

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 Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting

Monday, August 26, 2019

5:30 PM

**Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT**

A Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting was held on Monday, August 26, 2019, at 5:30 PM, at the Coles Road Firehouse, 105 Coles Road, Cromwell, CT to consider and act upon Special Fire District business.

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

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by President Brow at 5:34 PM. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Prior to Public Comment being started, Secretary of the Board, Commissioner Jason Hinnners, read the Rules for Public Comment so everyone present understands the rules.

Nick Schenarts, 154 Woodland Drive, Cromwell, CT, spoke to say that he had some reservations about the new staffing model but feels most of the scheduling changes made within the Fire Department are for the better. He has been involved with the Cromwell Fire Department for over ten years. He has worked as a firefighter and EMT and most recently has become a new career, full-time firefighter. He submitted a written statement for the record. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

Chris Bellamo, 46 Franklin Rd., Cromwell, CT, spoke to say he wanted to show his appreciation for the way things have been operating. He is a full-time Dispatcher and a part-time Captain and a taxpayer. He stated he was speaking as a taxpayer and Captain. He stated as a taxpayer he appreciates what the District has done with scheduling solutions. He now feels his family is protected when he is not able to be at home or with them. He feels there is still work to be done, but the first steps are a complete turnaround from coverage before. As a Captain, he wanted to thank the Board for the opportunity. He is enjoying the experience whereas before he did not

enjoy the experiences as much. He thanked them for creating a happy environment for him to work in.

Andrew Cooke, 12 Grove Road, Cromwell, CT spoke. He is a part-time Dispatcher for the District as well as Union President for the Dispatchers' Union, AFSCME Council 4, Local 1303-475. He shared a Press Release that the Union had written in light of the recent banter on social media. The Press Release was written by the Secretary of the Local. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Cooke also read a letter from the Executive Board of AFSCME Local 1303-475. A copy is also attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. In summary both letters reflect the Dispatcher's Union support for the Executive Director, the Board of Commissioners, Chief Terenzio and their leadership in initiating change in staffing models to more effectively respond to calls.

Brett Hallden, a Cromwell Full-time Career Firefighter and President of the Firefighters' Union Local 4662, read a statement he prepared. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. His statement also showed support for the Board of Commissioners, Chief Terenzio and the Executive Director. He stated the importance of staff coverage for a call, compliance of the law for coverage and the improved work environment. He noted the years in the Department of inadequate coverage and poor leadership. He also discussed the negative messages being put out on social media that has led to the bashing of the Commission, Fire Chief and union members. Lives and property of the residents in Cromwell should be the mission of the District instead of hurt feelings and other negative feedback by members who are publishing false information.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Executive Session – Discussion of Daigle Report Regarding a Personnel Matter with Counsel. A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to enter into Executive Session at 5:50 PM, to discuss the Daigle Report regarding a Personnel Matter with Counsel inviting Attorney Linda Yelmini and the Executive Director into the first portion of the session.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to adjourn Executive Session at 7:43 PM.

- B. Discussion and Possible Action on the Fire Chief's Employment Contract. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the action proposed for the Fire Chief's Employment Contract as follows: During the period from August 27, 2019 through January 4, 2020, the Chief's contract will be extended for that period. He will work with the Executive Director to improve his management style to be more inclusive and responsive to employee needs. The Chief will be required to attend any training directed by the Executive Director and/or Personnel Committee. It is anticipated that the Chief will make the positive changes to his management style. The Chief's performance in the area of management style will be reviewed on a bi-weekly basis by the Executive Director who will report to the Personnel Committee.

Commissioner Epstein hoped that this action will lead to more continued positive effects on the District and the Fire Department. He noted that some very positive things were discussed tonight from members of the Department which were impressive. It is hoped that the District can continue on that path and be successful. Commissioner Hinnners noted that this whole issue was met with a lot of discussion and input all in a positive manner. He is hopeful that

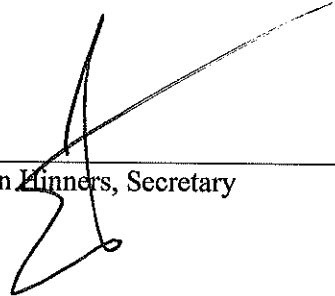
the decisions made are agreeable across the board. He hopes that everyone can work together and continue to do so.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and unanimously approved to accept the following statement as read by President Brow and entered into the record of these meeting minutes, "The Board of Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District received complaints against the Chief of the Department. Based upon those complaints, the Board initiated an independent investigation. The investigation was conducted by the Daigle Law Group. Having reviewed the Daigle report, the Board of Commissioners has determined that a hostile work environment has not been created based upon advice of legal counsel. 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. Part of these changes ensures that the District is in compliance with federal and state wage and hour laws. The Daigle report did identify certain management style issues that the Chief needs to improve on. Therefore, during the period from August 27, 2019 through January 4, 2020, the Chief will work with the Executive Director to improve his management style to be more inclusive and responsive to employee needs. 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 the positive changes to his management style. The Chief's performance in the area of management style will be reviewed on a biweekly basis by the Executive Director who will report to the Personnel Committee."

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 PM.

ATTEST:



Jason Hinnners, Secretary

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
9-5-19