

# Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE  
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT  
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS** **Special Fire Operations Committee Meeting**

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse  
105 Coles Road  
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners David Colligan (Chairman), Jason Hinners, Robert Donohue and Charles Epstein. Also attending were Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade, Fire Marshal Ray Saracco and Dispatch Supervisor Justin Lonergan had called in. Acting Assistant Chief Stacy was absent.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chairman Colligan.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as submitted.
- III. Approval of Meeting Minutes of May 17, 2021. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Special Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of May 17, 2021, as submitted.
- IV. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- V. Communications Report. Chairman Colligan reported that the concrete has been poured at the Nike site. The concrete testing will take 7 days. After the testing is completed, the flagpole will be scheduled to be installed. The Clerk of the Works has given an estimated date of completion as 3 weeks to be fully installed and on air. They had been worried that things were not going in the right direction, but with the news about the concrete it looks like things are beginning to look up. Mr. Neto added that he went to the site with Steve from Associated Construction. Steve was inside the generator looking to see if they can get Kinsley to connect and start the generator prior to the cabinets showing up. When the pump house was built, the generator was in the plant, and they connected it on site at their plant. It worked, but now that the equipment has traveled, he will check it again in a few days. Associated Construction wants to get the flagpole within a week. He is being pressured to get things done as people are already living up there, and they want to clean up that area. Most of the townhouses around the pump house will be occupied within a very short period of time. Once the pole is up, they can do grading work and get the fencing up.

Fire Marshal Saracco reported there was a problem yesterday getting the transformer pole to feed that whole development. The condo association is giving them a hard time because they

have to cut all the power off to those condominiums in order to attach the power. It is estimated that the time for cutting off power will be between 12 to 24 hours. They are looking to get hooked up to a generator during that time period. There are some issues to be dealt with regarding hooking up the generator to the condo association building.

There was some discussion about radios operating within Stop & Shop. It was reported that in certain areas of the building tones cannot be heard. Chief Balletto reported that as a follow up, three radios were tested the next day at the same location. Two out of three had no problems. There was a minor issue with one radio that was addressed.

There was another issue at the site regarding the air conditioning. There was a crew working there on a Sunday that had unplugged the air conditioning while they were doing some other services. When they left they forgot to plug the air conditioning back in. The unit went up to 110 degrees, and the alarm went off. It was lucky that the Water Department was doing their job when this occurred at the Chemfeed building, and they were able to get things under control. Once everything is up and running they plan on getting the locks changed. The plan is to have everyone operate like they are operating at the Tower. He wanted to make a suggestion to have a key at each location, not have one key opening all the locks.

Commissioner Epstein was concerned about having any dead spots at the golf tournament. Assistant Chief Brade reported that there is a tower on site. It should be a transmit and receive tower which is located at the Chemfeed building. The location was chosen to cover the CT River, the TPC and Rocky Hill.

The Chairman asked if Mr. Lonergan had anything to add on communications. He did not have much to add because everything was presented last night at the full Board of Commissioners meeting. He has had a lot of meetings between the TPC and the new Fire Chief reviewing all policies, procedures and upgrades that took place on the EMD, EFD systems. They are currently advertising to replace a part-time Dispatcher that left under good circumstances.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinnens and unanimously approved to accept the Communications Report as presented.

- VI. Reports of Chief Officers. Chief Balletto stated that his report is the same report that was submitted to the Board of Commissioners at their meeting last night. There was nothing new to report. Assistant Chief Brade wrote the report for the Chief because the Chief was not here. The Chief was able to answer any questions from June 1, 2021. Prior to that time period, Assistant Chief Brade was available to answer any questions. Assistant Chief Brade added that they have been working to prepare for the TPC. They have had a few meetings with Kevin Harrington from the Travelers Tournament and Jonathon Latham from St. Francis Hospital. Some logistics in terms of response were worked out. They agreed on an operations plan for this year which is a little different than last year. Some locations were moved. They will be better with communications this year, and they have an RV coming in from Newington as a command post. There will be cellular coms, radio coms and a place to cool off. They requested the State Regional mobile Communications vehicle for interoperability. Assistant Chief Brade is waiting to see if that gets approved or not. Everything is moving well on that.

Chief Balletto gave an update on training. He reported that it is coming along. Chief Stacy is working on getting certifications for everyone including part-timers, volunteers and career.

Hard copies will be downloaded on the Fire Department share drive. That will also include any additional trainings or certifications that an individual has. He recently was able to write the HAZCOM policy. He adjusted the Respiratory Protection Policy and Infection Control Policy. They were submitted to the State of CT OEMS. They were approved for 12 hours of CEU time. That can be used for any recertification.

The Chief is also working with Mr. Darius on some other issues. They are going to try to reduce the number of Fire Rescue Academy classes. The Chief's ultimate goal is to give 24 hours of EMT training for recertification, and still do a lot of hands on for the mandates for the year. The Chief is thinking of reducing the training to possibly 4 online classes a month. He will also give everyone the opportunity to do night training. Per the CBA, night training can only be done in six month intervals. He is going to try to do 4 Mondays every month for night training to get everyone involved in training especially the part-timers and volunteers, and focus on whatever the online training is to hands-on training. He will try to put a little more responsibility on the Chief Officers come July 1 where he will issue a directive where every shift will have to do a minimum of 4 hours of training, officers' preference, unless Ass't Chief Stacy has something planned. They want to make sure they are covering the training mandated by ISO ratings. There are 70 MSI's in the Department including the Chief. They will be working to figure out a process. One of the mandates for recertification for CT states that up to 24 hours of training can be distributed, and 16 hours have to be hands-on training. One of the issues with the Fire Rescue Academy is that there will be 26 – 30 hours of online training to meet the 24 hours. Come September the Chief is planning to do 4 Saturdays of the Hazardous Materials Operations Refresher Training which will equal 8 hours of CEU time. They will be adding around 20 hours of CEU time. The Chief and Firefighter Parker are going to hold back to basics class and deliver it on a Saturday here. They will be volunteering for the full-time staff. He is addressing all the significant issues that they saw when OSHA came in.

A. Fire Marshal's Office Report. Fire Marshal Saracco started by saying the thorn in his side is the Red Lion. They are forwarding the entire issue to the State's Attorney's Office. His office is done trying to resolve any of the issues or risking anyone's life for that property. He has a call into the State's Attorney's office. They will bring it to prosecution. That property was abated in March. They sent the abatement letters out and they were signed for and received. Nothing was done after the letters were received. There is no fire protection there right now. The hydrant is working but the building is not sprinklered. A chain link was put across the entrance to the parking lot, but Mr. Saracco drove by there today and the chain was down because the chain was only put in with landscaping stakes. It is safer to just bring this whole issue to the next level.

There was a fire at Taco Bell the other day. The restaurant is fully operational again. He inspected it with Sal Nesci who gave the OK to reopen. Mr. Saracco noted that they have inspected the two McDonald's and everything was up to par. They also did Kentucky Fried Chicken. There are concerns with the Fire Marshal's Office regarding fast food restaurants and grease fires.

The FMO assigned Harold Holmes to the high school graduation for extra duty. It was held outside, and they were blocking the fire lane. The Board of Ed. will be reimbursing the FMO the cost for Harold to work the graduation.

The FMO has been doing inspections periodically in preparation of the tournament. Tomorrow everything will be assessed and inspected so the FMO will be at the TPC for most of the day.

Mr. Saracco reported that the FMO is planning to implement a fee schedule on July 1. The Executive Director had forwarded an email to the District's attorney for a legal opinion. That legal opinion was forwarded to all the Fire Operations Committee members. The attorney's opinion was that the FMO can move forward with their fees. The plan was to institute it on July 1. As a courtesy the Executive Director spoke with the Town Manager's office to give them an FYI. Mr. Neto warned that there may be some push back from the Town on this issue. The only request from the Executive Director to the Town was to advise the District of their decision officially. He did advise that the District is going to move forward on this. According to the attorney, the Statute does allow the Commission to set fees, no different than being allowed to hire individuals to perform a service. The Executive Director explained the process that was done to prepare for the fee process. Chairman Colligan thanked Mr. Neto, the Fire Chief and Mr. Saracco for working so hard to get this program started. Mr. Saracco distributed a copy of a 5 year comparison of what the Fire Marshal's Office has accomplished. The Fire Marshal's Office has been stepping up in terms of addressing neglected issues and keeping inspections current.

The Executive Director shared a story about teamwork with the Water Dept., Fire Department and Fire Marshal. Cromwell Gardens is shutting down water service tomorrow. Once the Fire Chief was notified, he worked with the Fire Marshal. Within 4 or 5 hours a meeting was held with the Water Dept. on site with a plan that he shared with the Committee members. The Executive Director wanted to share the high energy focus of the three divisions. He wanted to recognize the level of professionalism that these individuals show. They will also be coordinating their effort with Justin and the Communication Center. Chief Balletto explained the plan that was drafted and distributed. The shutdown is expected to be for a couple of hours.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hanners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Chief's report and Fire Marshal's Report as presented.

- VI. Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response Capability. Regarding Firefighter/ EMT staffing, the Department was waiting to see what the budget proposed specifically with the 7<sup>th</sup> position. It is summer and they are having difficulty filling the 7<sup>th</sup> position. It is starting to be a concern with the summer months. It was difficult to get 6 people at certain times. Regarding hiring, the Chief has learned that Westfield is going to start hiring part-time and full-time firefighters. The rate of pay is \$18 an hour. Manchester 8<sup>th</sup> District is also looking at \$18 an hour. One of his concerns is if Cromwell will be able to hold on to what they have for staff. After the TPC the Chief wanted to reopen the Indeed app. and see what happens for applications.

Regarding Response Capability, the Chief recently found an SOP that went into effect where Tack 4 is the first to respond especially to all cars. He will be reissuing that policy for July 1. It is needed especially for the highways. Regarding the 7<sup>th</sup> person, the Chief is doing everything in his power to staff that 7<sup>th</sup> person. That will be outstanding if it is approved. The Chief explained the difficulties in trying to get coverage for calls. He is trying to come up with a plan to make it work. The Executive Director pointed out that in defense of the lower

firefighter hourly wage in Cromwell, the part-timers may receive a lower wage, but they receive benefits. That should be highlighted. The Chief added that they are doing interviews for 12 individuals on July 13. He is going to have one of the career officers sit in because the Chief knows some of the candidates, and he will have to excuse himself from the process. The interview panel will consist of Ass't Chief Brade, Chief Stacy, his Administrative Assistant and the Lieutenants.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response capability report.

VIII. Old Business. There was no old business to report.

IX. New Business

- A. Update on Communications Project. This was covered earlier in the meeting.
- B. Discussion on Apparatus Replacement/Need. Chairman Colligan noted that there is a District Operations Committee meeting tomorrow night where an Apparatus Committee will be discussed. Commissioner Colligan asked Chief Balletto if he had any thoughts about an Apparatus Committee or its purpose. The Chairman explained the history of the apparatus needs and what is currently needed based on a new staffing model and other factors. The 5 year plan states that the Department should be replacing a full-size rescue and an engine. They later decided as a group based on the reports submitted and the new staffing model, on an engine/rescue and later to look at a smaller type of Rescue.

The Chief noted that he had done a needs' analysis with Ass't Chief Brade. One of his thoughts is the replacement of Tack 4, but keeping it as an engine/rescue. He thinks it would be beneficial to have something with water on it. His other thought would be to replace one of the ambulances, specifically 4C. There are significant issues with it. He thought that if they were to rechasis it, it would be putting good money into something that will only have more issues down the road. It may be a little bit cheaper in the long run just to replace the ambulance. He has been working with Chris Logan and Ass't Chief Brade to come up with a decision. At this time one of the ideas is to replace Tack 4 and possibly replace 4C. He also thought if there is a new ambulance, they could repurpose 4C for something to be used by the Fire Marshal's Office for an investigation. It could also be used by the Association as a canteen or rehab area.

The Chairman asked Chief Balletto to put his recommendations in writing in some type of a report. The Chief noted that Shipman's will be coming to Court St. on June 23, at 3 PM, to show a new demo. It is a new apparatus. The Chief also thought if they are thinking about a new ambulance, he would like to downsize on the electronic components. He thinks there are too many electronics on the ambulances, and after a while they start to see significant issues with the electronics. That creates significant concerns. Regarding electronics, the Chief is referring to switches, not radios. The Executive Director discussed the ideas of the Chief and Chris Logan and thought they were on the right track.

The Chief had some updates about the Fire Marshal vehicle. It is getting the pullout drawer or tray which was ordered. It should take about 2 or 3 weeks for all the special orders to be put on the vehicle. The PO's were all completed. Everything is moving

forward. There is no additional cost that has been incurred. Chairman Colligan updated the Committee members on what has taken place regarding the Fire Marshal vehicle. The FMO had decided to install a slide out tray in the back of the vehicle. A cover was also requested rather than a cab. Ass't Chief Brade obtained some quotes. There will be no additional charges to these orders. There was discussion about the decals for the vehicle. The Chief noted it will be marked with the same decals as the other Fire Marshal vehicles.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the report on the apparatus replacement/needs.

- C. Update on SCBA's and Turnout Gear Needs. Chief Balletto reported that he has a vendor coming out on Tuesday. They will be replacing 5 sets of gear and two sets of leather boots that are needed. He purchased 5 carnage helmets to replace the ones that have to come out of service by the end of next year. This will set the standard with a plan in place to replace gear every year. The Chief plans to get rid of all the old gear they don't need anymore, replace it and put it back for the part-timers to reduce cost. One of the significant issues that he did not know when he first started was to replace 14 sets of boots. They were all part-timer boots. He decided to go with black rubber boots. They are saving \$450 for a pair of leather boots to \$120 for the rubber. The Chief made the decision to reduce the cost for the part-timers by giving them the rubber boots and coming up with a plan regarding what gear should go to part-time personnel. Career personnel are still going to get leather boots. There are different types that will need to be tested out and compared for cost. He is focused on reducing that cost. The helmets are also significantly expensive. The part-timers will also be getting the lions helmets which will reduce the cost by \$100. The Chief has been in discussions with Shipman's, Firematic and Lion to get specifications for different types of gear. They will be looking at cost and what is beneficial for the department. There should be a decision by January 1, on what vendor they will choose. There will be the same gear used across the board.

Regarding SCBA's, the Chief has had discussions with Shipman's. It is possible that the Department is going to have to do a replacement of up to possibly 35 SCBA packs. The reason is because of the lifespan on the Scott packs and bottles. The Chief was comparing prices with the 4.5 and 5.5 compacts. There is a substantial difference. If they decide on the 5.5's, the cost could be from \$7,000 to \$9,500 per pack. That consists of a Scott pack, 2 bottles and a mask. There are a lot of bells and whistles. He has been in fire service for about 25 years, and does not like the bells and whistles. He is looking at ways to reduce the cost by not getting all the bells and whistles. The Chief stated that June 30 a representative will be coming to Court St. He will be bringing a 4.5 and a 5.5 to examine so the Chiefs can make a decision. Before this process begins, starting tomorrow or Friday, he wants a full list of all the SCBA packs and SCBA bottles to assess. He wants to know which ones need to be replaced and which ones don't. He originally put in for 35 packs to be replaced at \$5,000 each. The total cost would be \$175,000. He is going to see if he can stagger the list for Scott packs by determining which packs need to be replaced immediately and which ones can wait. The Chief knows that everyone would rather look at multiple bid processes and multiple products, but the Chief feels that single source with Scott is the way to go because it is what most of Cromwell's mutual aid partners are using. The Executive Director noted that the Board has the authority to waive the bidding process when it was mutually beneficial for operational, safety and financial reasons. He suggested that the Chief go on record as to why. There was a lengthy discussion on packs and costs of equipment.

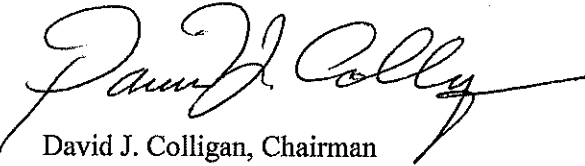
A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's report on SCBA's and turnout gear needs.

- X. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Epstein had the same comments as he did last night. He thanked Chief Brade for all he did for the Department and the District during the time he filled in as Acting Chief. It is greatly appreciated by all the Commission members. He acknowledged the fact that there were no turnovers with the ambulance this month. Chairman Colligan acknowledged the great work Ass't Chief Brade has done acting as Chief. He also acknowledged the great work the Fire Marshal's Office is doing. It is much appreciated by the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Hinnners wanted to be on record for thanking everyone involved with the call to his house. The brotherhood still exists. It made him feel good that a relatively routine call was handled with such professionalism. He was impressed by the crews and their compassion.

- XI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



David J. Colligan, Chairman

Nancy Deegan  
Recording Secretary  
7-15-21