

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Fire and Water Divisions

Tuesday, February 18, 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, February 18, 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, Mertie Terry, Charles Epstein, Robert Donohue, David Colligan and Allan Spotts attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Michael Terenzio, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Michael Alibrio from BlumShapiro, Cromwell Mayor Enzo Faienza and Town Liaison (Deputy Mayor) Jennifer Donohue. Commissioner Jonathon Hamlin had an excused absence.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM, by Vice President Rukowicz. Vice President Rukowicz led the Pledge of Allegiance. Vice President Rukowicz chaired the meeting due to the President not feeling well.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

President Brow asked to add under Item IX., Consideration of Old Business, Item A. Report of the Town Council Liaison, item 1. Mayor Enzo Faienza. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to amend the Agenda to include item IX. Consideration of Old Business, A. Report of the Town Council Liaison, adding item 1. Mayor Enzo Faienza.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Vice President reminded the public of the time limit of 3 minutes. Ms. Alice Kelly, 47 Willowbrook Rd., began by stating that her comments would be directed to the Fire Department's Emergency Medical Personnel. She was there to thank all of them for all their kindness, compassion and understanding while assisting her son off the floor out of the shower; most of all helping him to not feel embarrassed while they pick him up. They have a way of making him feel that it is just another day in one's life. She hopes the members know how their attitude has been so helpful as he has had to adjust from being able to do things for himself to having others do what he can no longer do. Ms. Kelly and her son gave the Fire Department a monetary contribution so that the EMT's can either have pizza, coffee & doughnuts or whatever they would

like. She wanted them to know how much she appreciates their attitude and everything they have done for her son over the last 5 years. She can never express how much it is appreciated. She explained that her son has transitioned from being able to walk to now being in a wheelchair or a walker at different times. She explained that when the members come to the house, it is like a friend is coming into our home, not people just assisting him. It is wonderful that Cromwell has these types of people that come to a home to assist people. Her son will be 61 tomorrow, and his life has drastically changed. From the beginning the members have always made him feel that he shouldn't be embarrassed. It was very hard. The President asked the Fire Chief and the Executive Director to do a blanket accommodation to recognize the entire group who has been responding to calls at the Kelly's.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
JANUARY 21, 2020

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by President Brow and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of January 21, 2020, as submitted.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL DISTRICT MEETING MINUTES OF
JANUARY 21, 2020

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the Special District Meeting of January 21, 2020, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

Secretary Hinnners read a card that was forwarded from the Butters. It was a "thank you" card for the gas cards that they received in order to travel back and forth from the hospital in Boston to stay with their son.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's report for January had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District office. In the interest of time, he did not go through his report because the report had been distributed early and there were a few Commissioners that were feeling under the weather this evening. He asked if there were any questions.

A motion was made by President Brow, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's report for January as submitted.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for January had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Alibrio reported there is nothing out of the ordinary to report. There are a few line items such as Repairs & Maintenance that are trending in the wrong direction, but overall looking good. As the Executive Director mentioned in his report, the budget process has begun. The worksheets have gone out. Those meetings will be scheduled soon. He announced that the District will be moving to a paperless payroll. It will be saving the District a little money. Employees will be able to access all their paystubs and other payroll information on line. There will be no more paper.

President Brow asked about ambulance billing. Mr. Alibrio reported that it has been going the same as it was. He has made a few inquiries to Quick Meds to see if collection has gotten better or worse. It has been about the same in terms of them getting the appropriate information to do their job.

Commissioner Epstein asked about the information the District is going to need to get ready to provide to the federal government in terms of social security. Chief Terenzio reported that Cromwell has been singled out as one of the agencies for ambulance provision to participate in the centers for Medicare. They are doing a very detailed survey and want to know the number of band aids, syringes, gas and man hours used. Cromwell needs to participate in the survey otherwise they will suffer a 10% reduction in any Medicare payments. Chief McIntyre has reached out to them. The survey was to start in January. They were able to start the program in July. It is an issue that is more or less been on the Chief's back burner as opposed to the front burner. But they will be ready by July 1. It could be a good thing if they are using the data in a positive way to increase reimbursements. It is an unfunded mandate. They will be looking for every level of detail. The Fire District does not presently use the new program Medicare is using for their run forms. They would make the job a lot easier. Commissioner Epstein asked if the District could start the conversation about the other program. Mr. Neto stated that just like everything else, it is a budgeted item. It needs to be put in the 2020/2021 budget. The Chief will be moving this item. Cromwell can move this year if resources are re-allocated to accommodate right now. If the Board wants to move sooner rather than later on the program and they give Mr. Neto the OK, Mr. Neto will figure out how to repurpose some dollars. There has been a lot of juggling going on, and the budget is stressed. Someone will have to give the Executive Director some direction. President Brow asked for a cost for the next meeting. He thinks it is closer to \$10,000.

President Brow asked how the delinquent water accounts are doing. The Executive Director stated that there is some progress. He reported that the new part-time Administrative Assistant that has just been hired in the Water Department will be handling the administrative part of that project. Her job will be to look at the accounts more aggressively. In order for these collections to be successful, there needs to be more time and follow-up involved. The new administrative assistant has a background in water collections as a retiree of the New Britain Water Department. He added that part of this process will be to aggressively place liens on properties that are quite delinquent. He reported there are over 200 households that are delinquent in water payments. People have been put on notice but have not reached out to the Water Division to discuss a Payment plan. If people reach out to the District, the District is willing to work with the residents to come up with some type of plan because it is realized that everyone falls on hard times at one point or another. They are willing to work with residents so that something is being paid on the account. People that have not been working with the District and are behind in water payments by several years will have their water turned off, and the District will notify the local Health Dept. This is a fairness issue to other residents as well as a resource issue for the Water Department.

Regarding Medicare documentation, Commissioner Colligan asked if the man hours being put into it will be monitored. He would like to know what that cost will be. Chief Terenzio stated that the cost will be figured in. He also learned that the ESO program will assist in their documentation. He added that the District probably needs to move forward on it.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hanners and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for January as submitted.

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for January had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. He added that they did interview for the second half of the SAFER hires from the FEMA grant. They will be able to meet the performance time beginning March 20, as the President recommended. The other issue he added was regarding Ladder 3's engine. He reported during the Fire Operations Committee meeting that they have scheduled a meeting with the General Manager of Cumings Power Supply to meet with the Fire Chief, the Executive Director and the District's mechanic Chris Logan to discuss the engine issue and how the District is going to move forward on it. Based on a discussion earlier today, and now knowing the dates for testing availability, President Brow asked the Chief to check to see the feasibility of running an in-house physical agility since there are a large number of individuals to be tested. President Brow has contacts with the State. He will check to see if Cromwell could rent the facility.

A motion was made by President Brow, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Chief's report for January as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for January had been previously submitted and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri was going to add his Administrative Assistant announcement. Some of her duties were discussed earlier in this meeting. She will be starting employment with the District in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Palmieri is looking forward to working with her. He thinks she will do a good job with collections. She has a lot of experience with it. Commissioner Donohue asked how Mr. Palmieri is making out with Prime A/C. He responded that he has not spoken with Guy Russo yet. He is waiting until he has a plan together for the RFP's for a water supply plan and the distribution study. They should be completed by Friday, and they will be sent out the beginning of next week. He also reported he has reached out to a roof contractor about the water garage, but has not heard back. He is trying local companies.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Operations Report for January as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations. There was no meeting, but one will be scheduled shortly.
- B. Executive Committee. There was no meeting. They should be scheduling something for the first or second week of March to begin budget reviews.
- C. Fire Operations. A meeting was held on January 21, 2020. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by President Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of January 21, 2020, as submitted.

1. Communications Subcommittee. Commissioner Colligan reported that there will be a meeting tomorrow night with all the parties involved. Once the meeting takes place, the Subcommittee will get a better understanding of what has been happening and what direction they are moving in.

- D. Pension Committee. There was no meeting.
- E. Personnel Committee. A regular committee meeting was held on January 23, 2020. Special meetings were held on February 6 and 13. Minutes from the regular meeting of January 23, 2020, were previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the Personnel Committee meeting minutes of January 23, 2020, as submitted.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the Special Personnel Committee meeting report of February 6, 2020, as submitted.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the Special Personnel Committee meeting report of February 13, 2020, as submitted.

- F. Water Operations. A meeting was held on February 11, 2020. Minutes were not available at this time. The next Water Operations Committee meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2020.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the Water Operations Committee report of February 11, 2020, as submitted.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no board appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. Mrs. Jennifer Donohue began by stating that she brought the Mayor with her tonight because he has more history with the Town regarding where the process of the joint study started. Mayor Faienza began by addressing the District officials, and Board members thanking them for the opportunity to speak before them tonight. He also thanked the District for the sympathy card sent to him and his family for the passing of his father-in-law. He and his wife were very appreciative. The other reason for the Mayor attending this meeting was because he had heard there were questions, comments and concerns regarding the joint study. He wanted to speak to the group to explain the Town's perspective. He has been Mayor for almost 7 years. During that time meetings were held with himself, Mr. Dagostino, Deputy Mayor Newton, Town Manager Sistare, Mayor Faienza, President Frank Seidl and Vice President Craig Murphy. At the time the concept was how they all can work together, and how the relationship between the Town and District can be improved. We all represent one constituent, one tax base for one Town. Through the years a lot of issues were discussed but there was never any headway made whether it was communications, personnel, etc. Another meeting took place about a year and one-half ago with President Brow and Executive Director Neto. They discussed an independent joint study for an independent perspective on District and Town operations. There may be some areas where the District and the Town can collaborate and find some tax savings to the taxpayers or better ways of doing things more efficiently. The Town Council has approved

the study. The cost is \$14,000. Back in September Town Council approved the Town's share. The Mayor is aware that there were concerns about the budget. The Town is willing to pre-fund the District's share of the cost of the study. This way the funding can be put in the 20/21 budget for the District's portion to pay later. Ultimately, the goal is to try to find ways to work together. Come to some areas of possible improvement or savings. The Town is committed to working together in the spirit of working for the citizens and taxpayers. There have been some good meetings with Mr. Neto and President Brow. They want to do what is best for their constituents. The Mayor asked if anyone had any questions. He explained that he wanted to be at this meeting with Ms. Donohue to be able to provide any additional information that Ms. Donohue may not have had being relatively new as a Town Council Liaison. Vice President Rukowicz thanked the Mayor for attending the meeting and offering insight into the joint study issue. It was a generous offer that the Mayor made regarding paying the District's portion of the study. Commissioner Terry asked what areas in particular were being looked at. The Mayor does not know at this time. That is the point of the joint study, to determine what areas should be looked at. In the past they have looked at communications and the new maintenance facility. It is hoped that the study will produce a list of recommendations, but if both sides don't come to some agreement, none of the recommendations will happen. They would also like to know if they are focusing on the right areas. The vendor being used is CCM. They are former town managers that used to run fire departments. They also have experience with water departments.

Commissioner Epstein did not understand why the District and Town is jumping right into a joint study without having completed meetings between themselves to come to any conclusions. A lot of discussions have been held for several years. Although Commissioner Epstein thinks we are rushing into this, there have been discussions for several years with no conclusions or recommendations. President Brow commented that he thinks some progress has been made over the last 3 years compared to the previous 3 years. Ms. Donohue added that there have been multiple committees and conversations on this topic. The taxpayers have been asking the Town and the Fire District to look at this for years. Everyone comes up with great ideas, but that first step is never taken. Vice President Rukowicz thought it would be a good idea to have a third set of eyes.

B. Reports of the Special Committees

1. Public Safety Tower Committee. There was no meeting. The next meeting will be Friday, March 6, 2020.
2. Safety/Building Committee. A meeting was held on January 9, 2020. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hinnens and unanimously rejected (nay votes) to accept the Safety/Building Committee meeting minutes of January 9, 2020, as submitted.

Commissioner Donohue noted there was an oversight in the minutes on page 1, second paragraph of New Business indicating that someone on the Committee had seconded a motion when he is a non-voting member of the Committee. The vote was regarding the replacement valve for the Red Hawk system. The Executive Director suggested that the report be tabled until the recording of the meeting can be reviewed. If it is discovered

that the motion was seconded by Mr. Logan, the Committee will have to have another vote.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to table the Safety/Building Committee meeting minutes of January 9, 2020, until next month so that the issue in question can be clarified.

3. By-Laws Committee. Commissioner Epstein noted that meetings were scheduled on January 30, 2020, and February 11, 2020. The January 30 meeting was canceled, and there was no quorum on February 11, 2020. Commissioner Epstein reported that the next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 25, 2020, at 5:00 PM, at West Street.

- C. Discussion & Possible Decision on Safety Valve Protection Plans. The Executive Director explained that this item had been tabled from last month because the representative was not present at the meeting. Mr. Palmieri had received a call that the representative is no longer with the company. They will be contacting us to reschedule as soon as a replacement has been assigned. Mr. Neto will try to schedule this item for next month's Board meeting. It was learned that this representative will also be in front of the Sewer Dept. for a similar opportunity with them.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to table this item until it can be rescheduled.

- D. Discussion & Possible Decision on Operations & Efficiency Study with the Town of Cromwell. A motion was made by President Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and approved 7 to 1 to accept to participate in the Efficiency Study with the Town of Cromwell with great thanks for the offer of the Town to finance the District's portion of the cost up front so that the District can schedule this into their next budget cycle to alleviate the financial burden on the current budget. Commissioner Epstein voted nay.

- E. Correspondence from Altman & Altman, LLP, re: Shawn Stokes Pro-Rata Share of Settlement. The Executive Director reported that this item had been tabled from last month. He contacted the attorney and relayed some of the questions the Board members had from last month. He has attempted to contact them again twice. They have not responded. It is up to the Board on how to move forward. Their original request was to reduce the fees owed on the account by one third based on the patient's financial situation.

A motion was made by President Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to move forward with full billing and payment request.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. President Brow reported that there was a recent loss within the Fire Department family. Kim Zordan's mother passed away. Her maiden name is Dalo. Vinnie Dalo was a member of the Department. President Brow indicated that the information was spotty getting out. President Brow, Executive Director Neto and Chief Terenzio shared it with some people. The Chief will be drafting a policy on this issue so that this type of situation does not happen again. He feels there should be a policy that covers active members, past members and life members whether they are volunteers, part-time scheduled, part-time unscheduled, life members, Commissioners and immediate family. If there is a loss, District administration needs to act sooner rather than later. He was in contact with

some family members that were a little upset by the showing of the Fire side. A Fire Department member from his work crew showed up. Mr. Neto reported there were some other people there. It was thought that he was referring to people that were on duty. If the funeral is local, it would be easy for the on-duty crew to drive by and demonstrate a showing from the Department. The District was represented by a couple of Commissioners and the Executive Director. President Brow knows that the District was notified. He stated he dropped the ball on making sure that everyone knew about the arrangements. He apologized for the oversight. The Executive Director and the President will work to develop a District policy. He does not want to see this happen again. The last time this happened was with past Commissioner Ken Going. At that time President Brow was not a Commissioner, but sent a 2 page letter as a member of the public to the Board of Commissioners and chastised the District and the Department for not being more responsible getting the word out. Yet President Brow allowed it to happen under his watch. He reached out to Kim, Dana and DJ. They were very receptive and knew why President Brow could not be there due to an illness. However, he stated that should not happen again. A family member is a family member.

Commissioner Colligan wanted to thank the crew for the outstanding job that they always do. Recently his wife had to be taken to the hospital at 5 AM. It turned out to be an all-day event. They did not get home until 10 PM. On behalf of his family, his wife and himself they were very grateful.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors
- D. Recommendation & Decision for Water Department New Hire. A motion was made by President Brow, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the recommendation to hire Donna Baccuzzi, as the new part-time Administrative Assistant for the Water Division.
- E. Discussion & Possible Approval of the following.... The Executive Director took the opportunity to correct the wording of the agenda item. Item 1 should read National Honor Guard Academy. Item 2 the PIO is a State of CT CFA program. Item 3 is FDIC which means Fire Department Instructor Conference.
 - 1. National Honor Guard Academy. A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the recommendation of the Fire Operations Committee to send someone to the program.
 - 2. PIO Conference. A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the recommendation of the Fire Operations Committee to send representatives to the conference as follows: 3 Chiefs, 3 Commissioners and President Brow will be attending as a State Instructor.
 - 3. FDIC Conference. A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the recommendation of the Fire Operations Committee to send a representative from the District to attend this. President Brow abstained.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no executive session items to report.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 PM.

ATTEST:

Jason Hinners, Secretary

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
3-11-20

DRAFT