

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Special Health & Safety/Building Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 22, 2021

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Robert Donohue (Chairman) and Robert McIntyre. Commissioner Allan Spotts had called into the meeting. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Commissioner Charles Epstein, Health & Safety Advisor Chip Darius and Brian Petrocelli AFSCME Dispatch Member from Local 1303-475. Absent members: Commissioner David Colligan (excused), Acting Fire Chief Jason Brade, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Mechanic Chris Logan, Maintainer Russ Johnson, Dispatch Supervisor Justin Lonergan and IAFF Member Local 4662.

Per Executive Order No. 7B, Governor Lamont has ordered and directed that in-person open meeting requirements be suspended. Therefore, the Special Board of Commissioners' 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 5:30 PM, by Chairman Donohue.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Executive Director Neto, seconded by Health & Safety Advisor Chip Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as presented.
- III. Public Comment. The Executive Director did not receive any public comments via email or any other communication.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Update Committee on First OSHA Consultation. The Executive Director gave the update on the consultation. He explained that two OSHA representatives came in for the consultation. One consultant was focused on safety, and the other was focused on health. They provided some feedback in the way of a report with recommendations and areas for the Department to focus on and report back. He then gave Mr. Darius the floor because the District has responded and taken some corrective action.

Mr. Darius began by giving an update on the process. When CONNOSHA is invited for a consultation there are 2 aspects to that consultation. One is physical safety and the

other is health. There were two representatives that came. One was for safety and one was for health.

The health representative started off the consultation focusing on the respiratory protection program. They only focused on respiratory protection and then stopped the consultation to give the District a chance to address the recommendations. A report was received with a detailed list of recommendations for improving the respiratory protection program. Before CONNOSHA had arrived, Mr. Darius was already working on an updated respiratory protection program which was shown to CONNOSHA in draft form. They thought that the updated program was 98% there, it just needed to have some details nailed down. The health side of the consultation is taken care of. They just need to nail down some final details on the respirator program.

The safety side was the same process. CONNOSHA came in then stopped the consultation to give the District time to address the recommendations. The major issues they brought to the table were: an organizational statement that sets forth what the Fire Department does and does not do. It is called a Fire Department Organizational statement. Mr. Darius prepared a draft. He reviewed it with the Acting Chief. He is not sure if it was finalized and accepted, but they at least have a working copy of the organizational statement if anyone wants to review it.

The other two issues on the safety side of the house had to do with training curricula and making sure the objectives were clear for what fire department members get trained on, compared to what fire department officers get trained on. The requirement is that officers receive training above and beyond what members receive. Those were the three things on the safety side of the house. Ass't Chief Stacy is working on the training related issues. Mr. Darius took care of the organizational statement. The other issue on the health side was a Personal Protective Equipment hazard assessment. Mr. Darius prepared a draft PPE hazard assessment policy and data collection form. His hope was in this meeting to network with other folks that are currently in the organization to delegate some task analysis to them. However, there was not a full quorum of committee members present to do that.

The Executive Director wants the plan to continue so he suggested working through the Chief's office and the Communication Center. Mr. Neto stated that we need to do exactly what Mr. Darius had stated which was to delegate it to them to assist as part of their engagement. The tasks that need to be assessed are several variations of firefighter such as a structure fire, brush fire or incident on the river. The other tasks are EMT/EMR which can be looked at together; Fire Police, Mechanic, Maintenance and Groundskeeper. If there are any only job tasks that may require a hard hat, safety glasses, respirator, boots, gloves, etc., please advise Mr. Darius what they are. There are instances where a second dispatcher may be put on scene to assist command. That situation would require some gear, but they are usually away from the hot zone. Mr. Darius will follow up with Mr. Lonergan on that. The process of a PPE hazard assessment is to go systematically through parts of the body and identify when someone is doing that particular task, how is that particular body part at risk if at all. An additional category is respirators and high visibility clothing. For each job task the PPE hazard assessment has to be signed and certified by the person who did it.

Mr. Darius reported the District is well under control given the concerns that CONNOSHA has brought forth so far. Commissioner McIntyre asked if some of those

documents could be emailed to people just as an FYI. Mr. Darius stated that his role is to work through the Chief's office. The Chief has everything except the PPE information because Mr. Darius just received it today. All of that should go through the Chief or the Executive Director. The Executive Director will make sure that all Commissioners receive the Organizational Statement. If Commissioner McIntyre needed the PPE Hazard Respiratory Assessment, Mr. Neto would get that out as well. Commissioner McIntyre wanted to have a better understanding of what CONNOSHA is looking at or looking for. Then it can be tracked through the Committee. Mr. Darius stated that the process with CONNOSHA is that Cromwell will have their documents finalized by the end of the month. Their deadline is mid-May for submittal. They will receive it and review it and then move on to the next phase of the consultation. There will be several phases coming from CONNOSHA. There will be paperwork, recordkeeping, physical plant walk-throughs, and apparatus in vehicles.

B. Discussion On Any Health and Safety Issues.

1. Fire Department. The Executive Director stated that he was hoping to have Labor and Management here to discuss this item. He has not received any items of concern that would have not been dealt with. He did not think there were any open items to deal with. Once they are brought forward, they would go through the Chief's office or the Health & Safety Advisor, Mr. Darius. Mr. Darius can bring concerns forward to the Chief's office if there are individuals that do not want to go to the Chief's office directly. Mr. Darius will make an effort to get the issues resolved. Currently, Mr. Neto is not aware of any outstanding items that have not been addressed. There were a couple of minor issues at Court Street related to housekeeping. The birds are an ongoing issue, but the vendor is working to eliminate them. Springtime tends to increase bird activity in the firehouse. Mr. Neto has advised the Fire Chiefs and Lieutenants that once they have identified a bird inside the firehouse longer than flying by or flying through, they need to contact the vendor to let them know there is a bird that needs to be removed in whatever way to eliminate them that is effective.
2. Communication Center. Mr. Petrocelli stated there were no outstanding issues that he knew of. They had a couple of meetings where a few issues were discussed. Most issues were addressed very quickly. He had a couple of questions for the Committee. One was the status of the HEPA filters for the Dispatcher Center. They were told that their unit would accept HEPA filters. The last thing they were told was they were looking into the replacement of those filters. They wanted to know if that had been done. Mr. Neto stated they were advised by Trane that the units cannot accept HEPA filters. The District needs to rely on portable filters. That was the report from Trane to Russ to Julius.

Mr. Petrocelli also had questions about the Dispatch Alarm System. They knew that there was testing done on it as to where the alarms go. They checked the fire alarms for the building, whether or not there is an internal alarm and the panic alarms in the Dispatch Center. They knew Russ had coordinated a lot of testing to be done, but they wanted to know if it is known how the building is wired, where the alarms actually go and who monitors all of that. The Executive Director reported that some preliminary work had already been done. They also had the phone system in there. They are trying to map out all these systems. It is not finalized, but it is going to be something that they are going to be trying to use the new communication system to

monitor a lot of these alarms and systems at some point. It is an open item that needs more discussion.

Mr. Petrocelli reported something else that came to his attention again. It was noted that people are calling the 10 digit West Street general office numbers for emergencies. The administrative assistants are transferring the calls to Lisa. Lisa is transferring them to the Dispatch Center. He advised that first of all those calls should never be transferred to Lisa because if she is not in her office the call will not be answered.

The situation with that call was it was an emergency with a person having difficulty breathing/chest pain which was transferred from Lisa to Dispatch but had originated at the West Street office. He suggested that the protocol be looked at when an emergency is received on a 10 digit line or the administrative offices. He explained that if "0" is dialed from West Street, it does not go to the Dispatch Center although they are connected. If you dial "0" from Court Street, it hits the Dispatch Center. He reported that this is the third time in a month and a half that there has been a call rolled over from West St. They need to look at an internal transfer line that is dedicated to all the phones at the Dispatch Center so that everyone knows that a call is transferred to a specific line. The Executive Director explained that we do have an immediate need to manage those calls. He appreciated the feedback from Mr. Petrocelli. This also re-emphasizes the need to replace the whole antiquated phone system which should have been done 10 years ago.

Commissioner Epstein suggested sending out an immediate press release that advises people that if they have an emergency to remind them to dial 911 and not a 10 digit access number. He also suggested this information be put on our electronic signs. Mr. Petrocelli thanked the Committee because they had a punch list that was efficiently addressed. He thanked the Commissioners and the Committee for taking care of their issues. Mr. Darius understood that the Dispatch Center was to receive a free standing HEPA filter just like upstairs at Court St. Mr. Petrocelli stated there is one down there now. Mr. Darius stated that one is adequately sized for a room like that so even if they cannot get a filter into the main system, there is a filtration system there.

3. Quick Update on COVID 19. Mr. Darius gave an update, but backed up a little bit to explain there was a concern about the procedure for fit testing the respirators regarding the process and location there were being held. He researched it right away at the Chief's request, and consulted with an OSHA compliance representative out of Vermont who has extensive experience with the machine. Based on that consultant's recommendations and some information they uncovered on the manufacturer's literature and training videos, a specific procedure for how and where to conduct fit testing was written and submitted to the Chief's office. He understood from the Chief that it was distributed to the Lieutenants that are responsible for the fit testing. Fit testing is back on line, and the process has now been finalized.

In addition to that, the world has changed and we are starting to re-emerge from COVID, and they have been de-escalating some of the policies in the pandemic procedure. Chip has been working with the Chief to make adjustments as they become appropriate. One thing Mr. Darius noticed was that the current version of the Operations plan is April 2 of this year. What is on the website is outdated

information. There needs to be the correct update posted in the members' section on the website. Mr. Neto will take care of that tomorrow. In terms of vaccination, anyone over 16 is now eligible for vaccination. Connecticut is one of the leading states in the Country in terms of getting out there and getting the vaccinations done. Chip is also volunteering with the Medical Reserve Corps., giving vaccines in Vernon and Middletown. The process is happening, and the restrictions are loosening. They are still under the face coverings requirements at this point. Travel mandates are now travel recommendations. The update upon return from out of state is that it is no longer mandatory to quarantine, it is recommended. They are still continuing with the Dispatch protocols for COVID screening. That information is going to the crews. They are getting closer to the light at the end of the tunnel.

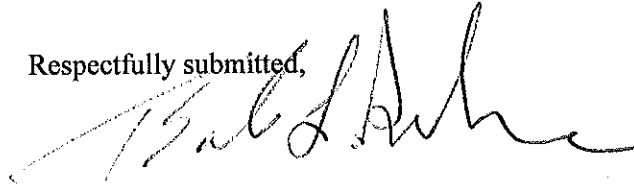
The Executive Director noted that on May 19, 2021, the State through Governor Lamont's office is going to modify or open up the State. Until the District gets that information they may not know. He asked Chip if that date means we can open up all offices, all firehouses to the public. Mr. Darius responded that some of that is still unclear in terms of Connecticut specifically. The way the process is working in other parts of the country is when the Governor removes a statewide recommendation, the specifics of what can be done will be coming specifically from the Governor's office. His expectation is that a statewide mask mandate may be lifted. It would then be up to the counties and towns to look at their numbers. The District wants to be compliant with any local, State or Federal mandates. Commissioner Epstein will also be sharing any information he receives from the State that he has access to. Commissioner Epstein will make sure Chip Darius is on those information sharing emails. He discussed the double mask issue which they have found does not make any difference. The sprayer is off line. It was a CONNOSHA recommendation because it was not an approved method or delivery device for applying disinfectant. That is happening at the same time that the CDC is saying it is highly unlikely to catch COVID from touching something and putting a finger in your eye. Cleaning surfaces are important but not as important as social distancing or respirators.

Regarding Emergency Scene Rehabilitation, it is something that our Department does if there is a large incident or a prolonged incident. There are on scene drinks, cooling and warming stations. There has been confusion over that. OEMS has come out with a policy document that says it is not illegal or inappropriate to do rehab, but you can only do rehab under the guidelines of your sponsor hospital. Chip has asked Rob Ferone and the Chief to find the guidelines from Middlesex. They are in the process of finding those. Every patient interaction that is more than something to drink or a blanket or ice for cooling, once vital signs are taken and assessing fitness for duty, it has to be a documented patient contact with a patient care report and a refusal if they don't go to the hospital. They cannot independently practice rehab medicine without any protocols or oversights. There is a standardized protocol in the OEMS Basic Life Support guidelines that apply statewide. That is the foundation document. In addition any local sponsor hospital protocols for documentation and patient care would have to be followed. That is the active request from Middlesex. Cromwell needs to follow both levels of instruction.

V. Commissioners' Comments. There were no comments from the Commissioners.

VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Executive Director Neto, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Donohue", written in a cursive style.

Robert Donohue, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
5-20-21