

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Executive Committee Meeting

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

2:00 PM

Via Conference Call

1 West Street
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Roger Rukowicz (Chairman), Allan Spotts and Mertie Terry. Also on the call were Executive Director Julius Neto and Water Division Manager Joseph Palmieri.

Per the Executive Order No. 7B, Governor Lamont has ordered and directed that in-person open meeting requirements be suspended. Therefore, the Executive Committee 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 2:10 PM, by Chairman Rukowicz.
- II. Approval of the Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as submitted. It was noted that Committee members and managers all had working drafts of the proposed budget.
- III. Public Comment. There were no public comments submitted to the Executive Director.
- IV. Old Business. There was no old business to discuss.
- V. New Business
 - A. Water Division Budget 2020/2021. Chairman Rukowicz asked the Committee members if there were any questions regarding the Water Fund. They reviewed the Water Division budget one account at a time.

The first account 05901 was the payroll account. The Executive Director explained that he worked with Mike Alibrio to shave some dollars off the Water payroll as a way to control expenses. It was a very small percentage. Mr. Neto stated that he and Mr. Palmieri started this process two months ago. At that time the District did not have as many financial concerns as it does now due to the pandemic. He added that Mr. Palmieri runs a tight ship, and Mr. Neto is confident that the Water Manager can stay within his \$25,000 budget limit. The only thing that could affect that item is excessive overtime. It was also noted that the budget does not account for possible water main breaks. Repairs are built into the budget but not major repairs. Also included in the budget is a minor

salary increase for one of the employees who has been taking some courses to improve his skill level in the Water Department.

The next account was 05902. This account was power and plumbing. Commissioner Rukowicz asked what the \$11,000 was for in other expenditures. Mr. Palmieri stated that it was a figure they used last year. He would have to go back to last year's budget to determine what the items are. Basically it would be used for other repairs at Chemfeed.

Water Treatment was account 05903. Commissioner Rukowicz noted that this account refers to chemicals. There are times where Mr. Palmieri will order some things ahead of time, but the chemicals are ordered as needed.

05904 is the account for transmission and distribution. Mr. Neto took out \$2,500 under maintenance of meters. He was looking to find \$2,500 and thought taking \$2,500 from this account would be less painful. Mr. Palmieri discussed this with Mr. Neto, and it was agreed that the \$2,500 was something they could live with.

The next item was other operating expenses 05908. Mr. Neto increased this account by \$1,000 totaling \$55,000. It includes training, education and membership dues. Mr. Palmieri explained they are trying to add a new account to cover training, education and membership fees because every year the water division staff has to renew its certifications. They also have to take classes to earn CEU's to renew their certifications. They usually take the money from wherever they can find it in other accounts. This year they are creating an account specifically for the purpose of training, education and professional water organization memberships. Some of the organizations are New England Water Works Assoc. and American Water Works Assoc. It was noted that these are not additional dollars, but dollars out of other accounts.

The next account was 05907, General Administration. Commissioner Rukowicz noted that the health insurance annual term is followed by the calendar year, not the fiscal year. A "guess-timate" has to be done to figure out the last 6 months of the fiscal year of insurance expenditures. He believes it was figured out at 13 % of an increase. Commissioner Spotts stated he was good with that number because it is less than the requested amount. Commissioner Terry questioned the payroll tax expense. Mr. Neto reviewed this with Mr. Alibrio. They looked at 6 mos. of actual expenses and 6 mos. of a projection. They doubled that figure, and it came out to \$47,086. Three months later they had better data to work with. They were able to reduce it by \$1,953. That is what the District is paying for payroll tax based on experience. The total figure is \$534,516.

Debt service interest was the next item. The Water Dept. has some loans for projects that they had over the last 10 years. Some of them will be paid off in the next couple of years. There is \$49,000 that has to be paid back. That is part of the debt service that cannot be shaved off.

05908 is the Water Capital fund. There was a difference in that account. The Executive Director changed that number from \$315,000 to \$333,000. He referred to the Door Access Security System. The District will be looking at an expenditure of \$72,000 to update the access codes and the ability to open any door in the District. The Water Department also have doors on its buildings such as Chemfeed. The figure is the Water Division's portion of the \$72,000. When the budget was first allocated, they did not have that figure broken up. It was all allocated in the Fire Department/District side of the

budget. Joe has counted the number of doors the Water Division has. A percentage was assigned based on that. Out of the \$72,000 in Capital requests, the Water Department will own \$17,459.

Revenue over and under expenses was the next item with \$10,000. The new figure is based on 3 additional months' worth of actuals. With budgetary transactions there is an approximate \$9,000 difference. Mr. Neto explained that it is the same \$10,000 that was carried from the top of the page.

Commissioner Rukowicz had the Water Department as the next item. He went through each account line by line. The first item was meters as in replacement meters. There was \$74,000 allocated for meters. Mr. Palmieri explained this amount allows for approximately 200 meters to be replaced every year. He was referring primarily to the 5/8" meter which is the normal household meter. Some businesses or commercial property require larger six inch meters which the District purchases and is reimbursed by the customer. Commissioner Spotts asked about the lifetime of a meter. Mr. Palmieri stated that he believes it to be 15 years. There have been 20 year old meters taken out that test fine. Commissioner Terry asked about the life of the pipes going up and down Main St. Mr. Palmieri explained that the Water Department has done a water supply plan and distribution study. Environmental Partners is performing the study, and the Water Division has been gathering information for the study. A lot of the information the Water Department is supplying is about repairs they have made, and a lot of the repairs have been on Main St. There are also a lot on Franklin Rd. and a lot of the older neighborhoods.

The outcome of the study will be a 10 – 20 year plan to recommend what the Water Department should do first and when they should do it. Once the Water Department is back on track with funding and some other projects are completed, the District can look into the State revolving fund loans and low interest rate loans. He would like to see that type of funding for a big project such as Main St. That will be a large and expensive project.

He also noted that the Water Department also needs to focus on their storage tank inspection. Mr. Palmieri is hopeful for next year to start an account for improvements. Because this is a tight budget year, that account will not get started until next year. Another issue to think about is increasing the water rates at that time. Rates have not changed in many years. The revenue side of the Water Division has remained stagnate. However, this is a need on the infrastructure side, they are looking at approximately \$6 -- \$10 million in projects after all the information comes back from the studies being done by the State. There is no way the present water rates can support that. The Board needs to come up with a strategy on how they are going to fund that strategy. This year is not the year to consider this.

The next item was hydrants. Five new hydrants with hardware cost \$12,000. They are used for replacements from being hit or damaged. Joe bills out for the replacement of the hydrant or the repairs needed and water loss. He added that the new administrative assistant has been working on collecting for those repairs.

The next 3 lines which was the distribution study, the 2019 truck was taken out. VFD for wells was also not budgeted. For the engineering service for water tank inspection, \$30,000 was budgeted for calibration of VFD's and everything that goes with that. They

will need to run the system off of pressure when the tank is drained for actual inspection of the tank. They will need to purchase equipment as well for that project. They also discussed the spare motor for Well 4. Mr. Palmieri noted that this item can be removed from the budget. The Water Division has already purchased that. The spare motor and hydraulic breaker have already been purchased.

The next issue was Major repair service, Truck body for \$35,000. This was brought up at the last Water Operations meeting. Bad weather or cold weather, it would be a special body on a truck for the staff out in the field. Commissioner Rukowicz recommended holding off on this because of the tight budget year, he would like to put this off until next year. He asked Commissioners Terry and Spotts what they thought about the expenditure. Commissioner Spotts asked what the purpose of this truck body was. Mr. Palmieri explained that the Water Division will be inheriting an old ambulance when it is rechasis. Once they receive it, it will be an additional truck to their fleet once a body is purchased and installed. This vehicle will become their vehicle on the job like their Dodge is now. It will have all the tools and equipment in it that they need. It will be warm enough to be able to do fittings in the back of the truck. It will be totally enclosed. Mr. Palmieri thought it would be a great addition to their fleet, but agreed that they have gone without it for all these years, it can wait another year. The Water Department does have equipment they can use for another year. Commissioner Terry asked if they could have a partial amount of the total cost to do some of the work, but Mr. Palmieri stated that the project should be done all at once because they will be taking the body off the old ambulance and putting it on a new chasis. The Ambulance Division will take the old chasis and park it until the Water Department has funding for a body. Due to all the uncertainty regarding the virus, Chairman Rukowicz suggested that this be tabled until next year. Commissioner Spotts agreed that it would be a good idea to save some dollars for any emergency that might come up. Commissioner Terry agreed.

Risk & Resilience Study is a new requirement from DPH. It came out very recently. The Water Department has until June of 2021 to complete the study. Mr. Palmieri added that they need the funding in this year's budget to have Environmental Partners perform the study. The Committee agreed this was necessary to keep in the budget.

The Permit Renewal was the next item for \$85,000. This is also a very serious issue involving the Water Division's Diversion Permit. The Committee did not have a choice but to keep this funding in the budget. The Water Department runs off the Diversion Permit. It has to be updated through EPA and DPH. It is a very lengthy and expensive process. There is no shortcut for the renewal. It has to be done. The last time it was done was approximately 15 years ago. Mr. Palmieri is hopeful there will be leftover funding and the price will be lower than the quote. It is a two year process.

The next item was Water Supply Plan for \$10,000. This is also something that needs to be done. This process was already started when the Distribution Study and the Water Supply plan were combined. They had some funding from previous years' Capital budget which they were able to put towards this amount. The \$10,200 being requested is to make up the difference of combining both projects. They received a deal from Environmental Partners to do the studies. The District also saved money by combining the two studies.

Leak detection equipment for \$17,500. Mr. Palmieri explained that the Water Department plans to purchase their own leak detection equipment. It is correlation

equipment that helps locate leaks better. According to the District's diversion permit, a leak detection survey needs to be done every four years. A company comes in and the District pays them the same amount of money to perform this study as the equipment is going to cost. If the District were to purchase their own equipment, they could perform these studies annually. It will also help locate leaks better in an emergency situation. Commissioner Spotts asked if there were any State contracts for this equipment. Mr. Palmieri did not know that. He had gone directly to the company instead of a dealer. He assumes he will get a better deal that way. Middletown Water has this product and they highly recommend it. The Committee agreed to leave this in the budget.

Confined Space equipment was the next item. It is a safety item. The Water Department does not own a tripod or gas detectors to enter some of the confined spaces that the District has. Mr. Palmieri received quotes from the same company the Town used for their equipment. This company was also used by the Fire Department. In the past Mr. Palmieri has borrowed equipment from the Cromwell Sewer Department. However, in the event he cannot get into their building and it is an emergency situation, the Water Department should have their own safety equipment. If they were to get caught by OSHA entering those spaces without the right equipment, they could get into some type of violation situation. Mr. Palmieri feels this is a necessity. Commissioner Rukowicz agreed. Commissioners Terry and Spotts also agreed.

Light Tower was the next item. This is something that is used at night, in bad and good weather. The price is \$8,500. The Water Department has never had one of these before. This piece of equipment is not only a light tower, but also a generator. They would be able to utilize this light tower in an emergency situation at the pump stations and booster pump stations. If power were to go out for an extended period of time, it can be chained to the building so it is secure. When they are out working at night in a dark area in the past they have borrowed the Town's equipment, but the light tower is very helpful in allowing them to see and do their work, and it is a lot safer. The Committee all agreed this item was needed.

A Roller-compactor was next. The price was \$15,800. This is another item that the Water Department has been borrowing from the Town. The Water Department uses it frequently for every repair and patch work project. In order to use it, Mr. Palmieri has to track it down and schedule a time that he can use it. Mr. Palmieri added that if the Water Department breaks any equipment, they are responsible for the repairs. Repair can be pretty costly. The Committee all agreed this item was needed.

Door Access Security System for the Water Division. The Executive Director explained that this item was part of the capital project item for \$72,000 for the whole District. \$17,459 is the Water Division portion. If this money is not appropriated, be prepared not to appropriate the other monies. It cannot be one or the other. Mr. Neto reported that last week there was a problem with Court St. doors. This week was West St. It is old technology that is at least 20 years old. It is mechanical and electrical. Mr. Alvarado explained the technology. When the system is off line, it usually takes a while to get back on line (sometimes days). This also affected the Dispatch Supervisor's ability to access logs on the system.

Mr. Neto reported the new capital total for the budget is \$298,210. They saved \$35,000. A motion was made by Commissioner Terry, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the changes to the Capitol Fund budget as discussed

bringing the total to \$298,210. Mr. Neto will work with Mike Alibrio tomorrow to incorporate the changes to present to the full Board of Commissioners.

Chairman Rukowicz commented that the Water Department staff is an outstanding group. It is always a pleasure working with Mr. Palmieri on their budget. Mr. Palmieri thanked the Commissioners for their input and hard work as well.

- B. IT Budget 2020/2021. It was noted that the IT budget is under the General Fund part of the budget. Mr. Alvarado referenced Account 01103. Total computer operations is \$93,774. There is a minor discrepancy between Mr. Neto's numbers and the initial numbers. It came down to payroll based on better numbers. Mr. Neto reported that Mr. Alvarado does a good job, and he is a one-man department. He takes care of all the computer systems, internet, fiber optics and equipment related to the communications project. Half of his payroll is on the water side as part of Mr. Palmieri's budget. Some individuals such as Angel and Mr. Neto have salaries split between Water and Fire. Mr. Alvarado was on the line to address any questions the Committee may have.

Commissioner Spotts asked what was included in some of the operational expenses. Mr. Alvarado stated that it includes all email accounts, maintenance support and backup for the server and disaster recovery plans where the server goes off line because of a virus or other disaster. Mr. Alvarado has the ability to recover the server environment from a backup that was done 15 min. prior to the event. Security and preventative watchguards are also part of operational expenses. This allows us to project where the next attack may come from. IT is also tied into the web services, anything that is tied to cromwellfd.com, cromwellfd.org or any communications to its server or network through a DNS zone as well as fiber for backbone and infrastructure. Commissioner Spotts requested that in future budgets would it be possible to break out some of those costs into separate budget items so they would know how much is being spent for each budget item. Mr. Alvarado explained that he has had conversations with Mike Alibrio to see which items can be more specified to certain accounts and which ones are more global.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the Computer Operations budget at \$93,774.

The Executive Director noted that Mr. Alvarado also had a piece of the Equipment Reserve fund. Mr. Neto asked Angel to discuss some of the items in that fund that are his. The first item was the door access system. A portion of that would go to the Water Division as it pertains to the buildings that they currently have access to as well as pump stations throughout Town. The other portion would come from the District side that is tied to the Fire Department and EMS and the other buildings. That total was \$72,000 for that capital project.

The other is the District telephone system. The system is about 12 years old. They are no longer being supported by the manufacturer for repair. They had tried to replace the phone system two years ago. It was pushed back to last year. However, last year the funding went to the communications radio project. Mr. Neto noted that it was his decision to take the phone system out of the budget due to the tightness of the budget but kept the security system in the budget. He explained that there is a need to replace the phone system. He is hoping they can muddle through one more year. If there is any money left over from the \$3 million communication project, it could encompass the \$60,000 that he is suggesting they neutralize out of that budget. He spoke with the

District's accountant in terms of revisiting that. After some negotiating and lobbying, the accountant could justify it through accounting principles that it would work. Mr. Neto doesn't know if there would be \$60,000 left. Mr. Alvarado and Mr. Lonergan discussed the issues and decided that the priority should be the door access system this year.

Commissioner Spotts asked about the \$267,000 that was obtained with the grant (not the SAFER grant). Mr. Neto explained that will be used for portables, mobiles and part of the communication system. There could be money leftover because that was a surprise. We are repurposing some of the funding that was appropriated two years ago for the civil work, and that could be used at the end. However, the District will not know that until 10 months from now. If there is anything close to \$60,000, Mr. Neto will be going before the Commission for a phone system. Commissioner Rukowicz reviewed that the security audit and door access will remain in the budget, and the phone system will be put on hold. It was also noted that the drone kit is also on hold.

- C. Communication Center Budget. 01122, the first item was payroll with a \$19,000 increase. Most of that is contractual, and 4 hours were added to Mr. Lonergan's schedule this budget cycle. Those extra four hours are going to help the team overall especially once the new system is in place. Justin will also have the ability to facilitate a "hot" call when there are multiple priorities going on in the Center. Mandatory training for \$8,000 is continuing education that is done on a routine basis. Dispatchers have to become recertified every 2 years. Annual training happens to stay current with Middlesex Health. There are contractual agreements for the training system with Priority Dispatch, membership fees with a Dispatcher Association APCO. Continuing education and membership fees. Commissioner Rukowicz asked if there was any money left in training due to all the cancelations due to COVID 19. There is additional funding. There was a lot in the training fund. Mr. Lonergan brought it down this year. They had planned to send 4 dispatchers to the Navigator conference. That did not happen, and they spent money on airline flights that were not reimbursable unless used within a year. That is funding that is sitting around. His plan was to send two people to Navigator next year. They have been thinking about planning some additional training by the end of the year. He was going to use that additional training money to get the dispatchers additional training, but due to COVID none of that happened. Some of the training opportunities that did not happen this year due to COVID hopefully will be able to make up for next year.

Commissioner Spotts commented on the job Justin and all the dispatchers do. He learned what actually happens by listening to his pager. He listened to what they do and the calmness with which they do it. Each and every person in the communication center does an outstanding job. They have such an important function, and they do it confidently and professionally. He stated he is proud to say they are part of the Town of Cromwell. Mr. Lonergan thanked Commissioner Spotts for his comments. He relays all the comments back to the Dispatchers.

The next account 011225805, Operating Expenses. There was a \$24,000 increase. Some stuff was moved out of signals and alarms into this category for budgetary reasons to streamline budgetary processes. Most of the increase is due to the movement of those funds. It is an increase in that line item which was taken from the Fire Department line item. Under equipment reserve funds, Angel and Justin were working on equipment for communications including the Ipads and EMS charts for the ambulances. The charts are beyond their expiration of usage. The computers were slated to be replaced last year.

Funding was tight this year so it became a budgeted item for this next budget year. Ipads are past their recommended usage timeframe. The two figures for Ipads and EMS charts are \$6,500 and \$5,500. Mr. Lonergan has not done exact pricing on those items but the total should come just under \$12,000. Commissioner Spotts asked if these items could be purchased under a government contract. Both Mr. Alvarado and Mr. Neto confirmed that the District does purchase through government contracts. Mr. Alvarado added that the District even gets credit for some of the items they turn in.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the Communication Center Budget for 2020/2021 as presented.

VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 3:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Roger Rukowicz, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
6-3-20