

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, May 21, 2024, 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, May 21, 2024, 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 Donald Smith (Vice President), Mertie Terry, Charles Epstein, John Sokolowski, Steve Wygonowski, Donald Goranson, Robert McIntyre and Chip Darius attended. Also attending were Executive Director Roger Hart, Fire Chief Jason Brade, Finance Manager Michael Lupkas, Fire Marshal Harold Holmes, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan and Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri. Commissioner Roger Rukowicz (President) was absent.

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice-President Smith asked the Commission to consider a request to change the order of Executive Session, requested by Director Hart. Executive Session to be before X. New Business, Item F.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wygonowski to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Commissioner Darius, and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vice-President Smith thanked Nancy Deegan for her many years of dedicated service to the Board of Fire Commissioners.

James Rude, 25 Highridge Road: Expressed he was happy to hear the Pension Committee is finally meeting. (See Attached Comments for further detail).

Commissioner Epstein thanked the Fire Department, Communications Division and surrounding Fire Departments that responded to the structure fire at 17 Crest Dr.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
APRIL 16, 2024

A motion was made by Commissioner Wygonowski, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of April 16, 2024, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS AND WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

Commissioner Epstein read a thank you from the Vernon Volunteer Fire Department.

Vice-President Smith noted the correction of the Board of Commissioners Committee assignments that was distributed.

REPORTS OF STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's report for May had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Director Hart answered a few questions relative to his report.

A motion was made by Commissioner Goranson, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's report for May as presented.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for May had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lupkas reported on the current tax levy collection. There were 134 EMS calls that were billed out last month. EMS receipts are 112.9% of last year's. Water has produced 65.2 million gallons less than last year. There are 30 parcels in collection with balances over \$1,000.

Commissioner Darius asked about multiple Alcap Ridge properties in collection. Mr. Lupkas and Mr. Palmeri answered the question. The properties are former businesses that are currently vacant. Commissioner Wygonowski asked if water was still flowing at the addresses. Mr. Palmeri said he believed the properties had not been shut off yet, but the process is still ongoing.

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

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for May had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

Chief Brade summarized his monthly report and asked for any questions.

Commissioner Terry corrected the date of the car show reported by Chief Brade.

Commissioner Sokolowski asked about the SOG regarding uniforms and how is the process proceeding. The Chief stated they are focusing on getting the career staff caught up on

contractual obligations. After the career staff are caught up, they will focus on the volunteer staff.

Commissioner Epstein asked the Chief to mention the FD's new golfcart. Chief Brade spoke briefly about the golfcart that was recently purchased from Lowes with funds donated, in part, by Covenant Living. Lowes also discounted the price.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Chief's Report for May as presented.

Fire Marshal Holmes summarized his monthly report and noted grant applications including FEMA grant opportunity.

Fire Marshal Holmes spoke briefly about the cause/origin of the Crest Drive Mother's Day fire. (Hot Lawn Mower, Grass Clippings, Fuel)

Commissioner Epstein asked Fire Marshal Holmes to speak about the laptop fire at the school. Mr. Holmes reported a Chrome book was dropped by a student and then started smoking when powered up. Chief Brade reported all entities worked together seamlessly during the incident and had a unified message to the public.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Marshal's Office report for May as presented.

- D. Communication Center Report. The Communication Manager's report had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lonergan reported the District-wide telephone project was nearly completed.

Commissioner Darius asked about a telephone in the public space in the meeting room of 105 Coles Rd. He suggested it be labeled to help the public use the telephone.

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

- E. Water Operations. The Operations Report for May had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri was available to answer any questions.

Commissioner Terry corrected the spelling of "Shanley".

Commissioner Goranson mentioned members of Covenant Living had not received the Water Quality report mailer.

Commissioner Epstein asked a brief question regarding a pump station.

Commissioner Darius asked a historical question about Covenant Living and water.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Operations Report for May as presented.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. Executive. There was no meeting.
- B. Public Safety Tower. There was no meeting.
- C. Water Operations. There was no meeting.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. The Town Council Liaison was unable to attend.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees.
 - 1. Pension Committee. The next meeting is Wednesday, May 22, 2024.
 - 2. Health & Safety/Building Committee. A meeting was held on May 13, 2024. Minutes had been previously distributed and are being reviewed.
 - 3. Budget & Oversight Committee. There was no meeting.
- C. Issue of Updating the District Collection Policy. A DRAFT policy was included in the Board of Commissioner's packet. A brief discussion occurred regarding the updated policy.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the DRAFT Collection Policy as the District's Policy.

- D. Interest Issue, Town of Cromwell (Tax Disbursement). Commissioner Epstein commented that the Town should be responsible for reimbursing the District for unearned interest on the delayed Tax payments from the previous calendar year.

Commissioner McIntyre suggested the Town and District enter into a written agreement regarding the Tax Collection including ramifications if the Town fails to make payment after a set period of time.

A lengthy discussion proceeded.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski, and unanimously approved to direct the Executive Director to meet with the Town Manager to develop a Memorandum of Understanding regarding Tax Collection.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioners McIntyre and Goranson thanked the Board for their sympathy and support during difficult times of loss. Commissioner McIntyre lost his father Harry and Commissioner Goranson lost his son David and they both appreciated the kind words and gestures from the Department and the Board. Commissioner Darius commented on the low voter turnout for the budget vote. Commissioner Wygonowski added that the limited hours of voting may be a factor. Commissioner Epstein commented that combining the Town budget vote with Fire District budget vote may increase turnout and efficiency.
- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were none.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were none.
- D. Webster Bank – Resolution Authorized Signatures. Resolution is necessary to update signatures on the Webster Bank account. Vice-President Smith read the Resolution. (See Attached)

A motion was made by Commissioner Goranson, seconded by Commissioner Darius, and unanimously approved to accept the resolution and update the signatures.

- E. CCM Municipal Consulting Service Agreement – Authorize President to sign. The Town of Cromwell is inviting the District to enter into an agreement with them to hire a Connecticut Council of Municipalities (CCM) representative to conduct a shared services study A copy of the agreement was included in the Board of Commissioner's packet.

A lengthy discussion ensued.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Darius, to allow the president to sign. The vote was 6 – 1 to approve with Commissioner Terry opposing the motion.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No Public comment.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski, and unanimously approved to enter Executive Session to include the Executive Director, the Fire Chief and the Finance Director.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. Labor & Management Issue
B. 2- Career Fire Fighters Positions

NEW BUSINESS (Continued)

No action was taken on Item A.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Darius, and unanimously approved to allow Chief Brade to hire two (2) Career Fire Fighters.

F. Certify Fire Fighter Employment List.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Darius, and unanimously approved to Certify a Part-time Fire Fighters Employment list and a Career Fire Fighter Employment List.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner McIntyre, seconded by Commissioner Darius, and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 PM.

ATTEST:

Charlie Epstein, Secretary

Cromwell Fire District Commission Meeting May 21, 2024

Public Comment

James Rude, 25 Highridge Road

Good evening.

Pension Committee Meetings- I am very happy to see that the Pension Committee is scheduled to meet tomorrow (May 22, 2024) for the first time since July 5, 2023. Ten months without a meeting is a hard to comprehend. I strongly encourage the Commission to ensure that these meetings are held at least quarterly to review the current Volunteer Pension Plan asset values and discuss the progress towards complete closure of this terminated plan.

Long Range Financial Planning- I want to again emphasize the need for the development of a meaningful capital acquisitions plan for the Fire District (for replacement EMS & Fire apparatus as well as for the water service interconnection with other Towns). It is important that the Commission begin to look further ahead to ensure the financial viability of the Fire District.

Communication with Taxpayers and Customers- I applaud the improvements made over the last several years to begin to provide better information to Town residents. I have heard some recent comments that the District may consider elimination of the quarterly newsletter. I strongly believe that this communication vehicle should be continued, and that it needs to begin to include some of the critical elements of information that will impact the District's finances over the coming years. Particularly the items mentioned above about long range financial needs of the District.

Thank you.