

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS **Special Personnel Committee Meeting**

Thursday, February 6, 2020

5:30 PM

**1 West Street
Cromwell, CT**

Present: Commissioners Jason Hinnners (Vice Chairman), David Colligan and Mertie Terry attended. Chairman Johnathon Hamlin had an excused absence. Also attending were Commissioners Roger Rukowicz, Robert Donohue, Charles Epstein and Lee Brow (President); Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Michael Terenzio, Dispatcher Union President Andrew Cooke, Firefighter Frank Marrotta, Firefighter Brett Hallden, Dispatch Supervisor Justin Lonergan, Firefighter Peter Boin, Firefighter William McKnight and Dispatcher Brian Petrocelli.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. Vice Chairman Hinnners reminded everyone that there is a time limit of 3 minutes for each person to comment. Brian Petrocelli was acting in the capacity of Executive Board member of AFSCME 1303-475. He was here tonight to discuss matters that are on the agenda tonight. He stated that the union feels the District has taken a step back. One of the issues on the agenda tonight that they have spent several hours investigating is a matter of a negative nature which reflects badly on all employees of the District. All employees of the District are now worried about certain issues such as retaliatory acts brought against them. He was speaking for the Executive Board of the Union saying that they are going to be taking a step back. They feel this is an outrage. They have been getting feedback from other fire departments such as South Fire District, Middletown, Meriden and all the way out to Danbury. The fact that this incident is occurring is becoming a laughing matter among the fire service, and it is sad. He had a chief officer come up to him and ask him if Chris Brandt's job (City of Meriden) was in jeopardy over this matter. All the employees of the District had something to look forward to July 22. That was the start of the new service model (EFD), and everyone was working well together. Within the last two weeks the nickname around the State has become "glitter gate." It makes Cromwell a laughing stock. The Executive Board of the Union has had many discussions about this issue. How do the employees move forward. There is also a federal law suit pending over a legitimate termination of an employee.

He went on to say they have done the right thing for the District, for the taxpayers, the people and the employees. There are other employees that are negligent retention. They have used

words like Safety, NFPA and OSHA. The Union would be more than happy to put together a list of OSHA, NFPA and Safety violations which they have been trying to work with the District to overcome and adapt. There are larger issues at stake, and changes have been made. He stated that the former Executive Director did what he wanted and treated employees in bad ways. The Union wants employees here. They want people to feel comfortable. The Executive Board at their last meeting felt uncomfortable knowing that this meeting was taking place tonight about certain issues. He feels it is sad that this is being discussed. He does not know where to begin. He hopes that everyone thinks about what they are doing tonight, and the fire storm that will be created about this issue. He has never been nervous talking in front of this group, and he has never felt that way speaking to the District leadership or Commissioners. But tonight he was nervous and upset. He feels bad that this issue could result in a possible termination or suspension. This organization has made so much progress, and something like this will just set them back. He does not want to be a laughing stock in the Fire service. The Executive Board is proud to report to people that they work great with management. There are people that want to work here. He added that people that want to work dispatch or firefighting have to earn it. He thanked the Committee for listening to him and allowing an extra minute for him to speak.

IV. New Business

A. Navigator Conference 2020 – Discussion and Possible Decision on Attendance. The Executive Director began by stating last year Cromwell was represented at this conference by two of its dispatchers. He explained that this conference is out of state. There may be up to four members attending this year. The total cost for four is \$6,000. Mr. Neto had copies of the conference agenda which is quite extensive. He asked if there were any questions. He noted that the conference was well received. A great network was formed as well as a lot of good information that was brought back to Cromwell. Some of the things learned there have been implemented in the Communication Center. Mr. Neto thinks it would be beneficial to have four members attend if possible. Commissioner Colligan asked about cost. Mr. Lonergan noted that the cost is \$5,500 for four people. Commissioner Colligan noted that there is \$13,347 in that account. He rounded the conference amount up to \$6,000 in case there are any last minute costs. The National Academy has offered to sponsor or compensate and give comp passes to the Conference so Cromwell would get waived the registration fee which is close to \$2,000. This would lower the total cost to \$3,500.

Mr. Lonergan added that this is an amazing conference that the National Academy puts on every year. Last year Brian Petrocelli and Andy Cooke attended and can attest to all its benefits. There are seminars and conferences that teach the basics and fundamentals of emergency dispatching. With the recent launch of the EFD program, it is a highly educational time period to go through this program. The program is taking place in Florida this year. It includes non-stop seminars and vendors. Every year each dispatcher is required 36 hours of CDE's over a two year certification period. By attending this conference all of a person's CDE's are covered for their entire certification period. It is beneficial for dispatchers to attend this conference due to the CDE's and the education it provides. Mr. Lonergan had budgeted \$7,500 for this conference. They are underneath the budgeted line item even if they are not comped. Commissioner Colligan asked if there was anything "special" being promoted at this conference. No one was aware of what the featured topic or subject matter might be.

Commissioner Epstein stated that he is an ICA EMD instructor. He is affiliated with Priority Dispatch who sponsors the conference. It is the foremost conference in the world. People come from all over the world to attend this conference. The conference is broken down for the dispatcher, the dispatch supervisor, dispatch managers, managers and Law Enforcement, Fire or EMS dispatch. There is a whole host of vendors that attend with the latest equipment and operations. Commissioner Epstein believes that every year the District should send people to this conference. This is where people will maintain their proficiency and get the latest information. The program is constantly updated to coincide with changes that are happening in the field. Commissioner Terry is a big supporter of training.

A motion was made by Commissioner Terry, amended by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to allow four people to attend the Navigator conference at a cost of \$3,500 and not to exceed \$6,000. Once the cost savings is confirmed, the Dispatch Supervisor, Justin Lonergan, will be authorized to choose the four staff members to attend. Thursday, Mr. Lonergan will reach out to the National Academy to get the verification to have the registration fees waived.

- B. Discussion on Elimination of Paper Paychecks and Paystubs. The Executive Director explained that in an effort to be environmentally friendly as well as financially friendly, during the last couple of weeks there have been meetings with the Executive Director, the Fire Chief, Lisa Pandolfini, Mike Alibrio and Angel Alvarado to discuss some payroll issues with the payroll vendor, Prime Pay. During the meeting it was brought up that many of the pay stubs are not being picked up in the firehouse. It is a waste of resources to create them if they are not being used. Also there is financial information on the stubs that anyone could easily access off a stub that has been sitting around for weeks. No one is responsible for destroying the stubs at any point. They are now being recycled after a month. Prime Pay is able to send each person an electronic copy of their pay stub as well as provide their payroll history on line through their CromwellFD email. The issue at the meeting was whether or not there is an opportunity to eliminate pay stubs including the couple of individuals that are still issued pay checks. Prime Pay charges the District \$20.38 for the first check that has to be generated, and then a smaller fee for each additional check. Mr. Neto reported that most employees have direct deposit. For the few individuals that do not, there needs to be a discussion with them to modify their banking.

Mr. Neto is recommending going paperless to eliminate waste if employees are not using their pay stubs. It is a matter of having the ability to clean up the firehouse by eliminating some processes that are not being used. There are no mandates by the State to provide a paper check. It will come down to having a discussion with a couple of individuals and alerting the group of the change with the effective date. There will no longer be paper stubs generated. Employees will have the ability to go online to view and print their pay stubs. There will be some savings, but not a huge amount. Prime Pay does not provide an option to each individual to opt in or out of paper pay stubs. The whole organization goes paperless or not paperless. Mr. Neto further discussed the old payroll issues that were never rectified from the District's transfer a few years ago from the ADP payroll company to Prime Pay.

Mr. Neto is not very satisfied with Prime Pay's performance. He will be exploring other options for payroll vendors. Commissioner Colligan roughly calculated that the District would save \$120 per week by going paperless. It would be a savings of approximately

\$1,000 per year. Those figures would be achieved by eliminating the pay checks. Mr. Neto did not have an amount for savings with paperless pay stubs.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and approved 2 to 1 to move forward with the elimination of paper paychecks and pay stubs. Commissioner Terry voted nay. Mr. Neto stated he would speak to everyone that has a paper paycheck. Chief Terenzio will set up group meetings to disseminate the information once an effective date has been established. He will also work with Mr. Alvarado to draft some type of tutorial to help people access their pay stub information on line.

C. Discussion and Possible Decision Regarding the Investigation of a Career and a Part-time Firefighter. The Executive Director explained that Chief Terenzio did an investigation of an incident that occurred. The report has been submitted and copies given to Personnel Committee members. Since this is a personnel matter, the Chairman of the Personnel Committee was told he could propose to the individuals involved, to have this matter in open session or closed/executive session. Firefighter Frank Marrotta was an individual that was part of this investigation. Mr. Marrotta was given the opportunity to decide how to proceed. Mr. Marrotta requested that the session be in Executive Session.

V. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Terry wanted to make a part of the record that she had two instances at her house within the last week or so that involved assistance from members of the Fire Department. She could not begin to explain how grateful she is to be able to rely on the Fire Department during her times of need. The first instance was a CO detector. She called Commissioner Donohue who had a crew come over within minutes. They took the detector, and reassured her that everything was fine. She was so grateful to all that helped her that day. Her second occurrence was a blood pressure issue which caused her arm to go numb. She called 911 and within minutes a crew was at her house. They were fantastic. From that point, she was transported to Hartford Hospital in very good hands. She wanted these minutes to reflect her gratitude to the members of the Fire Department. Both instances made her realize how lucky Cromwell residents are to have this Fire Department in their community. She was so grateful for everything the Fire Department has done for her. Her written letter was added to the minutes for the record.

Commissioner Epstein noted that there is an item on the agenda that some of the Commissioners are not familiar with. When the Committee is done with deliberations on this item, it will come before the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Epstein requested that the Commissioners be briefed or be given more information prior to this coming before the Board at a Commissioners'.

VI. Public Comment. Andrew Cooke, President of the Dispatchers' Union, thanked the Committee and the Commission as a whole for supporting the attendance for the Navigator Conference. Last year he and Mr. Petrocelli attended. It was a great experience that helped them implement the EFD program in July. There will be a lot more training going forward to improve the process. It can help reduce some of the responses of the Fire Department, or to make the responses more effective. He appreciates the support the Commissioners have given because it really did help improve the communications center.

Mr. Petrocelli as the Union Secretary added that he concurs with the President's comments. They did bring back several things to Cromwell from the conference. It has changed the response process along with the operation of the Chief and the Commission. They are

producing an effective response getting the needed resources when they are needed. They have utilized their new knowledge to the "nth" degree. They were asked if they were given information that could be brought back like "train the trainers." They also have quality assurance in the center. A lot of the information is not so much train the trainer as it is highlighting a lot of things that are distributed through email with explanations of why things are done the way they are done. There are professionals (doctors, nurses, paramedics, etc.) explaining why things are done the way they are done. Information is constantly changing, and updates are given before they are sent out into the field. Updates are done throughout the year. Every protocol that is changed is tested in the field for a period of time before it is changed throughout the country or the world. They are able to adapt and change some of the responses due to the training they received. They are able to utilize their responses to the best of their ability.

- VII. Executive Session. A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to enter into Executive Session at 6:14 PM, inviting Executive Director Neto, Fire Chief Terenzio, Lt. William McKnight, Firefighter Frank Marotta and Firefighter Peter Boin.

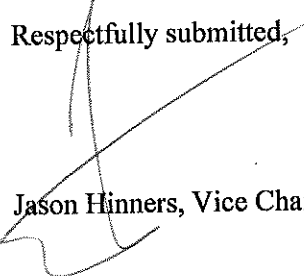
A motion was made by Commissioner Brow, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to adjourn Executive Session at 9:00 PM.

A motion was made by Commissioner Terry, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to implement the agreed action plan for Part-time Firefighter Boin as discussed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Brow and unanimously approved to suspend Full-time Firefighter Marotta for two weeks, unpaid, with an extension of his probationary period of six months to be negotiated with the Firefighters' Union.

- VIII. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Terry, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,


Jason Hinner, Vice Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
2-20-20