them in mind when going forward. She thanked them for all they do.

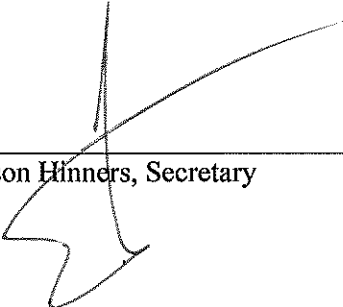
Ann Keizer, 7 Bow Lane, began by stating she has been a resident of the Town since 1952. She has seen the Town grow over the years. Both she and her husband have had family members that have been members of the Fire Department. Her concerns were: what happens if the Department does not get enough volunteers; are there enough volunteers to fill the part-time slots available; will there be an overflow of volunteers left behind; what happens to the people who are on the list to become volunteers; if all the part-time slots are filled, do the people on the waiting list have the option to go part-time. If that is the case, who pays for their training. She also feels there should be a residency requirement for members. She also asked if the pension goes away, will people have the option of doing a 401K. She also noted the website needs to be looked at. The links for the Honor Guard and Calendar of Events goes to a page that is not in English.

Candace DeVizio, 17 Mountain Laurel Court, had concerns about the document referring to the members as volunteers. Everyone in the room receives a W-2. They are established employees.

She is unclear whether or not they are going to be removed from their positions and reapply for them. President Brow stated that if members are currently in the Department, there will be a place for them. A lot of the information presented tonight applies to new members.

Julia Hadman, 43 New Lane, she asked that the Board consider the fact that they have a group of people who have been in the pipeline since September. Their interviews have been completed, drug testing and physicals completed, skill sheets done, attended boot camp weekend, attended drills and meetings, but they are not members. Please consider voting them in immediately if they sign volunteer agreements and not make them wait seven more weeks. She expressed the frustration of the group. They have been blocked from volunteering. They have also been blocked from riding along as observers. These people are already licensed EMT's that Cromwell did not have to pay for.

ATTEST:



Jason Hinners, Secretary

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
4-30-19