

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION
COMMUNICATION CENTER

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS **Budget & Oversight Committee Meeting**

Friday, April 5, 2024, 1:00 PM

West Street Firehouse

1 West Street

Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners John Sokolowski (Chair), Chip Darius, Donald Smith and Donald Goranson. Also attending was Executive Director Roger Hart, former Executive Director Julius Neto, Commissioners Charles Epstein and Roger Rukowicz (President), Finance Manager Michael Lupkas and Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Chairman Sokolowski.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. Commissioner Darius apologized for his comments at the last meeting about the graph. He did not mean to diminish the intentions of the work the former and current Executive Directors had done on the budget. He did not mean for his comments to be offensive.
- IV. Old Business. There was no old business to discuss.
- V. New Business
 - A. Discussion on 2024-2025 Fiscal Year, Five/Water District Operating Budget/Equipment Reserve Fund. The discussion today was regarding the Water Division Operating Budget. Mr. Hart gave a Powerpoint presentation of the proposed Water Division budget. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

Revenue was discussed first. It was the status quo in some areas and a reduction in others. There was a nice figure for interest income. There will be a transfer of funds of \$175,000, last year was \$180,000.

There was a 18.59% increase in total payroll. That was a 3% salary increase for everyone across the board and adding one Maintainer salary to the mix. Mr. Palmieri would like to increase his staffing by one person at the Maintainer level. Mr. Palmieri had a straight forward budget with things almost the same as last year. He explained the maintenance

of pumping equipment item and the improvement it will make to his operations. Mr. Hart explained some of the slight increases to accounts due to the addition of another Maintainer. Debt services had a slight difference but no issues to report. The Water Capital fund was reviewed. The SCADA system was discussed.

Mr. Palmieri explained the Vac Valve Exerciser/Vac Excavation trailer. The Treatment Feasibility Study was discussed. All the Capital Fund requests for the Water Division were discussed. All requests were a priority. Generators have been added to the list because there needs to be back up power at all booster pump stations. This is required by DPH. The pump stations are Sovereign Ridge, Evergreen, Sanford Lane. The Landon has been designed to have a backup in place without adding one by the Water Division. The total Water Capital request is \$487,900. The budget has a .42% increase overall.

Going back to the last meeting, there was a decision that was made that there may be a cost initiative to having 8 full time people that did not work into the numbers, specifically for holiday payout. There is roughly \$40,000 that should be added to that number. That will make up for the holiday payout for the 8 full time people.

They are using \$175,000 of the Net position will be used to make this budget balanced. There is a sufficient number there that can be used.

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the proposed Water Division Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

- VI. Commissioners' Comments. Chairman Sokolowski discussed issues remaining from the April 2 meeting with the Fire Department budget. There was discussion about the possibility of having 9 staff, 7 full-time and 2 part-time, with the part-timers having a 24 hr. shift. The cost would be \$446,000 and would increase the mil rate by .75%. He discussed option 2 of Chief Brade's budget requests which was to add 2 additional part-time staff at the beginning probationary salary 24 hours a day. There will be new OSHA guidelines coming out which specify 1710 which is a potential increase in manpower and Cromwell would be getting ahead of the curve on this. The Chairman just wants to make sure the Department heads have the resources and tools they need to run their departments. There was discussion regarding the Police Department no longer taking emergency calls, all first responder calls are taken by the Communication Center.

Although Chief Brade's options 1 and 3 were voted on and accepted, the Chairman proposed rescinding that motion and vote on options 1 and 2. It was calculated out to cost \$688,423. It would increase the mil rate to .37%. Commissioner Darius reviewed the information from these meetings to publish in the upcoming newsletter. He asked for additional feedback from the Commissioners present.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to reconsider withdrawing the motion made by Commissioner Darius in the Budget & Oversight Committee meeting of April 2, 2024, to approve increasing the Fire Department budget by \$446,584 increasing the mil rate by .26%.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Goranson and unanimously approved to increase the Fire Department budget by \$645,032 in support of Chief Brade's option 1 and 2 as presented at the Budget & Oversight Committee meeting of

*April 2, 2024, and approximately \$43,391 identified that should be included in option 1.
The total being \$688,423.*

- VII. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John Sokolowski, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary

