

# Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE  
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT  
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS** **Subcommittee for Non-Career Staffing Solutions**

**Monday, February 11, 2019**

**5:00 PM**

**1 West Street  
Cromwell, CT**

Present: Executive Director Julius Neto (Chairman), Deputy Fire Chief Michael Salonia, Curt Anderson (EMS) and Nicole LaTerra (Fire/EMS). Commissioner Mertie Terry had an excused absence.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:01 PM, by Chairman Neto.
- II. Approval of Minutes of January 22, 2019. It was agreed to table the minutes until the next meeting.
- III. Public Comment. Deputy Chief Salonia asked the Chair to review the Subcommittee's objectives. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Neto read the objectives. The Deputy Chief asked if the subcommittee is aware of or has made any motions to not listen to recommendations of other individuals not sitting on this subcommittee. Mr. Neto advised the Deputy Chief that because he is a member of this subcommittee, he may ask questions or comment during any part of the discussions during the meetings. He does not need to wait until the Public Comment portion of the agenda. The Deputy Chief stated that he received an email last week with a letter attached to it. The document was asking for clarification on a few items. Therefore, the Deputy Chief wished to submit the document as public comment. It was from Fire Chief Terenzio. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.
- IV. New Business
  - A. Continue Discussions for Non-Career Staffing Solutions/Possible Approval of Specific Suggestions Related to Solutions. Mr. Neto asked Ms. LaTerra if she had anything to add to her presentation from the last meeting. She did make some minor changes that had to be printed out. The document is the model but there was supporting data to be added to it. There were no significant changes that were added. Mr. Neto asked if she wanted to move on her plan as submitted. She was in agreement.

Mr. Neto discussed the two themes that have been discussed over the last few weeks and the objective is to decide on what will be presented to the Personnel Committee. One is represented by Ms. LaTerra which is to maintain the present environment with volunteers and controls to manage the service requirements going forward modeled by members of

the Department that Ms. LaTerra has spoken to. Another one is to have a career component, volunteer component and part-time component. Those are the two themes discussed over the last six weeks. It was agreed by the Subcommittee that those are the two themes on the table. There has not been any proposals that would indicate an all-career department or all volunteer.

Mr. Neto noted that within the part-time and volunteer there have been different gyrations of the plans. That was agreed by those in attendance. Mr. Neto wanted to bring out some points. All the multiple plans did not need to be discussed, but he asked for motions and guidance from the Subcommittee on whether or not they wished to present one or both plans to the Personnel Committee. Mr. Anderson noted that at the last meeting, Mr. Neto had suggested presenting one plan. Mr. Neto confirmed that was the idea, and it would show the Subcommittee is unified and in agreement.

Ms. LaTerra summarized that both she and Mr. Anderson have been representing their Fire and EMS groups to try to stay within the scope of the Subcommittee and adhere to the criteria outlined by the Subcommittee. Other people from the membership, the public, the employees and anonymously have submitted many different plans that have been reviewed. It was noted that the proposals drafted by Mr. Anderson and Ms. LaTerra used information they received from all those sources. They have never decided to go with any one specific plan they received. They have been reviewing all the information available. There has been no voting up to this point other than discussion on various options.

One plan will be called the Volunteer Only plan and the other will be called the Volunteer/Part-time plan. Mr. Anderson stated that his plan is different from the third plan because it tries to utilize some of the people they have currently and making them part-time. It was different than some of the other plans where he felt they would lose a lot of people. It was correct to state that there are many different volunteer/part-time plans out there. If the subcommittee wishes to continue to work on a volunteer/part-time model, they need to work to come to some type of conclusion on what they will support moving forward. The volunteer only plan is less work because there is only one component.

Deputy Chief Salonia clarified that whatever plan the Subcommittee works on needs to stay within the guidelines of the Subcommittee, specifically being budget sensitive. Moving a plan to the next level with more detail associated with the volunteer or volunteer/part-time plan. Ms. LaTerra added that the volunteer model keeps everyone that is currently a member the status that they are. It is a baby step without making an irreversible change to go to a part-time model without being able to come back from that. It complies with FLSA but tries in a new way to stay within the parameters of the Subcommittee. Mr. Neto is concerned about consistency of service to our citizens. Mr. Anderson added that the Subcommittee originally started to address the FLSA issue, but it has turned into a restructuring of the Fire Department. Ms. LaTerra added that she feels the members have always and will continue to provide the coverage necessary to fulfill the criteria of the Subcommittee in terms of servicing the citizens of Cromwell.

A motion was made by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Deputy Chief Salonia and passed 3 to 1 to move to the next level of the volunteer-only model. Mr. Neto voted no.

The next action of the Subcommittee will be to work on more definition including financing and managing the components of the volunteer-only staffing model at its next meeting.

The final version can be distributed to the Subcommittee electronically. A strategy for presentation to the Personnel Committee will need to be developed. It was noted that the Subcommittee will need to approve the plan and meeting minutes before they can be published on the website.

There was discussion regarding components and details to be included such as incorporating the Red Alert system. Ms. LaTerra asked for a quick review by the Subcommittee, and if there are issues that are discovered immediately, she would appreciate them being brought to her attention so they can be addressed to help fine tune the proposal specifically meeting the guidelines of the Subcommittee.

- V. Public Comment. Chief Terenzio gave credit to the volunteer members of the Subcommittee for getting input from their constituency. He stated that he was not given the opportunity to provide his input through his representation on the Subcommittee. He congratulated Mr. Anderson and Ms. LaTerra for being given the opportunity of getting input from their constituency.

Ms. Jennifer Anderson was curious to know why when the Subcommittee was looking for input, those individuals that had input did not approach the Subcommittee members as was done by various individuals in various capacities such as volunteers, employees, and those that remain anonymous. Regarding people not showing up for calls, she stated that it has never been an issue. For EMS, if there are circumstances where someone does not show up for a call, then a driver would stay on. She added that her hope is that another plan could be submitted if this one is turned down. Regarding the Town not being covered during the nights and on weekends, there always was and continues to be EMS coverage although there are less people providing it. One reason for the lack of staff is a hostile work environment, and members do not feel comfortable or have been harassed. Another reason for a lack of staff is there are/were nineteen applicants that were never moved forward in the application process. The orientation had been held up.

Mr. Nick Schenartz stated that since the FLSA issue came about, the Department is starting to divide with individuals going "upstairs" or not wanting to go "upstairs." He asked why the Department can't keep the personnel they already have, why they can't be made part-time, or why they can't keep the current system that is in place now. He is not sure what the cap is, but it needs to be figured out and made reasonable. He suggested moving the people at Coles Road that don't get out all the time and combine firehouses with West Street. There would be more people on the rigs and less trucks on the road. Also, new data needs to be collected and move forward from there. Data has been collected over several months maybe years. Since new appointments have been made, there needs to be new data because different members have moved throughout the Department. Plans can be made accordingly. If there is a part-time plan, it should be kept as is as needed. There are Fire police and explorers continuing to do their jobs. On the Fire side, they should begin doing shifts, Two on the ambulance and four on the Fire side. EMS already has this in place. Whatever is not covered in 48 hrs, a career call back should be done. This will all be in-house. Anything minor in nature will be a still alarm. Anything that requires additional manpower should be paged out to the rest of the part-timers. Large scale incidents should have an all-call including career staff. The answer should not be to "kick people to the curb" that have been here for years.

The answer is not to make them volunteers when they are already being compensated. If people are cross-trained to assist on a fire scene, EMT personnel are still needed on standby. Cross-trained personnel are already covered in the SOP's and SOG's. This should eliminate using other agencies to cover Cromwell. Cross-trained individuals should be paid a little more. The Department needs to stop being divided and come up with answers. A lot of the answers are common sense.

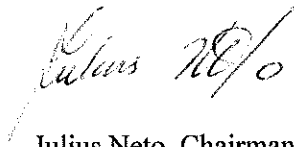
Roger Thompson stated that they were told as a membership that this subcommittee was formed to solve FLSA issues regarding EMS and shift coverage. It is stupid that the subcommittee and the entire Department thinks its investigating how to fix the EMS side and is restructuring the Fire side. The rest of the membership has no idea this is going on.

Ms. LaTerra stated that in her opinion as is stated in the Bylaws, the CFD should not be divided but they are. They are divided from the Chief's office to the officers or the officers to the members or career staff to volunteers. There should be no separation. In the Chief's job description there is language regarding fostering a good relationship between volunteers and career staff. However, they are becoming divided. She believes it is the Chief's job to improve that. Does not know how that can be done. She has heard that comments have been made that people have not been heard. Every monthly membership meeting, both Mr. Anderson and Ms. LaTerra have encouraged members to provide their feedback or ideas so that they can be brought forth to this Subcommittee. She also stated that the Chief could have approached Mr. Anderson or herself with his input. There is no divide in terms of being heard. It did not have to go through the Chief's office. It included all the chiefs. She had spoken to career staff and others and would welcome any feedback or input from anyone in the membership to benefit the Department as a whole.

Ms. Anderson added that regarding budgetary guidelines, a clear assessment of the cost of each plan should be made so that the taxpayers are informed.

- VI. Commissioners' Comments. There were no Commissioners' comments to report.
- VII. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Deputy Chief Salonia and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 5:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Julius Neto, Chairman

Nancy Deegan  
Recording Secretary  
3-25-19