

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS **Fire Operations Committee Meeting**

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

5:00 PM

Via Conference Call
West Street Firehouse
1 West Street
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Johnathon Hamlin (Chairman), Jason Hinnners, Robert Donohue and Allan Spotts. Also attending were Commissioners Charles Epstein, Lee Brow and David Colligan, Dispatch Supervisor Justin Lonergan and Executive Director Julius Neto.

Per Executive Order No. 7B, Governor Lamont has ordered and directed that in-person open meeting requirements be suspended. Therefore, the Fire Operations 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 5:11 PM, by Chairman Hamlin.
- II. Approval of Agenda. The Executive Director asked that one more item be added under New Business, which would be Item C. 2004 FMO Vehicle. A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted with the addition of Item C. under New Business as 2004 FMO Vehicle.
- III. Public Comment. The Executive Director reported that as of 5:00 PM, he had not received any public comments to report.
- IV. Communication Report. Commissioner Colligan asked the Executive Director to provide a report since he had been working with the Clerk of the Works. He added that the contractor started working, and Mr. Neto has been monitoring their progress. Mr. Neto reported that the civil work has started. A telephone pole has been installed at the Chemfeed station. They received both of them from down south. The one for the Nike site has been stored. They saved over \$1,000 by having one drop for two poles. The trenches are starting to get dug. All the other utilities are underground as well. The electrician is scheduled to be there tomorrow. All the permits have been obtained from the Town. Mr. Neto researched an ordinance that the District might be excluded from the permit process but that is not the case. He investigated the possibility of the District not needing permits because it is part of a municipality. He learned the only entity that is excluded is the Board of Education. He has asked that in the future when ordinances are to be reviewed, that the Town consider the

District to be an exception. The permits for all sites is approximately \$1,500. The Clerk of the Works has been in contact with Mr. Neto. He has been in quarantine but is back in CT and slowly coming out of quarantine. Mr. Neto also spoke with the developer of the Nike site last week. The developer is looking long term to put a tower in the back of the site. He is also interested in what the site will look like in terms of line of sight. Something that is appealing to the eye and not ugly. The site started to get cleared last week also.

- V. Reports of Chief Officers. Chief Terenzio began by giving a report on COVID-19. He reported there are no infections to report. With the active members, the supplies are holding. He has been in constant contact with the local Health Department and other area Chiefs to see how everyone is doing. Provisions are still in place related to distancing staff, monitoring, hand sanitizing and station sanitizing. They are contemplating relaxing some of the provisions after a meeting with staff tomorrow to coincide with the State regarding a phased operation. Training activity has increased with the onboarding of the new Assistant Chief. Assistant Chief Brade has been pretty active with the FMO in the absence of the Fire Marshal.

Chief Brade reported that the Fire Marshal's Office remains very busy. He does not have a timeframe for when the Fire Marshal may be coming back. There have been a lot of outdoor dining requests and a few tent requests. There is also a lot of construction going on in town. They did not do as many inspections due to COVID. They have focused on plan reviews that have been piling up. He is concerned with the amount of requests they will receive once businesses start opening up again.

- VI. Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response Capability. Chief Terenzio reported that they onboarded the last two SAFER grant hires. They have reached out to the federal government to find out when they will receive the funding. He was advised the funding would be coming within the next two weeks. The Chief noted he did interview one additional part-time scheduled staff to augment some of the deficiencies in staffing because they lost a part-time scheduled staff member who took a position at Sikorsky Fire Department and will be in training for a while. There are also four Meriden firefighters that are part-time members that have been told they cannot do any side work or be involved with anything else besides Meriden during the pandemic. Assistant Chief Brade and Lt. Hallden have been looking at the participation levels of inactive staff. Some equipment has been pulled from some of those individuals and redistributed to those that are active. The Chief reported that their response capability seems to be holding fast. They had a Task Force Activation and still had enough coverage for the Town. The Chairman asked about the CPAT requirement for the two SAFER hires. The Chief noted that both individuals are waiting for CPAT testing to be resumed. An MOA was signed between the Union and the District which allows them to be on board. Their employment is contingent upon their passing their CPAT test.

- VII. Old Business. The Chairman asked if the Chief could speak to the new engine on Ladder 3. Ladder 3 is back up on the front line. Everything is working well with the new motor. With thanks to the Mechanic and Executive Director they were able to get a significant reduction in the bill. The Chief also noted he had received a quote of \$124,000 to re-chassis the ambulance that had the recent lower motor work done approximately 1 ½ to 2 years ago. The Chief noted that the Executive Director has issued a budgetary directive to not spend any new money after July until it is determined how much revenue (taxes) is being collected before committing to any large capital expenditures. They are making plans to secure a chassis sooner rather than later. In the capital money that was approved, there was an item for the purchase of a new stretcher for the re-chassis. In accordance with the Executive Director's

request, this vendor will be able to defer invoicing for 90 days. The Chairman then asked about the status of the drone. The Executive Director reported that the drone has been grounded due to lack of funding. In the budget cycle there was \$6,000 for training, certification, etc. Based on the Executive Committee's decision there is no funding to let the drone fly. It is temporarily grounded. If the District can find \$6,000, next year it can be ungrounded. The drone itself was a donation but to make it legal and to have training requirements fully compliant with FAA, it requires a lot of money.

VIII. New Business

A. Fire Marshal Fire Inspector Plan. Chief Terenzio announced that the Fire Marshal is having some medical challenges right now. He has been hospitalized and transported by Cromwell Fire last night. He is facing some complications from his current ailment. Ass't Chief Brade has been inundated with work between the Fire Marshal's Office, his full-time job and assisting with the Chief's office. Some of those duties have been relieved with the hiring of the new Assistant Chief for Training. The current process of per diem inspectors is set up so that they are receiving 14 hours a month. The Chief would like to suggest identifying a part-time person who can give 14 hours per week to assist in the Fire Marshal's office. It is budgeted. He would like to move forward with posting that position for a part-time inspector for 14 hours per week. The Executive Director added that the Fire Marshal's Office is in dire need of hours to fulfill the objectives of the Fire Marshal's Office and meet community needs. Once the State opens up, the Fire Marshal's Office will be inundated with requests for inspections and permits. Currently there is no open position to post and then hire. The Executive Director suggested that there is an individual that the Chief has interviewed that may or may not be the long term solution, but suggested putting him on a per diem basis short term while going through the process of getting a position approved through the Commission and hiring through interviews, etc. The dire need is today, not a month from now. It typically takes 4 – 6 weeks from when the Commission approves a position to when the person gets hired.

The person being considered is Harold Holmes. He is a Fire Marshal in Granby and Assistant Fire Marshal in Westfield. He is a known entity and has good credentials. However, it should be understood there will still be a need to hire an inspector with a guaranteed amount of hours in the future. The per diem people are welcome to apply, but the District is looking for someone with all hands on deck. That is Plan A.

Another plan suggested is with the union representatives of the Fire Department. There are two Lieutenants that were trained 14 -16 months ago that are qualified to perform inspections. However, there needs to be an MOU in place with some form of compensation if those two individuals are identified as doing some of this work. The Chief and Mr. Neto agreed that there is a need to have a per diem while they work on Plan A or Plan B. The Fire Marshal's Office expense will be out of pocket, and it is not known how long that will be. The Chef added that he has had conversations with the Union President, and they have no problem doing the job. It did not cost anything to send them for their certifications. All they would be asking for is to be given compensation time to get their recertification. Mr. Neto suggested that Chairman Hamlin forward this to the Personnel Committee for their meeting next week since Commissioner Hamlin is Chairman of the Personnel Committee as well as Fire Operations. The President of the Union will prepare an MOU to be considered to address the per diem issue in the Fire Marshal's Office. The Chairman asked about the time period of the

MOU. Mr. Neto explained it would be contingent upon the District's need to fill the position part-time. There is a job description in place for a fire inspector. The President noted that any compensation or reimbursement will be paid at the individual's hourly rate, straight time not time and one-half or overtime.

- B. CFD Apparatus Replacement Committee. Chief Terenzio reported that when he was hired one of the first things he had done was identify the need to replace the Rescue. Some Commissioners were helpful in identifying the need to do so. They also modified the reserve rig that is running as Tack 4 currently. It showed that getting a pump on a rescue is a very efficient way of doing things. It addressed an immediate need to take off the road the 28 year old vehicle they were running as a rescue. Since that time it has been demonstrated that the need for a larger vehicle to carry everything that is needed is required. He focused his research on a rescue truck with a pump. A number of manufacturers are constructing exactly that. He would like the Fire Operations Committee to entertain forming a committee and look into the research of the proposals that the Chief has obtained from a number of different manufacturers using the HGAC process that Cromwell is a member of and user to identify the vehicle that they will ultimately secure. It is the Chief's recommendation for cost savings and an expedient way of obtaining a vehicle. The vehicle that is running is doing OK, but she is getting less and less reliable. There is \$250,000 that has been appropriated as a good down payment. He would like to entertain the option of a lease purchase. This way they can get something that is already built and near completion. There are approximately 5 vehicles that are in that state right now. Through the HGAC, there are a couple that are less than \$500,000 without equipment. A few are slightly over \$500,000. He would like to direct the committee that is formed to look into that and put the cart before the horse where equipment that the Department has currently is identified, and equipment they would want and make the equipment fit onto the vehicle as part of the decision in the selection process. There are some with 750 gallon tanks, 1,000 gallon tanks. It will be up to the committee to come up with a recommendation.

The Chief mentioned that he forwarded a memo to the Fire Operations Committee members outlining his suggestions for committee membership. The President pointed out to the Chairman that according to the By-Laws, Committee appointments are made through the District Operations Committee. The Executive Director asked about the timeline for this committee. Would they be providing recommendations for this fiscal year. The Chief replied that he would like to target this fiscal year. The Chief added that if the District were to go with the lease purchase option, they would not need to make their initial payment for a year. Commissioner Colligan was under the impression that the Committee that has been recommended by the Chief is to choose the equipment that is to go on board and make a recommendation to the Fire Operations Committee. From there a second committee would be formed to purchase or choose a vehicle. The Chief had not intended having a second committee. This new committee would be solely for a rescue/pumper vehicle. The Standing committee is for apparatus replacement in general.

The Chief recommends that this committee be solely for the identification of a vehicle that is currently on the line or built so that we can save significant dollars going through the HGAC, and identify one of the proposed vehicles. The Chief explained he is looking to buy a cost effective, ready to go work horse. They need to identify equipment they want to have on board, equipment that they have currently and what equipment would be needed. The Chief has submitted an AFG grant request for \$600,000. He wants to include since we may do a lease, by identifying equipment through the Committee and

purchasing it as a whole out of capital instead of using individual line items through the Fire Operations. The Chairman stated that the Fire Operations Committee could appoint a committee specifically for this apparatus since the By-Laws have not been changed.

The Chief's suggestion for committee members are: PTU Capt. Bellamo, Career Lt. Hallden, Mechanic Logan, PTS and retired New Haven Fire Dept. Capt. Chris Parker, the Executive Director, the Fire Chief and Commission members of the Committee's selection. Commissioner Hinnners suggested Commissioners Colligan, Brow and himself. Commissioner Spotts thought that the Commission members that know fire department equipment would be the best choices for the Committee. He would be in favor of those individuals that were mentioned.

President Brow read the current By-Laws that are in effect, Article 14, Item B. District Operations Committee, he quoted Item d. under that. Which states that the District Operations Committee is responsible for the appointment of all special committee memberships when needed, and shall appoint and with cause may remove the members and a chairman, and shall determine the duration of such committee's existence. He pointed out that further in the By-Laws document under Item F. Special Committees, it notes that the District Operations Committee is to staff and appoint members for standing and special committees. The President stated that a District Operations Committee will be scheduled as soon as possible so that it is not delayed any further. The President added that we need to follow the By-Laws the way they are currently written. Chairman Hamlin advised the Chief that the District Operations Committee will get back to him with their appointments.

- C. 2004 FMO Vehicle. Chief Terenzio reported that this FMO vehicle has developed more motor problems. The mechanic's assessment is that it is not worth putting the additional money into it. He is recommending that the District dispose of it. Perhaps put it up for auction. Strip it of all useful equipment and reallocate it to the training division to use as a permanent vehicle fire prop. The Chief did ask for a capital expenditure for this coming budget of \$26,000 to replace one of the FMO vehicles. He identified another outlet to utilize which is Enterprise Rental Car Wholesale. It is possible to get a two or three year old vehicle for considerably less. Then they would be able to replace it come time when money is available.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to release the 2004 FMO vehicle to the Fire Department training division for a vehicle fire training prop. Chief Terenzio will have the mechanic take the vehicle to the training area.

- IX. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Epstein asked about using the Fire Police again. He noticed that they have not been used much lately. He would like to see them come back as he believes their role is to protect the fire personnel on a scene. Commissioner Colligan reported that the Fire Police are being used. The Chief added that they have been on limited response if they are needed. They have been special requested. There was an issue at the beginning of the pandemic because they were not made aware of the processes that needed to be followed. They almost created an exposure so it became more of a hazard to the rest of the staff that needed to be quarantined. The pandemic has been a very large challenge for the Fire Department. The Fire Police almost had an exposure that had to be dealt with quickly. The fire police have not been needed right away for a single engine call or an EMS call. They are not needed to that degree so that an exposure that was almost created from a Stop & Shop call was stopped by the Chief. He

plans on discussing this issue tomorrow at a District meeting. We will have to come up with an alternate plan as to when the fire police will respond. It involves money when they respond because they receive an hour's pay when they respond. The Chief wants to get that under control. This needs to be discussed, and they will be reactivated at some point. Getting back to normalcy will require a phase in, and that will be part of it.

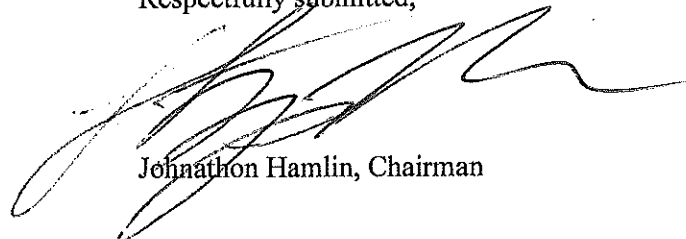
Commissioner Epstein had comments about the rechasis of the ambulance. As Chairman of the Water Operations Committee, he wanted everyone to be aware of some of the conversations that have been happening on the Water Division side. Commissioner Epstein stated that the Water Operations Committee is hopeful that when the ambulance is rechasised, the chasis is sent over to the Water Division so that a box could be mounted on it to use by the Water Division so that when there is a water main break, they would have one vehicle that had all the equipment on it that they needed. He stated that the estimated cost would be \$124,000. Mr. Neto confirmed that there is money put aside for the rechasis. This transaction would be a transfer of resources or reassignment of resources.

In regards to Harold Holmes, Commissioner Epstein wanted to go on record as saying he has known him for approximately 45 years. He worked for Commissioner Epstein for a number of years. He works with him now on the disaster medical team where he is a logistics officer. He highly recommended him and added he has impeccable credentials. He also knows the Town of Cromwell backwards and forwards because he was a mail carrier. Commissioner Colligan also knows Mr. Holmes and agreed with Commissioner Epstein regarding his knowledge of the Town and people of Cromwell. He suggested discussing him at the next meeting (Board mtg.) to bring him on board as soon as possible. Mr. Neto suggested adding this to the agenda of the Board meeting, making an appointment on a per diem basis until it is decided which way to go. Commissioner Colligan also explained the issue the fire police had with limited calls to reduce chance of exposure.

Assistant Chief Brade gave a brief overview of the operations in the Fire Marshal's office. There were five people assigned. Todd was the full time person, Jason was part time 21 hrs. a week but being split with the Chief's office. Nick Tommosone had announced his retirement a while ago but is still on the books to fill in or help out. The other two inspectors are DJ Zordan and Tom Duff. Tom Duff is only in the office twice a month, every other Friday. Mr. Zordan is not available at all during the week because of his full time job. Chief Brade stated that both individuals have stepped up a little since working from home. This has helped with plan reviews. Once they go back to work after working from home the FMO will not have the extra help. He is basically by himself in the office right now.

- X. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Hanners and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Johnathon Hamlin, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary, 6-10-20