

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Bylaws Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse

105 Coles Road

Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Charles Epstein (Chairman), John Sokolowski and Robert Donohue attended. Also attending were Board President Roger Rukowicz and Executive Director Julius Neto. Commissioner Mertie Terry was absent.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:33 PM, by Chairman Epstein.
- II. Approval of the Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Continuation of Proposals for Bylaw Changes. The Committee continued from where they left off on Article VI. B. which is the duties of the Vice President.

The Executive Director asked for clarification of Article IV which identifies the roles of Commissioners. There was some discussion at the last meeting but it was not clear if anything was voted on. The issue was brought up by the Executive Director and the Fire Chief including former Chiefs regarding Commissioners being on fire scenes. When they are attending fire scenes they are technically in dual roles; Commissioner and volunteer. This situation has always been a concern of the Fire Chiefs past and present when managing a scene. Commissioners have stated when they show up at a scene they are wearing whatever hat their volunteer status is such as Fire Police, EMT, etc. Commissioner Sokolowski feels it is the perception. People who are on the fireground see these individuals as Commissioners, which is a different level in the organization. Commissioner Sokolowski does not think Commissioners should be volunteering during their term as a Commissioner. He has had conversations with people in the Department saying they are uneasy about having a Commissioner working on a fire scene because they feel they are being judged differently.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and approved 2 to 0 that effective in 2024, Fire Commissioners during their

term can no longer volunteer with the Fire Department. Commissioner Epstein was opposed.

Regarding Article VI.B., a motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to keep Article VI. B. as is regarding the Vice Presidential duties.

For Article VI. C. regarding the duties of the Secretary/District Clerk, it was suggested to omit Item a. under VI. C. because the meeting records are kept in the District office rather than with the Secretary/District Clerk. Responsible entity to ensure that subordinate staff does what they need to do. It is more of an oversight role of the records. The secretary needs to be the signatory of such documents. The Secretary should have oversight of all Board meeting minutes, Committee meeting minutes and all records related to Fire District business.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to change the language in the Secretary's job description, Article VI., Item C., showing the combining of items a. and b. "The Secretary/District Clerk shall provide oversight of all records and minutes of the Cromwell Fire District."

There was discussion about the current voters list (Item c. under Article VI, Item C.). The Executive Director explained that the District Office keeps up with current voting lists for every election it has.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to accept the changes made to Article VI. C.

The next review was Article VI., Item D., Treasurer's duties. From a practical perspective, there has never been a Treasurer for the Fire District that has been tuned into the collection process. Collections fall on the burden of the staff. The Water Division has its own process for water billing and the Fire Department has theirs with EMS billing. It was suggested to remove item a. under Article VI., Item D. President Rukowicz noted that of Items a. through g. for Treasurer's duties, the only thing he has seen the Treasurer do is sign checks. All the other duties listed are not done by the Treasurer. In most cases the District's Finance Manager is responsible for the financial management of the District.

It was suggested to eliminate item a. Item b. should read, "Be able to sign all checks drawn on District funds." One of the issues with the Board officers' roles is that there is no experience or criteria required to meet the needs of the Treasurer's role, or Secretary's role.

Commissioner Sokolowski suggested that the Treasurer have some type of interaction with the Finance Manager on a regular basis regarding the status of collections or investments. It was suggested to have a quarterly review. The Treasurer should meet quarterly with the Executive Director and the Financial Manager for periodic review of financial records that are reported to the Board of Commissioners.

Item d. under Article VI, Item D. adding at the beginning of that statement, "quarterly meetings with the Executive Director and Finance Manager in preparation of the annual budget." This would remove the word, "Coordinate" at the beginning of the sentence.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to change the language in Article VI, Item D.d. to "quarterly meeting with the Executive Director and Finance Manager in preparation of the Annual Budget for submission to the Board and voters."

There was a discussion regarding Article VII, Item A. It was agreed to keep the language as it is.

The next Article VIII, is regarding the Annual Meeting. The purpose of the Annual meeting is to elect Officers to the Board after the annual election is held. Commissioner Epstein has suggested in the past that the Board of Commissioners' election be held on the same night as the Town's election. The feeling is that this might make for a bigger turnout of voters for the Commission election. Usually the voter turnout for the Board of Commissioners' election is much less than the town election. The District Bylaws and the District voting process does not fall under the guidelines of the Secretary of State. The District is not governed by them. The voting machine would not be able to read two different ballots. Therefore, the District would have to purchase its own machine and have its own staff. One of the other points is that Town elections are held at Town Hall, Fire District elections are held at the Coles Road firehouse.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to table the discussion on Article VIII.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to leave Article IX as is with no changes.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to leave Article X as is with no changes.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to leave Article XI as is, no changes.

Article XII was discussed next. There was a question whether or not this section which is regarding Uniforms should be in the Bylaws. This section was recently added to the Bylaws. Commissioner Epstein noted that the Board never got to the point of purchasing or receiving the pocket inserts with the badge and patch on it. They had discussed a formal outfit for events which included a navy blue blazer purchased by the Commissioner, grey pants, white shirt and tie. Commissioner Sokolowski did not think this needed to be in the Bylaws, but rather an administrative policy for the District.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to remove Article XII from the Bylaws and forward to the President of the Board to adopt it as an administrative policy.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to table Article XIII at this time. It was agreed

that the discussion of Article XIII should be scheduled as a separate meeting or workshop.

The Committee moved on to Article XV, Item A. which is a description of the Executive Director.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to leave Article XV.A. unchanged.

On that same page 15, the subtitle, "Cromwell Fire District Division of Fire and EMS Services" above Item B. in Article XV had been struck out on the document. It was proposed to leave the language the same for Item B.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to keep the language in Item B. the same.

Item C. under the same Article lists the responsibilities of the Assistant Chiefs of Operations and Assistant Chief of Training/Safety. The Commission had considered going in a different direction regarding these positions. However, based on current circumstances, the Committee agreed to leave all the language in the document. There was discussion on Item d. under Item C. It was unclear why the Fire Chief would need to provide the reviews of his or her Assistant Chiefs to the Personnel Committee. It was agreed for Item d. that the language of the first sentence end at "on an annual basis."

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to edit Item C.d. to read, "The Fire Chief shall evaluate the performance of the Assistant Chief of Operations and the Assistant Chief of Training/Safety on an annual basis." The rest of the language of that item will be stricken.

Commissioner Donohue excused himself at 6:57 PM. President Rukowicz sat in for Commissioner Donohue to make quorum.

The next item was Item D. under Article XV. It was agreed to remove "part-time unscheduled employees" from the subtitle. For Item b. it was agreed to remove the language "through the Personnel Committee" at the end of the sentence.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept Item b. with the removal of the language at the end of the sentence which reads, "through the Personnel Committee."

The next item was Item D.c. under Article XV. It was agreed to keep the language as is, and at the end of the sentence adding "and the Executive Director."

A motion was made by President Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to accept Item D.c. under Article XV adding "and the Executive Director" at the end of the sentence.

The next item was Item D.d. This item originally was intended to be removed. It was agreed to leave the original language there and not to edit.

A motion was made by President Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to leave Item D.d. under Article XV as is. It was due to be deleted from the Bylaws document.

The next section was the Water Operations Manager, item E. Regarding Item d. in that section, it was noted that there are no collective bargaining agreements within the Water Division.

A motion was made by President Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to remove Item E.d. under Article XV, moving Item E.e. to the new Item E.d.

The next section, Item F. was Communications Manager. A motion was made by President Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to keep the language the same for the Communications Manager.

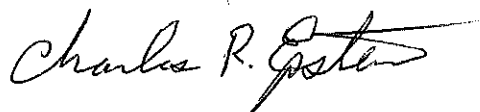
A motion was made by President Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to rescind the last two motions and to those motions add the wording at the end of each of those items after "by action of the" it should read "Executive Director and the Board of Commissioners."

A motion was made by President Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to leave Article XVI, Item A. as is. No changes to the language.

Chairman Epstein wanted to schedule a workshop to work on the sections that were tabled, such as the Committee section. The workshop was scheduled for Wednesday, April 19, 2023, tentatively.

- V. Commissioners' Comments. There were no further Commissioners' comments.
- VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by President Rukowicz and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Charles R. Epstein, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary