

Cromwell Fire District

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Cromwell, CT 06416
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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Fire and Water Divisions

Via Conference Call

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

5:30 PM

West Street Firehouse

1 West Street

Cromwell, CT

The Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District held their monthly Board of Commissioners' meeting on Tuesday, May 19, 2020, at 5:30 PM, via conference call, at the West Street Firehouse, 1 West Street, Cromwell, CT to discuss and act upon Fire and Water Division business.

Per Executive order No. 7B, Governor Lamont has ordered and directed that in-person open meeting requirements be suspended. Therefore, the Board of Commissioner's Meeting will be held via conference call. Members of the public may send questions or comments to meetings@cromwellfd.com on any agenda items.

Commissioners Lee Brow (President), Johnathon Hamlin, Jason Hinners, David Colligan, Charles Epstein, Allan Spotts and Robert Donohue attended. Also signed in were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Michael Terenzio, Assistant Fire Chief/Deputy Fire Marshal Jason Brade, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Michael Alibrio from BlumShapiro. Commissioners Terry and Rukowicz had excused absences.

The meeting was called to order at 6:17 PM, by Secretary Hinners.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Secretary Hinners noted that there were items to be added to the agenda. The first item would be under New Business, Item I. Mark Ciancola Review of Relief for Outstanding Bill, and Item J. Onboarding of Harold Holmes as a Per Diem Fire Inspector. The Executive Director requested to add Item II.a. E-Mail from President Brow Regarding His Leave of Absence.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as amended.

- A. E-Mail from President Lee Brow Regarding His Leave of Absence. The Executive Director explained that the Board of Commissioners received an email from President Brow officially ending his leave of absence. The Board was asked to accept this email as a formal action as he has formally announced that he is available and that his personal

matter is being resolved. The Executive Director asked that the email be entered into the record and become part of the minutes of this meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the email from Commissioner Brow to return from his leave of absence and resume his duties as President of the Board of Commissioners.

President Brow thanked everyone for their continued support, and he resumed his duties as President of the Board by presiding over the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Executive Director did not receive any public comments to bring before this meeting.

Commissioner Hinnners read a communication from Robert Zajac regarding the hiring of the new Assistant Fire Chief, William Stacy. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. President Brow reported that he received this letter yesterday and did reply back to Mr. Zajac. He explained he was on a leave of absence, and was just returning to duty. Because of his absence he was not specifically aware of the process or what transpired. He explained he would be working with the Executive Director to formulate an investigation and/or answers to his questions.

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

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and approved 6 to 0 to accept the minutes of the Board of Commissioners' meeting of April 21, 2020, as submitted. President Brow abstained.

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

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of April 9, 2020, as submitted.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING
MINUTES OF APRIL 30, 2020

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and approved 6 to 0 to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' Budget meeting minutes of April 30, 2020, as submitted. President Brow abstained.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

Commissioner Hinnners forgot to read this last month, but it is a thank you note from Chief Pendl to the Board for thinking of him and his family during their recent loss of a family member.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's Report for April had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. He added that the District has been very active with the Radio Communications Subcommittee and COVID related issues. He spoke at the Fire Operations Committee meeting about negotiating with the developer about the Nike site. That is going well. They are working on multiple projects such as the tower and security. Since money has been appropriated for some security improvements and researching vendors, this will be a District wide project. The Water Department is working with Chuck Adelsburg from Environmental Partners. They are applying for funding for the interconnection between Middletown and MDC through a drinking water State revolving fund with either a grant or low interest rate fund. The amount is approximately \$1.5 million.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's report for April as submitted.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for April had been previously submitted and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Alibrio reported that things are moving along as the end of the fiscal year approaches with the same issues with the same accounts. Monthly budget reports have been submitted to Department heads, and he has asked them to think about any budget amendments that need to be done. Overall Mr. Alibrio thinks the District will come in under budget because of expense lines, mainly debt service that was budgeted for this year but is not going to happen this year. Mr. Neto added that they are unfavorable in payroll in the Fire Department as well as other payroll in the budget. The Fire Department budget increases are related to the new model coverage and COVID. The other is that the Board approved 2 ½ % COLA, when only 2% was budgeted. They are confident they will be under budget for the year.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for April as submitted.

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for April 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 Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for April as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for April had been previously submitted and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Operations Report for April as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations. There was no meeting. A meeting will be scheduled soon to enact and staff the Fire Apparatus Heavy Equipment committee to start the process for the rescue pumper taking into consideration the requests for membership from the Chief.

- B. Executive Committee. Meetings were held on April 22, 2020, and April 23, 2020. Mr. Neto reported that the first meeting held on April 22 was to review the Water, IT and Dispatch budgets for the annual budget meeting. The minutes were not available for either meeting. Therefore, the minutes for the meetings were tabled until next month.
- C. Fire Operations Committee. There was no meeting.
 - 1. Communications Subcommittee. Commissioner Colligan reported that he gave a report during the Fire Operations Committee meeting. They have started breaking ground and building the voting sites. It is ongoing at the moment.
- D. Pension Committee. There was no meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for June 17.
- E. Personnel Committee. A Special meeting was held April 16, 2020. Minutes were not available for this meeting. They were tabled until next month.
- F. Water Operations Committee. There was no meeting due to COVID. The next meeting is scheduled for August 11, 2020.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. Mrs. Donohue was unable to dial into this meeting because she had a commitment to attend a Town Council meeting.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
 - 1. Public Safety Tower Committee. There was no meeting.
 - 2. Safety/Building Committee. There was no meeting.
 - 3. By-Laws Committee. There was no meeting due to COVID but the next meeting is scheduled for August 11, 2020.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Epstein thanked the Chief and the gentlemen that responded to his house on Sunday. They were pleasant and knowledgeable. There was an issue with carbon monoxide that was discovered and rectified. He appreciated their immediate response.
- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to be made. Mr. Neto advised there may be some next month.
- C. Approval of Contract/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to report.
- D. Drinking Water – State Revolving Fund Project Eligibility Application. Mr. Neto explained he had mentioned this earlier in his Executive Report. The objective is to keep the Board advised of what the Water Department is doing in terms of trying to engage some State funds either through a grant or a loan. They are trying to offset some of the infrastructure costs that

they are anticipating in moving the Water Department forward and its future needs. The objective is the interconnection with Middletown and MDC. The Department of Public Health will approach this as a mutual aid environment. There is more to come. Mr. Palmieri has been working with Chuck Adelsburg from Environmental partners who is helping with the project and has assisted the District in getting permits. The District has appropriated some significant funds to catch up with their permitting.

- E. COVID Update – Reopening Fire District to the Public. The Executive Director reported he and the Chief will be moving cautiously and slowly to reopen. There will be a barrier installed to close off certain parts of the building to the public but allow limited access. Tomorrow the Fire Department and Dispatch will determine how much leeway they will be giving the public. He is thinking of opening the building to the public for four hours a day to start. All public will use the elevator. There will be chains to guide people through appropriate walking paths. The District buildings will begin to open at some degree. There was a discussion about the shade in the Communication Center lobby. The policy is when the lobby is open the shade is open. He has lightened the policy due to COVID to have the shade down at the dispatcher's discretion. There was a discussion regarding the elevator usage. Due to some people being uncomfortable with elevators, alternatives will be considered. There was a discussion for COVID expenses being possibly reimbursed by FEMA.
- F. Safety Valve. Mr. Neto explained that this is a program that WPCA approved. This is the company trying to get the District to sponsor their insurance program to deal with the water service. Letters were sent out to residents from Safety Valve endorsed by the Sewer Department to purchase insurance. They want us to sponsor them to serve our customers. Commissioner Spotts reported they have not done anything with this. He is on the WPCA. But due to the pandemic also they have not moved forward on this. Commissioner Spotts will be looking into this and check with Richard Peck. Commissioner Epstein shared the letter he received with the rest of the Commissioners. It was noted that the cost would be \$95 a year.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to table this issue until the next meeting.

- G. LaMar Lease Proposal Outdoor Advertising Structure – Jack Concalves. The Executive Director explained that he was contacted by LaMar. They are an outdoor advertising company that has two billboards on Rte. 99 next to the old pump station. They wish to renegotiate their lease and decrease their cash outflow to us because they are having issues selling the space. Under COVID advertising is not in a good environment. They are looking for a new 5 year lease agreement that basically decreases their commitment to the District. Currently they pay rent on a monthly basis. The District gets a percentage of sales. The more they sell, the more the District gets. Mr. Neto learned from the former Operations Director that LaMar was less than honest about their intentions because there were a lot of public service announcements on the board. His opinion is why the District would want to move into a negative environment. He told LaMar that he will present the new lease agreement and let the Board determine if it is something they want to negotiate even though there is nothing in it for the District. They want to reduce the rent to \$2,000 a year. They want to eliminate the percentage the District receives. It appears they are using COVID as an excuse to change the agreement. Mr. Alibrio added that right now their annual rent is \$2,750 and they are asking to reduce that to \$2,100.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Hinnens and unanimously approved to put out an RFP for two electronic signs, one on the highway as well as Rte. 99 in Rocky Hill. The Executive Director will let the LaMar representatives know that the District plans on going out to the marketplace for that sign as well as other opportunities, and the District is not making any decisions on this lease at this time.

- H. Discussion on Berlin Fire Proposal for Communication Center Assistance. The Executive Director explained that he distributed a copy of a draft document that should be finalized into an agreement after it gets vetted. Justin Lonergan did all the work on the letter. This is not the actual letter that will be going out but the concept of the subject matter. Mr. Lonergan stated that some of the Commissioners that have been around a long time may have been aware of some discussion with surrounding agencies, specifically task force towns regarding joining up to provide service to them. With the implementation of the EFD program that standardized the dispatching policies and procedures, and policies and procedures that Cromwell put in place coincides with emergency dispatching protocols, they have made a name for themselves with the surrounding agencies. A couple of those agencies have reached out to Mr. Lonergan to work more frequently together in the future. One of those towns is Berlin. Mr. Simmons who is the Fire Administrator for the Town of Berlin is eager to join with Cromwell in agreements to provide additional service to them. The document distributed to the Commissioners was an outline for a formal agreement. A couple of questions to come up would be the cost and what impact it may have on operations. Page 3, item A. outlines the cost value that would be assessed to the Town of Berlin. He took a standard dispatcher rate on overtime for 4 hours. That would be a normal length of time for an activation. If there were one dispatcher in the Dispatch center, they would call back a second dispatcher if a plan were put into place. It would cost the District less than \$250 per activation. They are covering the cost of personnel based on that fee.

The \$5,000 fee noted in item B is an initiation cost based on creating policies, procedures and protocols plus going to meetings and time allocated to the implementation of this plan. He worked closely with Mr. Simmons over the last couple of months over this plan. They have come to a good understanding of what is in this plan. They have offered to follow all the stipulations that are in the plan. Based on Mr. Simmons' input, Berlin has already allocated funding for this plan. He knows however that this is not finalized until the Board of Commissioners vote that this is something that the Commission and the Communication Center wants to move forward with. It is something that has been talked about for years. This is the first step forward in further possibilities for the Communication Center regarding their work with other agencies. Mr. Neto added that they are looking at this as a Phase I, Phase II approach. Phase I is the document distributed to the Commissioners tonight that would need to be vetted by an attorney. The intent of this document is to establish a working relationship and establish some protocols. Phase II would be full support and work of the Berlin Fire Department communication system. This is not something either party wants to jump into at this time. Within a year or year and one half, if everything is jelled, Cromwell would entertain an agreement with them to fund the whole fire side. We would behave the same way we do in Cromwell. Their PSAP would get the call and it would be transferred to Cromwell. The PSAP in Cromwell gets the call and it gets transferred to Cromwell. Cromwell would manage both of those simultaneously. Mr. Neto added that some of the Commissioners were involved when the District was investing time and training with the Communication Center since this was a vision and a long term process.

Commissioner Colligan asked if the purpose of this was for Cromwell to be a backup for any time that they need Cromwell or is it every call. Mr. Neto replied that it would be for any

major call. Mr. Loneragan stated that this would be similar to the Task Force activations where Cromwell becomes the communication center for the task force activation. There are two parts to this. The first is that Cromwell is the backup center. If their communication system were to go down, Cromwell can still function as their communication center during the outage. The other part is major incident. Their dispatch center is run by their Police Department and their officers need communication just like the Fire Department. Some communication centers are run by Police Departments. Sometimes the Fire Department gets less attention. During large scale incidents is it based on call type or decision by the incident commander to say where to transfer the incident over to Cromwell. Cromwell would become their communication center during major incidents such as structure fires, major accidents, etc. The current policy is if there are not two dispatchers on duty, a dispatcher call back is done to bring in a second dispatcher. This policy would be no different. The goal is not to affect the phone operation in the Cromwell Fire District. The challenge with that is that the dispatcher call back takes time. Mr. Loneragan stated at the present time they are not considering a third dispatcher.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to move forward with the legal vetting and contract drafting for an MOU between the Berlin Fire Department proposal for communication center assistance. Mr. Loneragan appreciated the support the Commission has been giving to the Communication Center and the dispatchers. It is greatly appreciated.

- I. Mark Ciancola Review of Relief of Outstanding Ambulance Bill. Mr. Neto explained the letter received from Mr. Ciancola's daughter explaining his financial situation. She apologized for not responding sooner to the request for more information for the District. Mr. Ciancola also has Stage 4 cancer, and cannot afford to pay the whole balance owed. He no longer lives in Cromwell. He is living closer to his daughter in Hamden. Mr. Neto pointed out that this relief request had been brought before the Board previously. There were four different events that caused Mr. Ciancola to go to the hospital. Any Medicare or other payments have already been applied. The total amount due is \$1,220.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to ask Mr. Ciancola for 10% of what is owed and forgive the 90% owed.

- J. Onboarding of Harold Holmes as a Per Diem Fire Inspector. A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the recommendation presented earlier by the Executive Director and the Chief to go with Harold Holmes as a per diem inspector (independent contractor) effective immediately but start date to be negotiated with Mr. Holmes. This should be added to Contracts/Contractors under new business at the next Commissioner's meeting.

Before adjourning Mr. Neto wanted to discuss his discussion yesterday with Union President Hallden regarding Memorial Day. There will not be a Memorial Day recognition that is normally done in Cromwell. Lt. Hallden had approached the Chief and Mr. Neto. He has gotten together some volunteers and set up an environment of cooking and recognition of the veterans in Town. He is willing to try to get some funds for food to create a virtual picnic where they would create a package to be picked up or delivered for any veteran that has a need or wants to. He brought this up because they would be using our facility. He checked with the Health Dept.'s health director who was very supportive and had no issues with it as long as social distancing is maintained and PPE is used. The endorsement would be helping

sponsor this event and is the Board OK with this? Are there liability issues? Mr. Neto thought this was a good idea as long as it meets the veterans who this year are not going to get a break by remaining home due to COVID. Mr. Neto was looking for two things. One was funds which would be greatly appreciated.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to donate no more than \$500 for the Memorial Day festivities/picnic for the veterans and give permission to use the Fire District facilities. Commissioner Spotts did not disagree with this, but noted that Memorial Day is for those Veterans that have gone before us. It sounds more like Veteran's Day in November. It was noted that historically the Fire Department has provided hot dogs, etc. for participants of Memorial Day. The Chief stated he will get more clarification from Lt. Hallden, but he thought the intent was to do something in recognition of those who passed. That could be open to the public in general which could be a lot. The President suggested that the Chief meet with Mr. Hallden to clarify and remind him that Memorial Day has been to remember our fallen and past veterans. We need to find out if that was his intent or was it Veterans Day? Commissioner Epstein suggested making one of the intents to honor those that have fallen and their families. The Chief stated that the Town is doing something on the 30th and the Fire Department was asked to participate with the Honor Guard. Perhaps it would be better to do something in conjunction with that. The Chief will talk to Lt. Hallden to see what they can come up with. The ceremony with the honor guard is a wreath laying ceremony with the Police so the actual day is remembered without the public.

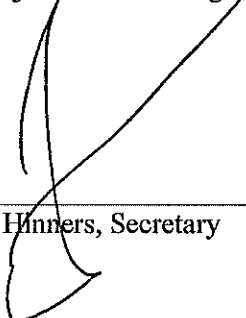
It was suggested by Commissioner Hinnners to amend the motion to keep the amount at \$500, but leave the decision making to Mr. Neto or the President until Chief Terenzio and Lt. Hallden have an opportunity to re-examine the vision of the activity. If it is tabled, they will have no money because the Board does not meet again before the event. If that change is made, Commissioner Hinnners will continue to second it and put it in appropriate hands to make the decision. Commissioner Hamlin amended the motion to keep the amount at \$500 and leave any decisions on the appropriateness of the activities for the Memorial Day event in conjunction with the Union, and the President or the Executive Director have the authority to approve or disapprove the overall expense. The Commissioners asked that whatever is decided be communicated to them.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 PM.

ATTEST:

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
6-12-20



Jason Hinnners, Secretary