

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Communications Subcommittee

Wednesday, July 22, 2020

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners David Colligan (Chairman), Charles Epstein and Jason Hinnners; Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Michael Terenzio, Dispatch Supervisor Justin Lonergan, Paul Zito from NERC and Tower Manager Angel Alvarado.

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

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM, by Chairman Colligan.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. The Executive Director did not receive any public comments for this meeting.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Update on Communications Project. Mr. Paul Zito, Clerk of the Works, gave an update on the project. He began by reporting he had been out to all the sites to make sure the construction work was done properly and to make sure the project is where it should be so the equipment can get delivered. He thought it would be a good idea to have a meeting at this point to review what has been done since it has been a while since the Subcommittee has been able to meet.

Mr. Zito reported that site-by-site the District is in pretty good shape. They were at Pilgrim Manor today, and it is important to note that the electrician the District hired to do the work there still needs to do his portion of the work. Mr. Zito will follow-up tomorrow with Pilgrim Manor and the electrician. This is not holding anything up right now.

They were also at Holy Apostles. Mr. Zito reported it is the same situation as Pilgrim Manor except that Eversource has not pulled the meter yet and pulled the conductors through. But again, they are waiting for equipment. There was also supposed to be a fence at Holy Apostles but it was not there. Mr. Zito made a phone call and was advised the fence should be going up next week. He thought they might be waiting for the equipment originally. There are two 48 inch gates on that fence so it should not be a big deal entering or exiting.

Mr. Zito reported there is nothing for him to do at the Marriott. He did the site visits with Mr. Alvarado. Mr. Alvarado showed Crown Castle where the sites were and what had to be done so that they could put the fiber in at the site. They do not plan on doing any radio work at the Marriott until the equipment gets delivered. There is very little electrical that has to be done there. The cabinet, antenna and electrical were all done in the same day.

Mr. Zito reported that Chemfeed is ready to go. They also visited Shunpike, but there is nothing going on at Shunpike in terms of construction. There is still some work to be done at Shunpike, and Mr. Zito will contact Norcom to see if they are going to do it in conjunction with the new equipment or if they will do it ahead of time. Mr. Zito would like to see them do it ahead of time. The room has to be cleared out as well as some wiring. He thought this work was being done off a different purchase order that is not part of the radio project. This work was part of the pre-assigned work to the Tower as part of the \$49,000.

The last site was the Nike site. There have been previous meetings at West Street with Mr. Zito as well as virtual meetings with the engineers and various representatives for the developer and owner. The Executive Director feels the District is still on the page it needs to be on. The developer and owner are still supportive of the process. The last meeting the owner had some concerns about the telephone pole. The next step is to approach Planning & Zoning. The District is looking for some feedback as far as what is needed. The District is within the 30 foot setback. They wanted to put some of the equipment or the pole within the 30 feet. The Town Planner did not approve of this. It was more work and engineering adjustments to the associated construction. They had to go back and reconfigure everything. The District is going to have to go back to Planning & Zoning. There is a need to go through the formal process. The reason for that is equipment although it is not part of the initial acceptance of Planning & Zoning. They want to put in a cabinet and a telephone pole which is a change. Also the neighbors in the condominium complex had some concerns about the development, so the Town is taking a more conservative approach.

The owner and the construction company are also volunteering to go to Planning & Zoning on the District's behalf. They will be setting a target date of August 11, 2020, for the application to go before Planning & Zoning. The District does not think there will be a problem, but it is not for certain. Mr. Neto stated that the District needs to have a Plan B in case the first plan is not acceptable. Mr. Zito reported that they have spent a lot of time working with the owner and his representatives, and they have been more than cooperative. They split hairs to get everything down to the exact inch to fit. Mr. Zito researched trying to put a 55 ft. flagpole with an antenna on the top. They came back with a realistic cost of \$75,000 to put a pole up there. It would be a monopole that holds a flag. It has to be strong enough to hold an antenna. The \$75,000 is not just the cost of the pole. It is a ballpark figure that could be higher or lower. This is a good starting

number based on the contractor that did the other civil work. They had gotten that contractor from the engineering firm they used for the geotech surveys that were done. They were forwarded to the District's engineer. They were able to determine that there would not be a problem putting the (telephone) pole 15 ft. into the ground in the sand that was there. It should not be an issue.

A metal pole would be a completely different story. They would have to go back up there to do geo testing. They know there will be sand, but they will also have to design a foundation. The owner and their representatives do not know anything about this situation because it just happened. Mr. Zito doesn't know if this has to be done because the District already has a solution in place that will work. It does not cost any more money that we know of. They may want to pass some costs along to the District. It will not be at a huge cost such as \$75,000.

Chairman Colligan suggested that the District move forward, go through the necessary processes with the Planning & Zoning, etc. If everything is in place, then the District can move forward. The Committee can discuss other options at that time. Mr. Zito did make a call to find out what \$75,000 would pay for. He was told a guess on the (standard) foundation and the structure and does not include the engineering costs. It also does not include the tax warrants. The Executive Director noted that the expensive solution or Plan B is the one outlined by Mr. Zito. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the Planning & Zoning Commission and their support. The Chairman again suggested that the Committee move forward, and if there is a change in plans, the Committee will regroup at that time. The Executive Director discussed the scenario of a no vote. If the Committee has to regroup, the timeline will be stressful.

Chairman Colligan noted that there have been discussions at previous meetings about an alternative to the Nike site. Things can still be running, but there will not be 100% coverage in that area. Mr. Zito noted that they have received so much cooperation from the owners' standpoint. They have put some serious time into this and gone out of their way for the District. The Committee discussed some alternatives and the concerns surrounding those alternatives. It will be a fine balance trying to find a solution if the District's Planning & Zoning application is rejected. There is a generator there and a pump house that is required. The District has use of the generator. When the project gets done, the property gets turned over to the District as the water company as a requirement. They upgraded the generator and the District does not know if there will be a charge back or not. Mr. Zito pointed these things out so there is full disclosure of the situation. A lot of these things were to be addressed administratively. Mr. Neto added that if he and Mr. Zito had some of this information 10 weeks ago, they would have had a different strategy or options for Planning & Zoning.

Mr. Zito answered some questions by the Commissioners about the cabinet and the power consumption. All the sites they are putting equipment into are basically the same except for the rack that is going into one of the sites.

Mr. Zito added that Norcom is beginning to stage Cromwell's equipment at their shop. They are bolting things into the chasis. So before Cromwell brings people over to certify the equipment and before it gets shipped out into the field, it will be a working system site by site. Mr. Zito added that Cromwell is really close to certification tests on the equipment and the configuration of the consoles. This should happen mid-August. After that it will be a matter of breaking it down to the different sites. He is thinking it is

possible that by mid-September or late September if everything works, the system could be in place.

Chairman Colligan asked about the status of mobiles and portables. At one point there was a discussion about putting them in the trucks. He is concerned about getting training started to operate the new equipment. There was discussion about getting them in the trucks a little sooner so that there would be an opportunity for early training. Mr. Zito stated that he contacted Norcom and advised that it was time to get the mobiles installed. They will have a template available with both systems in it. One zone will have the new system and the one next to it will have the old. Everyone will eventually operate on the second zone after the new system is brought up. They will bring it up on analog first, but stay on zone 2, work all the bugs out and make sure the transport is right. They will come back, and at some point electronically flip the switch, that will put everything over onto the digital system. Regarding the portables one bank will be on the old system and one bank will be on the new system. They will go back and reset all the subscriber units and take the old system out of it. They need to start with like for like. It is not recommended to go to digital, and turn on the new system at the same time if it is not necessary. They will turn on the new system in the old format and find out how much better it works. Cutting over to the digital will be even better. Mr. Zito stated there will be no additional cost. All the work is included in the overall cost.

Chairman Colligan asked the Dispatch Supervisor if he had any concerns. He responded that he did not have any concerns, and he did talk with Tyler today who is the programmer from Norcom. He will be coming out on Monday to read the current radios so he can get a solid read on what is in the radios now so he can program into Bank (zone) 2. He is also working with Tyler to build the entire layout for the portables for the long run. They will get a base template built up as discussed. They will come back and reprogram taking the old system out when the District is ready to go to the new system. Everything will be fine-tuned at that time. He has worked with Tyler before and has no concerns. Chairman Colligan asked if he and the Chief could be included in the meeting with Tyler on Monday because they had a format on the portables before Justin had started so they want to make sure they are all on the same page. Justin will contact the Chief and Chairman Colligan with a time for the meeting on Monday.

Chairman Colligan asked Norcom what the outcome was on portables. Chief Terenzio per request of the Executive Director had forwarded that information to Norcom already. He thought they were at 50 or 60. The original number was 70. Chairman Colligan asked what the outcome was on the large knobs. The Chief has not heard back from Mr. Ambrosino yet regarding the XL model. There is a model portable available that has a larger knob for fire service. The Chief doesn't think that the model they are proposing for us to use is that model. The Chief would like to have the units that are going to be assigned to interior forces to have that larger knob. He doesn't know if they should be sent back because they have not been taken out of the boxes yet or should the knobs be modified. Mr. Zito stated that the knobs cannot be modified. It would have to be an exchange or a return. Then there will be an upcharge. Chairman Colligan thought the District should have been told from the beginning about the knobs. Mr. Zito stated they were in the original order that got changed. Commissioner Colligan agreed that it was changed, but the only thing that was changed was the model because it was a lower grade unit. Justin explained that in some of the emails he was included in, Mr. Ambrosino did say he looked back at the original quote, and they never quoted the excess model with the larger knobs. It was always the police model, not the fire model. What the District

changed in the meeting when it was decided to go with all tri bands was the District went with the 1.5's and 2.5's all tri bands. They did not change the excess vs. whatever the other terminology was. Justin did say that Mr. Ambrosino looked at the original documentation that did say the smaller knobs. Mr. Zito stated that would be easy enough to confirm.

The Chief noted that he did have the email that was sent to everyone. It stated that the portables have not been touched yet. They will not do anything with them until a decision has been made. Mr. Zito stated Norcom did call him, and he advised the same to hold on to them until a decision has been made. The Executive Director reported that after listening to the recording of the meeting on October 30, he quoted Mr. Ambrosino as stating, "it has been 3 years, let's regroup as to what we are going to be ordering." He started the next sentence by saying "Firefighter model." All of the changes were in that meeting which started with the APEX 8000 with a full key pad, model 3.5. Others spoke up, and there was a discussion regarding what the District's needs are. It was then agreed on model 2.5. This refers to the keypad. High capacity battery, high impact green housing, 70 radius, APEX 6000, single ban, VHF, intrinsic battery, dual mike noise suppression, etc. The question is did Mr. Ambrosino misspeak when he said "firefighter model." His words were on the tape recording of the meeting.

Chairman Colligan suggested that someone have a conversation with Norcom about the knob issue. Chief Terenzio added that whatever is decided needs to be NFPA compliant with the recommendation for the ability for a person with a gloved hand and a PPE to be returned. The District sees this as a safety issue. Mr. Zito pointed out that it is a recommendation but it does not have an NFPA number assigned to it. Mr. Zito does not think there would be an issue to exchange them, but there would be an upcharge not a restocking fee, because that option costs more.

Mr. Zito wanted to check on the option of dual microphones with noise suppression. He did not know if that was available only on the firefighter version or on all versions. It adds more credence. Mr. Zito thought that a regular microphone was \$100, the speaker microphone and firefighter version is \$600. Mr. Zito stated that Norcom was told not to do anything with the microphones. Chairman Colligan stated that the Subcommittee was led down this information path by Mr. Ambrosino that this was to be the Fire Department version. He was the salesman who should have made sure it was the right product. The meeting where this was discussed, Mr. Ambrosino was recorded referring to the firefighter version or firefighter model. The Chairman stated that this is not the Committee's mistake. Justin Lonergan agreed with Commissioner Colligan. Mr. Zito did not disagree, but stated that there will be an upcharge. Commissioner Colligan disagreed that there should be an upcharge because the Committee was misinformed from the beginning. Mr. Zito did not know what the upcharge would be. Mr. Zito wanted to verify because of the noise suppression which might dictate what model and verify. If it is only available on the fire model, that will give us more credence. If it is available on anything then it is just words. If it is available on fire only it will give the District credence to what they already earned. Norcom will have to go back to Motorola to figure out how to handle it. Commissioner Colligan noted that from day one Norcom should have known this as a fire service, and the District would be looking at fire service equipment, not police service. They should have known better. Chairman Colligan noted that at the last meeting, everything was documented as to what was agreed upon and signed off. He wants to get what the Fire Department deserves.

Chairman Colligan asked for an update on the fiber situation. Mr. Alvarado reported it is going well. Site visits were done today and last week to introduce another vendor that is both faster and cheaper. Chairman Colligan asked if all the sites were going to have backup generators. Mr. Zito reported that the Holy Apostles cabinet will have a twist lock connector to plug a generator into it. Typically the generator would require 240 volts at 60 amps.

Mr. Zito addressed Commissioner Colligan's question site by site. Shunpike will not have a backup generator added because they already have one there. It is going in a building where they are not putting anything in the cabinet.

The Nike site will have a backup generator. If that generator fails, there will be more of a problem than the radios. That site has a generator that will be upgraded to take care of the unit and also have a fixture on it to hook a generator up to it if we had to for the cabinet.

The Marriott has a generator but it is a receive site only so there is not as much of a concern. Mr. Zito has never seen it or gotten any information on it.

Pilgrim Manor has one, but it also has a cabinet with the hook up on it just in case.

Chemfeed is all set. Mr. Zito stated that as with the Nike site, if the generator fails at Chemfeed, there will be bigger problems than the radios. Holy Apostles is the only place they would need a backup. Mr. Alvarado discussed emergency startups for generators that only last for approximately one day. Commissioner Colligan noted that he was trying to get this information to prepare for any emergencies through either the budget for funding a generator or rentals. Mr. Zito added that if the District loses power, there should be a plan in place.

Chairman Colligan asked how the training will be laid out with Norcom. Mr. Zito responded that he will set up the training for the District. Part of the training will be when the District goes to certify the equipment. When they are there to certify the equipment, they will train the Dispatch Supervisor on the console and the configuration of it. They will come up with a configuration of their choice based on the District's assets that are hooked to the radio. At that point when the Dispatch Supervisor meets with them, they will be asking Justin how he would like to configure it. Mr. Zito described it as a "train the trainer" session. Anyone that would like to stand behind him and watch would be welcome. Mr. Zito thinks they will allow four people at a time in a session.

Mr. Lonergan was asked who he would want in the session to back him up. He replied that he would get a couple of senior dispatchers and another person just so that there are more eyes on the puzzle. If something should happen to Justin, someone else would know how to do operate it as well. The Chairman asked Mr. Lonergan to put something together as far as who he will choose to train with him and advise the Committee. He asked that Mr. Lonergan have it prepared for the next meeting. Chairman Colligan then asked about the fire side for training with portables and mobiles. Mr. Zito explained they will do the training when the portables are handed out, and they will spend time with training the trainers.

Mr. Zito went back to discuss the visit to certify the equipment. This is an acceptance test plan, not just a social call. They will do testing on the radios at that time and make sure all the sites work. They will do simulated power failures on the site. Mr. Zito will get the Committee a written test plan to review before they go out to Norcom. It is a standard plan, but some of it gets tailored to the customer. Chairman Colligan asked Mr. Zito who he would suggest to attend this session. Mr. Zito suggested the Fire Chief and the Assistant Fire Chief of Training should attend. Mr. Zito was going to check and get back to the Chairman about who usually attends these sessions. There is only enough room for so many people especially now with COVID. He will check on the rules of engagement.

The Fire Chief had a question regarding fire ground. He stated that Dispatch is only able to hear fire ground and not transmit. Dispatch cannot speak on the fire ground. Mr. Zito confirmed that fact. The Chief asked if in the future, they could add that, and how difficult would it be to add that. He wanted to know what that would involve. Mr. Zito responded that the first step would be to determine if Cromwell could even license the frequency for a bay station. If they can obtain a license, the next step would be to take all the receivers that are at the site and replace them with transmitters. They have one quote now for a bay station for \$28,000 or \$30,000 for a transmitter/receiver. This was for the Shunpike location. Mr. Neto explained that this issue was discussed a couple of meetings ago. The Committee discussed the desire to protect it and is there an upside to potentially losing it. Chairman Colligan asked if we could take one of the repeaters we have now leave it on and retune it on that frequency. Mr. Zito was going to check into that. He is 95% sure that could be done. It will not sound as good, but it will preserve the frequency. Mr. Neto stated that in 5 years from now if there is a greater need, the District could invest \$30,000. All the sites are not ready to receive that frequency as a repeater at the sites or the receiver sites. The antenna systems will receive it. The back hall will receive it, but the District does not have the bay stations to put in but it is there. There is no modification, it is just a matter of network configuration and a resource on the console and you will be ready to go. Chairman Colligan thought that the old equipment should be saved as a backup until the new system is up and running. Mr. Zito thought that the work order includes disposing of old equipment. He suggested that the District find a spot now and then advise Norcom where to bring the dismantled equipment and have it marked where it came from and where it should be relocated to. There was a discussion about using a Conn xbox to lock everything up. The training department will take it to use. The cost of the box is \$2,500. They discussed where the equipment could be stored. The West Street firehouse was discussed. The plan is to offer the used equipment to the Town since they do not have resources to upgrade their systems. They would have to get their own frequency. Mr. Lonergan was not able to have a good connection during this part of the meeting. The Chairman suggested they have a conversation with Mr. Zito on Monday to review and discuss the issues further.

The Chief discussed the layout for the channel identification. Mr. Zito explained that this was discussed at the last meeting and Mr. Zito wanted to clarify. The problem was that the second channel that was in the chart was really the other channel Norcom got for the District that there are no radios for. The question was what is the District calling it. These will be labeled at all the sites and on all the documentation. Channel 2 will be a simulcast digital transmit receive. The channel is called the command channel. According to Mr. Zito that would be an F2 which is a real channel. Chairman Colligan updated the other Commissioners at the meeting regarding what had happened. There will be a Dispatch channel. Normal operations will happen on that channel. For a

structure fire, an incident commander can now make the decision to get off the dispatch channel and go to a command channel so if another ambulance call comes in, they are not interrupting the major fire. Anyone that goes interior will go into fireground 1 or fireground 2. Fireground 1 will be digital. Fireground 2 will be analog. Later on they will change fireground 2 back to digital. They have also discussed having a light tower with a generator. This could be shared between the Fire Department and the Water Department. It can be used for any emergency in the District. Mr. Neto added that there is money in the budget for it. It was a 10 kw, not 20.

- V. Adjournment. There being no further business a motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

David Colligan, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
8-20-20