

# 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, October 19, 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, October 19, 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 Hinners, Charles Epstein, David Colligan, Robert Donohue and Chip Darius attended. Commissioners Mertie Terry, Roger Rukowicz and Robert McIntyre were absent. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade, Finance administrator Michael Alibrio, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan and Firefighter Lt. William McKnight.

### 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.

The President announced that they had added a third flag to the Conference room. There are new Union standards issued at all three fire stations with this flag to be flown under those standards. It is in recognition of fallen firefighters. The President continues to support the flag with the thin blue line, but as a Fire Department he feels the Department should support their own. They have a fallen fire fighter within their own ranks that passed away last year. The President requested the Executive Director to direct the appropriate staff to have the flag flying sometime next week at all three firehouses.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted with the following addition: under New Business, Item G. New Committee Assignments and Item H. Discussion on Town Burn Official Role.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2021

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of September 21, 2021, as presented.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF  
AUGUST 31, 2021

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of August 31, 2021, as presented.

APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL DISTRICT MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 4, 2021  
ELECTION & ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Election & Organizational Meeting minutes of October 4, 2021, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

President Brow read a letter from the CT State Firefighters Assoc. Memorial Foundation regarding their 2021 fundraiser. They are looking for donations to help complete the restoration project and the 9/11 Memorial at the CT Fire Academy. The Memorial dinner event will take place at the Aqua Turf Club on Monday, November 15, 2021. The notice will be posted at the firehouses so that those interested will have the information.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's report for September had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Attached to the Executive Director's report was an Executive Summary from Environmental Partners. The District has received and submitted to the State of CT their environmental study which is required by the Health Department every 10 years. The last one done was 2015. The Board had appropriated sufficient funding last year for this study through the budget cycle. The report itself is very lengthy. A copy is available in the office to read. It will be distributed and more thoroughly reviewed by the Water Operations Committee at their next meeting. This could be considered the strategic plan for the Water Department. It looks at future water consumption and is very detailed.

Mr. Neto made a point to note as part of his report that a new Commissioner has joined the Board after the elections, Chip Darius. The other item Mr. Neto discussed was the first edition of the Quarterly Newsletter. The District has not received any feedback, but would appreciate some feedback from the Commissioners. The office staff is interested to know what worked, what didn't work and future suggestions or recommendations. Mr. Neto will pass along any feedback to the Publicity Committee.

Now that the first edition of the newsletter has been published, it is time to work on the next edition. Commissioner Colligan suggested having the Commissioners noted on the

newsletter so that people can know who is on the Board of Commissioners. The President noted that there is a plan to have a "Meet the Commissioners" section. The cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, even though it is enclosed with the water bills, is \$637 which included the price of printing, folding and mailing (8 ½ X 11, double sided). The President liked the idea of the Meet the Commissioners, and thought it would be best to have all Commissioners listed together. The Executive Director explained the format which should be kept consistent with each publication.

As time goes on there can be information about the various projects the Fire District is involved with, Fire and Water. The Fire Department website and Facebook is where a lot of information can be published because it has a larger audience and information can be updated quickly. Many articles in the newsletter refer to the Fire District website for more information. Commissioner Epstein asked for more information on pricing for the next Publicity Committee meeting. The Executive Director noted that the expense from the first newsletter was charged to the Commissioners' account since it had not been a budgeted item.

The Executive Director asked everyone to evaluate what is in their packet for this meeting and decide what is needed or not needed. Meeting packets take a lot of resources. If there can be some elimination of paperwork, that would be helpful. Commissioner Hinners requested that he receive his packets electronically. Administration would like to know if there are Commissioners that prefer to receive their packets electronically to cut down on paper and other resources to print them. Commissioner Darius also would be in favor of receiving his packets. The Executive Director will survey the Commissioners to see who would like to receive electronic packets. Commissioner Colligan thought that some of the older Commissioners would prefer to at least have the financials in printed form. Most Commissioners like to refer to the hard copy at a meeting. Commissioners were asked to let their thoughts known to Mr. Neto when he sends out his email.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's Report for September as submitted.***

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for September had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Alibrio reported that the District is 57% on budget for tax collections. He pointed out that there are accounts that are not where they should be at this point in the budget cycle. Repairs and Maintenance have had no end in sight with repairs. Commissioner Epstein asked about collections on EMS billing. Quick Meds has had issues with their billing software. There was a presentation to the Commissioners a couple of weeks ago on other EMS billing companies. This is on the agenda for decision on tonight's agenda.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for September as submitted.

- C. Chief's Report. The Chief's Report for September had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Chief had no changes to his report that was submitted. It has been a busy month. He noted that they have been doing a lot of things related to training. They are trying to update their training files. Ass't Chief Brade, Acting Ass't Chief Petrucelli and Meghan Petrucelli have been a great resource to the Chief assisting him with updates.

President Brow asked if there was anything to report from the Marshal's office. Chief Balletto stated that the Marshal's office is busy with fire prevention and inspections are high. Colin Whalen has been working out well filling in for the Marshal's office. They have been working on Mutual Aid agreements with other Fire Marshal offices around Cromwell. They will be discussed further under New Business on this agenda. The Chief also informed everyone that Red Lion has been sold. The Fire Department will assist the Police Department in doing a sweep of that building. They will have respiratory protection in order to go in. It will be a 2 day process and will be boarded up at the same time. The plan is to board it up for now. There will be a demolition time of 6 to 9 months. It will be rebuilt into a hotel/conference center with new owners.

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

- D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for September had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri was unable to attend this meeting. Mr. Neto was available to answer any questions. Mr. Neto explained the pre-engineering study, federal funding and locations for pump houses.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the Operations Report for September as submitted.***

- E. Communication Center Report. The Communication Center report for September had been previously submitted and reviewed. Mr. Lonergan noted that he added a Quality Assurance section to his report under Statistics on Page 1. He noted there were over 8,600 separate audio radio transmissions within September. He reported that regarding the radio project, they are almost 90% complete with obtaining MOU's to satisfy Norcom on programming and the State. This should be closing out over the next couple of weeks. It will need to go to the State of approval. New chairs were received in the Dispatch Center. The Knox box project has been going on for a while. Those boxes are on order. Mr. Lonergan has been meeting with the Police Department working on better interoperability. They are also working with the Police Department and the Town on Citizens Alert. That partnership is ongoing, and they are hoping to be completed by the end of the year so that they can start marketing Citizen's Alert back in action between Emergency Management, the Police Department and Fire District in Cromwell. They are working with the Fire Marshal's office on their permits module. They have also been updating policies and procedures as they relate to the Fire Department.

Commissioner Colligan advised that as Chair of the Communications Committee, he authorized Justin to go ahead and get information on the cost of having Dispatch able to communicate with the fire ground. This was brought up as a safety issue at one of the Health & Safety/Building Committee meetings. Commissioner Darius asked if Pro QA is able to generate statistical reports. Mr. Lonergan responded that they do. He submits reports to Middlesex Hospital, Med. Control monthly. They oversee the QA process in this region. The Communication Center works with the hospital to generate those reports. Every month they are at or above the ACE standard which is the accreditation standard for the national academy of medical dispatching. The Communications Center QA's 50% of their medical calls.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Communication Center Report for September as presented.*

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations. The President reported that a meeting was held on October 15, 2021. Minutes had been distributed to the Commissioners at the meeting. Committee assignments were reviewed, and some changes were made. Since a new Commissioner was elected, that person was added into some of the committees filling the vacancy left by a former Commissioner. There were also some minor changes to some of the chairman and vice chairman assignments on a few committees.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the District Operations Committee meeting minutes from October 15, 2021, as presented.*

- B. Executive Committee. There was no meeting.

- C. Fire Operations Committee. A meeting was held on September 20, 2021. Minutes were previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Colligan reported that a meeting was held last night, Oct. 18, 2021. Committee members reported on issues and concerns they are having. One of the major concerns is personnel and staffing. The Chief's Office was tasked to present a report to the Committee at their next meeting regarding personnel issues. At that point Commissioner Colligan will recommend forwarding their findings to the full Board of Commissioners for review. He is trying to move the process along so that these issues can be addressed immediately.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of September 20, 2021, as submitted.*

1. Communications Committee. Commissioner Colligan noted that a meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 4, 2021. One of the purposes for the meeting is to make the final payment to Motorola. The other purpose would be to discuss the cost of correcting the fire ground situation. There will also be further discussion about the new radio system and future plans with it.
2. Apparatus Committee. Meetings were held on September 1, 2021, and September 14, 2021. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioners Hinnners did not have a lot to add that was not already in the minutes. The Committee has identified their needs for potential vehicles, and the Committee is in the process of trying to move forward with that. The Chief made arrangements to have a demo brought in to view, and the Chief felt that it met his and the Department's needs. They are also attempting to move forward with an ambulance and an additional engine to follow. Commissioner Darius got clarification on the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes for September 20 with the Chief explaining what he actually purchased as noted in the minutes. It should read one 5 gas meter and 3 four gas meters.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and 5 to 0 approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of September 20, 2021, as presented. Commissioner Colligan abstained.*

*A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Apparatus Committee meeting minutes of September 1, 2021, and September 14, 2021, as submitted.*

- D. Pension Committee. A meeting was held on September 15, 2021. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Epstein reported that Mr. Dan Jock from the Pension company came to the meeting to explain the various options to cash out. Mr. Jock was then invited to a Commissioner meeting to explain the pension options to everyone. Mr. Jock had agreed to draft a resolution explaining the pension options for the Board to vote on. Those documents have not yet been received.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Pension Committee meeting minutes of September 15, 2021, as submitted.*

- E. Personnel Committee. A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to table Personnel Committee meeting minutes until month.

- F. Water Operations. There was no meeting.

#### BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

#### CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. Commissioner Donohue had a message from Mrs. Donohue conveying her congratulations to the three Commissioners that were elected. She wishes the new Board of Commissioners the best of luck in the coming year.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
1. Public Safety Tower Committee. There was no meeting.
  2. Health & Safety/Building Committee. There was no meeting.
  3. Bylaws Committee. Commissioner Epstein reported that there is a meeting coming up. The Committee is reviewing some of the suggestions that were made. The next meeting is scheduled for Nov. 4, 2021.
  4. Publicity Committee. The Executive Director distributed copies of a newsletter that was distributed with the October Water bills. It is the first publication, and the Committee is anxious for feedback about it.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. President Brow acknowledged the Fire Dept. personnel that attended the meeting. Commissioner Darius commended the Chief for receiving grant money for the Department and hopes to see more of that.

Mr. Neto commented that the Publicity Committee is looking into using "Linked In" as a tool to get information out to the public. They are working with the website and also using FaceBook as a tool. He added he has been working with Mike Alibrio, Joe Palmieri and the Water Dept. to implement online payments of water bills that is more customer friendly for water customers to access their account as well as make payments. They are in the process of getting a price from the vendor. It was noted that the cost will NOT impact the budget. This will be implemented around the same time as the new design of the webpage. With the new design, the Fire District will own its internet accounts.

Commissioner Colligan reminded everyone that the CT Fire Chief's Assoc. dinner and meeting is in Cromwell this year at Cafe Fiore's. All the Commissioners are members and invited to attend. The meal is \$30. He reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to come before the Board.
- D. Discussion and Possible Decision on Resolution for Town Meeting for Apparatus and Water Division Projects. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to table this item until the November Board meeting or call a Special Board of Commissioners' meeting to vote.
- E. Discussion and Possible Decision on New EMS Billing Company. The Executive Director explained that he and the Fire Chief were tasked with following up with the billing companies that gave presentations. They were asked to check with their current customers for feedback, which they did. They could not find anyone that was unhappy with the services they were provided by their billing company. They provided a handout which was a cost comparison of the two companies including the current vendor.

Mr. Neto was asked for his opinion. Mr. Neto felt that Shared Response was the better option. Shared Response would give an overall consistency of service. They claim to have a 92% collection rate. They have an advantage in terms of having access to good information from Middlesex Hospital. Chief Balletto was asked the same question. He commented that the only company he never got a call back from was the company we are using now. He had reached out to 3 companies to provide a presentation for the District. Quick Meds never responded to his phone calls. He received responses from Shared Response immediately. Since the presentations, the Chief has received multiple calls from Shared Response to follow up. He has not heard from anyone else. He feels the right decision on this is Shared Response. Ass't Chief Brade also concurred. The advantage with Shared Response is their relationship with Middlesex Hospital.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to have Shared Response as the Cromwell Fire District vendor for EMS billing.*

- F. Discussion and Possible Decision on Fire Marshal Mutual Aid Agreements. The Chief explained that the Fire Marshal's office is understaffed, and he was tasked with figuring out how to use its resources wisely. Multiple Fire Marshals are needed to be on call or do investigations. The Fire Marshal's office has been over-taxed especially with on call responsibilities. In the past Cromwell has had a mutual aid agreement with Portland. The Department has reached out to the surrounding towns, Westfield, Berlin, Portland and Rocky Hill to see if there is an interest. They had a meeting with those towns, who have all agreed to a mutual aid agreement. Draft copies of agreements with those four towns were distributed for review. The document was a template of what had been used in the past. The Chief was available to answer any questions. Commissioner Colligan stated that this was discussed at the Fire Operations Committee meeting last night. The Committee was in full agreement of the Mutual Aid agreements. Commissioner Darius pointed out a couple of typos to be corrected.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to finalize the four Mutual Aid agreements with the corrections discussed, and forwarded to President Brow for signature.*

- G. Committee Assignments. President Brow reported that revised Committee assignments have been made. Information had been distributed informed the Commissioners of their assignments. Any questions can be addressed by either the Executive Director or the President.
- H. Discussion on Town Burn Official Role. This was discussed at the Fire Operations Committee meeting, and it was suggested to forward the item to the Board of Commissioners meeting. The Executive Director noted that the Fire District does not have the authority to issue burn permits. It is a Town function. Recently there have been requests for open burning; i.e. bonfires. If permits are issued, the Fire Department does not always know about it. The Fire Marshal is responsible for evaluating and enforcing the situation as safe or unsafe. The Fire Department does not think it makes sense that Fire Marshal enforcement is not engaged. It was suggested that this be brought up at the Town Council level. The President thought this might be addressed at a meeting with the Mayor, Town Manager, Executive Director and President of the Board. The Executive Director suggested having the Fire Marshal and the Town Burn Official, Sal Nesci, to meet and discuss. The President recommended to the Fire Chief that he start the process of the Fire Marshal and Town Burn Official meeting to discuss and resolve this issue.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Hinnners announced that Jim Pandolfo passed away today. He had been a first responder for the Fire Department for many years.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to enter into Executive Session at 7:40 PM, inviting the Commissioners and the Executive Director to discuss the Executive Director's contract extension.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to adjourn Executive Session at 8:30 PM.

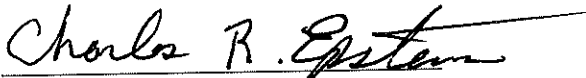


A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's contract with a 2 year extension.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 PM.

ATTEST:

  
Charles R. Epstein, Secretary

Nancy Deegan  
Recording Secretary