

# 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, September 20, 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, September 20, 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 Hinnars, Charles Epstein, David Colligan, Mertie Terry, Roger Rukowicz, Robert Donohue and Robert McIntyre attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan, Financial Manager Mike Lupkas, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri and Fire Marshal Harold Holmes. Commissioner Chip Darius and Fire Chief Jason Balletto were absent.

### 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.

In recognition of the events of the weekend which was the ceremony at the International Association of Firefighters' Fallen Firefighter Memorial in Colorado, a moment of silence was held for the 469 names that were read this past Saturday, one of them being Cromwell's past Fire Marshal Todd Gagnon.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

*A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted with the following addition under new business, Item F. Discussion and Possible Decision on Driver-Only Role within the Cromwell Fire Department.*

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Fire Lieutenant Bill McKnight gave a brief report on the trip to Colorado for the Fallen Firefighter Ceremony. He had some pictures from the event that he would be emailing to the Commissioners. He thought it was the most important event he has attended as a member of the

Firefighters' Union. It was hard to describe, but those that attended agreed that it is something to be experienced. There was a 10-hour practice on Friday prior to the ceremony so the ceremony was executed perfectly.

Lt. McKnight also commented that a while back, he along with Lt. Zadrick and Lt. Wolmetz were sworn in to be Fire Inspectors in the Fire Marshal's Office. Deputy Fire Marshal Colin Whalen has received a new assignment in the New Haven Fire Department to work Monday through Friday in their Fire Marshal's Office. This means that Mr. Whalen will not be available for the Cromwell Fire Marshal's Office.

Fire Marshal Harold Holmes is due to go on vacation in October. Because of a lack of FMO staff, his vacation was canceled by the Chief because there was no coverage for the FMO. Lt. McKnight noted that the District paid for 3 lieutenants to go to fire inspection school and suggested that the District use them. His suggestion for monetary compensation is to use the lieutenants on the weeks that they work 24 hours. Lt. McKnight stated he is available if needed.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF  
AUGUST 16, 2022

*A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and approved 6 to 0 to accept the Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes of August 16, 2022, as submitted. Commissioners Terry and Colligan abstained.*

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING OF  
AUGUST 30, 2022

*A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes of August 30, 2022, as submitted.*

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

There were no communications or written appeals to report.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's Report for August had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Neto was available to answer any questions. Commissioner Colligan asked if the M&T Bank merging issues are affecting the Fire District. Mr. Neto noted that the water billing deposits are part of remote depositing that was handled by People's Bank which is merging with M&T. The issues are there, but the Fire District had decided to switch to Citizens Bank for its water account needs prior to the M&T banking merge. There will be a learning curve getting acclimated to the new banking.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's report for August as submitted.*

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for August had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lupkas was available to answer any questions. He added that the District had just received a check

from the Town for tax collection for approximately \$630,000 that was not reflected in the report. Year to date right now, approximately \$2.7 million has been collected including money from the State which would be about 58% of the levy. In comparison to prior years, this is a respectable number. The EMS receipts are exceeding last year by 42%. There were more claims the first two months of the fiscal year, and the recovery of the fees followed. As part of the preparation of the audit they review each account to verify accuracy. He is hoping to have things ready earlier than in the past. Some of the problem areas over the last couple of years seem to be resolved already. He plans to have the audit out on time this year.

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

C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for August had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Assistant Chief Brade reported that there has been a lot going on in the Department:

- They have hired three part-time scheduled staff. They are working on all their start-up paperwork. They will have onboarding sessions with the Lieutenants. They are also in the process of taking on one volunteer.
- Now that COVID issues have subsided, the Fire Department is trying to get back out into the community. They have been relying on the Lieutenants and staff to help. They did a recruitment drive at the Farmers' Market and also showed off the new apparatus there. They are posting a lot of information on facebook. They also took part in the 9/11 ceremony at the Landing. It was well received.
- Fire extinguisher training for Mattabassett was held today. They are trying to get out to local businesses for training. Saturday the Department will be doing a cleanup on the river. There will be an open house at the beginning of October. They will also be doing a car seat installation at that time. The Department will also be doing a CPR class for the staff of Habitat for Humanity.

The President asked Assistant Chief Brade to send a note to the troops from the Commission for a job well done.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Chief's and Fire Marshal's report for August as presented.*

D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for August had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri was available to answer any questions. The President asked about the interconnect. Mr. Palmieri responded that it is moving slowly. He and the Executive Director have been meeting with Environmental Partners. They are waiting for the final engineering design that is 2/3 funded for this fiscal year. The other 1/3 will be available in July 2023. Mr. Neto added that they also met with the Deputy Director of the Middletown Water Department. They had a very productive meeting, and had some good contacts with the State of CT. The project is timely and within the main scope of the State's long-range vision of connecting water sources. Cromwell is in a good position. They are willing to get low interest bonds, but grants would be better. The more funding the better because the Water Department will be committing to \$4 to \$5 million of funding. They are in direct communication with the Town Manager. There was a lengthy discussion about the project being coordinated with the Sewer Department's project.

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

- E. Communication Center Report. The Communication Center Report for August had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lonergan gave a couple of updates that were not in his report. The access control replacement and simultaneous camera upgrade replacement is ongoing. He has only received one quote and is waiting for 3 or 4 more to come back.

Mr. Lonergan is also starting to work on the Everbridge Notification system. He is taking the lead on this project to help get the program off the ground. There has been a lot of good communication between the Fire District, Police Department, Water Department, Emergency Management, the Mayor's office and the Communication Center. They had a meeting last week, and this has become a team effort. Everyone is very excited about this project. Management and Dispatch will both have access to send alerts.

He had some documentation he distributed for review. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. They will be starting a PR campaign for Cromwell residents to opt-in for these notifications via all necessary means, i.e., cell phone messages, text messages, email. It is another way to reach out to the citizens of Cromwell in times of emergency. It also provides communication of general information for newsletters etc. Communications are provided in a tier system format. The system is part of CT Alert which is part of the statewide notification system that a lot of 911 PSAP's have. It will be a lot of hard work to get this implemented, but it will get done.

They are currently in the development stage for the opt-in for Everbridge. Mr. Lonergan is working with the web designer to get information updated on the website. The Town is doing the same on their end. The PR push will happen after that, i.e., sign boards, facebook, etc. They will also be doing some training on the system for the users.

Regarding the radio reprogramming, Mr. Lonergan has an appointment with the State of CT on October 20, 2022. He and Mr. Alvarado are working with Total Communications on spec'ing out a phone replacement system. He also reviewed the Tower activity which has become a regular item on his list of responsibilities. He reported that the gate was replaced and is fully functional once again. Sprint has decommissioned and removed all their equipment from the Cromwell buildings and Tower. There is still equipment on the property, but a box truck will be coming by the end of the week to remove it. There are some upgrade projects coming up with Verizon, T-Mobile and AT&T.

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

#### 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 August 15, 2022. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

Commissioner Hinnners chaired that meeting and gave a brief summary of what took place at the meeting. He commented on the presentation given by Steven Tyc for an inventory tracking program. People that attended the meeting thought it was a good program. Now it will be a matter of finding the financial resources to fund it. It is in the range of \$3,000 - \$3,500. It provides a good base for evaluating all the Fire Department assets. At some point it could also be adapted to the Water Department inventory. It is just a matter of a QR code which goes into a database.

Mr. Lonergan has been researching the Holy Apostles generator. He received a quote from one of the approved vendors. The quote is to run a long underground cable to a disconnect. There is also the possibility of talking to the neighbor about gaining access from the other side of the property. Commissioner Colligan asked Mr. Lonergan to provide an update at the next Fire Operations Committee meeting.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and approved 7 to 0 to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of August 15, 2022, as submitted. Commissioner Colligan abstained.***

1. Communications Committee. There was no meeting.
2. Apparatus Committee. A meeting was held on August 2, 2022. Minutes had been tabled from last month. Commissioner Colligan reported that Chief Balletto updated everyone so that new Committee members were informed. There were a couple of discussions on some of the items. The Chief appointed Assistant Chief Brade as the primary contact person for the vendors. Assistant Chief Brade added that the Rescue/Pumper is in the process of being built. He emailed pictures of it being built. The final recommendations from the Committee were communicated to the vendor. Another meeting of the Apparatus Committee will be scheduled in the next month.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Apparatus Committee meeting minutes of August 2, 2022, as submitted.***

- D. Pension Committee. A meeting was held on August 31, 2022. The minutes were not available for review. ***A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to table the Pension Committee meeting minutes of August 31, 2022.***
- E. Personnel Committee. There was a Special Personnel Committee meeting held on August 10, 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 Donohue and approved 7 to 0 to accept the Special Personnel Committee meeting minutes of August 10, 2022, as submitted. Commissioner Colligan abstained.***

A Personnel Committee meeting was also held on September 13, 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 Hanners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and approved 7 to 0 to accept the Personnel Committee meeting minutes of September 13, 2022, as submitted. Commissioner Terry abstained.*

- F. Water Operations. There was no meeting. The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for November 2, 2022. Mr. Neto added that they are looking to schedule a special meeting to come up with a plan on how to engage the community about the interconnection project.

#### BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no Board appointments to report.

#### CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. There was no report. Mr. Neto noted that after the passing of the Mayor, the Town has a new Mayor, Steve Fortenbach, new Deputy Mayor Joe Hennehan and new Council member Jay Polke.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
1. Public Safety Tower Committee. A meeting was held on September 2, 2022. Minutes were not available for review. A motion was made by Commissioner McIntyre, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to table the Public Safety Tower Committee meeting minutes of September 2, 2022.
  2. Health & Safety/Building Committee. There was no meeting.
  3. Bylaws Committee. There was no meeting.
  4. Public Relations/Community Outreach Committee. There was no meeting. Regarding public relations, the first published article was submitted to the Rare Reminder last month. There is also information that will be published in this month's edition. Commissioner Darius is working to make sure information is submitted every month. These publications are at no cost to the District.

#### NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. The President discussed setting a date for a "Meet the Candidates" session. The Board of Commissioners' election will be held in a couple of weeks. It was decided to schedule a "Meet the Candidates" session for Thursday, September 29, 2022, 6:00 PM, at the Coles Road firehouse.

Commissioner Donohue touched base on the activities that have taken place this month. The 911 Ceremony down by the river was fantastic. He was also grateful for the turnout at the Mayor's funeral. He gave a shout out to Nicole LaTerra and Brian Cavaleri for stepping up and participating. John Carlson, Ryan Bengston and Jay Holden were also involved. The funeral detail was phenomenal. The patriot guard was also there. It was a good send off. They were in unison with the Police Department. President Brow asked Assistant Chief Brade to give a special thanks to Lt. Hallden, Alan Dominy and Ryan Blaney for taking the new Engine there and standing in line with them.

Commissioner Epstein commented about the new engine being at the Farmers' Market. The crews that were on that day came with the truck. They set up a table with signs about recruitment.

Commissioner Terry announced that on September 30, 2022, at the Courtyard Marriott, at 7:00 PM, there will be a comedy show for the Cromwell Children's Coalition. It is their annual fund raiser, tickets are \$25. There will be light hors d'oeuvres. Drinks and soda will be a slight charge. Commissioner Terry is a member of the Coalition, and she explained that the money that they raise is distributed to children in the school system anonymously.

Commissioner Colligan thanked the Commission for sending him an edible arrangement when he was out recovering from surgery.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to report.
- D. Discussion and Possible Decision on New Water Maintainer Position. The Personnel Committee met last week. Mr. Palmieri and the Executive Director are taking the name back that was originally recommended for the Maintainer position. With additional follow-up and a background check, it was learned that things did not add up with that candidate's resume.

They have chosen to make an offer to the second choice candidate, Joe Goodrich. He is equally qualified as the first candidate. He is a former State employee that worked for DOT on bridges. He was a member of the Cromwell Fire Department many years ago. They think he will be a good fit for this small group. They were going to go back to the Personnel Committee with the second choice candidate, but they were given permission by the Personnel Committee Chairman to bring this before the full Board of Commissioners in the interest of time. The President knows this candidate personally and believes he is the right fit.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to offer the Maintainer position in the Water Department to Joe Goodrich.*

- E. Discussion and Decision on Personnel Committee's Acceptance of Chief Balletto's Resignation. *A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to table this item until after Executive Session at this meeting.*
- F. Discussion and Possible Decision on the Driver-Only Role Within the Cromwell Fire Department. Assistant Chief Brade had a discussion with Chief Balletto about an older member who is interested in coming back on the volunteer side to drive the apparatus. They realize that there are not a lot of volunteers and also that they can be of help. It is something that the Chief would like to try to institute so they can get apparatus on the volunteer side out the door. With the new stipend program, it would cost money for a volunteer driver so they wanted to discuss with the Commissioners to get their feedback. This concept would not be getting any additional services for EMS or Fire operations, but they would be able to get apparatus out the door. They wanted the Commission to be aware that the volunteer driver would be getting the same stipend as someone performing EMS or Fire services. Have the Chief's office have the ability to limit the number of driver-only staff members. They would

be looking for apparatus operators. The Commissioners thought this concept was a good idea. President Brow asked the Chiefs to provide some specifics including a maximum number that they see fitting this role and also include training requirements.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Epstein discussed the water main break on Catherine Street. He was able to learn that the break was detected through the equipment the Water Department has available.

Commissioner Terry discussed the Cromwell Children's Coalition and the support provided through the sale of bracelets that say, "Kindness is Contagious."

Lt. McKnight had a correction on the Chief's Report for August. On page 1, the third bullet down, the correction is Lt. McKnight was at the high school with Fire Marshal Holmes doing the annual inspection. He also conducted inspections of food trucks at the Farmers' Market as well as the food trucks at the Pierson Park Children's Coalition/Creative District event.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to amend the Chief's report as noted.*

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Discussion and Strategy Regarding the Fire Chief's Office. A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to enter into Executive Session at 7:13 PM.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to adjourn Executive Session and resume the regular Board meeting at 8:23 PM.

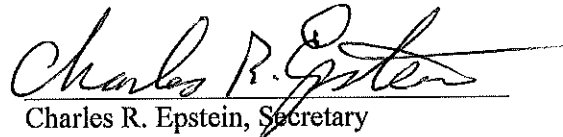
A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept Chief Balletto's resignation with an effective date of October 9, 2022.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to adjourn the regular Board meeting at 8:25 PM.

ATTEST:

Nancy Deegan  
Recording Secretary

  
Charles R. Epstein, Secretary