

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Fire and Water Divisions

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

6:00 PM

Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

The Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District held their monthly Board of Commissioners' Meeting on Tuesday, February 15, 2022, at 6:00 PM, at the Coles Road Firehouse, 105 Coles Road, Cromwell, CT to discuss and act upon Fire and Water Division business.

Commissioners Lee Brow (President), Jason Hinnners, Charles Epstein, David Colligan, Mertie Terry, Robert McIntyre, Chip Darius and Robert Donohue attended. Commissioner Roger Rukowicz was absent. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balleto, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Accountant Michael Alibrio and Don Smith from Covenant Village.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM, by President Brow. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Brow.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted with the following additions: under New Business, Item G. Fire Marshal and Part Time Fire Inspector approval, and Item H. Discussion on the Executive Order of Apparatus change.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Executive Director submitted some public comment from Firefighter Alan Dominy who was not able to be present because he is out on workers' comp. Mr. Dominy had put his comments in writing. Mr. Neto read them to the group. A copy of the comments is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Dominy identified himself as a senior firefighter in the CFD and also Vice President of Local 4662. He was hired in July 2019, but has yet to be sworn in at a formal ceremony along with all the firefighters that came after him including the Fire Chief. His comments were to request a "swearing in" ceremony to show that the Department recognizes

their accomplishments, and family members can share in their pride and ownership of becoming a firefighter.

The President agreed with the content of Mr. Dominy's comments. The President has discussed this with the Chief and the Executive Director. The members being referred to were sworn in, however, they have not had the ceremony with family and friends that goes along with it. Part of the reason was COVID, and the other part was an issue with uniforms. The Chief reported that Class A uniforms are in, but suggested maybe holding off on the ceremony until the end of the month because there are 5 firefighter candidates that are going to be tested and interviewed this week. Mr. Neto explained that the ceremony should be scheduled for the third or fourth week in March. The President tasked the District with scheduling the ceremony in March. It was agreed to plan this for the last week of March. The day is to be determined depending on how many participants there are and the space needs. The Chief was tasked with finding out an approximate number of attendees to determine what venue to use.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
JANUARY 18, 2022

The Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes from January 18, 2022, had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hanners, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and approved 7 to 0 to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of January 18, 2022, as submitted. Commissioner Terry abstained.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS AND WRITTEN APPEALS
TO THE BOARD

There was a thank you card and prayer card from the Merle "Butch" Reynolds family. The Fire Department was thanked for their presence at the funeral.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's Report for January had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The month was very busy. He reported that the communication project is coming to a close, and the State of CT released the key to Norcom to do the programming.

Mr. Neto also spent time this month getting paperwork together for the application for bonding. Last Thursday the District received a \$2.25 million bond. P.O.'s are being put together to request those funds for purchases. They locked in an interest rate of 1.75% on the bond. John Healy from Ezro Financials is the contact for the bonding.

Mr. Neto added there is work being done at the Tower. AT&T is adding equipment and reinforcements to the Tower.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hanners, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's Report for January as presented.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for January had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Alibrio

reported that both the General Fund and Water are on target this year. There are a few accounts that are not looking that good, but overall they are on target.

Mr. Alibrio should be receiving a draft of the audit by the end of the week. The final draft should be available by the end of next week.

Work is being done to consolidate the District's banking. They are also working with the new ambulance billing company, Shared Response, who will be taking over ambulance billing on March 1, 2022.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for January as presented.

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for January had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Chief had submitted his report along with the Fire Marshal. There have been no changes. He was willing to answer any questions.

President Brow asked about the status of the training program. The Chief stated they will be operating as status quo, however, that is pending based on the workshop being held on the 22nd. Training is still being done with the Fire Rescue Academy. An invitation was sent out to everyone for next Wednesday's class. There will be an outside speaker coming in regarding strategies and tactics for all company officers. It is mandatory training for company officers. They also invited Eric Roberts, Dave Barillaro and Chris Bellamo. They are working to coordinate training and do live fire training. The Chief is going to start mandatory training for hazardous materials in March or April. Infection Control policies also have been reviewed and revised.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for January as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for January had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The President asked about the interconnection project. Mr. Palmieri reported that the project is running smoothly. Mr. Neto added that the District received a draft of the preliminary engineering study. Mr. Neto and Mr. Palmieri are trying to coordinate a meeting with Environmental Partners at the end of the week depending on schedules. Once the draft has been reviewed and the document finalized, it will be passed on to the Water Operations Committee and the Board of Commissioners for review. Once approved it will have to be submitted to the State. The preliminary numbers are a little scarier than anticipated. There are certain construction costs that have gone up in price since they were first presented to the District. The proposal includes three connections rather than two. There will hopefully be a Water Operations Committee meeting before the next Board meeting. Chuck Adelsburger of Environmental Partners was not able to attend the meeting scheduled on February 2 due to a traffic issue. The Water Diversion permit was just completed. Commissioner Epstein thanked Mr. Palmieri for keeping the Water Department information up to date in terms of information submitted to the State Emergency Management office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Operations Report for January as submitted.

- E. Communication Center Report. The Communication Report for January had been previously submitted and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lonergan had a couple of things to add to his report. The District's portion of the radio programming has been completed. The State and Norcom now need to do their part. Once programming is completed, there will be a testing period on a couple of devices.

He has been working with the Chief's office over the last couple of months to update policies and procedures of the Fire Department to coincide with the Communication Center policies and procedures. They are also working with the latest version of the CAD system which integrates hydrants, mapping and NIFRS, etc. Knox boxes have been installed in most places they have been assigned. That program is almost concluded.

Regarding Water Division radios, portables have been distributed and mobiles were given to Chris Logan to be installed. As trucks become available for routine maintenance Mr. Logan will reinstall new radios in those vehicles.

Commissioner Terry asked about the Communication Center status with the Town of Berlin. Mr. Lonergan explained that they currently have a good relationship with Berlin and see it as a positive relationship that will continue and grow over time.

Commissioner Epstein asked if the District was still interested in obtaining another frequency with the radio project. The Executive Director reported that the task has been left with Paul Zito, Clerk of the Works for the Radio project. The District is interested in a frequency they can use for their own purposes. He added they are hard to find, and people don't want to give them up in case they need them. Mr. Zito's main objective is to complete the programming with Norcom and the State first. He will then focus on the frequency issue.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Communication Center report as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations Committee. A meeting was held on Tuesday, January 25, 2022. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the District Operations Committee meeting minutes of January 25, 2022, as submitted.

- B. Executive Committee. There was no meeting.

- C. Fire Operations Committee. A meeting was held on January 24, 2022. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Colligan noted that the minutes were not voted on at the last Fire Operations Committee meeting because the Committee will be meeting next week to review them. Meetings were out of their normal sequence because of scheduled holidays.

1. Communications Committee. There was nothing further to report on communications. The radio project is in its final stages.

2. Apparatus Committee. A meeting was held on Thursday, February 3, 2022. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Hinners reported that it was a brief meeting to discuss the color of the new apparatus. In that meeting it was voted to have red over red.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Apparatus Committee meeting minutes of February 3, 2022, as submitted.

- D. Pension. Commissioner Colligan reported that the Committee is waiting for information from the company managing the Volunteer pension. The Executive Director stated that the Pension Committee and full Board of Commissioners approved the resolution to terminate the volunteer pension plan. He emailed the company a copy of the resolution as well as meeting minutes. He requested a quote for the level of work that is required as well as a timeline that is needed. He also requested referrals of companies that handle this type of work. When all the information is received, it will be presented to the Pension Committee and the Board.

- E. Personnel. A meeting was held on February 8, 2022. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the minutes from the Personnel Committee meeting held on February 8, 2022, as submitted.

- F. Water Operations. A meeting was held on February 2, 2022. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the minutes from the Water Operations Committee meeting of February 2, 2022, as submitted.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. There was no report. No liaison was present.

- B. Reports of the Special Committees

1. Public Safety Tower Committee. There was no meeting.
2. Health & Safety Building Committee. A meeting was held on January 6, 2022. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Health & Safety Building committee meeting minutes of January 6, 2022, as presented.

3. Bylaws Committee. Commissioner Epstein reported there has not been a meeting.
4. Publicity Committee. There was no meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Colligan was informed that one of Cromwell Fire's lifetime members, Bill Gray, is now residing at Autumn Lake in Cromwell. Some of the senior members of the crews might remember him. He asked if the crews are in the vicinity or are there for a transport, to please stop in to say hello. He served the Cromwell Fire Department for many years being the first to get an engine out of the West Street station.

Commissioner Epstein asked about Commissioner Rukowicz. The Executive Director gave an update on Commissioner Rukowicz's condition. He has been hospitalized and is going through some testing. Mr. Neto will keep the Board updated.

Commissioner Darius complimented members of the Fire Department for complying with the Chief's orders on masking and distancing and getting the Department through COVID.

Commissioner Terry asked about fire programs for the schools. She asked about Fire Prevention specifically. She remembers seeing displays of artwork from the kids during Fire Prevention week. COVID challenges did not allow for the school programs to continue. The Chief responded that before COVID, they had just completed the poster contest for fire prevention. The schools have asked the FMO to hold off on any programs until April when COVID restrictions are lifted. The Department also plans on doing Career night at the high school. The Chief has reached out to the teachers via email with contact information, so that they can contact the Chief's office when it is appropriate for fire programs to start up again. Assistant Chief Brade discussed the program they are establishing at Vinal Tech.

Commissioner Hinnners thanked the Chief and his office for the show of support at the funeral of one of his family members. Instead of a thank you card, he wanted to express his gratitude in person.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There was an adjustment to the water capital fund. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to be it resolved that the Board of Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District consider and act upon a resolution to approve budgetary adjustments to the Water Capital Fund budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, as reflected in the worksheet provided by Michael Alibrio of CLA at the Board of Commissioners' meeting of February 15, 2022. To transfer available funds for the SCADA system; \$10,000 from Water Capital—Remote Data Collection System (35912-5730) to Water Capital—SCADA System (35958-5740).
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to report.
- D. Discussion and Decision on Coles Road AED Cost Out of Trust Fund. There was a need assessed by the Fire Operations Committee that an AED and First Aid material be

purchased and available for the Coles Road firehouse. This item was identified as a critical need and was expedited for purchase. There is a Trust fund that has been established to be used for critical need. The approximate cost is \$1,700. If Funds are used from the Trust Fund they must be approved by the Board. If it is not approved to use the Trust fund, the money will come from the Fire Operations budget. After discussion with the Fire Operations Committee, it was felt that the Trust Fund was established for purchases such as this one.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan but not approved to use funds from the Trust Fund to purchase the AED and first aid equipment for the Coles Road firehouse.

Commissioner McIntyre noted that if this equipment is needed at the other firehouses, why not take care of that at this meeting tonight.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to use funds from the Trust Fund to purchase AED and First Aid equipment for all three firehouses including cabinets and signage.

Mr. Lonergan added that regarding security upgrades which will happen in a couple of months, it is possible to arm the AED's. If the cabinet comes ajar, it will send a signal to Dispatch.

- E. Discussion and Possible Approval of \$10,000 Donation from the Dolores Lammers-Padwater Living Trust to be used to help purchase a Lucas Machine. A generous donation of \$10,000 was given to the Fire Department a few weeks back. Over the last couple of years, the Fire Operations group through the Chief's office has been looking for a Lucas Machine. The \$10,000 would pay for 65% of the Lucas machine. Through the budget process or possibly some savings, the Executive Director challenged the Chief's office to find the other \$6,000 between now and the end of the fiscal year. Commissioner Colligan suggested if the Chief cannot find the additional \$6,000, that the Trust Fund be considered. That is what the Trust Fund was set up for. Commissioner Darius suggested an identification of the donor on the machine by way of a plaque or something similar. Mr. Neto thought that the Trust Fund was a good suggestion. \$6,500 can be requested from the Trust fund and would be quicker than waiting until the end of the fiscal year.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to use the \$10,000 donation for the purchase of a Lucas Machine.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to take the remaining balance for the Lucas Machine, \$6,500, from the Trust Fund. Mr. Alibrio advised that there is a balance of \$77,000 in the Trust Fund. Commissioner Colligan reminded everyone that the money in the fund is not tax payer dollars but money received from their annual drive. Chief Balletto thanked the Board for allowing the Fire Department to use the donation for the Lucas Machine. The Chief would like to have some publicity when the machine is received and would like to invite the family to the event to acknowledge their generous donation and what it was used for. They would like to dedicate it to the firehouse and the Lammers-Padwater family. It was agreed to have some publicity on this as well as include it in the quarterly newsletter. There was discussion about a picture with the family and plaque at each firehouse.

- F. Approval of Out of State Travel for the Navigator Conference. The Communications Manager explained that the Communication Center uses the National Academy EMD and EFD call-taking procedures. In the past they have sent dispatchers to the national conference. They had planned two years ago to send two people. Because of COVID that did not happen. Last year they wanted to go, and the conference was held but heavily restricted so Cromwell did not attend. The last two years Mr. Lonergan had budgeted for travel for two dispatchers. This year he also budgeted for two dispatchers. He has priced out flights, hotel and registration. The total was \$1,500 - \$1,600 per person. He believes he can get a third person down there within the \$5,000 window, maybe a little bit more than that. Chief Balletto has also expressed an interest in attending. Those travel funds would come from the Fire Department budget. If the Chief is approved to travel as well, there will be four people traveling. Mr. Lonergan does have some extra funds in his training account if it goes over \$5,000 for his three employees to travel. He would really like to get the dispatchers down to this conference since they had missed it for the last two years. It also covers their recertification commitment for the two year recertification cycle.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to allow three Communication Center staff to attend the Navigator Conference at a cost not to exceed \$5,500. Commissioner Epstein, who has been involved with the Navigator conference for many years, added that this is the number one conference for Dispatchers to attend. The Board should continue to think about sending two or three dispatchers every year. Commissioner Darius reiterated what Commissioner Epstein had said regarding the conference. He added that it is an incredibly important and powerful conference. He strongly urged the Chief to attend if possible. He encouraged all those attending to do their best to begin to make plans to become an Accredited Center of Excellence. Mr. Lonergan noted that they are making or exceeding accreditation levels through their EMD and EFD quality assurance program month over month. One of Mr. Lonergan's plans is to begin the accreditation process.

- G. Fire Marshal and Part-Time Fire Inspector Approval. The Executive Director reported that the Personnel Committee at their last meeting approved Acting Fire Marshal Harold Holmes being promoted to full-time Fire Marshal; and Acting Part-Time Fire Inspector Colin Whalen being appointed to Part-Time Fire Inspector.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Personnel Committee's recommendation to appoint Harold Holmes as full-time Fire Marshal and Colin Whalen as Part-Time Fire Inspector. Commissioner Epstein added that he has worked in the past with both Colin and Harold. Both individuals are very competent and have been doing an excellent job for the District in their acting roles.

- H. Discussion on Executive Order for the Apparatus Change. The President received numerous text and phone messages from people that were adamant about the two tone color idea of the cab of the new apparatus. With the history of the Fire Department, the President had suggested a grey color for the two-tone color of the cab in addition to red. The grey would represent the color of the former volunteer organization's uniform color. The President was not able to attend the Apparatus Committee meeting where this was discussed. However, he was informed that the grey color was not very appealing unless it was metallic. There was an additional upcharge for a metallic color. The Apparatus

Committee voted to have the color of the cab red over red. The President received numerous complaints. He received support from five Commissioners to have the cab white over red as has been the tradition. He issued an Executive Order to the Executive Director to contact the manufacturer/distributor at his earliest convenience to see if a change order would be possible. It was possible, and the change order was placed. The President was looking for official approval from the Board so there is feedback from both sides because there is the opportunity for the Board to override the President's executive decision.

Commissioner Epstein did not agree to spend the additional money for the color of the cab. He did not think that the color of fire trucks puts out fires or saves lives. He did not think that spending \$1,800 additional to take a truck that was already painted and repaint part of it is a waste of money that they need to buy equipment for the first responders. He does not think it is good use of funds. He cannot support this motion because there is equipment that the members need that is not being purchased because the Department doesn't have the money.

Commissioner Colligan added that the original order was white over red. The Chief confirmed that the original order for white over red was for the Fire/Rescue, and the paint was no additional cost. The Fire engine was a stock model already being built, and was built for complete red. Commissioner Hinners agreed that the color does not put out a fire. He noted that the color matters to the members who have to look at it every day, washing it, going to kids birthday parties around town, swearing in ceremonies in front of new pieces of apparatus, etc. It is a quarter of a percent of the total cost of the apparatus.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and approved 7 to 1 to accept the Executive Order to paint the cab of the new apparatus white over red. Commissioner Epstein was opposed. Commissioner Darius added that the white over red is consistent with the rest of the fleet. Fleet continuity is important. It is a source of pride and professionalism within the Department. The minuscule cost of this minor paint change is inconsequential in his opinion, and he fully supports the motion. Commissioner McIntyre attended the Apparatus Committee meeting and made comments at that meeting. He had the same comments as that meeting which was the white over red to keep the fleet consistent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. James Rude, Highridge Road, Cromwell. Regarding his comments from the last meeting, he thanked the Recording Secretary. He still stood firm on the timely completion of the 2021 audit, including balance sheet information in the monthly financial report; also changes to the budget location and process for the upcoming budget vote, and the need for the Commission to begin to do some long-range planning. He had a quote from an anonymous source, "do not be afraid of change, be afraid of not changing." He has been coming to these meetings for a while now after having the Commission indicate last summer that input from the public is very important. Communication, however, involves a dialogue which is two-way conversations. So far his experience here at Commission meetings has been that communication has only been a monologue involving the public. He is disappointed that so far the Commission seems to indicate that they are not really interested in communication with or from the public and is frowned upon.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to enter into Executive Session at 7:14 PM, inviting all the Commissioners and the Executive Director to the session.

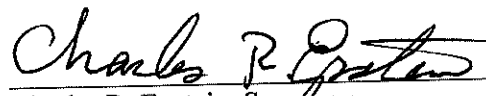
A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to adjourn Executive Session at 7:26 PM. No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 PM.

ATTEST:

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary


Charles R. Epstein, Secretary