

Cromwell Fire District

1 West Street
Cromwell, CT 06416
Telephone 860-635-4420

FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

District Operations Committee

Wednesday, July 28, 2021

5:30 PM

West Street Firehouse

1 West Street
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Lee Brow (Chairman), Jason Hinnners and Charles Epstein. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto and Commissioners Robert Donohue and Mertie Terry.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:16 PM, by Chairman Brow.
- II. Approval of the Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Brow and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Discussion on Setting Expectations for the Publicity Committee. Chairman Brow stated that at the last meeting the Publicity Committee was formed with Commissioner Terry and Commissioner Donohue being the two Board members represented on the Committee. Ms. Jolie Hinnners was also appointed to this Committee. Ms. Hinnners did similar duties working on the Fire Department newsletter a few years ago.

Chairman Brow asked about the expectations for the Committee. Commissioner Terry had been vocal about getting Fire District information out to the public. The Chairman welcomed any ideas she might have for the Committee. He suggested setting goals and objectives at their first meeting based on public feedback after the Town meeting for the Budget vote. The townspeople are looking for a more official publication that perhaps could be included in the Water billing mailings.

Commissioner Terry said that one of the things she would like to do is meet with one of the gentlemen from the Rare Reminder or Cromwell Chronicle. The purpose of the meeting would be to explain who the Fire District is and what they are about and how to get the people in the community to recognize them and be able to use them as a resource to respond to any of their concerns. She felt that in doing so, it will open up a lot of doors. She added that meeting schedules and information should be available on the District's website.

She thinks more statistical data should be made available on the electronic signs. Rocky Hill and Wethersfield put out a monthly publication on their Facebook page including feel good information. There is also a way to have people sign up for their newsletter. The District would need someone like Angel to get the ball rolling on that type of a sign up situation.

Commissioner Terry also suggested that we advertise our volunteer status. If volunteers are needed, we need to let the public know. She would like to see more young people get involved. Commissioner Hinnners had a conversation with Assistant Chief Brade recently who noted that the Fire Department is working on this already. The Assistant Chief was not aware that this meeting was taking place today. Commissioner Hinnners suggested that Mr. Alvarado be brought into these conversations or meetings in the future. The Fire Department has started a Facebook page. There are other things that the Commission was not aware of that the Chief went into detail about. The Chief did not want the information to be duplicated, but it seems that the Fire Department would be putting out some of the same information that the District would want to be putting out.

The Executive Director noted that there is a plan out there to redo the website. This is going to be a long process and is cumbersome and not user friendly. \$4,000 was allocated through the budget cycle so the process could be started right after the budget was approved. The Fire Department has been charged through the Chief's office to gather data. There is a lot of data every month that can easily be put on the website or Facebook.

The history with the Fire Department's Facebook page is that it is not owned by the Fire District. It is owned by DJ Zordan. Over the last year and a half Mr. Neto has been negotiating with Mr. Zordan, however, no progress has been made. Mr. Neto announced that the District will no longer try to negotiate this issue. The District will have its own official Cromwell Fire Department Facebook page. The District will control the content and put everything on it that they think needs to be on the Fire Department page such as information that is pertinent on a monthly basis. President Brow asked if this was going to be the official Fire Department page or the official Fire District page. The Fire Department page already exists through DJ. They originally thought to put everything under the Fire District, however, someone looking for Fire Department information may not necessarily connect with the Fire District. From a Facebook perspective people are familiar with going to the Facebook page. They need to make it known that the Fire District now has the official page. The District does not do a good job promoting themselves. The District needs to actively participate in providing good factual information.

It was agreed that the District should have a Facebook page. Now that it has been established, protocols need to be set. Everything should go through the Chief's office that is Fire Department or Fire Marshal related information, and Joe Palmieri's office for Water Operation information. It will not be a once a month event. The Facebook page will become an ongoing work in progress with up to date information always accessible. The District needs to use caution in posting on social media pages. The staff need to understand the downside of posts. Negative information is bound to come forward from posts that are made. District staff need to understand there is going to be good feedback and bad feedback. A certain amount of tolerance is needed to accepting feedback good or bad. The Executive Director distributed copies of samples of different formats for

newsletters. Everyone agreed that with the world changing and all the ways people are able to get information, the District needs to adapt to the changing times.

The President summarized the important points of the discussion: they are looking for a quarterly information sheet to be put in the water bills. The Chairman of the Publicity Committee will meet with the Cromwell Chronicle or Rare Reminder to discuss what they can do in those publications. They discussed updating the filler in those publications by advertising for volunteers. They were looking for monthly posts for the Commission webpage. The Facebook page will be the official Cromwell Fire Department page. There could be links to that on the Commission page. Monthly posts will be made on the District boards. The volunteer drive should be publicized. A presence in the high school should also be looked at. The Committee also needs input from other members.

The President also revisited the membership of the Publicity Committee. He had appointed Commissioner Terry as Chair of the Committee, Commissioner Donohue was appointed Vice Chair and Jolie Hinnars was appointed as a non-commission member. He appointed the Executive Director as moderator, and President Brow who is ex-officio on everything. They will need input from the Fire Department, the Water Division through Joe Palmieri, the IT Department through Angel Alvarado who will be helping to fix things such as information that is erroneous. He would like the committee membership to include someone from the Fire Department, someone from the Water Department and IT.

Chief Balletto reported that his goal was to get the facebook page up and running on Monday, August 2, 2021. Regarding publicity to the community, the Chief has discussed this with the Executive Director. They will be utilizing the electronic billboards at West Street and Court Street. They will try to advertise especially the Board meetings one week before the meetings.

The Chief also has plans to get back into the school system. He plans on scheduling a meeting with the Superintendent of Schools and the Fire Marshal. The Fire Department needs to find out what the COVID rules are going to be and how they are going to approach that. The Chief added that he plans on going big when they are able to get back into the schools.

He will also be scheduling a meeting with Melissa Roming and Capt. Eric Roberts to establish a recruitment and retention program. Once the meeting is established, he is going to have a pizza party and invite everyone to participate in a workshop to work on a recruitment and retention program.

Regarding the issue with the Facebook page, Chief Balletto will be following what he did with Emergency Management in Norwich. He ran their Facebook page and posted every storm notification received from the State. They will also publicize when to change out smoke detectors. They will publicize everything they are doing in the community. However, everything needs to go through the Chief's office or the Executive Director's office for approval before it can be sent out for publication.

They have also decided to have NO COMMENTS on the Facebook page. If comments are started back and forth, the District will lose control of the page. It will be information only. He also noted that his monthly report and the Fire Marshal's Report will also go up on the Facebook page.

The President discussed adding a Fire Association member to the Committee under the Fire Department. He would like to have an Association member trained to do photography so that they will know what types of photographs can be publicized. A formal Fire Department photographer was discussed also.

It was also noted that whatever is posted on the District's Facebook page could also be on other sites such as Twitter, Instagram and other platforms. The District needs to decide which platforms they want to use. The Chief added that Justin Lonergan would be a good resource for the Committee.

Another source for information is Everbridge. The District needs to revisit that concept. The State uses Everbridge, but the Town does not use it as much. They do have an account. The Chief stated that the Fire District needs to look into whether or not Town Hall uses it. Justin, Chief, ED and former Captain had a discussion on how to maximize the opportunity to engage or disseminate information on the fire side. The Chief stated that at his former department, a solicitation was done and groups were asked if they wanted to join Everbridge. All emergency management issues are programmed into the system, and all subscribers are alerted. All Emergency Managers should be plugged into Everbridge. It is a great resource to get quick information as it is happening.

Commissioner Epstein arrived at 6:05 PM. President Brow gave a summary of what has been discussed thus far. The Committee will be planning to publish newsletters that will be included in the quarterly water bills. The Chairwoman will be meeting with the Cromwell Chronicle or Rare Reminder to see what they can publish. There is space in the newspapers called "fillers." They will look into updating the information for the filler space. There will be monthly posts on the Commission webpage. The Facebook page will become the official Cromwell Fire Department page because negotiations with the current owner of the Facebook page have been unsuccessful. There will be an official Cromwell Fire Department Facebook page. They will post such things as call information and other District information and interests on the electronic signs at West Street and Court Street. The Chief has a plan for the volunteer drive and presence at the high school. They would like to have more input from the members, and have decided to increase the membership at this meeting. Commissioner Epstein suggested having a PIO position. The President stated that will be discussed with the Chief along with the idea of a District photographer.

Chief Balletto reminded everyone that high school football will be starting soon. He wanted to get a banner that could be hung on a fence at the football field. He asked if anyone knew who he could speak with at the Town to try to do that. It was agreed that the Chief should start with the Town Manager. Another activity the Chief would like to begin again in the Spring is getting back into the elementary school and read books to the kids.

The Chief added that they are also working with the Town on emergency evacuation protocols.

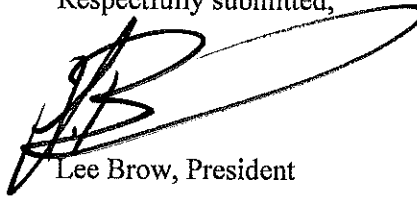
A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to amend the membership of the Publicity Committee to include: members from the Fire Department that include the Fire Chief, Ass't Fire Chief Brade, a representative of the Fire Association, Joe Palmieri from the Water Department, Angel Alvarado from IT and Justin Lonergan from the Communication Center. The original

CFD Dist. Ops. 7-28-21

members are: Commissioner Mertie Terry as Chairwoman, Commissioner Robert Donohue, Ms. Jolie Hinners and the Executive Director. A discussion of a possible photographer and PIO position will be discussed on the next meeting.

- V. Commissioners' Comments. There were no comments to report.
- VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LB', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Lee Brow, President

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
8-11-21