

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, September 19, 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, September 19, 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 Roger Rukowicz (President), David Colligan, Robert McIntyre, Donald Smith and Chip Darius attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Brade, Fire Marshal Harold Holmes and Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri. Commissioners Mertie Terry, Charles Epstein and John Sokolowski were absent.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM, by President Rukowicz. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Rukowicz.

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

Mr. James Rude, 25 Highridge Rd., submitted public comments in written format to be read by the Executive Director relating to the job description and hiring process for a new Executive Director. A copy of the public comments are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 15, 2023

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of August 15, 2023, as submitted.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
AUGUST 30, 2023

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of August 30, 2023, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

There were no communications or appeals to report.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's Report for August had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District office. Mr. Neto highlighted a couple of issues. One is that the District has been notified by FOI, that there has been a complaint filed against Mr. Neto and the District for not complying with FOI rules by not releasing two of the investigative reports that were done late last year. The attorneys have filed on the District's behalf. The deadline for appeal was September 6. The FOI Commission will now schedule a hearing. Attorney Mike Rose will be the Attorney of Record. Mr. Neto will keep the group updated. The hearing should be scheduled within 4 to 6 weeks in Hartford. He also discussed the water issue with PFAS. Mr. Neto and Mr. Palmieri are working with Environmental Partners. They have started the testing phase. Commissioner Smith has been keeping Mr. Neto updated on the Legionella issue at the Covenant Living community. The issue has surfaced again. Previously, the State had authorized a band-aid solution to the problem which helped the situation. However, shortly after that first round of testing, there was some private testing done by relatives of residents. The outcome was not as favorable. There is some speculation within that community that Cromwell water is the problem. It has been proven that Mr. Palmieri has been treating Cromwell water with the appropriate levels of chlorine. He will keep the group updated.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's Report for August as submitted.

- B. Financial Report. Mr. Lupkas is recovering from back surgery. The Executive Director was available to fill in for the Finance Manager and answer any questions. The Financial Report for August had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Neto had received from Mr. Lupkas some highlights to the report. The District received \$1 million from the Town as part of the tax revenue. It was noted that the amount of the check is not the total amount. The Tax Collector is having some issues reconciling year end. There is probably another \$500,000 to \$600,000 more that is owed the District. Other offices at Town Hall are also in the same situation. The funds need to be received for the audit. The District received a State Grant of \$160,319 that they did not expect. It was deposited. It was similar to the amount submitted last year to help with the decrease in motor vehicle tax revenue. EMS calls were 95% of last year. They are in the process of transferring \$2 million to the STIF program. The auditors should be on site at the end of September is begin their process. There is \$130,000 going back to the General Fund. Water collections have totaled \$694,678.89 since Donna has come on board in the Water Department. There was a question about the District receiving COVID funds that were given out from the Federal Government. It was noted that \$4.2 million was received by the Town.

\$2.2 million went to the Board of Education, and the Town kept \$2 million some of which has been spent already. Nothing was given to the Fire District/Water Department.

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

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for August had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Chief Brade reported that the Department continues to stay busy. There were 292 calls this month. There were 15 occasions this month where the Department had the second ambulance on. It was utilized about every other day. The Chief's office is working on a process for part-time staff to get to the staffing levels they need. There were 3 requests from Middletown to help with fires. There was also a Task Force activation. He reported on the dedication of the Fire Marshal's Office. The family attended. Also this month they did some flag presentations, touch a trucks, a swearing-in ceremony for the two Assistant Chiefs and a couple other community service events. They are working with the Union to finish contract negotiations. It has been a very good process thus far. The Department should be receiving a check soon from Travelers' for the billed event. A new call-back policy was instituted in the Fire Department. They adjusted the way they do things to get the alert to go out a little faster.

Chief Driscoll has been working on the highway cost recovery program. They have met with several different towns, and Cromwell is registering for the program as well. The State will pay the Fire Department \$500 every time they have a highway call that a volunteer responds to. Cromwell just submitted their first two reports to the State. They have changed some of their highway response. They are in a trial period of 30-60 days of sending Engine 3 to the highway instead of the Ladder truck. They are trying to prevent the Ladder truck getting hit on the highway since it's the only one. They are also sending volunteers to the highway to direct traffic and making use of the State highway Cost Recovery Program. Chief Neubecker is working on gear inventory. They are also updating SCBA inventory. They met with people from the Landon who are trying to do an expansion project.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for August as submitted.

1. Fire Marshal's Office. Mr. Holmes distributed his report at the meeting. The Commissioners took a few minutes to review. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. He discussed a couple of the more interesting calls that were taken. They involved Air BnB's located in Cromwell that are not regulated by any codes. Because they are unregulated it is difficult to get the State to get involved. The foundation has been poured for Texas Roadhouse. There was a meeting with Travelers today. They are planning to use double decker tents next year. The tournament will probably be drawing bigger crowds because the roster is going to be the top 80 money winners. There will be no cut. The same 80 people will be playing golf all weekend. The swim school is getting ready to put in the pool. Popeye's has submitted their plan. The old Friendly's has submitted a plan to become an auto parts store. There are no plans for the old 99 Restaurant. The Red Lion has settled all its tax issues. A demolition permit should be coming soon. Chief Brade noted that they did post for a part-time fire inspector in the Marshal's office. The posting closes on Friday. The Chief added to his report from earlier that the Department did have a fairly significant call on the highway the other day. It was newsworthy. There were crashes that occurred on both sides of the

highway. The department responded to both. The Chief explained some of the details of the call. For the record the crews did really well with the information they were given. There was a debriefing after the incident. A mother and child were involved. The child did not survive.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Marshal's Report for August as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for August had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri noted that he has also been in contact with the swim school and everyone else that has been submitting permits. Everything is running smoothly. He reported the Water Division also did a water main offset for the Town of Cromwell with the Allen Rd. reconstruction project. One of the fire hydrants was relocated and replaced with a new one. It was almost 200 ft. of water mains. They will be finishing Carroll Place, McDonald Ave. and Brooks Lane within a couple of weeks.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the Operations Report for August as submitted.

- E. Communication Center Report. The Communication Center Report for August 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 Executive Director was available to answer any questions. Commissioner Darius noted that he made Ass't Chief Neubecker aware of the projector at West St. Mr. Lonergan will be looking into it.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Communication Center Report for August as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations. There was no meeting.
- B. Executive. There was no meeting.
- C. Fire Operations. A meeting was scheduled for September 11, 2023, and was canceled. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2023, at 5:30 PM.
- D. Volunteer Pension. There was no meeting.
- E. Personnel. A meeting was scheduled for Sept. 12, 2023, and was canceled. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 10, 2023, at 5:30 PM.
- F. Water Operations. The next quarterly Water Operations Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov 1, 2023, at 5:30 PM.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. There was no report.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
 - 1. Public Safety Tower Committee. A meeting was scheduled for Sept. 1, 2023, and was canceled. The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for Friday, Dec. 1, 2023.
 - 2. Health & Safety/Building Committee. The next quarterly meeting is Thursday, Oct. 5, 2023, at 5:30 PM.
 - 3. Bylaws Committee. A Special Board meeting was held last night to discuss the final draft of the Bylaws. The final corrected copy will be prepared and presented to the Board for review.
 - 4. Public Relations/Community Outreach Committee. Commissioner Darius reported that the next newsletter is in process.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. This was Commissioner Colligan's last meeting as a Commissioner. He was not running for reelection this year. He commented that it has been a pleasure working with everyone. He has been associated with the Cromwell Fire District for over 40 years. A lot has happened over those years. The world has changed, including the fire service. He has served as a volunteer, a Fire Chief and a Commissioner as well as other committees and services within the fire service. Commissioner McIntyre thanked Commissioner Colligan for all his years of service to the community and the Fire District. Commissioner Darius had the same comments as well. He noted it was a pleasure to serve under Commissioner Colligan when he was a Fire Chief in the 90's. His vision, leadership, strength of character made the Department what it was and brought the Department forward. He has left a lasting mark on the community and the members of the Department. He thanked him for all his blood, sweat and tears over the years. President Rukowicz also commented he has known Commissioner Colligan as a friend, neighbor, and fellow firefighter. They started in the Department around the same time. Commissioner Colligan rose through the ranks. He accomplished a lot as Fire Chief for 4 terms. He spent over 20 years in the Chief's office as Ass't Chief, Deputy Chief and Chief. His accomplishments helped the Fire Department become what it is today. He wished him the best of luck and thanked him for everything he has done for the District.

President Rukowicz also suggested that the District make a \$50 donation to each of the two organizations listed in the obituary for Commissioner Darius' father who passed away recently. Mr. Neto was going to take care of that.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to approve.
- D. Continue Discussion and Possible Decision on the Executive Director's Job Description. President Rukowicz pointed out it is important to get this issue taken care of at this meeting because the Board is trying to follow a time table. At the last meeting there were some issues with the job description regarding qualifications. There was discussion about a Bachelor's

degree and any other degrees or experience. There was discussion regarding job experience. Under qualifications, there was discussion about having a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration, Business Administration or job experience. Under the first bullet, Commissioner Smith suggested after Business Administration add "or related areas" and eliminate the rest of the sentence regarding leadership/management experience.

Commissioner Smith had comments about job responsibilities. In some instances it says "reports and works closely" and other areas say "planning and developing." In some cases grammatically should the "ing" be used or not. The easiest way to correct that is to drop the "ing" anywhere it is written. Instead of "acting" it should be "act." He referred to numbers 2, 7 and 17 under Actual Job Responsibilities. The verbiage should all be consistent using the right tense of verbs throughout. He also had a question on Item 4. The word "directly" was taken out. It was noted to delete under Board Governance, number 4 take out "Old 5." For number 5. Take out "Old 14."

Commissioner Darius noted on Pg. 1, first paragraph, third line from the bottom, should say "review" not "reviews." The sentence then says "ensures" and should be changed to "ensure."

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's job description with the changes discussed tonight.

- E. Discuss and Establish a Hiring Process for the Replacement of the Executive Director. President Rukowicz asked what the process should entail. The Executive Director explained that the process will be up to the Board. He will need guidance from the Board in terms of what they want for a process and he will make it happen. Mr. Neto has looked into fees that are charged by vendors who help recruit. The average rate is \$14% of the candidate's first year salary. Commissioner Colligan recommended getting the job posting out there as soon as possible. After the elections, the Board should have its first meeting to put together questions, etc. for the Executive Director and move forward. Commissioner Darius suggested reaching out to the Capital Region Council of Governments and the CT Local Inter-Risk Management Agency. They are two entities that deal with multiple municipalities. If they do not have direct services they could probably connect the District with someone who does. He would also be careful with Commissioners drafting interview questions without having them filtered by some Human Resource expert. CROG and CIRMA are two places to start and a Human Resource consultant. Commissioner Darius knew a few people through the CT Business and Industry Association. He offered to reach out.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to table the process for the replacement of the Executive Director until more information is received regarding contacts.

- F. Discussion of a Process for a Cromwell Fallen Firefighter Memorial – Presentation by Lt. Alan Dominy, President Local 4662. Lt. Alan Dominy, President of Local 4662 distributed copies of drawing with their vision of what a Fallen Firefighter Memorial should look like and where. The members of the Fire Department had started to think about a memorial after the passing of Todd Gagnon. They thought about a Fallen Firefighter Memorial for the Town of Cromwell that would be located at the Court St. Firehouse where all firefighters operate out of daily. Lt. Dominy began reaching out to monument companies in the area to get

pricing. The Department did not have a lot of funds to get this project going. They did not want to come to the District to ask for funding for this. They ended up dedicating the last boot drive to the project and raised over \$11,000. Lt. Dominy waited until they had funding for the project before presenting it to the Board. The drawing presented gives an idea of the placement of the memorial at Court St. They plan to have the engravable bricks. The center piece will be a granite bench. Commissioner Colligan suggested locating it at the Coles Road Firehouse where the deceased firefighters from the Department are also noted. There was much discussion about the location of the memorial and the fact that the Town owns most of the corner on Court St. where the memorial was planned to be located. The firefighters in attendance appreciated the feedback. They will be doing more research and will be prepared to make a more informed presentation at the next meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to table this issue at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Alan Dominy thanked Commissioner Colligan for his years of service and the opportunity to work with him. He also thanked Mr. Neto for his service and working with him since he is also retiring soon. It was a pleasure for Lt. Dominy to be able to work with these individuals.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no items for Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner McIntyre, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 PM.

ATTEST:

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary

Roger Rukowicz, President

