

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Health, Safety & Facilities Committee
Wednesday, February 14, 2024, 10:30 AM
Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Chip Darius (Chairman), John Sokolowski and Donald Goranson, Fire Chief Jason Brade, Assistant Fire Chief Karl Neubecker, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Communication Manager Justin Lonergan, IAFF President of Local 4662 Alan Dominy, AFSCME President of Local 1303-475 Chris Bellamo, former Executive Director Julius Neto, New Executive Director Roger Hart and Firefighter Nick Schenartz. Committee member Commissioner Robert McIntyre was absent.

I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 10:30 AM, by Chairman Chip Darius.

II. Approval of Agenda. The Chair explained that this is a newly constituted committee for the District so this is considered an inaugural meeting. The agenda is large with the intent to spend a small amount of time on each item to lay ground work and establish awareness of what is being worked on and what needs to be worked on.

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

III. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.

IV. Introduce New Executive Director. The new Executive Director introduced himself. He is Roger Hart. He discussed his professional background. He began his career as a police officer in Wallingford, CT in 1989. He stayed in Wallingford until 2007. He was the rank of Administrative Lieutenant which was third in command of the agency. He tested and became a Captain in East Windsor which is second in command of the agency. The Chief of East Windsor retired a couple of years ago. Mr. Hart took over as interim Chief. He did not get the Chief's position and retired from the East Windsor PD. The job description for the Executive Director position describes all the things he has done in his career as a police officer. He is enthusiastic to hit the ground running with Mr. Neto as his mentor.

V. Review Committee Duties under the New District Bylaws. The Chair explained that with the new Bylaws, there was a reduction in the number of committees, and a shift of responsibilities to the main Board. The responsibilities were shown on an overhead projection. This Committee will be responsible for oversight of occupational health and safety in all operations and oversight of facilities and grounds. Implementation will happen at the department head level. The Committee will work with the Fire Chief or designees, Executive Director, Water Division Manager and Communication Manager to review and support. The Committee will go to the full Board to support any initiatives or resources.

There are 5 things the Committee is tasked with supporting:

1. **Compliance** – with OSHA, Federal and CT. The District falls under ConnOSHA rather than Federal OSHA because it is a municipality. The ConnOSHA website gives more information.
2. **Compliance with General Statutes 31-40V for Safety Committees.** He provided copies to anyone interested. CT DAS has requirements for Safety Committees in CT.
3. Looking to support staff in **compliance with applicable building codes and public health codes.**
4. Looking to support **implementation of initiatives for health, wellness and mental health.**
5. Progress towards **adoption of relevant fire and emergency services leading practices.**
6. The Committee will report back to the full Board as necessary.
7. The Committee will carry out any other duties as delegated by the Board.

- VI. Old Business The purpose of items A. through M. on the agenda under this item is to bring awareness and serve as an orientation of the issues facing the Committee.
- A. **West Street firehouse front apron** -- There is \$9,365 in the budget that can be used for the apron. Total replacement would be approximately \$70,000. The sidewalk is also a component of that project. There are plans to have this looked at as well as the sidewalks at Coles Rd. The Chief's office will work with the Executive Director's office to determine who will work getting bids and vendors.
 - B. **Court St. birds** -- Chief Brade reported this as an ongoing issue. Multiple solutions have been tried. It has been the recommendation of the many professionals consulted, that the District stop the life cycle of the birds. The District did not want to kill any birds. The Chief received quotes to completely net the ceiling so the birds have nowhere to land. The Chief is appropriating \$7,000 in the next budget cycle to address the issue.
 - C. **West St. Roof Replacement** – Mr. Neto reported there had been one minor issue with leaking after the new roof was installed. It was after a big rain storm. Some corrections were made by the vendor to materials that were leaking. There have been no issues since. The work is under warrantee.
 - D. **Coles Road Roof Replacement and Condition of Gutters** – There have been no issues.
 - E. **Coles Road Sidewalk Spalling** – To be addressed along with other concrete repairs.
 - F. **Water Division Mezzanine** – There are no issues. Mr. Palmieri reported it was painted and working well.
 - G. **AFFF Removal and Reimbursement** – it was noted that barrels of foam were removed and replaced with a different product from a different vendor. Clean Harbors removed the old barrels. Engine 2 is the only current apparatus that may have had AFFF in its foam tank at some point. Fire Chief or designee to arrange for the tank to be tested for PFAS.
 - H. **Air Quality in Stations** – it was noted that Exhaust Capture is used for exhaust. Mr. Lonergan noted there have been no issues with air quality in the dispatch area. A new HVAC system is in dispatch as well as the old system for the building. Filters are changed on a regular basis. More Stand-alone air filters were purchased and used during COVID. It was suggested to contact ConnOSHA to test air quality to determine if all the portable air filters are still needed.
 - I. **Mattresses in Sleeping Quarters** – the crews are sleeping on cots with mattresses on top of the cots. The Chief has looked into steel bed frames. They have some unused funds in the budget designated for beds. They plan to order one bed frame to see if it is a better solution for beds. Funding for mattresses will come from capital expenditures.
 - J. **Court St. Floor** – the Chairman is aware of the issues with the Court St. floor with cracks, gaps, etc. He wanted to reopen the discussion and look at options. It is on the Committee's radar.
 - K. **EVO Resources and Qualifications** – Ass't Chief Neubecker reported that all the Fire Department's apparatus operators are up to speed with qualifications and licensing requirements. He will be an EVO trainer in April. The Chair requested clarification on driver training for the mechanic and the maintainer.
 - L. **Available Health & Safety Resources; In-house and Online** – Ass't Chief Neubecker has an extensive background in occupational health and safety. There are many resources on these topics in the Chief's office. Resources are also available through ConnOSHA, osha.gov, cdc.gov/niosh, and Chairman Darius.

- M. **Staffing Trends and Effects on Health & Safety** – the Fire Department is currently understaffed. They have filled two career vacancies from the part-time ranks (based on the testing process). There was a part-time hiring process that took place at the end of the year. Five individuals were hired at that time. They exhausted the available applicant pool from the list. There will be an orientation held in a couple of weeks. The Chief has discussed with Ass't Chief Driscoll another part-time hiring process to on-board more staff. The Chairman noted that the Board is aware of the struggles with staffing and fully support the onboarding efforts of the Chief's office. Ass't Chief Neubecker to clarify recordkeeping for new hire OSHA training.

VII. New Business

- A. **Chain of Command for Health & Safety and Facilities Issues/Concerns** -- The goal is for the District to support the Department heads, Officers and administrative staff in their health & safety efforts. Ass't Chief Neubecker and Commissioner Darius are available for assistance. The Fire Department has put in place a "work order" type system through Red Alert to address fixable issues within the department. The Water Department has a similar system.
- B. **Policies, SOP's/SOG's, Compliance Plans** -- Chairman Darius had a workshop with the Fire Chiefs to take a quick look at fire department compliance plans, OSHA paperwork, etc. ConnOSHA came through as a consultation within the past couple of years. There were no huge red flags. The things ConnOSHA pointed out were adjusted. There are policies and procedures in place. There will be more to come on this, including review of Water Division OSHA paperwork. Dispatch also follows standards pertaining to compliance plans through Dispatch policies and procedures.
- C. **5 Year Lookback OSHA 300** – the Chairman had available the last 5 years-worth of logs. They need to keep current year to date plus 5 years prior for anyone to review or upon request of a compliance officer. Chairman Darius feels that the Department heads are doing a great job with the OSHA logs.
- D. **Hierarchy of Hazard Controls** – this is a widely recognized concept for control of hazards. The concept is an inverted pyramid. At the top is eliminate, if not substitute something less hazardous, if not go to engineering controls (physical changes in the workplace), fourth level is administrative controls (policies, procedures, training, work instructions, etc.), last is personal protective equipment.
- E. **Turnout Gear Decontamination Procedures: Routine & Post-Incident** – Commissioner Sokolowski asked the Fire Department the status of the Department's procedures on decontamination of gear and equipment and if the procedures in place address the concerns and issues. A new Public Act was published in July. The Department implemented new polices for on-scene decon. They are getting a second extractor into service soon. They need to work on getting more gear. Everyone has compliant gear, but they have an aging supply of gear. The Chief will be putting money in his budget towards more gear. The desire is for everyone to have 2 sets of gear and hoods. The interim idea is to order universal sizing for some new sets to be shared backups while other sets are being washed.
- F. **Extractors and Dryers** – it was noted that a second extractor is being put into service at West Street to supplement the one at Coles Road. Dryers are not at Court St. because of electrical and hook up issues.
- G. **Clean Cab, Clean Bays** – Commissioner Sokolowski was concerned about having seat covers in the apparatus cabs. There will be more discussions regarding clean cabs. The Chief was interested in some of the options. Bagged gear coming back to station after a fire can be stored in a miscellaneous cabinet on the apparatus, or in the open bed of the utility vehicle.
- H. **Behavioral Health Resources, Peer Support** – these issues are very high on the priority list. Health and wellness initiatives are a line item in the Chief's proposed budget. Ass't Chief Neubecker is in the process of launching a peer support initiative. There are EAP resources. They have established a team that will be participating in training in April. They are hoping to go live as a team this summer. The Chairman noted that there is enough interest on this topic to have a workshop if people are interested. There is a free EAP webinar session coming soon. The Chair reminded everyone not to forget the dispatchers for post-incident support and mental health.

- I. **Safety Data Sheets/Hazcom** – the Department does have a written hazard communication program for chemical safety. There is a safety data sheet collection. The Chair asked that the Departments re-inventory their chemicals and documentation of data sheets. An updated OSHA/Hazcom standard is in the development pipeline.
- J. **Vehicle Backing Safety Systems & Procedures** – All apparatus that require them have a backup alarm. Most have backup cameras. It is the desire of the Committee and the District to have current and technologically appropriate safety systems. For future apparatus specs, there needs to be backup cameras and backup alarms. The Committee would be interested in getting information on anything in the fleet that is eligible for a retrofit. The two older ambulances do not have backup cameras. The Committee would like to see some input so they can address it through the budget. There are guide lines on the pavement of the firehouses to direct apparatus backing up. The Water garage will look into adding the backup guide lines. A concern with backing into Court Street bays in bright sunlight was discussed.
- K. **Red Light Preemption** – Most of the traffic light preemption devices installed in Cromwell do not work. The Chief is interested in getting a company to come in and test the system to see which ones are working or not. Representative Carpino is proposing legislation that would provide grant money to towns who need to repair or install preemption devices. There are companies that can come in and give an assessment, and advise what needs to be done. The Chief will continue to research this issue.
- L. **Head Protection** – Fire Police now have helmets on the road. There were two old helmets on each ambulance. Now they are going to one new helmet on each ambulance since firefighters have their own helmets. OEMS has clarified there is no requirement to have a helmet on the ambulance, but Cromwell felt it was a good idea to do so. OSHA has a requirement for PPE hazard assessment, Ass't Chief Neubecker will update the PPE Hazard Assessment to reflect new particulate filtering hoods for firefighters.
- M. **Communicable Disease Status Discussion** – The Chairman discussed the different types of diseases out there this time of year besides COVID such as RSV, pneumonia, flu. There are no specific protocols currently in place from OEMS. From a local standpoint, the District's primary resource will be the Town's Public Health Director.
- N. **Touchless Handwashing** – This topic is a potential future discussion item. There are a lot of businesses and public places switching to touchless sensors when washing hands.
- O. **Kitchen Table and Seating at Court Street Kitchen** – Lt. Dominy stated that the chairs are outdated. The table seats 6 comfortably. If they are fully staffed, there are 7 people on duty. The chairs are all odd chairs from various areas. A chair survey needs to be done to determine how many chairs need to be replaced. There is a need for better tables and chairs in the Fire and Water Department. Department heads to survey their tables and chairs and submit to Executive Director so repairs or replacements can be coordinated.
- P. **Walking/Working Surfaces, Fall Protection, First Aid at Training Area** – It was noted that there is an annual structural inspection done of the training area behind Coles Road station annually. The Dispatch area will need new carpeting next year. It will be a major project due to the equipment in the room. A walking surface assessment will need to be done to see what other areas may need improvement from a health and safety standpoint. Railings at the front and back stairwell at Court St. need improvement. Replacement with metal rails was suggested to better withstand frequent sanitizing.
- Q. **Health & Safety Implications of Pending Change in CPD Supplemental R1 Status** – Change is coming because of the Police Department giving up their supplemental R1 status which could lead to more first responder work for the Fire District's first responders which can lead to more fatigue. Everyone should be aware.
- R. **Safety & Health Theme of the Month** – The Chair is proposing that each month will have a find and fix focus. Proposed topic for February would be chairs, tables and floors. Proposed topic for March would be electrical safety. He showed a device to be used in electrical outlets to determine if they are electrically sound and safe. Proposed topic for April will be hazard communications. Find chemicals and use safety data sheets. The Chair would like some more input at the next meeting.

- S. **Dispatch Sanitizing, Air Quality, Ergonomics, Security** – Mr. Lonergan noted that Dispatchers routinely clean their stations and chairs, and there is an air purifier system in the room. Sanitizing and pest control is also done routinely.
 - T. **Facility Security** -- in terms of security the Water Department is looking at fencing around Chemfeed and the Tower repair for physical barriers. There is a hold right now on access control replacement which is tied to camera replacement. The holdup is funding. Mr. Lonergan will be putting items in the budget to provide funding for these repairs. Security upgrades are ongoing, and is a District-wide project. He has also been working with Mr. Palmieri on alarm systems. Risk management, loss prevention, theft, Personnel safety, workplace violence, infiltration, unauthorized access all come under this category. Mr. Palmieri has been working on security system upgrades at the water facilities. His goal is to have everything alarmed. The Chair asked Ass't Chief Neubecker to inventory all out buildings belonging to the Fire Department to see if they are secure or need to be secured. Mr. Palmieri will be inventorying the Water out buildings. All inventory tasks will be submitted to the Executive Director for forwarding to the Committee Chair. The Chief is trying to secure Court St. like Coles Rd. He is also thinking about locking the doors to the apparatus bay so if the room is leased out for use, all the expensive equipment is in a secure area. The Chair asked the new Executive Director to think about West St. in terms of moving the water billing process to the first floor limiting public access to the rest of the building.
 - U. **High Visibility Safety Apparel (HVSA) and New MUTCD** – the Fire Department has been very proactive in upgrading items that need replacing. The Water Department also is proactive with these items. Fire Police have a different protocol for visibility. All apparel must be zipped or closed.
 - V. **Respirator Fit Testing** – proceeding with no issues. Portacount fit test machine was recently replaced. Ass't Chief Neubecker to verify that staff performing fit testing have completed training in proper use of the Portacount machine, with documentation to file. There are a few staff not in compliance with fit testing that have been taken off line.
 - W. **Workplace Violence** – this is an awareness item. Station security systems help to prevent that in stations. Supervision and SOP's and SOG's help to prevent patient/ employee violence. Assault issues should be determined by law enforcement.
 - X. **NFPA 1582 Physicals** – The cost keeps increasing. At a reduced rate there are companies that will do physicals and full firefighter assessments. It has been put into the Fire Department budget proposals.
 - Y. **Pending Changes in OSHA 29 CFR 1910.156** – this is the new version of the Fire Brigade Standard. It has been on the OSHA books since 1980 with no updates. Currently under OSHA rules, OSHA can only write a gear citation related to a 1975 standard for firefighting gear. Standards needed to be updated by 50 yrs. The standard will be renamed Emergency Response and will expand to include municipal fire departments, EMS agencies, and any agency that does technical rescue. The Chair provided a resource, which was OSHAedne.com. He explained the site. It is the latest thing that will change fire service since HAZmat.
 - Z. **3/6/12 Month Look Ahead** – 156 will be the big news in 12 months. There should be a final rule in 12 months. 6 months looking ahead will be the Travelers tournament, looking at staffing, key protocols and everything else that comes with the Travelers tournament. Within the next 3 months there is National Work Zone Awareness week in April and National Stand Down to consider falling objects and struck by incidents. June is National Safety Month.
- VIII. Comments from Department Heads, Union Reps, Commissioners. Lt. Dominy requested that the Court Street firehouse be assessed in its entirety as a career firehouse. He is interested to know what is lacking and what needs to be changed. A specific issue is physical fitness. Something needs to be implemented to maintain physical fitness. It was suggested to assess the kitchen area on the second floor of West St. for the administrative staff. The Executive Director will be assessing those areas. Commissioner Sokolowski was interested in ideas from the staff on what can be done for health and safety.

The new Executive Director thanked everyone for the input and information brought forward at this meeting. He asked if the committee was advisory. The Chairman described the Committee's role as receiving input

and transporting to the full Board, and then to download what the decisions are and deliver to the Department heads. Commissioner Goranson appreciated the review of all issues coming before this Committee and sees the Committee as a support system.

IX. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by Commissioner Goranson and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 12:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Chip Darius, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary