

# 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, October 18, 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, October 18, 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 Roger Rukowicz (President), David Colligan, Robert McIntyre, Mertie Terry, Donald Smith, Robert Donohue and John Sokolowski attended. Also attending were Commissioners Charles Epstein and Chip Darius who dialed into the meeting on the Owl. Others attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Financial Manager Michael Lupkas, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Interim Fire Chief Jason Brade, Communication Center Manager Justin Lonergan, Firefighter Alan Dominy, Fire Lt. William McKnight and crew and Brian Petrucelli Secretary of the Dispatchers' Union.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM, by President Rukowicz. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Rukowicz. A moment of silence was held for the fallen Bristol Police officers.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

President Rukowicz noted there were some items to add to the agenda before approval. One was Item III. Public Comment, A. Swearing in of Firefighter Alan Dominy to the position of Fire Lieutenant. Item X., New Business, F. Discussion and Possible Approval of the New Fire Chief's Contract.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as amended.*

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Brian Petrucelli addressed the Board as Secretary of Local 1303 AFSCME. Speaking on behalf of the Executive Board of Local 1303, he welcomed the new Commissioners to the Board. They look forward to working with the new members. They have worked very well with the

Commissioners over the last few years approving budgets, working on contracts and getting things done in the District. They hope to continue the same process and the good relationship. If the Chief's position is approved, they look forward to working with the new Chief on the operational side of things. The Executive Board also congratulated Firefighter Dominy on his promotion to Fire Lieutenant.

- A. Swearing In of Firefighter Alan Dominy to the Position of Lieutenant. President Rukowicz read the oath of office to Firefighter Dominy as Firefighter Dominy repeated the oath after him. Firefighter Dominy officially took the oath of office of Fire Lieutenant for the Cromwell Fire Department.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF  
SEPTEMBER 20, 2022

*A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of September 20, 2022, as submitted.*

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING OF  
SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

*A motion was made by Commissioner McIntyre, seconded by Commissioner Terry and approved 8 to 0 to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of September 29, 2022, as submitted. Commissioner Donohue abstained.*

ANNUAL DISTRICT ELECTION & ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING MINUTES OF  
OCTOBER 3, 2022

*A motion was made by Commissioner McIntyre, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and approved 8 to 0 to accept the Annual District Election and Organizational Meeting minutes of October 3, 2022, as submitted.*

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF  
OCTOBER 12, 2022

*A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and approved 8 to 0 to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes of October 12, 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 September 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. He asked the Commissioners to review the financial report they received. He along with Mr. Lupkas would like to know if the financial report format works or needs to be modified. They discussed the inclusion of an aging report for the Water Division which has been discussed in the past. He would like the

Commissioners to give the Aging Report some thought. The report includes outstanding invoices that have not been paid. It will also provide a status report of collections. He asked the Commissioners to give these issues some thought. They would also like some input on what works and what doesn't in the monthly Financial report.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's Report for September as presented.***

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for September had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lupkas noted that the report the Commissioners received will change since this is the report from last month. The change is due to audit preparation. He reported that the audit preparation is well underway. He is hoping to get the auditors all of the District's books by the end of this week or next week. There will be a lot of changes in the current year's activity. If anyone has any questions, they are urged to contact Mr. Lupkas.

Collections to date are approximately 58% collected. That includes the \$117,000 received from the State as collections. They are planning a budget transfer to put the State money under the proper account heading. At this time it is considered part of taxes. EMS receipts are coming in heavily. It is a 65%/66% increase over last year.

Other open items are the M & T Bank merge with People's. Mr. Lupkas reported that they have reached a usable point, but they are not using it as much as People's Bank because the District is transitioning to Citizen's Bank who will be taking over the majority of the District's banking services. He reconciled out all the money that was going to People's that should have gone to M & T.

The October water bills did go out. Collections have started. The bills that went out were roughly \$775,000 as opposed to \$528,000 last year. Commissioners requested to have the Financial report pages numbered on future reports.

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

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for September had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Interim Chief Brade reported that there were a little over 200 calls last month. They have been very busy. They have been trying to get back out into the community. They participated in the 911 ceremony at Riverfront Park. They have been providing EMS coverage for football games at the park for the high school and youth football games. They went to the Farmer's Market at the beginning of last month and used the opportunity as a recruitment effort on the volunteer side. They did recruit one volunteer that day. Lt. Dominy did a car seat inspection at Coles Road. The Fire Marshal did a fire prevention open house. This month was Fire Prevention Month so the Fire Department has been in the pre-schools, the schools, Lowe's First Responder Day and opening day at Battleground Nutrition.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for September as submitted.***

1. Fire Marshal's Office. The Fire Marshal's Report had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. On the last page of his report Mr. Holmes noted the FMO received a \$500 grant through the CT Fair Plan that was used to purchase some fire investigation equipment. Also, \$500 worth of smoke detectors was received from Walmart. The crews at Court St. and the FMO have a supply of smoke detectors ready to install with batteries.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Marshal's Report for September as submitted.*

- D. Water Operations. The Water Operations Report for September had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri welcomed the new Commissioners, and noted he is looking forward to working with them. He added that they are pumping a lot of water, and everything is running smoothly. There was heavy water consumption over the summer months. This past summer being very dry and hot was the highest water consumption ever recorded in the Town of Cromwell. Flushing of hydrants was suspended because of the draught conditions over the summer. It may be that they may not finish flushing this year because of those conditions, although it is done every year. Where the process was suspended is where it will be picked up again in the spring.

President Rukowicz asked when the new Water Division truck will be delivered. Mr. Palmieri was originally advised the end of October, beginning of November. He will follow up with the company. He explained the new truck's purpose which will be referred to as a job truck or leak truck. This will be equipped with all the tools and parts needed at a job site. It has an enclosed utility body so there will be heat there. There is also a compressor built into it and is PTO driven.

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

- E. Communications Center Report. Mr. Lonergan welcomed the new Commissioners and congratulated the Interim Fire Chief Brade on his new appointment to Fire Chief. The Communications Report for September had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. He stated that the Communications Center has a lot of projects going on. They are waiting on vendors for a lot of them.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to accept the Communications Center Report as submitted.*

#### REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations. A meeting was held on October 12, 2022. Draft minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. At the meeting minor changes were made to some of the Committees. The amended committee assignment sheet was distributed and reviewed.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the District Operations Committee meeting minutes of October 12, 2022, as submitted.*

- B. Executive. There was no meeting. The President explained that this Committee functions as a Budget Committee and does not meet until the Spring to work on next fiscal year's budget.
- C. Fire Operations. There was no meeting in September.
  - 1. Communications Committee. Commissioner Colligan reported that there is a meeting with the State of CT coming up at the end of the week to get the final programming done. Once the final programming is done the Committee will get together to finalize any loose ends, and the Committee can be dissolved at that point.

Mr. Lonergan reported that the Committee has been working with the State for the last two years. The final template was submitted a while ago. It has been at least one year. Like other places the State has been understaffed with limited resources. The meeting this week is a step forward in the right direction.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Communications Committee report as presented.*

- 2. Apparatus Committee. Commissioner Colligan reported that a meeting was held prior to the election. They reviewed the specs of the Rescue/Pumper. The Chief contacted the vendor yesterday. The vendor will follow up with the District on anything that needs to be done. The Committee will then need to make a decision on how they will handle the inspection. When Commissioner Epstein returns, he will be scheduling a meeting of the Committee.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the Apparatus Committee report as presented.*

- D. Pension. A meeting was held on August 31, 2022. Minutes had been tabled from last month's meeting. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Colligan reported they are working with the vendor and waiting for some more information. Outstanding cases are being handled on a case-by-case basis. Those cases will be researched thoroughly before a determination can be made. There will need to be a meeting of the Committee to draft some policies and procedures going forward for applicants to follow and the District to administer.

*A motion was made by Commissioner McIntyre, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to accept the Pension Committee meeting minutes of August 31, 2022, and Committee report given by Commissioner Colligan as presented.*

- E. Personnel. There was no meeting.
- F. Water Operations. There was no meeting. The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 2, 2022.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

Commissioner Donohue excused himself from the meeting at 6:32 PM.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. There was no one present to give a report. President Rukowicz asked the Executive Director to follow up with the Town on whether or not they will be sending a representative to future meetings. In turn, the Board should consider appointing a representative to attend their Council meetings.

B. Reports of the Special Committees

1. Public Safety Tower Committee. A meeting was held on September 2, 2022. Minutes were tabled last month. The next quarterly meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Friday, December 2, 2022.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Public Safety Tower Committee meeting minutes of September 2, 2022, as submitted.*

2. Health & Safety/Building Committee. The Chairman of the Committee, Commissioner Donohue, had excused himself from this meeting. Commissioner Colligan as Vice Chairman noted that the October quarterly meeting was canceled.

3. Bylaws Committee. There was no meeting but Commissioner Epstein will be scheduling one shortly.

4. Public Relations/Community Outreach Committee. Commissioner Darius reported that the article last month in the Cromwell Chronicle on the Juvenile Fire Setter Prevention Program got some good coverage. They had submitted a number of additional articles that did not get published. They have submitted a number of articles for this month, and the Chronicle pledged they will be published. There was some good coverage on the District's social media pages and updates to the website based on the Farmers' Market and other activities. This month the new colored newsletter went out with the water bills. Commissioner Epstein, Co-Chair, had nothing further to add. The President has asked the Committee to post monthly the number of fire calls, ambulance calls and dispatch calls. He feels it is important for the Town to know how many calls are done each month.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Commissioners' Comments. President Rukowicz requested that a \$150 donation be made to the Bristol Police Department from the Commissioners' fund in support of the Bristol Police Department's efforts for the fallen officers and their families. The fund will split the donations so that each family receives the same amount.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Terry, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to authorize the President of the Board to make a donation on*

*behalf of the Fire District to the Bristol Police Department to support the fund for the fallen officers' families.*

Commissioner Terry discussed information she is receiving from serving on other committees in Town. Specifically, that these are very tough times for some of the families in Cromwell, especially families with small children. When it comes to collecting water payments, she wanted to know if the District works with those families to make sure they can establish a payment plan to keep their accounts in good standing without shutting off their water. She also asked if the Water Department has had any discussions with the Town about any type of assistance program.

The Executive Director noted that currently the Water Department does not have a program where they go knocking on doors. If a person is under financial strain and they have not paid their bill and they bring forth information to document that they are in financial stress, the Water Department will develop a payment plan or pursue collections. This issue should also be generated in the budget cycle similar to the Town. The Town appropriates money to the Social Services division to help residents who are in financial distress. The District does not have a program, but has worked with customers in the past who have expressed a need for assistance. If someone is seeking additional assistance beyond a payment plan, there are contacts provided at Town Hall that the person or family can work with for financial relief. The District's process is a series of communications to the customer advising they need to pay their outstanding water bill to avoid late fees and to contact the office with any questions. Currently the Board does not have a proactive program in a social services environment.

If the Board would like to change that policy and come up with something that is more community based, they have the authority to change policy. President Rukowicz added that anyone that has financial issues should be referred to Social Services at Town Hall where there are programs that provide assistance.

Commissioner Epstein would like his fellow Commissioners to entertain a discussion in the future that would change the reports so that they are read at the Commissioners' meeting which is the public meeting. This has been discussed in the past, but a decision was not reached. He believes the Commission meeting is where all the reports should be read so that any members of the public present can hear them.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to report.
- D. Presentation by Fire Marshal—My Sidewalk, Craig1300Plus. Mr. Holmes distributed copies of information on Craig/1300Plus, NFPA1300. The NFPA 1300 is the Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development. In 2020, Cromwell was selected for a pilot program with NFPA with a company called, My Sidewalk. This program takes all the information that is scattered on the internet and different places and puts it all in one place. They take NIFRS data and the latest census bureau data and put it on one website. Mr. Holmes plans on sending the link to the Commissioners tomorrow. In the document all the items in red are what they have put on the website. If you were to go to the incidents page, it would give a breakdown of every incident that is responded to and how many. It also shows the 3 locations of the firehouses. There is lots of detailed information

available with the click of a mouse. When there is a chance for grant writing opportunities, all the information to research is in one spot.

- E. Recognition of Volunteers During COVID. Mr. Neto had put this on the agenda because a few months back there was some discussion about the District recognizing through Town funds, career and part-time employees under COVID. Commissioner Darius had originally asked how the volunteers were going to be recognized. Commissioner Darius stated from his perspective the issue has become complicated because at the start of COVID they had more volunteers than they had at the end of COVID. There were people that were volunteering their time and taking the risk of responding during the midst of the pandemic who are no longer with the Department for current recognition. As a Commission, it is important that each and every person that contributed their time, energy and effort and put themselves at risk for the public good be recognized. He would leave it to those that have more experience in these matters than he does to weigh in on how we can recognize those who volunteered.

The President thought that the State had already addressed this issue. Money was available, but it was for people that were paid. There was nothing that he knew of that recognized volunteers either with money or a bonus. Commissioner Colligan thought they were looking for some type of recognition that was not a financial compensation but some other form of recognition. Commissioner Epstein suggested having a workshop just to discuss that particular issue. Commissioner McIntyre asked if this issue could be assigned to a committee by identifying who the individuals are and come up with suggestions based on the individuals.

President Rukowicz thought it might be best to be addressed through the Fire Operations Committee. The Executive Director suggested maybe using the Cromwell Chronicle to recognize their hard work through the Public Relations/Community Outreach committee. If the direction is Public Relations/Community Outreach, something published would be one option. Commissioner Darius thought it would be a Human Resource issue. Recognition of personnel usually comes out of the Human Resources Department. That would mean the Personnel Committee would be involved in part of the solution. Some people thought that Human Resources only deals with individuals that are employees, not volunteers. Under Workers' Comp. guidelines every volunteer is also an employee. Every member of the Department is the responsibility of Human Resources. The Executive Director noted that the volunteers are covered under Workers' Comp. because of the risks associated with the tasks they perform.

Of course, the Board does not have an HR department, they have a Personnel Committee or the other option is for the Executive Director to identify some options. All agreed there should be some kind of recognition. Commissioner Colligan suggested that Lisa in the Chief's office come up with a list of all the volunteers during that time. The timeframe would be the beginning of COVID (2020) until the firehouses were open to the public (2022?). It was an approximate 2-year time period. Those individuals can have their name published in the Chronicle, along with certificates to be presented.

Commissioner Sokolowski suggested that the responsibility fall on the Personnel Committee. He thought that once the Committee receives the information from the Chief's office, they can determine what type of recognition to have. Once the recognition is decided, it can be turned over to the Public Relations/Community Outreach Committee for publishing.



President Rukowicz summarized by saying first of all the list of volunteers will be generated by the Chief's office. The list will go to the Personnel Committee. The Public Relations Committee will get involved after that to publish something in the paper or whatever else they decide to do to recognize volunteers. The President did not think there would be much cost involved.

- F. Discussion and Possible Approval of the New Fire Chief's Contract. The President noted that all the Commissioners had a draft copy of the contract emailed to them for review. Copies were also distributed at this meeting. The contract was approved by the Personnel Committee at the meeting before this meeting. He gave the Commissioners a couple of minutes to review. The Executive Director was available to answer any questions.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the Personnel Committee's recommendation to approve the New Fire Chief's contract as presented with an effective date of October 24, 2022. The New Fire Chief will be sworn in on October 24, 2022.*

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.

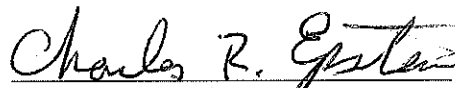
EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no items to discuss under Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner McIntyre, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 PM.

ATTEST:

  
Charles R. Epstein, Secretary

Nancy Deegan  
Recording Secretary