

Cromwell Fire District

1 West Street
Cromwell, CT 06416
Telephone 860-635-4420

FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Fire and Water Divisions

Tuesday, November 16, 2021

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, November 16, 2021, 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, Mertie Terry, and Robert McIntyre attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Finance Manager Michael Alibrio, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade, Acting Fire Marshal Harold Holmes, Water Operations Manager Joe Palmieri, Covenant Village liaison Sean Smith and Firefighter Lt. William McKnight. Commissioners Chip Darius, Robert Donohue and Roger Rukowicz 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.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as presented with the following addition under Item IV. Adding the approval of meeting minutes that were signed of a Special Board of Commissioners meeting that was held on November 9, 2021. It was also agreed to add an update on the Nike site pump house situation under Item VII., Item C., Item 3. Fire Operations Committee report.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
OCTOBER 19, 2021

A motion was made by Commissioner Hidders, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the Board of Commissioners' meeting of October 19, 2021, as submitted.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES OF
NOVEMBER 9, 2021

A motion was made by Commissioner Hidders, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the Special Board of Commissioners' meeting of November 9, 2021, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

A communication was received from Rodney Bitgood on behalf of the Cromwell Children's Coalition. It was a thank you to the Fire Department for all their assistance with the Halloween Pumpkins in the Park event. A copy of the letter is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Epstein read the letter at the meeting.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's Report for October had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Neto added that AT&T has paid the District \$143,462 for reinforcement of the Tower at Shunpike. AT&T will be footing the bill for the full 20% increase of structure stability to accommodate additional weight. Verizon was to be the other vendor, but they backed out at the last minute. The District will receive an additional 30% of capacity on the Tower.

The other update was on the Recovery Act which was funding given to employees who worked during the pandemic from March 2020 to March 2021. The Federal Act awarded full-time employees working during that time a stipend of \$1,000. Part-time employees received \$500. The Board of Finance and Town Council approved the Recovery Act funds for both Town and Fire District employees. There was no money given for volunteers. This will be discussed later in the meeting.

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

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for October had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Alibrio was asked about the status of EMS billing. It was noted that the District will be contracting with a new company effective March 1, 2022. The new company will be Shared Response.

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

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for October had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. There have been no changes to the report since it was submitted. The Chief has been in contact with

Firematic, and they are still holding on to the two engines for Cromwell. They are waiting to see what the process will be going forward. Regarding ambulances, the Department is moving forward with the status quo waiting to see what the future will bring in terms of resources. They have two vendors in mind that they will be continuing to research if there is an opportunity for apparatus or equipment.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for October as submitted.

The Fire Marshal's Report for October 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 Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Marshal's Report for October as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Water Operations Report for October had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The President asked about water leaks. Mr. Palmieri reported that there were a few, but the leak detection equipment the Water Department purchased is working great. There are two leaks left to fix. One has been shut off because it was an irrigation issue at one of the softball fields at one of the parks. The other is the old sewer garage. The Water billing collection is going well. They are now focusing on some of the smaller amounts due, and are helping customers make payment arrangements.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Water Operations Report for October as submitted.

- E. Communication Center Report. The Communication Center Report for October had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lonergan was not present, but the Fire Chief offered to answer any questions about the Communication Center Report.

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

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations. There was no meeting.
- B. Executive. There was no meeting.
- C. Fire Operations – A Special Meeting was held on October 18, 2021. Meeting minutes were not available. A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to table the minutes of October 18, 2021, until next month.
1. Communications Committee. Commissioner Colligan reported that a meeting was held on November 4, 2021. The Committee voted to issue Motorola its final payment on the project. They are also trying to address the issue brought up about Dispatch being able to talk on the Fire Ground channel. They are looking into getting additional frequencies to

help address the problem. Paul Zito and Justin Lonergan are working on this issue reporting their findings to the Executive Director.

2. Apparatus Committee. A meeting was held on September 28, 2021. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. They were signed by Commissioner Hinnners who reported there have been no changes since the Bonding meeting. The Chief gave a status report at the meeting.
3. Update on Nike Site. Commissioner Colligan reported that it was reported at the Fire Operations Committee meeting that there is an issue at the Nike site with water pressure. It was clarified that this issue is not the responsibility of the Fire District. The issue originates with the engineering of the site and how pressure is affected. There may not be enough water to get to a fire that occurs up there. There have been meetings with District staff and the construction managers and engineers.

Back in 2018 there were water pressure readings done on the fire hydrant closest to the site. That baseline was used for all calculations on how to design the domestic system as well as the fire suppression system. There are separate mains that are not attached to the fire hydrants. They are not part of the water that is being supplied to the domestic water for the buildings. The sprinkler system is fed from the Water pumps, which is the first source of fire suppression. First line testing of pressures were below standard to meet the need of fighting a fire. There is sufficient pressure for one fire hydrant. If they were to hook up to a second fire hydrant, the pressure would be cut in half.

Chief Balletto explained the results of testing. They have identified the problem and are working with the engineers. They have contacted the mutual aid partners. There will be additional tankers that will come in if needed. There should be more information available at the end of this week.

Mr. Palmieri reported that the company that did the original flow test on the original two hydrants came back out and redid the flow tests on those two hydrants and then took static pressure from every hydrant in the new complex. They performed two flow tests again in the complex. They will be putting together a report and following up with the District. The Town needs to come up with an engineering solution to meet the need. Any solutions such as having tankers available is only a short-term solution. There will be more to come.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee updates as discussed.

- D. Pension Committee. There was no meeting. The Executive Director had reached out to Dan Jock or a representative to find out the status on the draft document Mr. Jocks was to be preparing for the District. Mr. Neto has not heard back.
- E. Personnel Committee. Meetings were held on September 22, 2021, and October 12, 2021. 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 Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Personnel Committee meeting minutes of September 22, 2021, as submitted.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Personnel Committee meeting minutes of October 12, 2021, as submitted.

F. Water Operations. There was no meeting.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. Mrs. Donohue had been present but was not able to stay for the whole meeting. Her report consisted of reporting there is a new Mayor in Cromwell and a new Town Council. Mrs. Donohue is no longer the Deputy Mayor. The new Deputy Mayor is Steve Fortenback. The new Mayor is former Commissioner Allan Spotts. Going forward, Mr. Spotts and Mrs. Donohue will alternate liaison duties for the Board of Commissioners' meetings. Mr. Neto will do his best to provide a meeting packet to whoever is attending the meeting provided he is informed ahead of time who will be attending.

B. Reports of the Special Committees

1. Public Safety Tower Committee. There was no meeting, but there was a quick update that was given to the Committee through the Teams website during the previous month.
2. Health & Safety Building Committee. A meeting was held on October 7, 2021. 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 Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Health & Safety Building Committee meeting minutes of October 7, 2021, as submitted. There were no open items to discuss at this time.

3. Bylaws Committee. A meeting was held on October 12, 2021. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. Commissioner Epstein reported that there were several recommendations that were brought before the Committee. They will be forwarded to the full Board of Commissioners. There have been some technical difficulties that are being addressed. Once corrected, draft copies of the Bylaws with the recommendations will be made available to the full Board of Commissioners for consideration.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Bylaws Committee meeting minutes of October 12, 2021, as submitted.

4. Publicity Committee. A meeting was held on October 6, 2021. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioner Epstein reported that the first newsletter went out with the October Water bills.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to accept the Publicity Committee meeting minutes of October 6, 2021, as submitted.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Terry stated that as a member of the Cromwell Children's Coalition she wanted to thank the Board and its management team for all the work they have done on behalf of the Coalition.

Commissioner Hinnners also spoke as a member of the Cromwell Children's Coalition. Any donation is 100% passed on to the children by the Coalition. The overhead is handled through their fund raisers. Any donation is presented 100% as a donation.

Commissioner Terry also commented on the communication she received from the CT State Firefighters' Association. This was a communication inviting the Commissioners to their annual dinner. Commissioner Terry suggested making a donation to the Association on behalf of the Cromwell Fire District.

A motion was made by Commissioner Terry, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to make a \$100 donation to the CT State Firefighters' Association Memorial Foundation.

- 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 Volunteer Recognition. The Executive Director noted that while discussing the Recovery Act earlier in the meeting, it was noted that volunteers were not recognized for working during March 2020 through March 2021. There were a handful of individuals that did come out. The Executive Director was asked if there was an opportunity to recognize those individuals. Mr. Neto did not know what type of recognition would be appropriate. He asked the Board for some direction. The President asked for more information regarding the number of volunteers and how many occasions they participated.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to table this item until next month until the Executive Director can research the details and report them back to the Board next month.

- E. Update on Burn Official Role within the District. This issue was discussed at the last meeting. The Acting Fire Marshal gave an update. Mr. Holmes reported that the Fire Marshal's Office has had a few calls inquiring about ceremonial fires which are bonfires. These organizations are under the impression that the Fire Department was going to build the fire and then put it out. It is not the Fire Marshal's job. Mr. Holmes stated that Sal Nesci is the Burn Official in the Town of Cromwell. He governs the burning of small yard debris under State statute. This is defined as being allowed to burn no more than 3 inches in

diameter. The fire can be between the hours of 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM under the Burn Official's permit. He does not regulate bonfires or anything like that.

Mr. Holmes had sent a letter to Mr. Nesci suggesting they have a meeting to establish the same set of rules for a bonfire since they are not regulated. Mr. Nesci asked the Fire Marshal to send him a set of rules. Mr. Holmes sent back a letter saying it is not regulated, the FMO is not going to regulate it. Mr. Nesci stated that he would handle it and would give out the rules which are just common sense guidelines. The FMO would have the authority to have it extinguished at any time. Mr. Holmes acknowledged Mr. Nesci's response but did not take it any further.

Mr. Holmes called DEEP, specifically the head burn official for open burning. They advised that the Town can regulate by Ordinance the burning ceremonial fires, bond fires, etc. They can establish a set of rules. Mr. Holmes advised that the Town does not want to establish a set of rules. Mr. Holmes asked if the Fire District could establish some guidelines. The State advised that the Fire District can create their own Ordinance, the District can govern it and issue their own bonfire permit. The District can also decide to do nothing, but if they are called out, the crews will put the fires out. If it becomes a nuisance or someone complains, the fire would have to be put out by State Statute.

It was also noted that the State advised that a Town can have more than one burn official. Mr. Holmes thought that there should be some oversight from someone. It would be nice if the FMO had oversight since the Fire Department would be the ones to put out the fire. The Chief advised that some of the basic rules before a fire is lit, are that the people lighting the fire should be notifying the burn official or the FMO so that they can see what the index is and what the wind is all about. The President thought that this is a discussion that needs to occur between the Mayor, Town Manager and Fire District administrators.

- F. Discussion and Possible Decision on Committee Meeting Process. A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to table this item.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Firefighter Lt. William McKnight spoke on behalf of Local 4662. He wanted to discuss the two individuals that were not compensated as part of the Recovery Act that worked during that time period in a voluntary capacity. The individuals were Mr. Abrams and Mr. Early. He did not understand why the District could not simply cut a paper check. He feels a check would represent their share of the recovery act fund. Although one of the individuals has taken a position elsewhere, while he was in Cromwell during March 2020 and March 2021 he responded to 303 calls. During that time period he also contracted COVID and was out for at least 10 days as well. Lt. McKnight does not understand why these individuals are not acknowledged for their service.

Lt. McKnight also had concerns about the staffing issue in the Fire Department. The issue was not brought up at this meeting thus far. He stated that it is a timebomb waiting to go off. He requested that the Commission evaluate the problem and fix it. President Brow stated that the reason this was not on the agenda this evening is because it is an issue that needs to be its own meeting. It needs to be discussed with the full Board without any other agenda items. A Special Board of Commissioners' meeting needs to be scheduled.

Mr. James Rude, Highridge Rd., thanked the Commissioners that attended the wake for the 100 yr. old FDNY retiree, John Lorenz, that passed away over the last 3 or 4 weeks. He thanked the Fire District for the first edition of the newsletter. He rated the effort an A+. The content he rated a C+. He felt the information was all background and marketing information. The District needs to get out in front of the major issues facing the District. He thanked the Bylaws Committee for some of the changes they are proposing. He encouraged the Bylaws Committee to consider administrative policies and procedures for management to be able to implement things so that things such as the forgiveness of bills does not have to come before the full Board of Commissioners. The ongoing operation of the Commission and its governance in allowing management to act as the day-to-day operation should continue to be the focus. It is going to be important to see the aging report of accounts receivable for EMS, Water and Tax billings as collections are up to \$1.6 million.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

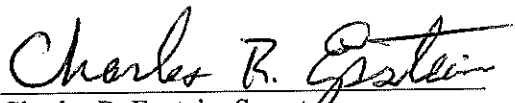
A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to enter into Executive Session at 7:12 PM, inviting the Executive Director into the session.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to adjourn Executive Session at 7:45 PM. No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 PM.

ATTEST:


Charles R. Epstein, Secretary

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary