

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, July 18, 2023, 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, July 18, 2023, 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 David Colligan (Vice President), Mertie Terry, Charles Epstein, Donald Smith, Chip Darius and Robert McIntyre attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Assistant Fire Chief Karl Neubecker, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri and Fire Marshal Harold Holmes. Commissioners John Sokolowski and Roger Rukowicz were absent.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Vice President Colligan. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice President Colligan. Vice President Colligan asked for a moment of silence for Firefighter Jordan Miller of Birmingham, AL who was conducting an open house with another Firefighter at their firehouse doing blood pressure checks when they were shot by a random shooter. Firefighter Miller did not survive. Commissioner Epstein mentioned the two firefighters who lost their lives in Newark, NJ when a cargo ship caught fire.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 20, 2023

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the Board of Commissioners' meeting of June 20, 2023, as submitted.

Commissioner Darius suggested looking at the Apparatus Replacement fund for any leftover funds from last year. Mr. Neto explained any leftover dollars will automatically go to the General Fund. Commissioner Epstein had questions regarding financial planning for a new ambulance. Mr. Neto explained the process for apparatus replacement or purchase.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for June as submitted.

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's report for June had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Assistant Chief Neubecker was filling in for Chief Brade who had an emergency at home. He gave a few highlights from the Chief's report. The golf tournament went very well this year. There were no major issues. This year there was an outpost that was set up on the far side of the course to have access to emergencies on that side of the course. The PGA came in and did an internal audit of all the services and agencies that worked for the tournament. They are waiting for the final report. The initial report was that they were happy with not only the Fire Department but Police Department and emergency services that were there onsite. More information will be coming.

Regarding training, there is a new training calendar that is in place. They have established a system to make sure they are getting accurate Fire and EMS training, along with the mandatory classes that need to be completed on a yearly basis. For safety week, a lithium ion battery training was conducted. The crews visited Middletown Toyota where they could look at an electric vehicle. The crews have been busy. They spent time doing the firework detail in Middletown. They were on the CT river for that. They also have visited some camps in Town to "wet down" the children on some of the real hot days this summer. The ambulances have all passed inspections, and the licenses have been renewed. The Chief's Office was able to get a 10% increase in rate until the end of the year through the office of OEMS. The Chief continues to work on continuing that or increasing it through the next calendar year as well. They are in the middle of the hiring process for full and part-time employees. Testing has been completed. The interviews will be scheduled in the next week or so. Last month there were no task force activations. This month they had 2 on the same day.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Chief's report for June as submitted.

1. Fire Marshal's Office. The Fire Marshal's Office report for June had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Holmes reported that from the FMO perspective, the golf tournament went fairly well. They complied with many of the Fire Marshal's requests. The day of the inspection they discovered 18 fryers under the tent. That situation was rectified.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the fire Marshal's Report for June as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Water Operations report for June had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri added that the Water Division is about to start its West St./side street improvement project. They are replacing the water mains and fire hydrants and water services. They had some materials delivered. The water main taps are scheduled for Thursday. It will be a 2-month project. They will start the project by installing the water mains, then fire hydrants. Once

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Discussion and Possible Decision on Water Billing Exemption – Scouts. This issue has been tabled for the last two Board meetings. Mr. Wygonowski submitted a memo dated June 26, 2023, explaining the “hardship” and what that means legally. He also offered suggestions for looking into water rate structures. As a reminder to all that Mr. Wygonowski’s original request was to consider a water bill exemption for the Boy Scouts Lodge at Watrous Park. They are currently being invoiced the minimum charge of \$45.54. The minimum charge per quarter for water customers is \$45.54. That charge includes the basic charge to be hooked up to water plus 4,500 gallons of water. The Boy Scouts are only using approximately 200 gallons of water.

Commissioner Epstein asked for a workshop so the Commissioners could discuss a plan going forward, specifically, for non-profit organizations. Commissioner Terry commented that the Boy Scouts are one of the non-profits where the leaders don’t get paid. They devote their time and energy to helping the young boys in Cromwell. She is totally against charging anything to this organization. The Boy Scouts deserve more compassion.

Commissioner Darius agreed with Commissioner Epstein that a workshop is needed. The Boy Scouts is an honorable organization but there needs to be objective, impartial criteria to determine water charges. He proposed a one-time benevolent \$90 credit to be applied to the Scout’s billing in recognition that the Fire Department has benefitted by members that have joined and volunteers that have come from the Scout’s ranks.

Mr. Palmieri mentioned that the alternate solution was to look at a different rate structure for the low usage customers. The Water Department is about to do a rate study. In the study they can include accounts such as the non-profits. They can bring forward suggestions during the study. It will also give them an idea of what other Towns and Fire Districts do. Everything should be documented.

Commissioner Colligan agreed that there needs to be some type of policy to address this. There should be a way to accommodate non-profit organizations. He also agreed to the benevolent \$90 credit. There should be a workshop to come up with solutions for these kinds of situations. He also gave an example of other groups holding car washes at the firehouses using District water. They need to schedule a date for the workshop. Commissioner Smith agreed that there should be some minimum usage fee across the board for these types of organizations.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to apply a one-time benevolent credit of \$91.08 to the Boy Scout’s water account in recognition of the Fire Department’s benefit of members who have come from the ranks of the Scouts. This credit covers the next two quarters of water bills (July and October) where the minimum charge for the Scouts each quarter is \$45.54.

Commissioner Colligan suggested setting a date for the workshop right now. Commissioner Darius suggested waiting until the Water Rate Study is completed in order to use that information in the workshop. The Executive Director and Mr. Palmieri did not think the study would be completed for at least 4 to 6 months.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to approve.
- D. Discussion and Decision on Appropriation (17,401.06) for Software Upgrade on Eventide Audio Recorder Astro P25. The Executive Director explained that this is a software upgrade to the recording system at Court St. There is also a new communication system that was installed a couple of years ago. There is a very serious maintenance agreement connected with this. The maintenance agreement with Motorola is to update every piece of security software anytime there are radio or tower issues associated with the overall communications project.

The District has invested in a 5 year contract. It was evaluated to install the new software as part of the maintenance agreement. This recorder does not nicely fit into the sophisticated software that Motorola keeps developing, especially with cyber security. There is a serious need to upgrade the software on that recorder to accommodate the maintenance agreement for the overall communication project. The funding is coming out of the consolidation of leftover monies from different budgets from different projects. There was some money from the big communications project. The money will be coming out of the consolidation of those projects. Failing for us to do this, Motorola will not guarantee the success of the transfer of all the updates to the software unless we do this. This will allow us to accept data across platforms. The money is part of the equipment reserve fund.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to take the funds for Eventide audio from the equipment reserve fund.

- E. North Rd. Rocky Hill Landowners Request for a Fire Hydrant – Frank Maganotta Consulting Engineer. Mr. Maganotta distributed copies of a diagram illustrating where his client is planning to construct a home and where the fire hydrant would be located. Based on Rocky Hill's ordinance, they will need to have a fire hydrant located within 500 ft. of the home to be built. The proposal presented is to get the Cromwell water system and a fire hydrant closer to that house to meet the regulations of Rocky Hill. All of the new infrastructure will be on the Cromwell side of the boundary and the expense of this will be paid by the client. After the last meeting, Mr. Maganotta went back to the plans and was able to shorten the water main extension and still be able to meet the Rocky Hill Fire Marshal's requirement which is illustrated on the diagram distributed. It is less than the 500 ft. requirement. The initial proposal had the fire hydrant in Rocky Hill. Since it is meeting all requirements, they do not need to get any legal opinions or attorneys involved. The Water Department will take care of maintenance and inspections once the project is completed. After completion the responsibility of the hydrant will be Cromwell's.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the project as defined in the diagram submitted at this meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Wygonowski thanked the Board for listening to his request tonight on behalf of the Boy Scouts. He is hopeful that something good will come out of it. He discussed the progress that was made at the last meeting. He thanked the Board for the forgiveness of the next 2 water bills. It was much appreciated. He discussed the \$6 million the District has from the last meeting and

