

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Safety/Building Committee

Thursday, January 14, 2021

5:00 PM

West Street Firehouse
1 West Street
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Robert Donohue (Chairman), David Colligan, Robert McIntyre and Allan Spotts (remotely). Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Dispatch Supervisor Justin Lonergan, Acting Fire Chief Jason Brade, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Maintainer Russ Johnson, Health & Safety Officer Chip Darius, Dispatcher and Dispatch Union President Andrew Cook (remotely) and Mechanic Chris Logan.

Per Executive Order No. 7B, Governor Lamont has ordered and directed that in-person open meeting requirements be suspended. Therefore, the Safety/Building Committee Meeting will be held via conference call. Members of the public may send questions or comments to meetings@cromwellfd.com on any agenda items.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:01 PM, by Chairman Donohue.
- II. Approval of Agenda. The Executive Director had an item to add under New Business as Item C. which was an estimate from Tuthill Electric for the Court Street communication/kitchen/stove wiring.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as amended.
- III. Public Comment. The Executive Director did not receive any public comments to report.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Discussion and Approval of Radio Room/Server Room at Court St.—Air Conditioning Solution. The Executive Director explained the situation in the Radio Room/Server Room related to overheating. This was identified approximately one month ago. The alarm system acknowledged that the temperature was over 90+ degrees. There was some short-term remediation of the issue which was to leave the door open circulating some air, but that becomes a concern for Dispatch. When the District added additional equipment from the communication project to that little space, it put that area into an environment of overheating that space. Approximately one or one and a half years ago,

an additional air conditioning unit was added to that environment. Mr. Lonergan reported that approximately 3 years ago one of the condensers was replaced, but they have not added any air conditioning units to the facility. One of the condensers in the primary cooling unit is failing. They also identified the Dispatch Center itself. There are two separate HVAC units, one for the communications room which is the back room known as the networking room, and the other is for the Communication Center. Both have had problems in the past keeping up with the amount of heat generated in that amount of space. They installed some of the new equipment, and that sent the unit into failure because it could not keep up.

The issue in the Communication Center is not being dealt with under the current agenda item. This item is just to deal with the radio room/server room. The District initially called Cromwell Energy. This was above their scope of work. The District then consulted with Trane. Trane handles all the annual servicing. They came up with a proposal, and he believed everyone had seen it. Commissioner Colligan had not seen it, and asked about the amount. Mr. Neto stated there are two quotes. One is from Trane for \$16,699, to place the outside unit on the wall facing the west side. Mr. Lonergan thought that the \$16,699 was a quote for the dispatch room itself. It was an old quote when they put the floor unit in the Dispatch Center. The \$18,000 quote was regarding placing it on the side of the building. At that time the District requested an updated quote to instead of having the condenser/compressor unit be on the side of the building, it would be moved to the back of the building. That quote was \$19,816 for just the server room. Mr. Lonergan spoke to Greg Jenkins from Trane who reported that because of the amount of coolant needed for the back room, you cannot do a single unit to cool both spaces. Mr. Lonergan noted there were 3 quotes. One for the Dispatch Center for the HVAC unit, the original quote from Trane for the server room and the updated quote for the server room.

Mr. Neto clarified that the \$19,816 quote from Trane is to address the server room overheating. The additional \$1,200 is to move from the west side of the building to the north side hidden from Court St. and the neighbors. Commissioner Donohue asked if this would be one condenser, two units. Mr. Lonergan stated that they asked if they could do that to take care of both issues simultaneously meaning the communications room itself and the server room. Greg Jenkins advised that because of the need for cooling being so high in the back room, they do not make a big enough unit to do split heads. The Communication Center will have a unit in the back of the building where there is already one mounted (the current one that can't keep up), and another one will be mounted next to that one or somewhere near the other one, and they will run the line into the server room only. Commissioner Colligan noted that right now there is a fan and the door is open to keep the temperature under control. He thought that originally they were going to try to get air inside from the outside. He asked how the situation got to this point. Mr. Lonergan explained that he believed Angel Alvarado had coordinated to have an HVAC expert come in and do an analysis of the room. The expert advised that the situation seems fine until it is 90 degrees out. It doesn't help to be bringing in hot air from the outside into an already hot room. At one point it was mentioned to cut a hole in the door and put a vent. The concern there is the noise volume coming out of the room. Commissioner Colligan asked Mr. Johnson about his involvement with this because he works with Trane on a regular basis. Mr. Johnson was aware of the issue, but the analysis was coordinated by Mr. Alvarado and Mr. Lonergan.

Commissioner Donohue asked if this is approved, will everything be all set. Mr. Lonergan stated that he did not know if there was a guarantee on the agreement with Trane. If the unit can't keep up, what is the remedy after that. Based on the HVAC expert and Greg Jenkin from Trane, recommending this unit and the price, Mr. Lonergan felt that we would be all set in the network room only.

They will still have the issue with the Communication Center itself. In the summertime they have to bring in a supplemental A/C unit that sits on the floor on really hot days to keep the Center cool. Mr. Johnson reported that the Dispatch room is run by the Aqua chiller outside. There are two compressors in it. One is not working and needs to be replaced before the hot weather comes in OR think about replacing the whole thing. Some preliminary quotes were received on that. They were told they are taking something that is normally run 6 months out of the year, and running it 11 months out of the year. He added that the air conditioner for the server room had the condenser replaced approximately 3 years ago. Commissioner Colligan thought that Cromwell Energy came in to get the air conditioning under control. Mr. Johnson stated that they were only involved in the server room. The vendor for Dispatch is Trane. Mr. Lonergan explained that the representative from Trane came out when they lost a condenser a couple of months ago. He had reported that the unit was on its last leg. It is being used to its capacity 11 months out of the year. That was when there was a discussion regarding putting in a split head unit into the Communication Center to take some of the load off of that big unit. That unit also controls the rest of the firehouse. If they put a mini-split in at a cost of \$16,000 that would take the load off of the unit that is doing the rest of the building which will expand the lifetime of the unit. The unit and the condenser do need to be replaced by summertime. If the other condenser is lost, there won't be any air conditioning. Mr. Johnson thought that a new condenser would be about \$6,000 (labor and parts). This quote is for the server room only.

Mr. Neto advised that there will be an opportunity to deal with the Communication Center through the budget cycle. There are some preliminary numbers that are all high. The question will be should the District invest in \$6,000 on a compressor and put it into an old unit that may not last a year, or could last 5 years. Or should the District replace the whole unit so things are set the way they should be. This item can be included in the capital budget cycle. Mr. Neto added that all this need is driven by all the new additional radio equipment based on the requirements of the communications project. At some point in the future there will be some take away. He added this situation cannot be band aided. The present situation is a band aid, a short term solution. It is an expensive solution, and in discussing this with everyone involved, there are no other options out there. Trane have been the experts to advise on how to control the environment. Cromwell Energy had advised that this was beyond their area of expertise. The cost is \$20,000.

Commissioner Spotts asked if this will solve the problem for the foreseeable future. He also asked where the \$20,000 was coming from. The Executive Director explained that based on the local experts and Trane, this should resolve the problem. Regarding the \$20,000, the Committee will have 2 options. The first is figure out in the operating budget if this should be in Capital Operating and earmark \$20,000 or recognize this as part of the Capital Communication Project because this requirement of additional cooling of that room is based on the new communication equipment in that room. It could be piggy-backed to the \$3 million communication project that is there. Commissioner Colligan was concerned as far as the financial status of the project since they now have to

construct a flag pole at the Nike site. Mr. Neto had asked Mr. Alibrio for a financial report on the communications project for this meeting. Mr. Alibrio was not in the office today so he did not give Mr. Neto a full report. Once Mr. Neto receives the full report, he will provide copies to the Committee. Based on Mr. Neto's quick assessment of what has been paid out already, the status of the voting sites including the Nike additional expenditures, the District should be able to manage the \$20,000 expenditure. Commissioner Spotts thought that was best out of all the scenarios. Commissioner Colligan agreed. He added that they are halfway through the budget year, and they need to start looking at where money is being spent.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commission Colligan and unanimously approved to allocate \$20,000 to the server room as part of the \$3 million project for the communication upgrade.

- B. Discussion on Role of Health and Safety Officer and Infection Control Officer – Chip Darius. The Executive Director stated that he put this item on the agenda so that this Committee understands Chip's role in the Fire Department. He has been a great asset to the District in the last couple of months evaluating COVID. Mr. Neto advised that Mr. Darius' role will be expanded. His primary role is focusing on the Fire Department at the present time, but in the future this Committee may be a part of that to engage him in a bigger role from a safety perspective district-wide. This is the type of work Mr. Darius does for a living. His expertise is outstanding and he really has kept his focus on the road the District is on and needs to stay on. Safety and health are a critical component of what the District does every day.

Acting Chief Brade discussed Mr. Darius' role. He explained that Mr. Darius had approached the Acting Chief and offered some of his services. There was a need for them. He sat down with Mr. Darius and drafted a job description for the position. It is an advisory role to the Chief's office. Mr. Darius will be utilized for 3 things. Those things are a Health & Safety Officer, an Infection Control Officer and OSHA compliance. The Acting Chief distributed copies of the job description for review. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District office. Acting Chief Brade discussed the fact that health and safety has been lacking in the Fire Department for a while. Mr. Darius graciously took this on. There have been multiple meetings. He has been in touch with Mr. Darius practically every day. They are making a lot of changes to the way things operate. The Chief added that Chip is a wealth of knowledge, and he will give the floor to Mr. Darius to explain what he does for a living. Regarding Health and Safety, the Department is moving forward. Regarding Infection Control, Chip has been an invaluable resource, and he came at the right time with the COVID exposures and the quarantines. They settled on a couple of things in terms of how information is processed that comes into the Chief's office such as exposure reports and injury reports. Regarding OSHA compliance, there have been several OSHA complaints over the last several months. Most of which have been unfounded or been deemed that appropriate action is in the process or is being taken to mitigate the issues. He has worked with Chip to try to come out ahead of that curve. They have developed a plan in steps as to how they can try to mitigate some of the reports to OSHA that haven't exactly come to the Department. They should come directly to the Chief's office so they can keep them informed as to what the Department is doing, just involving communication.

Mr. Darius had the floor. He briefly explained he has been doing Safety and OSHA compliant work since 1991. He was a member of the Department from 1990 to 2004. He

took a break and came back this year. He has been an EMT for 41 yrs. He has a long history with past Chief Colligan and several others in the room. On a daily basis, Chip works with clients to comply with OSHA; clients such as general industry, construction, utilities and emergency services. He is well versed in the regulations. He also does hazard assessments, risk assessments, training, training classes, fork lift operator, fall protection. He teaches for the OSHA training Institute in New England. He teaches 20 different classes for them all around New England. He is very well versed in this subject. He is happy to provide his services to the Department. On the Infection Control side, Mr. Darius and Acting Chief Brade discovered a Pathogen plan, a TB plan and a HAZCOM plan. He is happy to help get things updated as best he can.

The current approach in the fire service is to be more forward looking than reactive. They are looking at NFPA 1500 as the Fire Department Health and Safety Standard and 1581 for Infection Control. The minimum compliance rule is OSHA. The progressive standards are NFPA. The goal is to work with paid and volunteer staff to reinvigorate safety committees, processes, inspections, keeping things sound on the fiscal side, apparatus, facilities as well as training needs. He stated he is a resource and would be happy to help in any way he can. Mr. Palmieri stated that he would like to have Mr. Darius visit the water facilities. Mr. Darius is aware of the water facilities. He plans on working with the Water Department in the future. At the moment he is focused on working directly with the Chief. He is the primary liaison as the Infection Control Officer to Sal Nesci, the Public Health Director. He has talked extensively with Mr. Nesci as far as taking something off of his plate so that he can advise the Chief on quarantine, isolation and return to work. He is also a member of the Middletown and Capital Region Medical Reserve Corps. They have already participated in several COVID vaccination clinics. Mr. Darius has half of his credentials in to become a vaccinator. OEMS has a protocol where EMT's can become vaccinators if they are already qualified to give IM injections for Epinephrine. He has done all the necessary training. He is waiting for UConn to get him through the demonstration process. His goal is to do whatever he can to move the Fire Department in a safer and healthier direction.

Commissioner Spotts thanked Chip for all he has done so far. Considering the times we are living in, this is an incredibly critical role for all of the Fire Department personnel. The Executive Director added that he would like to see Mr. Darius become a member of the Safety/Building Committee going forward. He believes that Chip is a valuable resource of information. With the information Chip can provide, the Committee can make better decisions and be pro-active, not just in the Fire Department but District-wide. He will also be having discussions with Joe Palmieri. The District is a utility and we perform crucial, critical work in the field. The construction environment is another point that needs to be managed. They will be doing some baselining with Chip for the Water Department and come up with some programs that the District may or may not have but that they should have with Chip's assessment. The Executive Director is not proposing that Chip volunteer his time. He is providing a great service to the Fire Department. That is his focus and his passion. It would only be fair that if the District engages Chip on the other side of the Fire District separate from the fire service, that the business environment be used by the District. Up to this point complaints that have been received have been fire department issues only. There is no guarantee there will not be complaints against the Water Department or any other District entity. Mr. Neto wanted to be proactive. He wanted to give everyone a chance to meet Chip. He feels he will be a

great asset to the Fire Department. He will be discussing next steps for the non-Fire Department District divisions.

Mr. Darius added that he has been a safety consultant for the Metropolitan District, MDC, since 1990. Over the years he has worked with them on safety projects and initiatives. For more than 10 years he was the contracted Safety & Health Director for South Norwalk Electric & Water. He is very familiar with water operations, trenching, etc. All the things that go along with water operations.

- C. Estimate from Tuthill Electric for the Court Street communication/kitchen/stove wiring. Mr. Neto explained that on the communication side of Court Street based on COVID and the needs of the staff, they need to have a small stove purchased for less than \$500. However, to plug in the stove, an appropriate electrical service is needed. Mr. Neto distributed copies of a \$1,301.85 estimate of work. It is identified as the appropriate electrical circuitry to accommodate a small range. He determined along with Mr. Lonergan that this would be the best approach in today's environment and keep the communication staff closer to their workplace. If someone is the only individual on premises and they have to go to the kitchen, this will keep the staff confined to 15 feet away from the work space. They are looking for an acknowledgement of the need and approval of the work to be done at the earliest possible time. Commissioner Spotts stated that it is something that is definitely needed. He would approve a \$2,000 expenditure for this cause. He asked if they would be going to Lowe's for the stove since they have been very generous in the past in donating to the Fire Department. Mr. Lonergan stated he did find a stove from Lowe's that has to be special ordered. Before he looks into any type of donation, he thought it would be advantageous to get approval of the funds first if there is a decline for a donation. Commissioner Colligan asked if they would need a hood over the stove. Mr. Lonergan stated that currently they have a microwave with a hood underneath it. They are going to be swapping the cabinets and the microwave with the hood underneath it will go over the stove, so to answer Commissioner Colligan, there will be a hood over the stove. He added that the Fire Marshal has already reviewed the plan. He explained it is an internal ventilation system. Mr. Lonergan explained that they used to have a mini fridge. Last year they purchased a larger mini fridge. The space where the mini fridge was is the same size as the mini stove. They are going to cut the counter top and swap the two top cabinets and move the microwave over one spot. Mr. Lonergan noted that he and the staff in the communication center are willing to provide the services to swap out the appliances. He will make sure the work is cleared and vetted through the Fire Marshal's Office. They received the quote from Tuthill today. The price of the stove was approximately \$499. Mr. Lonergan stated that the total project should not go over \$2,000. They will allow themselves some room in case they need to purchase screws or other miscellaneous items to complete the job.

A motion was made by Commissioners Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to spend \$2,000 to include a new stove and the appropriate necessary electrical work for the Communications Center. Commissioner Colligan asked Russ Johnson to follow up and make sure the work discussed does not overload the generator.

Chris Logan discussed the fact that a couple of years ago, the District sent two people to Scott Air Pack school. The idea was to get those individuals trained and have them be responsible for air pack school. They had their flow testing done, etc. Two air packs disappeared and one regulator. There are four people on a shift that have their own

regulators. Air packs are getting switched from truck to truck. Mr. Logan does not want to take responsibility anymore. There should be a file for every air pack, and when the regulator breaks, it goes out and gets fixed. It comes back and goes in the file with that air pack. Mr. Logan is not responsible for doing that. Mr. Lonergan stated that they have the SCBA management module that includes service, etc. similar to the hydrants module or the vehicle module. It should be used when doing service on that equipment. Those two individuals that went to the school should be responsible. The two individuals that went to the school are Lt. Zadrick and Lt. Wolmetz. Mr. Logan did not know anything about the two air packs or the regulator that disappeared. The two air packs off of Truck 1 are gone. Someone knew they disappeared because someone moved the drivers pack into the truck.

Acting Chief Brade is going to check into this. Commissioner Colligan asked that this be brought to the Fire Operations Committee for them to do an inventory and be discussed in the Operations Committee. Mr. Logan does not know who is fixing the regulators for the four individuals that have their own. He also doesn't know who is buying those regulators, but they cost approximately \$2,000 each.

Mr. Darius added that also included in his job description as Health & Safety Officer he would be the Respiratory Protection Program Administrator which is a required position under the OSHA standard. He stated that OSHA would not be happy to hear that employees are buying their own respiratory protection equipment. It is not permitted unless the employer knows this is happening, and specifically approves it. Even if the employer knows it, the employer is 100% responsible for maintenance and serviceability for that equipment. Mr. Darius stated that once he is finished working on COVID issues, his first order of business is to look at the Respiratory Protection Program completely, and he will be working with the Acting Fire Chief on that.

Acting Chief Brade discussed the bird issue at Court Street. A new company was hired to mitigate the issue. He reported that yesterday there were no birds in the bay. Switching stations has helped because the times the doors are open are limited. There are traps that were set up when the birds are not there. The Acting Chief thought they were moving in the right direction for that. The hole in the floor in the bathroom has been temporarily filled. Mr. Johnson has reached out to the contractors. However, the contractor has had its issues with COVID, so they would not be able to send anyone out until possibly the week after next. For now it is temporarily fixed.

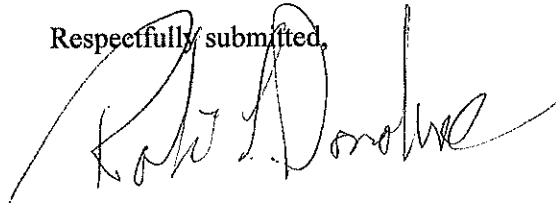
The Acting Chief added that part of the Health & Safety Officer's job is OSHA compliance. Mr. Darius did a walkthrough of the Court Street firehouse. He issued a lengthy, detailed report. There were approximately 63 items that were a lower priority. There were two items that needed to be addressed sooner rather than later. There were a lot of minor things or things that get overlooked. They will be addressed over the course of the year, especially during budget time. As they move forward they will look at the other two firehouses as well. He anticipates some budget discussion as they move forward. Mr. Darius added that if an electrician is being brought in to do something with the kitchenette, one of the needs identified is that there is a light fixture missing over the stairs that goes up to the catwalk and there is no switch. There needs to be a switch at the bottom of the stairs and one more light fixture over the stairs. Mr. Neto suggested a line item in the budget may be needed for all three stations. It should be a Safety/OSHA compliant line item for the budget specifically to deal with items of this nature. This will give the Board of Commissioners the opportunity to budget monies for repairs and

maintenance or whatever line item is needed. Once there is a documented report, it will become a guesstimate, and they will get more quotes. Once reports are received, an action item should be in place. Once a need is documented, failing to comply with that need is worse than not knowing about it. Mr. Darius clarified that the walk through was only slips, trips and falls issues. Electrical chemical and other areas still need to be reviewed.

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

VI. Adjournment. A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 5:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert L. Donohue". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Robert Donohue, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
2-3-21