

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Special Board of Commissioners Meeting

Thursday, February 17, 2022

6:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

A Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting was held on Thursday, February 17, 2022, at 6:30 PM, at the Coles Road Firehouse, 105 Coles Road, Cromwell, CT to consider and act upon Special Fire District business to come to a decision on Fire Marshal Fees/Ordinance.

Commissioners Jason Hidders (Vice President), Mertie Terry, Robert Donohue, Robert McIntyre and Chip Darius attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Fire Marshal Harold Holmes and Firefighter Lt. William McKnight.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 6:40 PM, by Vice President Hidders.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. Mr. James Rude, Highridge Rd., wanted to speak about the process followed by the Commission. Transparency is the basis of trust, being honest and open when communicating with stakeholders about business matters. Effective communication is a prerequisite for transparency and requires proper planning. The use of special public hearings and special committee meetings for matters, many of which are routine, is unfortunate. Tonight's agenda item years in the making is another example of an item that he believes should have been addressed in a more timely fashion. At the annual budget meeting there were over 220 people who were in attendance. At the meeting to vote on new capital items including apparatus there was maybe 24 people. Tonight there is less than half of that. It is clear that the use of special meetings makes it very hard for people to get information to be able to come and attend and speak their peace if they so choose. Having been here at the Commission meeting on Tuesday, he finds it hard to believe that there was not even a mention at that meeting about tonight's meeting.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Discussion and Possible Decision on Fire Marshal Fees/Ordinance. The Executive Director began by mentioning the Public Hearing that was just held before this meeting regarding the ordinances which are required by CT State Statute. The Commissioners all

received draft copies of the ordinances prior to the meeting. There were not many public comments made at the hearing. Mr. Neto was available to answer any questions.

The Fire Marshal's Office is mandated to do some of the work noted in the ordinance and fee schedule. This ordinance will provide some revenue recognizing the importance of the work as well as to use some of those dollars for infrastructure in the FMO such as software upgrades. It was stated at the hearing the Town has a lot of fee structures that they collect from to support their services which runs parallel with the Fire Marshal services. A lot of the fees will be coming from entities that are profiting from the Fire Marshal services.

The Executive Director thought that the fees were reasonable. It puts them in a position to manage and govern some areas that have not been managed before through the fee and application process. He hoped and strongly requested that the Commissioners support the ordinance. It has been a long time coming. He noted that this process had a few starts over the years, and at that time he did not know why it did not go through. There were different views and interpretations on what the District can do vs. the Town. They conducted a 6--9 month period of research for clarity.

Commissioner McIntyre stated that it is time the District/FMO started collecting for services. He stated that everyone else is doing it, and it is the "norm" in the industry. The District should take advantage of that. Commissioner Darius found the fees to be reasonable and customary, and he supports the fees and schedule proposed.

Commissioner Terry asked who was going to collect the fees. Mr. Neto explained that invoices will be produced through the Fire Marshal's Office, and will be collected on the second floor of West St., by the Water District administration. That is the same place water bills are paid. The process will be that prior to the service being given, a check or appropriate payment will be submitted prior to the service being provided.

Commissioner Terry asked how the public will be made aware of the fee schedule. The response was that if fees are passed tonight, there will be an ad in the paper advertising that the ordinance was passed. It will guide the public to the full, complete list on the website. The District will wait 30 days until they implement any fees. The Executive Director, Fire Chief and Fire Marshal will draft a letter to be sent out prior to implementing fees. They will also communicate with Cromwell's building department and Town Hall advising of the ordinance and the new fees. It was noted that the fees affect business owners in Town rather than homeowners. Mr. Holmes explained that there is only one fee for homeowners and that would be for a multifamily dwelling. The fee would be \$25, and that would be for a 3 family or larger. The majority of what will be billed is businesses that are corporate owned.

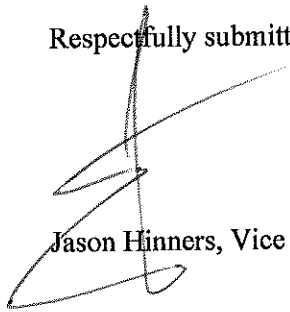
Commissioner Donohue stated that he has been in support of this for a long time. Commissioner Darius had comments regarding plan reviews. On page 1, under Purpose and Authority, it discusses setting fees for permits and inspections, but does not talk about a fee for reviewing plans. The second section discusses the establishment of fees based on the issuance of a permit or the time of the inspection, but does not mention reviewing plans. It does not say in the ordinance the amount that will be paid in advance of a plan review. There is also Fire Watch mentioned which is a service, not an inspection, a plan review or a permit. There is no mention that the purpose of the

ordinance is to collect a fee for Fire Watch or other services. The changes discussed will be incorporated into the document.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the ordinance establishing FMO fees and payable under Building, Fire and Demolition code, Fire Marshals and Fire Hazards, Safety of Public and Fire Marshal inspections.

- V. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Darius commented that this was a job well done by all those who have gotten it to this point.
- VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Jason Hanners, Vice President

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary