

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS **Fire Operations Committee Meeting**

Monday, December 20, 2021

5:30 PM

**Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT**

Present: Commissioners David Colligan (Chairman), Jason Hinnens and Charles Epstein. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Acting Assistant Fire Chief Brian Petrucelli, Acting Fire Marshal Harold Holmes, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan. Commissioner Robert Donohue was absent.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:31 PM, by Chairman Colligan.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnens, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Approval of Meeting Minutes of October 18, 2021 & November 15, 2021. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnens, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of October 18, 2021 and November 15, 2021, as presented.
- IV. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- V. Communications Report – Update. Mr. Lonergan reported that they have one Dispatcher who has completed training. They are waiting for one more certification. There is another Dispatcher who is in the training process. That should be completed within the next month or two, and they will be at full staff.
- VI. Reports of the Chief Officers. Chief Balletto reported that it has been a busy month for the Fire Department. They participated in the Toys for Tots program, alarm calls as well as recruitment and retention campaign for volunteers. They also started the hiring process where they have hired 8 new people, and they are outfitting them with PPE. He gave a lot of the credit to his staff for their help including Lisa who helped with the 350 – 400 gifts that were donated to Toys for Tots. In November the Department only did 3 Mutual Aid calls for Hunters. There were 16 turnovers for the month. This month the turnover rate has been much higher. The Chief thinks that the number will quadruple.

The Chief also reported that a meeting was held with the surrounding area Fire Chiefs. He could not expand on that at this time because he is still trying to work out the details of their

discussions. The Chief has concerns with Cromwell being able to respond to mutual aid calls, especially with Rocky Hill. He has a meeting scheduled after the first of the year with the Fire Chief from Meriden as well as Rocky Hill Ambulance Company. The Chief explained that Hunter's is making some significant changes. The central Connecticut area may not be getting serviced by Hunter's ambulance in the near future. This issue pertains to EMS service only, not fire. Cromwell currently has a mutual aid agreement with Middletown and Westfield. The Chief plans on pursuing a mutual aid agreement with Newington and a couple of surrounding towns.

The Fire Department has been providing service at the high school football games as well and has been receiving a lot of positive feedback from the community and the school system. When the high school football team won their championship, the Fire Department provided an escort into Town when they returned. There were Commissioners in the back seat of the fire truck and firefighters in the front seat.

The Chief reported that Scott packs are in. They should be picked up in a couple of days. It will take about 3 or 4 weeks to get everyone trained and ready to go. Acting Assistant Chief Petrucelli is reviewing all the PPE to make sure everyone has the right masks for the new SCBA packs. The old AB 3000's are not compatible with the new Scott packs.

The Chief reported that they signed a contract for a new fire/rescue and a new fire engine. The new fire engine should be arriving in March. The fire/rescue goes into production in January or February. They are waiting for a quote for an ambulance. Once it is received the Chief will bring that before the Apparatus Committee. They are trying to stay within the numbers quoted for the apparatus. They also plan on outfitting the new engine with hoses. They will outfit with the equipment identified in the bonding proposal. They plan on doing this before prices increase in January. They are still planning on replacing the Assistant Chief's vehicle as well as a Fire Marshal vehicle.

The 2003 air packs will be used for training for whatever was certified in 2003. The other apparatus' will be outfitted with 2007's. Come January they will be budgeting with the Executive Director because they will need to purchase at least 10 – 15 SCBA packs to be compliant. All of Court St. is going to use the SCBA packs with 3 spares going in the bat cage. They will outfit all of the other apparatus with the 2007's. SCBA packs will be placed in all the Chief's vehicles as well.

Chairman Colligan asked that all old equipment, even if donated, should be documented so they can be taken off the official inventory list. Mr. Neto noted that anything that is 10 years old or older is no longer on the inventory list, but the documentation needs to be maintained in case people ask. Acting Assistant Chief Petrucelli noted that the Department has switched to half masks. They work just as well and are cheaper. Commissioner Hinners gave kudos to the Fire Chiefs for researching and acquiring the half masks, which is saving money as well.

The Chief reported that they have started COVID tracing due to the uptick in cases. The only people to have that information is the Executive Director and the Fire Chief.

Acting Assistant Chief Petrucelli also reported the Department has started an "after action review" as part of their training. It is done with the officers and the staff. One was conducted today after the recent fire at Nooks Hill Road. These trainings will be done with Fire Marshal staff and Communications staff as well. He also reported that limited training will be done monthly. The amount of classes will go down, but the types of training will go up. There

will be one EMS objective, one Fire and one HAZCOM or HAZMAT specialized rescue. OSHA and EMS standards will have to be met. Certificates and CEU's will be issued. Everyone does the same drills every month. The volunteer drills are planned to begin in February. Acting Assistant Chief Petrucelli's goal is to make a mandatory drill for the third Monday of every month. The proposed training plan will be brought before the Personnel Committee at their next meeting. Once a training plan has been approved, people can do other training in addition to the mandatory one. He was also asked to bring the Department to a standard on training. It has been made very clear through the Chief and the Executive Director that if personnel do not meet the standards, they will be taken off line. He added that tonight will be a make up session for medical control. Anyone that is a certified medical responder in the Fire Department that does not meet the standard will be taken off line by 10:00 PM this evening. There was some discussion about which Monday of the month would work for everyone. Chairman Colligan thanked the 3 Fire Chiefs for all their hard work.

Acting Assistant Fire Chief Petrucelli added that they have interviewed 16 people within the last 4 weeks. There were a lot of good candidates, but as soon as they found out the pay, they instantly said no. He wanted this information on record.

- A. Fire Marshal's Report. Acting Fire Marshal Holmes reported that last month there were 230 calls. There was \$95,000 in losses. There were 34 inspections done between Mr. Holmes and Mr. Whalen this month. It took 44.5 man hours to accomplish that. A lot of site plans have been coming into the office. A Five Below store is coming into the space formerly occupied by Payless Shoe Store, No Anchovies Pizza and L & S Communications. They plan to be occupied by the end of January. There are plans to knock down Ruby Tuesday's and replace it with a Texas Roadhouse. The Landon was given their C.O. last week on Building 7. That will start to be occupied in a couple of weeks. The water pressure issue is still being reviewed by the engineers. They are trying to come up with solutions. It is not the responsibility of the Fire District. There has been no word from DPH on the double hydrant issue. The sprinkler system is working fine with 79 PSI. 75% of calls were medicals, 2% were fires.
- B. Update of Repairs on All Fire Equipment. The Chief began with Engine 1. Currently Engine 1 is waiting for leaf springs. They are waiting for another part to come in. He decided to repair the breaks when he took off the driver rear tire, one of the leaf springs was split in half. KME does not make them anymore so they must be fabricated. They found a leak in the air hose that was coming from the cab to the turntable. They are dealing with 4 other leaks. The leaks are both air and hydraulics. All invoices were submitted to the Executive Director. It has been out of service for 10 weeks. Sensors were also addressed. Everything was recalibrated. One or two may have been replaced. Because the work was done in Massachusetts, the apparatus needed to be DOT inspected. The Chief and Executive Director are estimating approximately \$15,000 total for repairs to Engine 1.

Commissioner Epstein asked the Executive Director to come up with some figures regarding how much the repairs to Engine 1 is costing the District and its down time for the year 2021. He suggested having the information for the next Fire Operations Committee meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Fire Operations Committee is scheduled for Monday, January 17, 2021, which is Martin L. King Day. The Committee agreed to reschedule that meeting as a Special meeting to Monday, January 24, 2021.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Reports of Chief Officers as well as the Fire Marshal's Report and Update of Repairs on Fire Equipment.

- VII. Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response Capability. Chief Balletto had previously reported that they have hired 8 people since they started recruitment and retention. There have also been some resignations. There were 4 within the last 2 weeks. They are advertising on Indeed. There were two or three individuals that have recently applied. They will be looking at that information after the new year. There are only 2 candidates for the Fire Marshal exam. That will be posted until January 5.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the report on Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response capability.

- VIII. Old Business. There was no old business to report.

- IX. New Business

- A. Communication Manager's Update on Reprogramming of Pagers and Radios. Mr. Lonergan reported that the Knox boxes are in, and only about half of them are installed. Chris Logan has been busy with apparatus repairs. The Fire Police portables have been reprogrammed and issued. They have been having some charger issues that are being addressed. They ordered some new batteries and antennas. The Fire Police now have the new radios that are able to communicate with Dispatch on the Dispatch channel. The generator test at Holy Apostles went well. He submitted a brief report to the Executive Director. He had some concerns about generator access at that location and the length of the cord. The generator was plugged in, and it ran at the site no problem. Chairman Colligan noted that he did read Mr. Lonergan's report. They are looking into the issue of having an access road.

Mr. Lonergan also had an update on communicating on the Fire Ground channel. There are licensing issues. Mr. Zito got back to Mr. Lonergan with the frequencies he was asked to research. All of them are not able to be used on VHF so there is a concern with licensing frequencies and the capability to do that. Mr. Lonergan has a call in to Tony Ambrosino of Norcom to discuss network infrastructure and what it will cost the District. Once Mr. Lonergan has received all the information, Chairman Colligan will schedule a Communications Committee meeting. The Communication Center also got approval to purchase a new mobile radio for the Police Department for interoperability. It was supposed to be delivered on the 9th. but Mr. Lonergan was recently told there will be an 8 week wait time. It will not be received until February. Currently the Police Department is monitoring Fire's frequency with a pager in their dispatch center.

Regarding pagers, Mr. Lonergan is waiting for a template revision and the updated firmware. Once he receives both of those things, he will be going through a pager reprogramming and update. There will be no major changes except for adding Berlin's frequencies. Regarding reprogramming radios, Mr. Lonergan has been in touch with Paul Zito, Norcom and the State. He was informed that Norcom and Mr. Zito are in the process so they should be receiving their programming soon.

Mr. Lonergan gave an update of MOU's. Not all MOU's that were sent out have come back. They have received most of the MOU's needed. Glastonbury, East Haddam and East Hampton did not want to participate. They did not hear back from Wethersfield. They made attempts to contact New Britain Fire because they had some questions. Rocky Hill and Newington did sign.

Mr. Lonergan reported that the Communications Center has a lot of old equipment that is 20, 30 years old and older. He needs to get rid of it. Most of it carries no value. Most of the equipment discussed does not even function any longer so it cannot be donated to anyone. It is also not FCC licensed, it is not narrow band, it is low band. Mr. Lonergan reported that there is a place in Portland that will take electronics. Most electronic recyclers will not take radios. He would like permission to start either selling or auctioning off any old equipment they can. Anything that has no value, he would just like to dispose of through the proper channels. There may be a couple that could be displayed in a cabinet or something.

The Chairman asked if some of it could be used to have a frequency to talk to the Water Department. Mr. Lonergan reported that the Water Division had portables issued, and Chris Logan is in the process of installing mobiles in all the Water Division vehicles. Russ Johnson and Chris Logan will also be taken care of. Russ has a portable and mobile in his vehicle, and Chris is in the Water Department and will have a radio in his vehicle as well.

Chairman Colligan did not have a problem with the request, but wanted to wait until Mr. Lonergan has put together a list of what should be disposed of. At that point it will be brought before the full Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Colligan wants to make sure the items come off the inventory list. It was noted that anything over 10 years old would not be on the inventory list. If there is anything of value Mr. Lonergan will attempt to sell or auction off.


Chairman Colligan asked the Communication Manager what the target date is for the room at Coles Road to be 100% operational. Mr. Lonergan stated that the room is already online. The only concern is phones. They do not have strong copper-wired phones. They are hoping to have some funding left from the radio project to use towards a telephone system. If not, it will be a capital item in the budget for next fiscal year.

Chairman Colligan was interested in confirming dates and timelines so that the project can be closed out. The system was designed and installed per the specs., but the project did not include the fire ground issue. The radio and portable reprogramming is something that will be done on an annual basis, and it was agreed upon by Norcom to facilitate that upgrade after the closure of the project. The Fire Ground 1 transmission is an issue to be addressed after the project is closed out. It is a separate project not associated with the system that was spec'd and installed. If there is an access road or easement that is installed at Holy Apostles, that will be considered part of the project. The project can be closed out now, then see if there are any funds left from closing out the project to be used for the access road. That money could also be saved as seed money to be used for Fire Ground 1 or invest in a phone system for the whole District. That will be the choice to make.

Chairman Colligan suggested setting the project end date at 30 days from today. If there are any loose ends, the date can be extended.

- X. Commissioners' Comments. Chairman Colligan thanked everyone in the room for all their hard work.
- XI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Hanners, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



David J. Colligan, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary