

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Executive Committee Meeting

Monday, April 10, 2023

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Robert McIntyre (Chairman), Donald Smith and Roger Rukowicz (President). Commissioners Chip Darius and Mertie Terry were absent. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Finance Manager Michael Lupkas, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan and Fire Chief Jason Brade.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chairman McIntyre.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Discussion and Possible Approval of the FY 2023/2024 Cromwell Fire District Budget for the Water & Fire Departments and Communication Center. Everyone present was given a copy of the final draft of the budget for review. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The document presented has a zero percent tax increase and a zero percent water rate increase. The driver of this budget is the Capital. If the document has no changes when their review is completed, Mr. Neto explained they will need to access the Fund Balance to maintain the zero tax increase.

The budget process consisted of the Executive Director and the Department heads communicating and compromising to achieve the final budget. It was then reviewed with the Finance Manager for presenting to the Executive Committee for review and approval.

They began discussing the Water Department budget first. It was done in the same format as previous years. Each line item was reviewed by Mr. Neto who welcomed any questions. Mr. Palmieri was also available to answer questions or provide more information about line items.

Mr. Neto explained a change in wages for Mr. Lupkas. Money had been set aside for consulting fees which included Mr. Lupkas' wages. In the next budget there will be a difference of consulting fees going into wages for the Water Division payroll because half of Mr. Lupkas'

wages comes from the Water Division budget and half from the General Fund budget. The intent is to have Mr. Lupkas become a part-time employee. Mr. Alvarado and Mr. Neto have the same policy for their wages; split between the Water and General Fund budgets.

Chairman McIntyre brought up the discussion the Board of Commissioners had a while ago regarding adding the Juneteenth holiday to the District's paid holiday schedule. The discussion at that time was about aligning with the Town's holiday schedule. He asked if this issue was taken into account for this payroll budget. At the time the only reason Commissioner McIntyre did not vote in favor of it was because it was not budgeted for. Mr. Neto said that this item was not budgeted in this budget because the vote was not in the affirmative. Mr. Neto said it is something that can be added. He estimated that the cost to the budget would be \$6,500-\$7,000.

It was noted that the only thing to add to this budget under the holiday payroll is Juneteenth. Commissioner McIntyre had some conversations with a few individuals that are employees here who are non-union. They feel that the District should follow the Town's holiday schedule. The non-union employees feel neglected and this is something they can do as a good will gesture towards employees.

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to add one more funded holiday to the budget should the Board members decided to vote in the affirmative on this issue. The estimated cost would be approximately \$7,000.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the 2023/2024 Water Division budget with the caveat that one more funded holiday be added to the budget.

It was agreed to review the Communications Center budget next. Mr. Lonergan noted that one of the reasons for the increase in Signals and Alarms was the Norcom Service Agreement. The rest was due to the increases in utility services and fiber optic. There was also a 20% increase in payroll costs. Mr. Lonergan expressed his concerns about not being able to put more funds into the budget for the security camera replacement. Due to budget constraints that was not possible. Mr. Lonergan stressed the importance of this project being completed. Also, Mr. Lonergan plans on compensating the trainers for the Quality Assurance Program. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the Heat/AC in Dispatch.

The next review was the General Fund budget. The bulk of the revenue comes from taxes. Since the Town is re-evaluating of property, the District is not increasing taxes. The Town may be reducing their rate. It was noted that \$10,000 was put into the Commission budget to replenish it.

They discussed the Fire Chief's budget. The cost of supplies continues to increase. There was an increase of 6.88% year over year. The Chief also discussed the FMO budget. Some funds that were used to fund a part-time secretary, is now being used to fund the inspectors and administrative duties.

Mr. Neto explained that taxes and benefits cannot be changed or controlled. Rates for insurance are being managed by the company.

Mr. Neto explained to make this budget happen, they will need to go to two funds to pull out \$300,000. This would be \$200,000 out of the Tower Fund and \$100,000 from the Fund Balance. This will allow \$918,000 for a rainy day.

Commissioner McIntyre asked about Truck 1. Chief Brade has not heard anything about selling Truck 1. It is still for sale, and they were going to use Brinley Mountain as the vendor for the sale. There has been no movement on it. The Chief has had discussions with the vendor where we had ordered the ambulance. They would want to list the truck for \$80,000 and hope to get \$70,000 or \$60,000. It would cost more than to put it back on the road. The piece has been stripped for sale. This budget does not have any capital funding to put that piece back online. It does have \$100,000 that can be added to the \$250,000 for apparatus replacement.

Mr. Neto discussed the \$379,500 for capital expenditures for public safety that is in the budget.

A motion was made by President Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the 2023/2024 General Fund budget with the caveat that one more funded holiday be added to the budget.

- V. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert McIntyre, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary