

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Fire Department Operations Committee

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

5:00 PM

**West Street Firehouse
1 West Street
Cromwell, CT**

Present: Commissioners David Colligan (Chairman), Lee Brow (President), Charles Epstein, Robert Donohue and Jason Hinners. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Commissioner Roger Rukowicz, Acting Fire Chief Jason Brade, Ass't Fire Chief of Training William Stacy and Dispatch Supervisor Justin Lonergan.

Per Executive Order No. 7B, Governor Lamont has ordered and directed that in person open meeting requirements be suspended. Therefore, the Fire Operations Committee meeting will be held via conference call. Members of the public may send questions or comments to meetings@cromwellfd.com on any agenda items.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM, by Chairman Colligan.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Approval of Meeting Minutes of December 15, 2020, and January 19, 2021. Copies of the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of December 15, 2020 and January 19, 2021, were distributed and reviewed. A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of December 15, 2020, as submitted.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of January 19, 2021, as submitted. Commissioner Donohue noted he was not listed as participating in the meeting because he had trouble calling into the meeting. Commissioner Donohue did participate in the meeting after he was able to sign in.

- IV. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- V. Communications Report. Commissioner Colligan gave some updates. The Chief and Dispatch Supervisor have been going out with crews to check portables. There has been a big improvement. He asked everyone if they have a chance to go to their email and watch the videos. It will show the difference between the old system and the new portables. The

transmissions are very clear with the P-25 system. He clarified that this is just the portables. They will be shooting for March 3 as the start date for the cross over to the new system. Acting Chief Brade was on the line and reported that Justin Lonergan did most of the hard work, but they did go out and do testing. They tested both the equipment and the P-25, digital vs. analog radio signals. He stated that if the Commissioners go into their emails, they should be able to watch the videos that Justin made and the Chief emailed out. There is a clear difference and that is without the network being live yet. This is just testing the old portables vs. the new portables and the new digital signal vs. the analog signal that they have been using.

At some point Commissioner Colligan wanted to discuss changing channel selections. He had a discussion with the Board President regarding how it is handled in East Hartford. He wanted to get the Communications Subcommittee together to have a discussion on how the Department will handle it. Acting Chief Brade stated final programming has not been completed yet so everything is subject to change. The Chief and Justin are working on a couple of additional channels to put in there as well. Any suggestions for programming should be forwarded to either the Chief or Mr. Lonergan before the final programming goes into effect. Commissioner Colligan will be trying to set up a meeting with the subcommittee and President Brow. Commissioner Colligan reported that the Nike site is still in progress. All the other voting sites have been tested. They are moving forward.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Communications Report as discussed.

- VI. Reports of Chief Officers. Acting Chief Brade stated that he has submitted the Chief's report for January. That information remains, but he had a couple of additions to the report. They had a discussion with the COVID committee about wearing half face masks. This was regarding N-95's with people who wear glasses, their glasses kept fogging up. Those masks have come in. They also bought an adapter for fit testing purposes. They are available and started getting distributed yesterday. They ordered six HEPA filtration systems for Court St. They were installed as follows: one in the kitchen, two upstairs, one in the other bedroom and two in the Chief's office. Those have been purchased, have arrived and are in place. Lisa has been working on the two Donald Harris scholarships which are two \$1,000 scholarships. High school seniors are eligible based on certain criteria and field of study. Scholarship information is being posted at the schools. The Fire Chief posting is currently live. He discussed the radios which had already been discussed. There are demo videos on email. The new Fire Marshal, Ray Saracco, started working last Monday, Feb. 8, 2021. He had a pre-scheduled vacation this week which the District is honoring for him. The Department spent the last week and a half getting Mr. Saracco up to speed on projects going on in Town. Harold Holmes was very helpful in taking Ray around showing him various sites. Mr. Saracco has come up with a few ideas that he will probably bring forward within the next couple of months. The Chief reported that there is a lot of work being done on the training building. A contractor from MAC Fire Protection Services has offered some services to Cromwell. He has sprinklered the entire training building minus the top 2 floors. The third and fourth floors are not being used yet. The whole building is sprinklered. There are various types of sprinklers in there. They can demonstrate the differences with different heads as well as provide protection for everyone when they are doing live fire training. He has also expressed interest in outfitting the third and fourth floors once there are staircases up there to start using them. This was a huge win for the training building. Commissioner Colligan recognized Ass't Chief Stacy who helped organize that effort and helped make all the contacts to get the job done.

Ass't Chief Stacy reported on what was in his report. There were 37 documented trainings last month. Everyone is working on ESO trainings. The Chief reported on the sprinklers that were installed. There has been on-line training for EMT re-certification and EVOC. He reported that mandatories are still ongoing for this year.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Hinnens and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Chief's report for January as discussed.

VII. Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response Capability. Commissioner Colligan wanted to explain to everyone where the District stands with finances in terms of response during a pandemic. There is a lot that has happened with COVID. There have been a lot of overtime costs. There are also other costs that have been incurred due to COVID. Finances need to be looked at and spending should be done carefully going forward. Year to date last year for overtime at this time was \$26,000. The same timeframe this year puts overtime at \$66,600. Full time staff is \$27,190. Part time staff is \$39,480. The difference is \$40,619. The time frame used was July to July. July is the beginning of a fiscal year. His point was that the Board needs to recognize that before moving forward with any new purchases, they should get a bottom line of what they have spent due to COVID. For the next meeting Chairman Colligan requested that the Executive Director find out how much the District has spent due to COVID-related (equipment & payroll) issues. Commissioner Epstein asked if the District was entitled to any monies related to COVID either through the State or Federal government. The Executive Director noted that the only thing received was a little over \$13,400 initially, but nothing since. The request to determine all of the COVID-related extra things including equipment, payroll will not be one of the items for reimbursement. The challenge is that they have changed the rules of engagement. At this point it is unclear what is reimbursable. The biggest ticket item that is not going to be reimbursed is payroll. Commissioner Epstein stated that all of the expense at this particular time is money we have to expend and have no idea if we are going to get it back. If the District should get money back next year or the year after, it would be similar to found money because we have no idea what the State or Federal Governments are going to do or what they will reimburse. Commissioner Epstein explained that any other reimbursement besides payroll is all considered money that was not budgeted for and will come out of the District's pocket. For the future it needs to be planned for in the budget process.

VIII. Old Business. There was no Old Business to discuss.

IX. New Business

A. Discussion and Possible Decision on Non-Career Officers' Position in the Fire Department (workshop scheduled). Chief Brade noted that he had this on the agenda to request an extension to keep the current officers in place until a workshop can be scheduled. President Brow noted that if a decision is made to change any of those positions, the Bylaws would need to be changed to reflect that. A workshop was scheduled for Tuesday, February 23, 2021, at 5:00 PM, at 1 West Street.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinnens and unanimously approved to continue the Non-Career Officers' positions on a month-by-month basis until the issue can be settled.

B. Discussion and Possible Decision on Next Steps of COVID Continuity Plan. Chairman Colligan reported that a lot has been happening. Percentages for the State of CT have

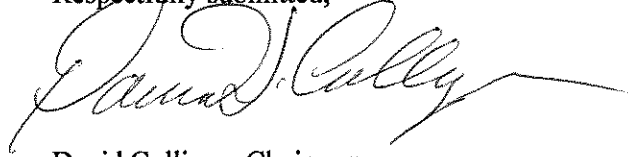
gone down. The Chairman asked the Fire Chief for an update. COVID continuity plans are ongoing. There were a couple of positive cases in the Department. Lt. Hallden was working to fill the slots. They lost a person that was on the floor to Dispatch. They are still maintaining staffing, and the schedule is still being filled although it is tight. The Chief added that as stated by the Chairman, the positivity rate is dropping, and hospitalizations are also dropping. The only uncertainty right now is the new variant of the virus. They have been monitoring things and have been in contact with Sal Nesci, Cromwell's Health Director. They are standing by to see what happens with the new variant. The new mask policy has also been implemented. They have revised all of Chief Terenzio's policies that were created back in the Spring. They were published this past week and included the new mask policy which had been voted on by the Fire Operations Committee. He has had discussions with a couple of individuals on a couple of policy items. There will be a few minor edits made. When it was published the Chief made it clear it is a changing document. There were some things that came out through the CDC and State guidelines that will dictate changes to the document. The changes will probably happen this Friday, but nothing too drastic.

Chairman Colligan added that the end date of the MOU is March 8. There needs to be some decisions made on whether or not to extend the continuity plan. Commissioner Epstein added that if decisions are made, enough time needs to be given so that changes can be implemented. President Brow suggested that a meeting be held the week of March 1 since the MOU is due to expire the following week. He suggested looking into the statistics from Chip Darius and Sal Nesci. At that point they can recommend to the Union they will do another 4 week extension which will give them a week to discuss it. The Executive Director thought that the purpose of this agenda item was to discuss and decide upon next steps. The Chief had previously indicated that they would need a good two weeks ahead of the deadline to prepare for the next steps. President Brow agreed and thought two weeks would be a more appropriate timeframe than the one week that he previously discussed. Mr. Neto stated that next week should be the timeline. They decided to schedule a COVID Committee workshop for Monday, February 22, 2021, at 5:00 PM, at 1 West Street. Chairman Colligan thought that everything was moving in the right direction. New policies are in place now. Mr. Neto suggested making Monday's meeting a Special Fire Operations Committee meeting with only two items on the agenda. Those items will be Items A. & B. from tonight's agenda. That would be decisions on non-career officers' positions and next steps of the COVID Continuity Plan. The Executive Director will send out a notification.

- X. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Rukowicz heard that a couple weeks ago the President of the United States directed the FEMA Director to reimburse states and towns for their COVID expense. Commissioner Epstein also heard that but could not find it in the Executive Orders. Commissioner Colligan heard that this is part of the package going before Congress. It has not come for a vote yet. He added that it is the Town that puts in for the reimbursement and not the Fire District. If it is decided that they are only going to reimburse \$10,000 out of it, that is what it will be, and the District will only see a portion of it. It was agreed that if there is any reimbursement, it will not be seen for a couple of years. That was why Chairman Colligan wanted everyone to be aware that if there are any reimbursements, they won't be coming for a while so the District needs to figure out how they are going to pay for things now. The COVID items were not budgeted this year.

- XI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 5:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Colligan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Colligan, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
3-2-21