

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

CROMWELL FIRE DISTRICT

Fire and Water Divisions

Tuesday, January 21, 2020

7:00 PM

Coles Road Firehouse

105 Coles Road

Cromwell, CT

The Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District held their monthly Board of Commissioners' meeting on Tuesday, January 21, 2020, at 7:00 PM, at the Coles Road Firehouse, 105 Coles Road, Cromwell, CT to discuss and act upon Fire and Water Division business.

Commissioners Lee Brow (President), Roger Rukowicz, Jason Hinnners, Robert Donohue, Johnathon Hamlin, Mertie Terry, Allan Spotts and Charles Epstein attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Fire Chief Michael Terenzio, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade and Michael Alibrio from BlumShapiro. Commissioner David Colligan had an excused absence.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by President Brow. The Pledge of Allegiance was led 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

Commissioner Hinnners read the Rules of Public Comment.

Jennifer Anderson, 15 Ridge Rd., addressed the Rare Reminder Article date September 25, 2019. A written copy of her statement is attached to these minutes. President Brow questioned the letter referenced in the Rare Reminder article of 9/25/19. That letter was not the correct letter, but there is a letter that was signed by all Commissioners, and it contained the position the Board took to bring resolution to the problem. The information published was determined to be a misprint or a miss-quote in the Rare Reminder. Mr. Neto researched the documents that Mrs. Anderson requested. He thought it might have been submitted prior to Mr. Neto's employment with the District. He could not find any official or unofficial letter from DOL stating a., b., c., d., e. or f. The Executive Director had several conversations with DOL, but they were never initiated by a direct complaint from them to Mr. Neto or the District. President Brow requested Mr. Neto to

search the archives for the letter so that he can review it. Mr. Neto had a copy of the letter at his office.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
NOVEMBER 19, 2019

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes of November 19, 2019, as submitted.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
DECEMBER 12, 2019

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes of December 12, 2019, as submitted.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
JANUARY 9, 2020

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes of January 9, 2020, as submitted.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
JANUARY 13, 2020

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of January 13, 2020, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

There were no communications or written appeals to report.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's reports for December and November had been previously submitted and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Neto did not include the audit in his report. He noted that as reported at the Special meeting prior to this meeting the audit received a clean opinion. That is the best rating to be given for a municipality audit. Mr. Neto was very proud of the findings as well as all the controls the staff is working with that are critical to the organization and protecting the taxpayer dollars. He added that he hopes to report more at the next meeting regarding possible opportunities for outdoor advertising. It would be an opportunity for the District to obtain some revenue that is not tax based. There are multiple pieces of property that abut Rte. 99, and one that is near Rte. 91. They are prime sites for electronic billboards. He is working with the District's attorney to set up a meeting with key players and Lamar Outdoor Advertising. Mr. Neto reported that it would have to go through the approval process which would include planning and zoning. Cromwell would be interested in placing the billboards where there is a maximum amount of car traffic. This opportunity has come up because there

are some zoning regulations that have changed. There are no proposals right now, just a concept. In the past, the District had looked at trying to sell the property by Rte. 91. Commissioner Donohue noted he had attended a redevelopment agency meeting last week. He learned there are only two properties that can absorb this type of signage which was the lower Citgo station and the District property by Rte. 91. Also to be used on the billboards are public safety announcements i.e., EMS, or statewide announcements.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Reports for November and December had been previously submitted and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Alibrio reported that the District is already at the halfway mark in the current budget. The audit presentation was given prior to this meeting at the Special District meeting. He added that everything is right where it should be at this time in the budget. A couple of accounts are over in the "expense" line, but there will be a couple of budget amendments later in this meeting to cover overages. Mr. Alibrio has started to put together budget worksheets. That means the budget process will be starting very soon.
- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's report for November and December had been previously submitted and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Chief added that Ladder 3 has been returned. As reported in the Fire Operations Committee meeting, there is still an issue with the #6 cylinder. The mechanic is working on it. On Attack 4, compartment #8 has been repaired. He also announced that the Cromwell Hockey Team has become League champions.
- D. Water Operations. The Operations report for November and December had been previously submitted and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri added that he had included with the meeting packets to the Commissioners, a letter from Mr. Palmieri indicating that he had made a recommendation for the Maintainer II position. There will be a discussion later in the meeting under New Business. The person to be considered is Michael Fiddler. He is from Rockfall, CT. Mr. Palmieri thinks he will be a good fit. Commissioner Donohue thanked Mr. Palmieri and his staff for all the work they did on Chelsea and Franklin Roads for the water main break that happened at Christmas time.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Reports of the Staff for November and December 2019 as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations Committee. There were no meetings.
- B. Executive Committee. Commissioner Rukowicz noted that there will probably be a meeting scheduled in mid-February.
- C. Fire Operations Committee. A meeting was held on November 19, 2019. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Executive Director gave an update on the Radio Communications project. The engineering drawings are being developed for each individual voting site. The only area where there is not a lot of work being done is the Nike site because they are behind schedule. He is checking with the engineering company to determine the timeline. By this time they should have paved and modified the road leading up to the Nike site. Cromwell needs to find out if the timeline interferes with Cromwell's timeline. There may need to be a

short-term solution. The Clerk of the Works, Paul Zito and Mr. Neto went to NORCOM to validate the equipment that was part of the project. The equipment was there. Mr. Neto also explained that Mr. Zito had just lost his daughter who was waiting for an organ transplant. He needed some time to regroup with his family so he was not actively involved in the project development for a few weeks. He is back working now and has been engaged in following the progress of the project.

- D. Pension Committee. There was no meeting.
- E. Personnel Committee. There was a meeting on November 21, 2019 and a Special Meeting on December 4, 2019. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Personnel Committee minutes of November 21, 2019, and the Special Personnel Committee minutes of December 4, 2019, as submitted. Commissioner Terry abstained.

- F. Water Operations Committee. Commissioner Epstein reported there was no meeting. The committee meets quarterly.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. Town Liaison Jennifer Donohue began by wishing everyone a happy new year. She stated that there have been discussions regarding a new ECS school. This issue is probably going to move fairly quickly, and will be going before a Special Town meeting. If there is a petition, it will go to referendum. The school is looking to get the grant application in by June 30. There will be some repair work done on the Pasco Hill bridge. The Towns of Cromwell and Berlin are overseeing the project. The Scannel property which is a 400,000 sq. ft. bldg., will have a redesign with retention basins. They need to realign their trucks coming in and out so that their traffic is not mixing with the public traffic going in. At 100 County Line Drive, there is an under-utilized parcel there that will be filled in with fill to cover the wetlands. The Town has established a new fund balance policy. They are looking to keep three months of operating revenue. Out of that a new capital improvement fund will be instituted. The additional funding will go into the new fund for capital improvement projects in Town. A public hearing will be set regarding Town Ordinance 221-2 on parking restrictions. The policy has become somewhat outdated. The Town of Cromwell will institute parking bans like some of the larger towns in CT. This may help reduce the amount of cars being towed since there will be parking bans in place. Transfer station passes have been amended; 24 dumps/passes per year; 12 for bulk and 12 for brush. Cromwell is working towards Connecticut sustainable action looking to get bronze or silver certification. There are about 15 different things that residents can do. One of the things Cromwell has done is to make the library 100% sustainable. Mrs. Donohue mentioned that she is the liaison for the Committee to Support People with Disabilities. Chief Lamontagne came to the last meeting. One of the things the members are looking for is many of the members have autistic children. Chief Lamontagne is working with Edelbrook to get training for the police officers on how to deal with autism. She thought it might be

something the Fire Department should take into consideration. Another thing mentioned at the meeting was the use of the 911 system. They are trying to teach their children how to utilize that system. Mrs. Donohue thought it might be helpful to get the word out that residents can contact the Fire Department as well as the Police Department. The information can be plugged into the system so that if a 911 call is made from a location, it will be known that there is an autistic child or adult at that address. The group also mentioned that they wanted to have an open house at the Police Department. They had noted that when the Fire Department has an open house, hours are listed as well as times when those with disabilities can attend. They would like to see something like that initiated with the Police Department or other open houses in Town. The Creative Arts District on February 21, 2020, is having a coffee house at 4 Willowbrook Rd. from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM. They will be having music and performers. A benefit for Tom Madden will be held on January 25, 2020, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM at Joe's Filling Station. All the proceeds will be going to the Jimmy Fund.

B. Reports of the Special Committees

1. Public Safety Tower Committee. A meeting was held on December 6, 2019. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District office. Commissioner Rukowicz added that the next meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 6, 2020, at 10:00 AM, at 1 West Street.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Public Safety Tower Committee meeting minutes of December 6, 2019, as submitted.

2. Safety/Building Committee. A meeting was held on January 9, 2020. Minutes were not available for this meeting. Commissioner Donohue reported that there was one issue that came before the Committee which was a bill from Red Hawk for a repair for a butterfly leak at the Coles Road Firehouse. Under New Business they discussed capital improvements down the road. A prioritized list was done. There were approximately ten items on the list. Safety and Security was the top priority. Eventually a closer look will be taken at a District-wide system. Currently, the District has a few different systems to access buildings, for cameras. Some cameras are not monitored by the Dispatchers. There needs to be a baseline of everything—security, accessibility and monitoring. One platform of technology, one platform of cameras and one platform of monitoring. Upgraded so that the District is comfortable that anyone accessing the District's public buildings, the District will have some controls. Mr. Neto also expressed the need for the District to manage themselves. Everyone has different work schedules and should only be able to access District property during working hours or whenever their job responsibilities need them to access District property. The process has been “band aided” in the past, and the reason for that was cost. Mr. Palmieri added another item to add to the priority list which is the leaky peak on the roof at the Water Garage. They have not had time to address it. It leaks when there is a hard driving rain. They need a contractor to come in and clean it and prep it, and then try to seal it.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the report of the Safety/Building Committee.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Epstein wanted to give kudos to the Fire and EMS personnel that responded to a call on Crest Dr. which is his neighborhood a couple of weeks ago. This call came in as a cardiac/respiratory arrest. The Cromwell first responders had a lot to do with the fact that the person walked out of the house and was transported to Middlesex Hospital. He thanked the emergency personnel for giving his neighbor a second chance at life. There were 3 cruisers, an ambulance and a fire truck that drove by his house en route before Commissioner Epstein could arrive on scene. President Brow asked Chief Terenzio to find out who the crew was for that call and give them a special "thank you" from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Spotts wanted to give a shout out to Commissioner Donohue for all of his hard work with the Christmas tree sale.

Executive Director Neto gave an update on the firefighter's child who has been waiting for extensive surgery in Boston. The child has been stable enough to be able to come home until surgery is scheduled for some time in February. A collection was held, and based on the fact the family will be traveling back and forth from Boston, it was suggested to purchase a gas card with the money collected. It was noted that the collection that was taken were donations from the members. They are not District funds or taxpayer funds.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and unanimously approved to be it resolved that the Board of Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District approves the amendments to the Water Enterprise Fund & Water Capital Fund budgets for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, as presented: \$17,564.16 from Water Fund – General Administration – Professional fees (05907-5320) to Water Capital – VFD's for Wells 3 & 4 (35740-5435) to cover engineering costs for VFD's.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to be it resolved that the Board of Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District approves the amendments to the General Fund budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 as presented: \$4,500 from EMS/Fire Operations – Non Capital Equipment (01116-5680 to EMS/Fire Operations – Uniforms (01116-5670 to reallocate available funds to cover additional uniform purchases.

- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to approve.
- D. Discussion & Possible Decision on Safety Valve Protection Plans. The Executive Director asked that this item be tabled because the presenter was not at the meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnens, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to table this item until next month's meeting.

- E. Discussion & Possible Decision on Operations & Efficiency Study with the Town of Cromwell. The Executive Director explained that in the meeting packets there were copies of a proposal to the Town of Cromwell and the Cromwell Fire District for an Operations & Efficiency study. The study is to evaluate operations' efficiencies. He explained that over the past year President Brow, Vice President Rukowicz and Mr. Neto met a few times with the Town Manager and the Mayor regarding some possible opportunities. Some of the issues

discussed were opportunities for the Town to look at services that possibly may be duplicated, are there things that the Town does that the District can jump on, or are there some things the District does that the Town can jump on. This is an opportunity to have an independent set of eyes look at both entities. Mr. Neto reported that the Town through Town Council had approved one or two months ago to move forward with this study. There is a \$15,000 cost associated with it based on the consultant's history with the Town of Newington. If the District decides to participate, the cost would be split in half. The cost would be \$7,500 which Mr. Neto confirmed is not budgeted. The money would have to be put in next year's budget cycle or reallocate some monies before the end of the fiscal year. If the District does not wish to participate, it is unclear whether or not the Town will do the study on its own. Mr. Neto asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner Hamlin did not think it was fiscally responsible for the District at this time to be spending the money when there are other financial priorities in terms of spending, i.e., apparatus replacement, radio project, turnout gear, etc. Commissioner Spotts felt the opposite. He thought that this would be a way to find ways to save money without a duplication of services. Anything that can be done to save money and not raise taxes is the way to go. He felt it was important to have this study done. Commissioner Hamlin stated that there were issues raised the last time there was discussions on combining services, and one of the sticking points is the fact that the Water Division has their own revenue source and a separate budget from the Fire District. Commissioner Donohue hears both sides of the discussion but feels the District owes the taxpayers the right to have the study done. He thought there were plenty of funds in the Fund balance. Commissioner Epstein felt that the Commissioners were not given any advanced notice and did not feel he had enough information to make a decision. He suggested that someone representing the firm performing the study could come in and speak to the Board about the study. President Brow noted that this topic has been discussed at past Board meetings, and the Executive Director and President have attended meetings at Town Hall regarding this very topic.

Commissioner Epstein asked that this be tabled. Commissioner Terry agreed with Commissioner Epstein. Commissioner Terry was not on the Board the last time this issue was brought up. She would like to see some examples of cost savings that would result from the study. The study identifies the possibilities of where the potential savings could be. The study needs to be approached with eyes wide open and no pre-conceived ideas one way or another. It also needs to be fully detailed. There should be documentation to support the savings concepts. It was noted that if the District decides not to participate in this study, the Town will be doing the study on its own without the District's input. President Brow noted that he feels we should be on the same page as the Town. The same taxpayers paying for the study with the Town is also paying for the study whether the District participates or not. The District should show the taxpayers that they can engage with the Town. He feels the District has an obligation to the taxpayers to work with the Town for the benefit of the Town of Cromwell.

Commissioner Hinnners agreed with everyone that spoke so far. He added that knowledge is power. He feels that the District has a need to know things. He feels that if there is an opportunity, the District needs to take it. It will be taken anyway whether the District gets involved or not. Commissioner Rukowicz said it needs to be done, but Commissioner Hamlin had a good point. Councilwoman Donohue did not have a timeline as far as when the study would begin or what it would entail. Commissioner Terry added that the District should act according to however the Special Act dictates. President Brow will provide

Commissioners Terry and Hinners with copies of the Special Act dictating the activities of the Board of Commissioners. It would take a resolution to change or dissolve the District.

Councilwoman Donohue was going to check with the Town to see if they could wait for one month before the Board votes on this proposal. Based on that information, a motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and approved 5 to 2 to table this item until next month. Commissioners Donohue and Spotts were opposed. Mr. Neto will advise the Mayor and Town Manager of the 30 day delay.

- F. Discussion & Possible Decision on MOU for Fire Chief's Administrative Assistant with Dispatchers' Union, AFSCME Local 1303-475, Council 4. It was noted that this item has gone through the Personnel Committee who has referred it to this Board for approval.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved accept the MOU for the Fire Chief's Administrative Assistant for the Dispatchers' Union, AFSCME Local 1303-475, Council 4, as presented.

- G. Ethics Questionnaire. The Executive Director explained the ethics questionnaire which is required to be completed by each Commissioner annually after the election. It is the same form every year which requires each Commissioner to complete which documents whether or not there is a conflict of interest for any Commissioner that performs their duties as Fire Commissioners.

- H. Correspondence from Altman & Altman, LLP, Re: Shawn Stokes Pro-Rata Share of Settlement. A letter was received from the attorney of Shawn Stokes. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District office. Mr. Stokes had a motorcycle accident in May of 2019. He did not have adequate health insurance or PIP coverage. Mr. Stokes attorney is proposing that a pro-rata share be accepted to satisfy the amount owed to the Fire District as well as other providers. The total owed the Fire District is \$977.91. They are proposing a payment of \$373.48. It is assumed that Mr. Stokes is not from CT as the attorney representing him is out of Cambridge, MA. The Executive Director will be getting more information on this matter. It is not clear if the person is from the Cromwell area or just passing through when the accident occurred. If the person is from Cromwell, there may be some other payment arrangements that can be made. In the past, there have been some arrangements made for Cromwell residents.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to table this issue until more information is received.

- I. Recommendation & Decision for Water Department New Hire. A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to extend an offer of employment to Mr. Michael Fiddler for the Maintainer II position in the Water Division.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mrs. Jennifer Anderson, Ridge Road, spoke about Blue Light permits being revoked. It all started on July 10, 2019. She spoke first about Ellen Quintana's request for a blue light. Ms. Anderson read Chief Terenzio's response to Ms. Quintana's request for a Blue Light. Because she was an unscheduled, part-time employee, the Chief was not authorized to issue her a Blue Light or any other light, and Ms. Quintana's request was denied. The Chief went on to say that

he would be developing an SOP regarding Blue Light permitting to volunteer participating staff only. He will also be revoking permits from all staff who are part-time or full-time. That same day Executive Director Neto emailed an attorney, Linda Yelmini, to find out if Chief Terenzio was interpreting the Statute correctly. She said that saying the Statute does not permit issuance of these permits is not correct. Chief Terenzio has miss-interpreted the Statute. She quoted the Statute, "A Blue Light or lights including flashing blue lights may be used on a motor vehicle operated by an active member of a volunteer fire department." On September 20, 2019, she along with others received a letter from Chief Terenzio stating that their blue light permit for their CT driver's license ending in has been canceled effective immediately. It stated that only volunteer members are allowed to hold this permit. She stated that this statement is not correct. On October 7, 2019, she gave an example. She was requested to keep her ears open for another call when she spoke to Dispatcher Bellamo a few minutes earlier when she attempted to respond to a previous MVA. I replied that I would respond if another call came in. She used "I am responding" and indicated that she was responding to the scene because she knew she wouldn't be passing the Coles Road firehouse before 4A would need to be in route. She responded as part of the ambulance crew but went directly to the scene because she lives on the border of Rocky Hill. Mrs. Anderson's 3 minute time limit was over. Mrs. Anderson stated the interruption was rude, for the record.

Commissioner Hamlin thanked Mr. Palmieri and his crew for responding to the MVA where a car had hit a fire hydrant in Commissioner Hamlin's front lawn. The guys were very efficient getting the job done.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no items to discuss in Executive Session.

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 8:34 PM.

ATTEST:

Jason Hinners, Secretary

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
2-12-20