

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Fire and Water Divisions

Tuesday, August 17, 2021

6:00 PM

Coles Road Firehouse

105 Coles Road

Cromwell, CT

The Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District held their monthly Board of Commissioners meeting on Tuesday, August 17, 2021, at 6:00 PM, at the Coles Road Firehouse, 105 Coles Road, Cromwell, CT to discuss and act upon Fire and Water Division business.

Commissioners Lee Brow (President), Jason Hinnners, Allan Spotts, Charles Epstein, Robert Donohue, David Colligan and Robert McIntyre attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade, Communication Manager Justin Lonergan, Dispatcher and Union Representative Brian Petrocelli, Firefighter and Union Representative Lt. Brett Hallden and Firefighter Barry Wolmetz. Commissioners Mertie Terry and Roger Rukowicz were absent.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM, by President Brow. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Brow. A moment of silence was led by President Brow for the fallen firefighter Colin McFadden.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted with the following addition under Item XII. Executive Session. The addition is CHRO Update.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lt. Hallden addressed the group. He stated that the Executive Board of Local 4662 wanted to say a few words. From the Special Personnel Committee meeting of June 28, 2021, the Executive Director said that it was a concern of his and some of the Commissioners if the Assistant Chiefs are part of the Union. There needs to be some separation between management and labor. The Chief agrees with the Executive Director that this cannot be a union position. If Chief Brade is not available there is no one that can do discipline or write SOP's. All the Fire Departments the Chief has worked in, the Assistant Chief was never in a union. The President was also adamantly

opposed to any Assistant Chief position being a union position. It is a management position that is responsible for disciplinary actions in the absence of the Chief.

In 2016 when the Dispatch Center lost its Communication Manager, it was Dispatcher Cooke and Petrocelli who were tasked with managing the day-to-day operations at the Dispatch Center until a permanent replacement could be found. They did a good job, but Lt. Hallden thought it was ironic that they were members of a union yet it was OK for the union officers to run their entire division. The Executive Board was on the record as confirming they did a great job with sometimes a not so good set of circumstances, and the Communication Center was much better off having them there, than not having them. The Firefighters Union finds it ironic that the Commission allowed union officials to run the Dispatcher Center a few years ago, yet a few weeks ago they were so adamant about the role of the third in line Assistant Chief being so off limits to union membership. Lt. Hallden wanted to know the difference.

The Director, the Chief and the Commissioners were dead set that a union member cannot be in an Assistant Chief role and yet they would be voting on that tonight. The Dispatchers are a different union than the firefighters, but the dispatchers are just as much part of the operational plan and effectiveness of this entire organization as the firefighters. The individual in question is not only a member but also an officer of that union. He quoted Lee Iococca as far as what makes a good leader. The individual in question has all those qualities. As a union, they support this person's presence in the role of Acting Assistant Chief of Training, but as a union they struggle with trying to understand the manners and methods of how they got there. Going forward, as a Union they requested many times through the previous Executive Director that there needs to be a standard set of hiring practices Districtwide that are the same. They should be fair, objective and without any favor.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
JULY 20, 2021

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnars, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and approved 6 to 0 to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of July 20, 2021, as submitted. Commissioner Spotts abstained.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

There were no communications or appeals to report.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's report for July had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Neto gave a few highlights.

The Communication Project is slowly coming to an end. The Nike site is fully active. They are anticipating wrapping up the project and closing it out within the next month or two. The next milestone is next week. They have reserved 3 days for testing the full system at 160 locations within the Town. They are going to get Staff 1 with equipment that Norcom or Motorola will install to drive around with a driver that is a chief officer or an officer, and Justin Lonergan will be staffing the Command point and communications. There will be 7 points to be rated on. The testing component is part of the contract with Norcom.

The other highlight is that the Executive Director is working diligently with Joe Palmieri and their consultant from Environmental Partners. They had a meeting with Berlin for their pre-engineering study for the interconnection. The purpose of the study is to determine the feasibility of Cromwell connecting to their neighbors to the north, south and west. They are counting on the interconnection to be their backup and will be used for future projects such as taking the tank offline for inspection by the State. The Fire Chief and Fire Marshal have been meeting with Town officials. Their last meeting was with the Superintendent of schools. They are trying to introduce the two new leaders of the Fire Department.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's Report for July as submitted.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for July had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Alibrio was not able to dial into the meeting. The Executive Director gave an overview of the report. He noted that this report reflects the first month of the fiscal year. Closing out the year financially looks promising. Last year was a very tough year, with the Board making some very tough choices.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for July as submitted.

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for July had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Chief had nothing to add to his report. He expanded on his report. Last month the Department had approximately 231 calls overall. There were about 5 turnovers. The reason for the turnovers were that they were receiving multiple calls at once. The Chief expressed how proud he is of all the firefighters that work for him as well as the FMO. They have all been doing above and beyond. The FMO has been keeping up with all the inspections that are required for the year. They are three quarters of the way completed with inspections of the schools with their annual inspections. They are also working with the firefighters on the preplanning of all the buildings. The Chief reported the Department is doing well. They are in the process of hiring two individuals and possibly getting a volunteer to be a part of the Department. The Chief has come out with a couple of SOP's and protocols to address COVID. The Chief was available to answer any questions.

The Chief added that they have been meeting with local politicians. That has been very positive. They have started to do some community relations. They had a meeting with Vinal Technical School. The Fire Department will be playing a big role with their students. They will be working with the seniors on EMT training and a basic introduction to fire service. They will be eligible to do ride-alongs. The Fire Department is also in the process of donating some of their expired gear to the school. The school is looking at possibly some of Cromwell's members teaching classes.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for July as submitted.

- D. Water Operations Report. The Operations Report for July had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri was on vacation, but the Executive Director filled in if the Commissioners had any questions or concerns about Mr. Palmieri's report. The President asked about any ongoing

projects. There have been a couple of water service leaks. Mr. Neto explained how they were corrected. There was also an issue with water pressure at the Nike site. The FMO contacted the Water Operations Manager and the Executive Director. They arrived on scene and the FMO did some testing. Everything worked the way it needed to. They believe the problem originated because of human failure in opening up the valves. Mr. Neto suggested that the Board recognize the property owner of the Nike site when the project has been completed. He has gone above and beyond in terms of cooperation and accommodating the District's needs. He has also donated a flag for the flagpole.

Commissioner Donohue reported that the Mayor's Office received some complaints about water bills being elevated. Mr. Neto addressed the issue. He received the same call from the Mayor's Office. He explained that the water reads for the July bills had 3 additional weeks of consumption added to the water reads. The Water staff simply read meters for a longer period of time this quarter. The water rates were not increased. The taxpayers had voted to have the water rate increase go into effect halfway through the fiscal year. That means rates will increase in January 2022. It was noted that water consumption tends to be higher during the spring and summer months. The Executive Director explained all these facts to the Mayor. He requested that the Mayor forward any phone calls regarding water bills to the Water District Offices.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Water Operations Report for July as submitted.

- E. Communication Center Report. The Communication Center Report for June and July had been previously distributed and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Two reports had been submitted because Mr. Lonergan was on vacation last month. Mr. Lonergan added that there is a lot of ongoing work. He is working closely with the Chief's office on crosschecking policies and procedures. They have been interviewing and onboarding some new dispatchers to fill current openings. One of the other projects is the radio project which is coming to a conclusion. They are hoping that the testing procedure goes smoothly. Mr. Lonergan thanked everyone for their confidence in him by making his position a full-time manager position.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Communication Center Report for June and July as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations Committee. Meetings were held on June 17, 2021, and June 28, 2021. Copies of minutes are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Donohue had a concern about the June 28, 2021, meeting minutes because the meeting was called to order at 5:16 PM, yet the time of the meeting was noted on page 1 as 5:30 PM. The Recording Secretary will research the discrepancy.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the District Operations Committee meeting minutes of June 17, 2021.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to table the District Operations Committee meeting minutes of June 28, 2021, until clarification is made regarding the meeting time.

- B. Executive Committee. Meetings were held on April 19, 2021 and April 28, 2021. Minutes had been previously distributed for review.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Committee meeting minutes from April 19, 2021, and April 28, 2021, as submitted.

- C. Fire Operations Committee. Meetings were held on June 16, 2021, and July 19, 2021. Minutes had been previously distributed for review.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of June 16, 2021, and July 19, 2021.

- D. Pension Committee. The June 16 meeting was canceled. The next meeting will be the regular quarterly meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 15, 2021.

- E. Personnel Committee. Special meetings were held on June 28, 2021, and July 20, 2021. Minutes had been previously distributed for review. The minutes from the regular meeting on August 10, 2021, were not available.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Special Personnel Committee meeting minutes of June 28, 2021, and July 20, 2021, as submitted.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to table the Regular Personnel Committee Meeting minutes from August 10, 2021.

- F. Water Operations Committee. A meeting was held on August 10, 2021. Minutes were not available. A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to table the Water Operations Committee meeting minutes for August 10, 2021.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no Board Appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. Ms. Donohue was absent.

- B. Reports of the Special Committees

1. Public Safety Tower Committee. There was no meeting.
2. Health & Safety/Building Committee. A meeting was held on August 5, 2021. Minutes were not available for review.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to table the Health & Safety/Building Committee meeting minutes of August 5, 2021.

3. By-Laws Committee. Commissioner Epstein reported there was no meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for October 12, 2021, at 6:30 PM. He plans to have a workshop in September is discuss some of the issues.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Commissioners' Comments. There were no Commissioners' comments to report.

B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustment to report.

C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors

1. New England Turf Management. The Executive Director asked the Board to acknowledge New England Turf Management, License Number-B2785, to be contracted to do an assessment of the District's lawns. This group also services the Cromwell Board of Education. They have been vetted through the State bid system. They met with the Executive Director and Russ Johnson at Court St. They received good reviews from the Board of Education. They can provide a special deal when they are in Town servicing the Board of Education. The pricing is appropriate.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to approve New England Turf Management as an approved vendor for the Cromwell Fire District.

2. Attorneys for Water Department Foreclosure Procedure. The Executive Director explained that last month they spent some time on the Water Department's plan to collect from people in Town that have not paid their water bills. They have collected over \$232,000. They have only turned off one service to a house in the process. They have been able to work with other residents to figure out payment arrangements. There are rental properties in town that are non-compliant. By law those services cannot be arbitrarily turned off because renters cannot have their service shut off because a landlord is not paying their water bill. There are some CT Statutes that will allow the Water Department to collect. That would be through a foreclosure process. That is the next step in the collection process.

There are three attorneys the District has been looking at that the Executive Director would like to have on the record so they can work with them if needed. These attorneys perform legal functions for collection with other towns and municipalities. The District would move any legal fees onto the water customer. The attorneys are: Att'y Albert Proulx from New Britain, Att'y Lynn Ustach from New Britain and Att'y Seth Feigenbaum. The was another person from Riccio Law, LLC, that was highly recommended.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to authorize the three attorneys recommended by the Executive Director to assist the District with Water collections.

- D. Update on New Vendor for EMS Billing. Chief Balletto reported that currently the Department has Quick Meds for EMS billing. The Chief was asked when he came on board to help the Department find a new vendor. Right now they have narrowed it down to two vendors. One is Shared Response from Killingworth, CT; and Certified Ambulance Group out of Rocky Hill, CT. Both companies are very good, and gave a good presentation to the Chief, Ass't Chief Brade, the Executive Director and the EMS coordinator. They would like to present the two vendors to the Board of Commissioners for a presentation for them. Quick Meds has a fee of 9 ½ % as a collection fee. The two vendors under consideration have a lower fee structure. Those fees are under negotiation between 5% and 7%. The services provided by both new companies are much more than what was provided by Quick Meds.

There was discussion regarding having a presentation by the vendors and what should be included in the presentation. It was suggested to have a Special Board meeting to specifically have a presentation by the two EMS billing vendors. A date was discussed of August 31, 2021, at 5:30 PM, at the Coles Road Firehouse.

- E. Discussion and Approval of Brian Petrucelli as Temporary Acting Assistant Fire Chief of Training. The President thought that this had been approved by the Personnel Committee and was forwarded to the full Board of Commissioners for approval. The Executive Director gave a brief history of Mr. Petrucelli and his position with the Fire District in the Communication Center. All staff and union staff have been consulted to make this transition happen. This position is temporary and will allow the District to find a permanent replacement while Mr. Petrucelli is filling the position temporarily. It is a part-time position of approximately 25 hrs. per week. The Executive Director has stated on record that management and labor need to be separate. Any Fire Department Senior team should not be part of the union. Mr. Petrucelli is a member of the union in the Communication Center. He is also an officer in that union. The agreement Mr. Petrucelli has made with management is that he will be taking a leave of absence from his role in the Communication Center. He will be assigned to the Chief's office for up to 120 days while management seeks a permanent position. He would not be engaged in any union business during that time, but will still be allowed to pay union dues. Any disciplinary responsibilities in this role will not be handled by Mr. Petrucelli, but rather will be handled by the other chiefs and the Personnel Committee. Mr. Petrucelli is very qualified to be in this role. This has also been vetted through the District's attorney.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and approved 6 to 0 to approve Brian Petrucelli as the temporary Acting Assistant Fire Chief of Training. Commissioner Colligan abstained.

- F. Discussion and Approval of Robert Ferone and Corey Mosdale as Part-Time Dispatchers. *A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the recommendation of the Personnel Committee to hire Robert Ferone and Corey Mosdale as part-time Dispatchers.*

- G. Application for Relief of Water Bill

1. Brian Grogan. The Executive Director explained that this issue was discussed at the Water Operations Committee meeting. The Committee is requesting that the District reach out to Mr. Grogan to come up with a payment plan. He is looking for financial relief. He has outstanding water bills. The bills tend to increase in the warmer months, and Mr. Grogan has an irrigation system. He asked the Board what their opinion is on

this situation. The documentation on Mr. Grogan's case had been distributed at the July Board of Commissioners' meeting. The material was not available for this meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to table this item until the Commissioners received documentation on Mr. Grogan's case.

2. Holly Beebe. This property is at 64 Pasco Hill Road. The last payment for this property was in 2012. Based on the person's financial information there is an income of \$1,386 income. The expense is \$1,288. There is a \$98 positive cash flow. Commissioner Colligan suggested negotiating a payment plan with the water customer.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to authorize the Water Department to negotiate a payment plan with Ms. Beebe.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Executive Director took this opportunity to introduce Mr. Don Smith from Covenant Village. Mr. Smith will be the District's liaison to that community. He met with the Executive Director a couple of weeks ago. Mr. Smith lived in Marlborough for many years. He was a volunteer in the Marlborough Fire Department and EMS. He and his wife served as volunteers. He encouraged Mr. Smith to provide feedback at the meetings.

Mr. Jim Rude, Highridge Road, followed up on a couple things from last month. The District is another month into the quarterly billing. He wanted to know if there were plans to utilize the quarterly billing. The President reported that this is in process. The Committee chair was not present, but he identified Commissioner Donohue and Jolie Hanners as members of the Committee. They are also working on establishing accounts on Twitter and Instagram. Mr. Rude was still looking for the Annual District Budget meeting minutes of June 7, 2021, on the District's web page. He also suggested reducing the wording in the minutes to reduce the size of them and meet the draft meeting minutes posting schedule.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

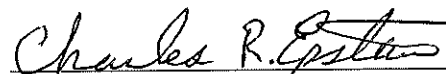
A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to adjourn the regular meeting and enter into Executive Session at 7:40 PM after a 5 minute break.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hanners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to adjourn Executive Session at 8:25 PM. No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 PM.

Nancy Deegan, Recording Secretary


Charles R. Epstein, Secretary