

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, June 21, 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, June 21, 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, Roger Rukowicz, Robert Donohue, Mertie Terry, Chip Darius and Robert McIntyre attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan, Fire Marshal Harold Holmes, Accountant Michael Alibrio, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri and Fire Lt. Brett Hallden.

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 Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as presented with the addition of Item G. under New Business, Discussion of Mike Alibrio's resignation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.

SWEARING IN OF FIREFIGHTER JARRED FONGEMIE

At 6:20 PM, Firefighter Jarred Fongemie was sworn in as a new career firefighter. The President read the oath, and Mr. Fongemie repeated the oath after the President. Mr. Fongemie's father pinned his badge.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
MAY 17, 2022

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of May 17, 2022, as submitted. Commissioners Colligan and Epstein abstained.

APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING MINUTES AND VOTE OF
MAY 23, 2022

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Annual Budget Meeting minutes and vote of May 23, 2022, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

There were 3 pieces of correspondence. Commissioner Epstein read them.

The first was a thank you note from Lily David, recipient of the Donald Harris Scholarship for 2022.

The second was a letter from the Executive Director of Covenant Living of Cromwell thanking the District for the generous supply of masks they donated to that community.

The third was a communication requesting a sponsorship with the Cromwell Creative District. They are asking the District to become a donor for them. There are different levels of donorship. James Demetriades is the Chair of the Cromwell Creative District and sent the letter. They would like the District to make a donation by June 24, 2022. The information was passed around the table so all Commissioners could review.

There was also a communication from the officers of Local 4662, Lt. Brett Hallden, requesting a meeting to bargain with the District regarding the Municipal Employees Relations Act, the subject of scheduling regarding Part-Time employees in the role of firefighter/EMT.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's Report for May had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Neto had nothing to add to his report but was willing to answer any questions. Commissioner Donohue discussed, "working with other contractors for the reinforcement of the Tower project." He wanted to know if the District was paying for that. Mr. Neto replied that it is on AT&T's dime. They have provided the District with \$124,000 to support the reinforcement project and provide them with additional space on the Tower.

Mr. Neto discussed a letter he sent on June 8 to the following: Lt. Barry Wolmetz, FF Ryan Blaney, FF/EMT Alan Dominy, Jarred Fongemie, Philip Newly, Chris Parker, Daniel Rodriquez and Connor Toomey. The District received a communication from Middlesex Paramedic, Jim Santacroce. It was well received by the Chief's Office and EMS. He wanted to go on the record as recognizing a job well done. This was regarding a MVA on Rte. 9 on June 7. Mr. Neto read the letter he drafted for those members. He wanted to reinforce that the men and women of the Fire Department do a great job every day, and it was recognized

by someone from the hospital that they work with who took the time to document it up the chain of command. This was only one event, but this type of work happens on a daily basis.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's Report for May as submitted.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for May had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Alibrio reported that everything is looking good. They are on target to come in under budget in both the Water Enterprise and General Fund at the end of the fiscal year. The collection process has been working much better with Shared Response as the new vendor. A meeting was held with Shared Response a couple of weeks ago. They are working with the District more efficiently than the previous vendor. Revenue is also up.

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

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Chief had no changes to his report. Since March 1, the Chief, Megan Petrucelli, Lt. Wolmetz and Lt. McKnight QA'd 700 EMS reports. He was willing to answer any questions.

1. Fire Marshal's Office. The Fire Marshal's Report for May had been previously distributed and reviewed. There were no changes to the report. He was willing to answer any questions. Mr. Holmes has added the fee structure to the last page of his report. It gives a total of fees collected for the month. Regarding the TPC, Mr. Holmes has been monitoring things there.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Chief and Fire Marshal reports for May as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for May had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. He distributed copies of pictures of the new trucks for the Water Division. They added the safety reflective striping on it. He wanted to show everyone what it would look like. He was available to answer any questions.

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

- E. Communication Center Report. The Communication Center Report for May had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lonergan has been involved in contract negotiations with the Dispatchers' Union. The second page that was submitted with this report is the Agency Performance Benchmark for the QA program. They have reached the "green" level which is good. They are meeting accreditation levels month over month. The report indicates a 3-month average. The information was from March 1, 2022, to May 31, 2022. Commissioner Darius congratulated the team and asked about the timeline. He wanted to know how many months in a row they need to submit to the Ace program. The accreditation process is many months long. The first step is the application process. They are meeting accreditation levels

and would love to get accredited, but there is a time and financial commitment that will need to be taken into consideration in the future if the District wants to pursue that route.

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

The President called for a break at 6:20 PM, in order to do the swearing in of Firefighter Jarred Fongemie.

The President resumed the meeting at 6:30 PM.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations. There was no meeting.
- B. Executive. There was no meeting.
- C. Fire Operations. A meeting was held on May 16, 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 Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of May 16, 2022, as submitted.

1. Communications Committee. Commissioner Colligan reported that at the Fire Operations Committee meeting last night there was a discussion about reprogramming. It is in the process. Mr. Lonergan has been working hard with the consultant to get approval from the State. There are delays on the State side of things. The Committee will be monitoring the situation. At some point a decision will have to be made to program with the State or without. There was also discussion at last night's Operations meeting about the generator at Holy Apostles and the need for some type of access road.
2. Apparatus Committee. Meetings were held on May 3, 2022, and June 8, 2022. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

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

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Apparatus Committee meeting minutes of June 8, 2022, as submitted. Commissioners Colligan and Hinnners abstained.

- D. Pension Committee. Commissioner Colligan reported that the Executive Director will be scheduling a meeting within the next couple of weeks with the Financial Advisors to discuss the market situation. Another meeting will need to be scheduled after that with the company managing the pension which is Future Plan. Commissioner Colligan has been doing a lot of research on volunteer pensions as there are some discrepancies when information was transferred from the old pension company to Future Plan. The Communications Manager was able to assist with older records.

- E. Personnel Committee. Meetings were held on June 6, 2022, and June 14, 2022. Minutes were previously distributed and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. It was noted that minutes were not available for the Personnel Committee meeting of June 14, 2022.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Personnel Committee meeting minutes of June 6, 2022, as presented. Commissioner Terry abstained.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to table the Personnel Committee meeting minutes of June 14, 2022.

- F. Water Operations Committee. A meeting was held on May 4, 2022. Minutes were tabled from last month. They have been previously distributed and reviewed for this meeting. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Rukowicz noted that the next quarterly meeting is scheduled for August 3, 2022, at 5:30 PM, at Coles Road.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Water Operations Committee meeting minutes from May 4, 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 liaison present.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
1. Public Safety Tower Committee. Commissioner Rukowicz noted the next quarterly meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 2, 2022, at 10 AM, at 1 West St.
 2. Health & Safety/Building Committee. There was no meeting.
 3. Bylaws Committee. There was no meeting, but the Committee is in the process of scheduling a meeting to finalize any proposed changes.
 4. Publicity Committee. There was no meeting. The Committee is working to schedule a meeting in preparation of the July water bill mailing.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Hinnners referred to the letter the Board received from the Cromwell Creative District that was read under Item VI. tonight. They were looking for donations for their Summer Fest.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to donate \$100 as a Summer Fest supporter. It was noted that the donation will come from the Commissioners' account.

Commissioner Darius expressed his concerns and well wishes to the firefighters that were injured in the training exercise. He hoped for a quick return to health. He asked how the investigation will proceed and what role the Fire District will play in that.

There was some discussion about the incident which occurred at the Newington Fire Training facility. There were 6 firefighters that were transported to the hospital. Two of them were from Cromwell. Chief Balletto gave an update on the two Cromwell firefighters. One returned to work yesterday. That person sustained blisters on the left and right arms. The other will be taken to the Bridgeport burn Center by Chief Balletto as a follow-up from the firefighter's PCP and the hospital. Tomorrow afternoon he will be interviewed by the Newington Fire Marshal and OSHA as part of the investigation. The Chief would like to bring the injured firefighter to the next Health & Safety/Bldg. Committee meeting so he can explain the chain of events that day. The Chief suggested having that discussion in executive session.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no budgetary adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to report.
- D. Update on Gardiner Well Permit Status. The Executive Director gave a brief update explaining that the District is in the process of getting diversion permits with DEEP. They already have a temporary one to sell water to Berlin. The permit that allows Cromwell to pump 4 million gallons a day is due next month. Cromwell has not run into any issues. DEEP is looking to reduce the amount of gallons on the permit. Cromwell is not in agreement with this. There was a meeting with Middletown 3 weeks ago. They anticipate in the very near future needing Cromwell water to supplement their supply due to the growth of the Town in certain areas. They were asked to go on record with DEEP. Cromwell's case is that they may not need the extra supply now, but it doesn't mean they will not need it in the future.
- E. Update on Interconnection Project. Mr. Neto explained the District is still working with DEEP, Middletown and the State of CT. The Board has allocated \$182,000. That is part of what is needed financially. They are looking for a final design quote which will be closer to \$300,000. Two-thirds of that cost has already been allocated in the budget. They are working with the State to start the application process for a loan. Because the District did not have the money up front, the process will be delayed 4 – 6 mos. What needs to happen is a Public Hearing to inform the public what the plans are for interconnection. The engineering consultant will be available at that meeting to give a presentation to explain the process. The project was approved by the Board, but the funding needs to come from the taxpayers. A District meeting will need to be scheduled so the public can vote to approve the funding of the project.

Commissioner Donohue excused himself at 6:55 PM, to attend a Cromwell P & Z meeting.

- F. Update on Travelers' Tournament. Chief Balletto reported that everything is going well. They have had staff there every day since Monday. There are four people assigned there now. They will have 2 additional people there, and there will be an engine and ambulance

there. Every half hour they are going to Corporate Row to make sure there is fire protection at all times. The Fire Marshal has been to the morning meetings representing the Fire District.

The Fire Marshal shared some concerns about the sky box at the 17th hole. They are not allowed to store mechanicals under the seating for bleachers according to fire code. He was told that this practice has been happening since 2014. Mr. Holmes noted that the fire codes changed in 2015, and they were done again in 2018. He will have to research the codes again to see if there has been a change. There are electrical connections as well as HVAC units underneath the bleachers. There are also several large freezers with compressors and ice machines. There will need to be another way of doing this next year. Mr. Holmes advised them that this situation cannot happen again next year.

- G. Resignation of Michael Alibrio. The President announced that the Finance Manager for the District, Michael Alibrio, is resigning from his position at the District. It is sad news for the District, but good news for Mike. The Executive Director wanted to publicly thank Mike Alibrio and his partner Bob Davis who have been working with the District for the last almost 10 years as an outside consultant/vendor, and has led the District through some very challenging and crazy financial times. This is a very key position in the Fire District. Mike Alibrio works for CLA which is an accounting firm that Cromwell used to find a financial manager. CLA will not be looking to replace Mike with another one of their staff. Therefore, there will be no support from the vendor for Mike's replacement.

The Executive Director explained there are two options available to the District. The first is to bring someone in to do exactly what Mike does whether it be another accounting firm or individual. Mike will be working with the District until July 28.

The second option is to take the opportunity with the Town to see if they can take on some of the financial responsibilities. Mr. Neto did not know what the capacity or timeline would be. He did not know if the Town could accommodate the District. He is looking for suggestions on how to fill the void as quickly as possible. This is a big task, and there are not a lot of people out there. Mr. Neto would like the opportunity to work with the President or Chair of Personnel to untie the bureaucracy so that the District can get the person vetted or have the Town spend some quality time with the person because there is so much detail.

Mr. Alibrio stated that when he started with the District he was working for a small accounting firm. He has survived two mergers of his employer and it is no longer what he signed up for. Mike will make himself available to assist with the transition. President Brow thanked him for his service.

President Brow noted that they have had some situations in the past where they have had to fast track certain positions in the interest of time. This is one of those situations where in the interest of time the President and the Executive Director will need to fast track this position due to the amount of information and knowledge required for the position.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to have the Executive Director and the President fast track the recruitment for this position by doing the interview process and rather than going to the Personnel Committee for approval and then the full Board of Commissioners, it would go from the Executive Director and President directly to the full Board of Commissioners for approval.

There was a brief discussion regarding the letter the Commission received from the Firefighters' Union requesting a meeting to bargain related to the Municipal Employees Relations Act and part-time firefighters. The Executive Director needs to know what the issue is or the proposal is. He will also need to consult with the District's attorney on these matters. He will keep the Board updated.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.


EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no issues to be discussed in Executive Session at this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Hanners, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 PM.

ATTEST:



Charles R. Epstein, Secretary

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary