

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS **Fire Operations Committee Meeting**

Monday, September 20, 2021

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Jason Hinnars (Vice Chairman), Charles Epstein and Robert Donohue. Also attending was Executive Director Julius Neto, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan, Firefighter Allan Dominy, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade and Fire Chief Jason Balletto. Commissioner David Colligan was absent.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM, by Vice Chairman Hinnars.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Approval of Meeting Minutes of August 16, 2021. A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of August 16, 2021, as submitted.
- IV. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- V. Communications Report. Because Commissioner Colligan was not able to attend this meeting, the Executive Director gave a brief update on the radio project. Mr. Neto did send the results of the testing to all the Communication Committee members. He reported that the testing was done. He thanked Assistant Chief Brade for going above and beyond on the second day of testing with Norcom present to validate the quality of transmissions received and sent. They tested over 180 sites, and everything passed with flying colors. There is a document confirming those results.

Commissioner Colligan and Paul Zito had a discussion last week regarding next steps. They would like to schedule a meeting of the Communications Committee to determine if there are any open items on the project. They will review the punch list and try to get an updated status on the fire ground situation. Mr. Zito has reported that the proper solution will require another frequency as part of the long-term solution for fire ground. Cromwell does not have those frequencies, only the FCC provides those frequencies.

They gave Mr. Zito preliminary direction to start looking for any licensing opportunity. Right now the radios are only programmed for the Fire Department getting information from

the fire ground channel. Dispatch does not have the frequency to talk back. They cannot do a radio test with Dispatch on the fire ground.

There is a licensing component to the fire ground channels. When a frequency is licensed with the FCC, it is licensed based on power output. They make sure that Cromwell's system does not interfere with other people's systems. Right now the fire ground channels are licensed for low power, portable mobile usage. It is not a high powered transmitter. The Dispatch and Command channel are licensed for high power output based on a 4-site simulcast system. Fire ground channels are not licensed that way.

One component is the fire ground licensing. Cromwell would have to re-license those frequencies and they may not be able to accommodate high output on those channels. They would have to change frequencies. They have receivers throughout Town that listen to radio traffic that is reporting back to Dispatch so they can hear what is going on and record it, but they cannot transmit back. 90% of the time the incident commander misses the May Day. Dispatch is the one that picks up the May Day. Dispatch can still hear that under the current system, they have to get on the Dispatch channel or the Command channel to call the incident commander to ask if they heard that. They cannot get remotely involved in the operation. They cannot set off evacuation tones. That would go from Dispatch to Field command and Field command to the Chief when it is a May Day. The Chief then has to run the May Day.

Evacuation tones have to be done on the scene, not by Dispatch. There is the ability to do that from the portables. Mr. Neto reminded everyone that to add another frequency will cost the District approximately \$50,000 or more. The Chief stated they are aware of the situation and are acting accordingly. The biggest challenge will not be the large scale events with mutual aid and Field Command, it is the first 15-20 minutes of an incident when there is very limited resources and manpower on scene. This is where the interim plan may not work. Once Field Command and communication are established they can give someone a radio that will be listening to Dispatch.

The Chief is implementing a Chief's Office on-call list. The Chiefs have agreed to split up the weekends being on call. It will be better for the Department if one of the Chiefs was on scene so they do not run into fire ground issues.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the staff's report on the Communication subcommittee with the fire ground discussion to be continued at the subcommittee level.

VI. Reports of Chief Officers

A. Fire Marshal's Office Report. Chief Balletto reported that the Fire Marshal's Office report had been previously submitted to the Board and Fire Operations Committee. There were no changes. The Chief added that Fire Marshal Saracco has submitted his resignation. He is leaving under good terms. His resignation takes effect Friday, September 24, 2021, at 4:00 PM. Mr. Saracco was able to obtain another position, and the District wishes him well in his new venture.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Marshal's Report for August as submitted.

The Chief discussed his report for August. It had been submitted for the Board meeting packets. There are no changes to the report. There were 6 turnovers in the month of August. They have been doing a lot of public education. They participated in the Labor Day car show. They also participated in the Sept. 11 memorial service. They are doing an Open House Fire Prevention program on October 2 at the West Street firehouse. They will be putting out a giant scarecrow in front of Court St. They will also start to hang volunteer recruitment signs. The Chief's office has been pretty busy with directives regarding SOP's coming out. The Chief offered to answer any questions.

The Executive Director noted that the Fire Department is making some ground with training and some OSHA issues. The Chief reported they will start the inspection and some work on the training building next week. A Purchase Order was approved for that. They reviewed the training budget and took the propane prop out of service until further notice. They plan on starting a lot of training in the month of December. They have already started EMT training. Mr. Neto mentioned that Chief Balletto was a star on the WFSB telethon for Muscular Dystrophy. It is called the Hero Fund. The Chief was able to get help for the 5 gas meter and 3 gas meter that was needed.

Assistant Chief Brade reported that the Chief has tasked him with going through all the accounts for fire extinguishers, oxygen, bottles, maintenance, etc. He is also working with Russ. They have switched 3 vendors already to reduce cost. They received a shipment of PPE on Friday. He has also spoken to Christie Carpino to do a PR event with the PPE.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for August as presented.

- VII. Firefighters/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response Capability. Chief Balletto reported that two individuals were hired. They may be losing one person who may be going to Keene State. The positions were scheduled firefighter/EMT positions. They also took on one volunteer firefighter. He just finished his EMT class and will be signing up for Firefighter I. That class will be held in Cromwell. The Chief is still looking into the status of the PPE going forward.

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 as presented.

VIII. Old Business

- A. Update on Equipment & Apparatus Replacement. The Executive Director noted that Old Business and Item A. under New Business are the same issue. Chief Balletto was asked to come up with a list of what is Needed and a Wish List. The Chief distributed his list. Everything highlighted on the lists are what is needed. He also listed cost on page 3 of the document. The Chief reviewed the items on his list. He had 3 companies Shipman's, Ankus and TNT will be calling the Chief in the next day or two to schedule a demo at Coles Rd. He is letting personnel go through them and provide feedback. The rope and confined space equipment the Chief feels is absolutely needed. He has checked out the confined spaces that the Water Dept. uses. It would be more protection for the Water Department employees.

Regarding apparatus replacement, Lifeline reached out to the Chief. Baseline price without a power load is \$290,000. The rechassis quote for \$221,000 came from Lifeline. They advised the Chief that the quote will probably be higher than originally stated because of the recommendations and standards that have to be followed with bucket seating, 5-point harnesses, etc. They can probably get a Dodge or Ford chassis.

The Chief reached out to Frazier today. The apparatus they saw in New Britain was completely different from the fire/rescue ambulance. The Chief has pictures from one that is in Cranston, RI and Bethel, CT. It fits Cromwell's needs. The price was the original price. AV is able to work out a price of less than \$250,000, but it would not have a powerload. That would increase the price by \$275,000.

They also reached out to Firematic. The Chief can get the price down to \$695,000. The Chief has not gotten any feedback yet from Bethel or Cranston to see how they like the apparatus. It is completely different from Wallingford.

The Chief noted that his list contains all the bare basic items that are needed before going forward with any advanced equipment. They will also need to have training for the basics. The advanced equipment would be one to two years out. One of the goals for a confined space rescue because they have the IAFF is to bring in a confined space technician to do training. The wish list exists but it is for future needs.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the update on equipment and apparatus replacement as presented by the Chief.

IX. New Business

- A. Update from Apparatus Committee. This was discussed previously under Old Business.
- B. Discussion and Possible Decision on Recommendation for Out of State Travel for Apparatus Evaluation. The Executive Director had put this item on the agenda. It was discussed at the last Apparatus Committee meeting. If the Committee agrees to recommend this trip, it will be forwarded to the Board of Commissioners meeting for the full Board to approve. The trip is to Greensboro, NC to check out a Pierce piece of apparatus similar to the one needed for Cromwell. It was discussed to have the Chief come up with a not to exceed price. The Chief was waiting for approval of the trip before he comes up with a price. The trip would be for only two people; the Chief and Chris Logan. Commission Epstein thought that regardless of price, the two people scheduled to take this trip should take it to examine the apparatus to see if it meets Cromwell's needs. The timeframe for the trip is 3 days and 2 nights. They discussed airfare, hotels and rental cars. A rough estimate was not to exceed \$3,000 for 2 people. The trip would be a Monday through a Wednesday.

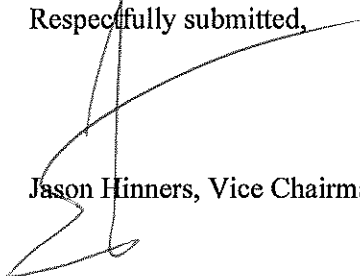
A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to recommend to the full Board of Commissioners to send Mr. Logan and Chief Balletto to Greensboro, NC to inspect a Pierce apparatus demo to see if it meets the needs of the Cromwell Fire Department at a cost not to exceed \$3,000.

- C. Fire Chief Update on Equipment Inventory List. This information was previously discussed during this meeting.
- D. Discussion and Recommendations How Acting Lieutenant is Assigned. The Executive Director asked to table this item. The Executive Director and Fire Chief were not prepared to discuss this item at this time.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept all reports under New Business as discussed.

- X. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Epstein spent some time looking at different apparatus with the Chief. He would like to emphasize to the full Commission how important it is for the Committee to move forward and not backward. The Fire Department desperately needs an apparatus. This is a safety issue.
- XI. 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 6:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,


Jason Hinners, Vice Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary