

# 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

### Water Operations Committee

Wednesday, October 2, 2019

5:30 PM

1 West Street  
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Charles Epstein (Chairman), Roger Rukowicz and Robert Donohue. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto and Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri. Commissioner Terry had an excused absence.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:34 PM, by Chairman Epstein.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. There were no public comments.
- IV. Old Business. There was no old business to discuss.
- V. New Business
  - A. VFD Project Update. Mr. Palmieri reported that the fiber optic cables have been installed. Everything is up and running. The division is running on fiber. There have been no problems thus far. They spoke to Brian Robinson from Fiber Tech who spoke to the electrician to see what their availability was to come back and install the final VFD motor starter for Well 4. He should be here the middle of next week. That is a 2 to 3 day turnaround because they need to gut the old motor starter from Well 4 and install the new VFD and connect everything. Now that everything is up and running on fiber, the install should go smoothly. There should be no more issues regarding communications.
  - B. Discussion of Concept of a Second Water Tank. Mr. Palmieri reported that the new air conditioning is due to be installed next week. The electrician and Cromwell Energy have been scheduled. It is going in the electrical room in the Chem Feed building where the VFD drives are located. It is definitely needed. The electrical vendor will take out a permit for his work. Mr. Neto added that the reason the District invested in VFD's is for the ability to take the water tank off line. When the tank is off line, the pumps will be working to keep continuous pressure while the tank is off line. The reason the tank has to go off line is because the tank is 50 years old. It needs to be inspected. There have been inspections where there are divers in the tank that provide a visual followed up by a report. The State (Health Dept.) is looking for a higher level of reporting to validate the

soundness of the concrete in the tank. That will be happening in the future with a date to be determined by the Water Operations Committee, the consultants, Mr. Palmieri and the Executive Director. When the tank is inspected, the District does not know what the extent of the repairs will be. There should be other options. One of the other options will be to have a second water tank. Without a second tank, Cromwell does not have any backup should there be any failures in pressure while taking the original tank off line. Taking the tank off line is a major undertaking. The costs could be anywhere in the neighborhood of \$2 million. If that is done, there is still no backup.

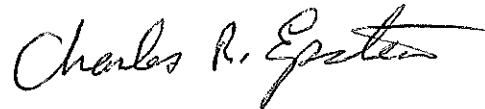
The Town has 2 ½ acres. There have been discussions about having a second tower, and that land could be potentially used for a tank with a communication tower or antennas. This opportunity would give the District a second tank and an opportunity for communications to help offset the cost. It is the second highest point in Cromwell. The first highest is the original tower. This location is near the NIKE site. This would be a major infrastructure at a major cost. A tank would use \$1 per gallon as its expense. A 2 million gallon tank would be a \$2 million investment. It was discussed that if this becomes a reality, there is a good chance that water rates will need to increase. The last time the water rates were changed was 2008. Mr. Neto brought this topic up so that the Committee could start thinking about it. Mr. Palmieri added that if there were 2 tanks, they would both be in service. If one were to have to go down, it would not be an issue. The consultant for the VFD project also does work with MDC. The District is going to see if they can schedule a meeting or two to determine what MDC's interests are. They have many projects taking place right now. This could possibly be a capital project for next year. This will give the District redundant backup. The Water Division needs to continue these discussions about future planning and investing in the water system and looking ahead. The idea is to bring in some smaller storage/pressure tanks (20,000 – 25,000 gallon tanks). They will run off the VFD's and provide emergency services. Emergency connection with MDC on Shunpike road would be a great backup plan. Mr. Neto stated the Committee needs to start the process.

- C. Discussion and Possible Establishment of a Process to Provide Late Fee Relief for Customers with Large Water Account Payments. A few months back the District had begun the process again of trying to collect on delinquent accounts. Mr. Neto gave an example of a water customer who owed thousands of dollars and wanted to know if she could get some relief on the late fee portion of her bill if she paid her bill in full. This has not been a past practice, but this request got the water billing staff thinking that providing a break on the late fees could be a business opportunity for the District if they provide some flexibility with parameters. It could be an opportunity to collect more of what is owed than if the accounts went to collections based on what would actually be collected on a payment plan through a collections agency. Mr. Neto was looking for some advice from the Commissioners on how to proceed. The customers cannot be shut off from water but there are limitations of what they can do and when they can do it. It is an ongoing battle. Mr. Neto would be fine if they did not come up with a policy. Commissioner Epstein suggested putting a time limit or grace period on a late fee amnesty plan to see how that would be received by the delinquent water customers.

Mr. Neto was asked to draft a late fee amnesty policy. Once a policy has been formulated, it can be posted on the website. It was suggested to try reducing the late fees by 50% if the account is brought up to date within 60 days of the receipt of the letter. Mr. Neto will work on the policy for the next meeting especially for businesses instead of residents.

- VI. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Rukowicz asked about training for Eric Roberts. This led to a discussion regarding Water Division staffing. It was noted that Eric Roberts is a Maintainer II. The Water Division has been given permission by the Board to hire another Maintainer II and a part-time Admin. Assistant. The Admin. Assistant position may be able to also take on water billing collections. Mr. Palmieri stated that Mr. Roberts still needs more training and has been taking classes to get up to speed with the division.
- VII. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Charles R. Epstein, Chairman

Nancy Deegan  
Recording Secretary  
10-24-19