

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, March 14, 2022

5:30 PM

**Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT**

Present: Commissioners David Colligan (Chairman), Jason Hinnners, Robert Donohue and Charles Epstein. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade and Fire Marshal Harold Holmes.

- 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 Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Approval of Meeting Minutes of February 22, 2022. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of February 22, 2022, as presented.
- IV. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- V. Communications Report. Mr. Lonergan reported that regarding the Communications Project, everything is still waiting on Norcom and the State. He has not been asked any questions, and he is waiting to hear back from them. He will try to send an email again to see if they can give the District a date of completion or timeline. Up to this point, the State has not provided that information, even though they have been asked before. When the State has approved the programming, it will get shipped back to Norcom. Norcom will then do the programming. This is what Paul Zito has advised. Everything is progressing. There were a couple of questions that were answered early on pretty rapidly.

The Chairman asked about the progress on the frequencies. The frequencies that were identified as being Cromwell frequencies were sent to Mr. Zito for investigation. He reported that all the frequencies were identified or being used for a specific purpose. They wanted to look at the programming before they started looking at the fireground situation. It is sort of on the back burner until they get the programming completed.

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

- VI. Reports of Chief Officers. The Chief's Report for February has been submitted to the Executive Director's office. There were no changes to the report. The Chief was available to answer any questions. The Department has been very busy with calls. They also hired five new career firefighters. They will begin working on Monday, March 21, 2022, at 8:00 AM. They will be working for five days straight to get on the level they need to be so they can begin their assigned shifts starting the following Monday, March 28.

Chairman Colligan asked the Chief if the new truck is still planned to be ready at the end of March or has it been pushed off to April. The Chief thought that it may get pushed back to early April because of the changes that were done regarding paint a couple of weeks ago.

The Chief also reported that they had Mutual Aid come into Town nine times this month. They also did Mutual Aid for Hunter's five times. Three in Middletown, one in New Britain and one in Portland.

Ass't Chief Brade reported that they are working on a few things with the new recruits. They started an orientation schedule. They will be participating in the annual St. Patrick's Day 50th Anniversary parade in Hartford. They will be doing standby coverage for the Town of Rocky Hill Thursday evening and Friday morning for the wake and funeral of their fallen fire fighter. They are also working on SOP's. In another month or two they will be getting ready for the TPC.

- A. Fire Marshal's Office Report. Harold Holmes reported that the report was submitted to the Executive Director's Office. There have been no changes to the report. The Fire Marshal was available to answer any questions. There were 196 calls during the month of February. One was a structure fire, and one was a chimney fire.

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

- VII. Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response Capability. Chairman Colligan wanted to add an item to the agenda permanently under this heading which will be, "Status of Volunteer Fire Department." He would like to see this on the agenda beginning next month.

VIII. Old Business

- A. Firehouse "Safe Haven" Discussion. The Chief spoke with Ann Adams from DCF who pointed the Chief in the right direction. If Cromwell decides to go the "Safe Haven" direction, it will not be a cheap undertaking. It would cost between \$15,000 - \$20,000. That is also including putting in some infrastructure to the firehouse because there will need to be a drop box installed with an alarm system and electricity connected to it. The Fire Department would also have to do significant training because the fire staff would be considered "counselors." Due to the price and responsibilities of being a safe haven, he is trying to take another route by maybe putting up signage at all the firehouses providing information from United Way, 201. This is a similar procedure to what is done for safe havens. Ms. Adams told the Chief it is very rare that departments have this type of request because it is not seen a lot throughout the State of CT. It is primarily used within the hospital systems. The loophole is to go through United Way. Ms. Adams is looking for additional information through United Way. The Chief will pass along any new information to the Committee.

The Executive Director was looking for some direction from the Committee. Since this project comes with a substantial price tag, he wanted to know if this was something that should be considered in the upcoming budget talks for the Fire Department. The Chairman wanted to bring this up before the full Board of Commissioners. He felt that the Fire Department is going to be going through a lot of changes and some of the costs associated with those things could be incorporated into some of those changes. He would still like to see more information from the Chief.

The Chief also learned that only a handful of personnel can be responsible for a safe haven. That would mean talking about all kinds of overtime and costs. Another responsibility would be going out to counsel if they receive a phone call that someone is thinking about dropping off a baby. The boxes would have to be installed through the brick and mortar of all three firehouses. There also needs to be an alert system installed on the cell phones of those who are responsible for the program.

The Department would be following the State of CT rules with DCF. The Chief has a video of what the box is and the whole process with it. This program was started about 10 years ago. The cost was roughly \$10,000 and was used in the South and Midwest. It is not practiced regularly in the State of CT. The other Commissioners on the Committee wanted more information before making a decision. If they go with additional signage, they will need to go through a State attorney for approval of the signage. Trained Crisis Intervention personnel would be needed. The Chair and Vice Chair did not think anything needed to be planned regarding budget dollars. They did not have enough information to make a decision.

- B. Discussion on Utilization of Court Street and Coles Road Firehouses. The Executive Director reported that they are in the process of gathering information. One issue that has come up is that the Coles Road firehouse does not have full redundancy for air conditioning for the generator. Unlike Court Street and West Street, once power is lost, they have backup through a generator. Mr. Neto reported that he is meeting on Friday with an electrical vendor. He is planning to bring in two electrical vendors to assess what they do have at Coles Road and determine what it would take to become fully operational. There needs to be more information on the project and its cost. They are also evaluating the exhaust system in the bay. The Coles Road station was designed to be a drive-through so all exhaust hoses are on the wrong side if the Department wants to maximize multiple apparatus including ambulances. They are looking at how they would manage the apparatus and exhaust system and what needs to be modified within that system.

They need more information before they can present anything to the Fire Operations Committee or full Board of Commissioners. The Chairman felt that this project will become a project with a budget, and the Committee is going to have to stand by the budget item.

Mr. Neto reported that Court Street was also evaluated, with a focus on plumbing. Some structural assessments will be required. Architectural and engineering drawings may need to be pulled to create livable space. This could be a greater expense than was originally expected. They do not want to start any work at Court Street until they evaluate everything at Coles Road. Modifications at Coles Road could be less expensive than Court Street. That has yet to be determined. The two electrical vendors are Lighthouse and Tuttle Electric. There will be more to come on this issue.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the information provided regarding the utilization of the Court Street and Coles Road firehouses.

- C. Fee Schedule for Emergency Calls. The Chief had a sample fee schedule used by Shared Response for the Town of Brookfield for emergency calls. They are a client of Shared Response. There were different types of rescues that were listed along with fees charged. If the Department gets assistance from DEEP, they could most likely be reimbursed for equipment used. The Chief reviewed all the items on the list. The items listed are charged to the insurance companies, not the individuals. The only one that would charge the individual would be a Hazmat situation. The Chairman asked the Chief to email the list discussed at this meeting to all the Commissioners for review. There was discussion on what types of incidents should be billed.

The Chief suggested that this be tabled for a couple of months to see how we are doing. Right now there are a lot of changes going on in the Fire Department. They recently changed over their medical billing company. He and Lt. Wolmetz were able to QA 250 medical reports in a matter of 2 weeks. 132 claims were billed out. They also just introduced the ordinance fees. He feels the Department should focus right now on what they have started. When they are ready, the Chief can have Sandra come in and re-introduce the fee schedule for emergency calls and explain the procedures. For now the Chief would just like to see the Department focus on some of the new policies and procedures that have been established, and see what kind of revenue is being brought in.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to table this item for 90 days. Chairman Colligan asked the Chief to have Sandra email any other related information to the Commissioners within the 90-day period. The Fire Marshal will also research Westfield Fire to determine what their fees are and who they use for billing.

- IX. New Business. There was no new business to report.

- X. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Epstein went to the Family Resource and Preschool Expo with some of the crews, the Chief and the Executive Director last week. He ran into a neighbor who wanted him to know how much she appreciates the Fire Department and EMS people. Her husband had passed away about a year ago. He had been the Town's Medical Director at one time. She could not say enough about the care she got from the Fire and EMS people. She asked if they accept donations. He asked that the Chief pass this story along to the crews. It is the kind of publicity the District likes to hear.

Commissioner Donohue commented on the number of violations in the FMO report for Champions Skating Rink. Mr. Holmes noted that the Rink has become run down. Recently it was bought out by Black Bear Sports. The new company will be taking over the maintenance and management of the skating rink. They are hoping for more improvements.

- XI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary

David J. Colligan, Chairman

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