

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 23, 2020

10:00 AM

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 Fire Chief Michael Terenzio.

Per 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 10:04 AM 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 presented.
- III. Public Comment. There were no public comments submitted to Mr. Neto.
- IV. Old Business. There was no old business to report.
- V. New Business
 - A. Fire Department – 2021 Budget. The first item to be discussed was the Fire Department/EMS General fund, 01 4100. Commissioner Spotts had a question about Operating expenses. Mr. Neto explained that to get this budget balanced without any tax increase the District needs to bring in revenue. Reviewing the whole budget, there is higher expense rather than dollars. The District will need to transfer in some money so that there will be no tax increase this year.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, to accept the \$4,946,751. The Executive Director asked Commissioner Spotts to save his motion until the end of the review process in case there are monies added or subtracted from the grand total. Commissioner Spotts retracted his motion.

The next item was tax collector. This is an item that is reviewed every year. The Town charges the District \$60,000 for the use of the tax collector. The Town will be giving the

District a check weekly starting July 1 for tax collection received during the week. This is a more efficient way of collecting so that the District does not have to wait until the end of the month to determine what has been collected for the month. In the future the District may try to manage tax collection on their own, but it was agreed for now to use the Town's services since the District is locked into that cost. Mr. Alibrio added that the figure also includes the Tax Assessor as well as tax collection. The figure is a percentage of the assessor's and collector's budget. Commissioner Terry asked that we look into what we are paying for those services. The Executive Director has had some discussion about this issue. \$59,531 will be billed to the District whether they are called assessor fees or not. Commissioner Terry asked that we look into how much it would cost for the District to do their own tax collecting. Mr. Neto added that the District would have to set up its own infrastructure for tax collecting. There would be some upfront costs. Mr. Neto would be willing to do a full assessment for next year's budget.

The next item was the Commissioners' expenses. This year it was \$10,000 which is less than last year.

The next item was computer operations. This was reviewed by the Committee yesterday. Also reviewed was the Administrative Account. It is hoped that the legal fees will be coming down this year. That was an item that has been quite high. Last year those fees were \$162,000. The year before they were \$165,000. Mr. Neto added that they will not be spending \$40,000 for any investigations this year. The alleged wrongful termination of a part-time dispatcher is a pending item. Some money had been budgeted for that issue.

The next item was Office of the Fire Chief. There was \$32,000 set aside for a new Assistant Chief part time. There was a question regarding CT Fire Chiefs/AFC/CCFCA. The Chief explained that the item was for membership dues, but there was discussion regarding whether or not the District should continue to pay membership fees for past Cromwell Chiefs. This would apply for any other Chiefs' organizations. Cromwell has past Chiefs that have moved out of town, moved out of state or others that remain active and are still local. Chief Terenzio reported that they could cut the membership dues amount in half. The Committee thanked the Chief and Lisa for all their hard work. The Chief added that because it is administrative assistant week, the Chief did get her something to show his appreciation for all that she does.

The next item was EMS operations. The total of that item was \$394,200.

Signals & Alarms was the next item. No one had any questions. The Fire Marshal's Office was next. Commissioner Spotts asked how the Fire Marshal was doing. Assistant Chief Brade/Deputy Fire Marshal reported that the Fire Marshal should be getting out of the hospital next week. There were no questions under Operating Expenses.

The next item was Communications Center which was reviewed yesterday.

Buildings & grounds was the next item. There was a breakdown of expenses for each firehouse. The expenses are the same as last year. There wasn't anything that could be cut there. The next item was training. The total was \$12,500. They took an average number from the amount of people they have active. The Chief thought they should be fine in that account. That also includes EMT certification, Firefighter I & II and PTU and volunteer 2 hr. sessions.

The next section was insurance. Commissioner Rukowicz noted that there is not much that can be done. However, the insurance company's fiscal year is January 1 to December 31. Next January the insurance company will be charging more. What Mr. Neto and Mr. Alibrio did was average the cost out to a 13% increase for next January through the end of June.

Debt service was the next item. There was nothing that could be done there. Those are debts that have to be paid. Next was apparatus and equipment. Annual checks and inspections are needed for all equipment. Maintenance of all equipment is also just as important. There was nothing to be changed. It was noted that the District's mechanic has a maintenance schedule that is followed.

Capital Equipment Reserve fund was the next item. Turnout gear was discussed. The amount of \$7,000 was for 4 sets of gear. It was noted that this is separate from what the Commissioners discussed previously. This is to cover any sets that expire this coming year. They have an expiration of 10 years. The Chief has already started the process of collecting equipment from people's homes that are not responding for calls. He is sequestering it. He is also looking for better prices. This price was based on a very good price from a vendor in Torrington. The company was Quaker Safe. The Chief was fine with money appropriated for hoses.

SCBA (self-containing breathing apparatus) was the next item. They are approximately \$6,000 each. The Chief added there are new standards, and things are out of date. A couple of officers have gone to some training recently at Scott Aviation and learned that Cromwell has a few that need updating. The Chief added that once there is a discussion for a new piece of equipment, it is his intent to not just purchase or lease a piece of equipment but he wants to include in that cost all the equipment needed for that apparatus which would be a lease over a period of time. The Chief is also asking for one Hurst Tool. The Chief stated if a new piece of equipment is approved for the rescue pumper he would also include in the overall cost leasing another set of Hurst tool equipment. One tool requested should be enough if one is included with the rescue pumper. The Committee was in agreement.

The next item was Rescue 1 replacement. There is \$150,000 in that account currently, \$75,000 was put in that account last year and the year previous. The Committee would like to increase the contribution this year to \$100,000 giving them a grand total of \$250,000 towards a new truck. The Chief explained that there are 3 ambulances. Two of them are approximately 10 years old, and one is 3 years old. They are rotated to extend their service life per the advice of the Mechanic. They are categorized as primary, secondary and tertiary. One ambulance had a new motor job last year. The Chief is recommending that it be rechasis. The Committee was fine with that.

Chairman Rukowicz skipped to the ambulance rechasis. There was \$100,000 in last year's budget. It is still there and will be carried over. It is anticipated to add another \$40,000 to that for a total of \$140,000. The Chief stated that the mechanic got a quote on the job which was approximately \$124,000. If \$40,000 is put in that account, it should be more than enough to cover the rechasis with extra in case something else should happen to it. The Chief was comfortable with that figure. Mr. Neto recommended removing \$10,000 with the caveat that the stretcher stays in the amount left. This will decrease the capital by \$10,000. The Chief and the Committee agreed with the recommendation.

The next item was Facilities Maintenance Program, \$20,000. Mr. Neto explained over the last two years there has been an exorbitant amount of unexpected repairs and maintenance to all 3 facilities. As the budget is processed, there have been buckets for each firehouse on the average of \$20,000. Mr. Neto reported that they are over budget this year by a significant amount of money. What they are learning is that as the buildings get older there are more unexpected repairs that are required. Mr. Neto is recommending allocating \$20,000 from each of the firehouses for the unexpected events that may occur. It will not be used unless it is necessary or there is an event. Since there has not been a lot of money put into the infrastructure of the facilities, repairs are done after there is an event that requires repairing. It will be a safety net for the infrastructure of the three firehouses. The Committee agreed to leave that money where it is.

Chairman Rukowicz discussed the District phone system which is over 20 years old. This item was tabled at the last meeting. It was thought if there is money left over from the \$273,000 grant, that money will be used for the phone system. Door access security system was approved at yesterday's Executive Committee meeting. The Security audit was approved. The drone for \$6,000 was taken back because it is not needed right now. Replacement of the thirteen I-pads was approved. The 4 ambulance charts computers were also approved.

Chairman Rukowicz asked about the stretchers. He thought a new stretcher was purchased last year. The Chief noted that no new stretchers were purchased last year. There were some that were modified with updates. Mr. Alibrio noted that two stair chairs were purchased. One was purchased by the Trust Fund and the other was purchased by the District. The total was approximately \$4,000 - \$6,000. The Chief confirmed that stair chairs were purchased and not stretchers. One stretcher is approximately \$17,000. The Chairman thought there might be money in the Trust Fund. Currently there is almost \$83,000 in that fund that was confirmed by Mr. Alibrio. \$14,000 was taken out for turnout gear. The money in the fund was allocated for equipment, and this item fits the criteria. The recommendation from the Committee would be to move the purchase out of the Trust Fund, but it also needs to be approved by the full Board. Mr. Neto recommended the \$17,000 be taken out of that fund.

The next 3 items, bunker room door, window modification and duty crew beds, bunk room men's and women's facilities. This is a requirement by OSHA that must be done. It is a must do, but the stations were never built to house people 24/7. Now the crews have been split up between EMS and Fire to keep the separation during the pandemic because it is very tight in those rooms. The room being used now is kind of tight and was never designed to be a bedroom according to State code. The \$30,000 for all three items requested seemed reasonable to Chairman Rukowicz. These items are necessary as explained by the Chief, and both Commissioners Terry and Spotts agreed.

The next item was the Fire Marshal's pickup truck and cab. That was a 4 X 4, the price noted is the price of an F-150. After re-examining the item, Chief Terenzio thought that it could be knocked down a little to a smaller midsize pickup. The Chief may even look at something smaller like a 4 cylinder based on the amount of investigations that are done. The thought process for the vehicle was to be able to keep all the heavier equipment away from the passenger cab from contamination of fires. The Chief stated that the vehicle noted was what the Fire Marshal has requested, but the Chief has not really evaluated it. He put the number in the budget because that is what was quoted. The ancillary vehicles besides the equipment are starting to get in worse shape. The

second vehicle for the Fire Marshal's Office which the inspectors use is shot. It is a 2004 and needs extensive motor work, but it does not seem wise to do all that work to it. The Chief will be looking at government surplus vehicles possibly if it is something the Fire Department can use. Chairman Rukowicz would like the Chief to pursue the government surplus vehicles. He also mentioned Ford Escapes. He learned there are a lot of 2019's that are not moving. A state bid might be able to knock off about \$8,000.

The last item was the air compressor in the Court St. bay. Commissioner Colligan who works with this type of equipment at his full-time job, has advised that it is time for a replacement of the air compressor. It was noted this is not the compressor that fills the air bottles. That compressor when needing replacement, may be eligible for grant funds. The Chief did submit two grants in the last cycle. One was for \$600,000 for a new fire truck. He also applied for \$200,000 to upgrade the training facility. If they are fortunate to get that, they may be able to use some of that money to upgrade the air bottles. Commissioners Terry and Spotts agreed that the air compressor was necessary.

Mr. Neto noted that the Committee has reduced the budget by \$28,000 between Capital and Operating. The new number that the Committee will vote on to pass along to the full Board is \$4,918,751.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the General Fund budget at \$4,918,751.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 11:16 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Roger Rukowicz in cursive script.

Roger Rukowicz, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
6-17-20