

Cromwell Fire District

1 West Street
Cromwell, CT 06416
Telephone 860-635-4420

FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Fire and Water Divisions

Via Conference Call

Tuesday, August 18, 2020

7:00 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, August 18, 2020, at 7:00 PM, via conference call, at the Coles Road Firehouse, 105 Coles Road, Cromwell, CT to discuss and act upon Fire and Water Division business.

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

Commissioners Lee Brow (President), Roger Rukowicz, David Colligan, Johnathon Hamlin, Charles Epstein, Allan Spotts and Mertie Terry were in attendance. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Michael Terenzio and Firefighter Union President Lt. Brett Hallden. Commissioners Robert Donohue and Jason Hinnners had excused absences.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM, by President Brow. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Brow.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted with the addition of Item H. under New Business, "Financial Hardship Requests."

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Executive Director read an email he received from the Deputy Mayor who could not attend this meeting. Mrs. Donohue's comments were to thank the District and its team for its help with the food distribution. She heard multiple positive comments of appreciation for the District's actions.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
JULY 21, 2020

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes of July 21, 2020, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

President Brow read a Thank you note received from Dave Jahn for the card and plant that was sent to his family in sympathy of the passing of his father and former Commissioner Robert Jahn.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's report for July had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Neto asked if anyone had any questions about his report. Commissioner Hamlin had questions about the volunteer pension plan. Mr. Neto advised that he will be discussing this item later on. It is on the agenda for later on in the meeting. Commissioner Hamlin decided to wait for the discussion later in this meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's Report for July as submitted.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for July had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. It was noted that Mike Alibrio was joining the meeting virtually. Commissioner Epstein thanked the Executive Director for including information on the District's water billing collection. Even though we have been faced with COVID, collection has been doing very well. Mr. Alibrio noted that this is now a new fiscal year. He has updated the budget with the new fiscal year's budget. There is not a lot of activity at this point which is normal for this time of the year. Some accounts look like they have already been spent because blanket purchase orders are being issued especially in the Water Department for such things as chlorine or other chemicals for the water.

Commissioner Terry discussed the coverage issue for a second ambulance. Mr. Neto noted that the second calls are usually responded to, but Cromwell does not always transport. The second ambulance was in the budget, but was taken off to balance the budget. At some point this issue needs to be placed on a future agenda for discussion. A decision can be based on service requirements of the Town and cost impact. The Chief explained how in his report under the "ambulance only" calls there were six calls that were turned over because they had no one to go. In that case the call gets turned over to the mutual aid company. Collectively it is approximately 10% of the time that Cromwell is not able to transport. The Chief explained some of the patterns that have developed with calls. The Chief listed those as Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, 8 AM through 5 PM. 75% to 78% of the calls are EMS related. Commissioner Epstein asked about the average collectibles from an ambulance call. Mr. Alibrio did not have that information available, but would research the Commissioner's request. The Chief also explained all the issues related to ambulance calls. Commissioner Spotts asked the Chief if unscheduled part-time and unscheduled volunteer members are stepping up. The Chief responded that it could be better. It is the Charlie, Echo, Delta calls that they are required

to report to. There are about 3 on average. They now have a predictable response. Which has been good for the District, and it was done without raising taxes. There was a lengthy discussion regarding a second ambulance and coverage.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for July as submitted.

- C. Fire Chief's Report. The Chief's Report for July had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Chief added some information he shared with the Fire Operations Committee at their meeting before this one. The intentional fire setter that has been in Cromwell Hills has not been caught but has been inactive. The crews operated mutual aid calls this month where they represented the Cromwell Fire Department and Police District as a top notch organization. He will be thanking them on behalf of himself and the Commission. The Department continues to bring on more people as part-time scheduled. They are working with a couple of volunteers. He wrote a letter for one of them who was an Explorer that needed to be excused from his job at Amazon to attend the Fire I & II certification. It was the right decision to make for him and the Department. Commissioner Terry added that the Cromwell Children's Coalition is doing an event for Halloween on October 17, and asked that an ambulance be there. The Chief will make sure that happens as they had done the same last year. Commissioner Spotts thanked the Chief for the demonstrations on the rescue pumper. He found them very informative for someone that is not familiar with fire service.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Chief's Report for July as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for July had been previously submitted and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Executive Director was filling in for Mr. Palmieri who was on vacation if anyone had any questions. The Commissioners wanted to extend their appreciation to Joe and his staff for a job well done working with the challenges of the last storm..

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the Water Operations Report for July as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations. There has been no meeting. The President will be trying to schedule one.
- B. Executive. There has been no meeting.
- C. Fire Operations. Commissioner Hamlin reported that the Committee has not met in two months. Commissioner Colligan is still chairing the Communications Subcommittee and gave an update on the project to the Fire Operations Committee at their meeting tonight. The project has had a few challenges but things are moving along.
1. Communications Subcommittee. There was a meeting on July 22, 2020. Minutes were not available for this meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to table the minutes of the Communications Subcommittee meeting of July 22, 2020, until the next Board meeting.

- D. Pension. There was no meeting. The next meeting is Sept. 16 at 5:30 PM. The Executive Director added that there is an agenda item on this agenda this evening regarding the Volunteer Pension which was something that needed to be reviewed by the whole Board and not specifically the Pension Committee. It was decided by the Chairman of the Pension Committee and the Executive Director to refer this item to the Board of Commissioners on their agenda for this evening.
- E. Personnel Committee. The minutes from the meeting of June 30, 2020, had been tabled last month. A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the Personnel Committee meeting minutes of June 30, 2020, as submitted.

A Special Personnel Committee meeting was held on July 16, 2020. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the Special Personnel Committee meeting of July 16, 2020, as submitted.

- F. Water Operations. The minutes from the meeting of July 7, 2020, had been tabled from last month. A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Water Operations Committee meeting minutes of July 7, 2020, as submitted.

There was also a meeting on August 10, 2020. Those minutes were not available for this meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to table the Water Operations Committee meeting minutes of August 10, 2020, until next month.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. The report was given earlier in the meeting under Public Comment by the Executive Director.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
 - 1. Public Safety Tower Committee. Commissioner Rukowicz stated the next meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 4, 2020, at 10 AM, at West St.
 - 2. Safety/Building Committee. There has been no meeting. Commissioner Colligan is going to speak to Commissioner Donohue who is the Chairman of this Committee.

Commissioner Colligan, as Vice Chairman, would like to have a meeting, and Commissioner Donohue was not present at this meeting to discuss.

3. By-Laws Committee. A special meeting was held on July 2, 2020. Minutes were not available at the last meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the Special By-Laws Committee meeting of July 2, 2020, as submitted. Commissioner Epstein reported that the Committee has been working very hard. They have a workshop scheduled for August 25.

A special meeting was also held on July 16, 2020. Minutes were not available at the last meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the Special By-Laws Committee meeting of July 16, 2020, as submitted. Commissioner Epstein had the same comments as previous.

Special Meetings were also held on July 28, 2020, and August 10, 2020. Those minutes were not available for this meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to table the minutes from the Special By-Laws Committee meetings of July 28, 2020, and August 10, 2020.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. There were no Commissioners' Comments to report.
- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to report.
- D. Approval of MOU's Between Local 4662 and CFD Recommended by the Personnel Committee. These MOU's had been tabled from last month because they were brought up in the June 30 Personnel Committee meeting minutes which were also not available at the last meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and unanimously approved to accept the following MOU's between Local 4662 and CFD as recommended by the Personnel Committee at their June 30, 2020 meeting: Fire Inspection Duties and CEU's, Mandatory Overtime, Seniority and Career Call backs.

- E. Discussion and Possible Decision on Cromwell Volunteer Pension Benefit Volume Submitter & Adoption Agreement 0-001. Each Commissioner was given a copy of the blue folder with the agreement enclosed. A summary sheet was also enclosed with the packets. The Executive Director gave the Readers' Digest version of the agreement. A copy of that is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. This document is mandated by the IRS based on the Pension Protection Act of 2006. It is a requirement that needs to be done every six years. The District will be held accountable for this document once it is signed. It is to protect employees or pension recipients that are eligible for the pension from their employers. This protects the employees from having their pension used by the employer to support the business. Mr. Neto consulted with the attorney that provided assistance for the bond council. He apologized for the short

notice, but once this was received it needed to be acted on as soon as possible. The deadline was met one day prior to July 31 which was the deadline. The last piece of the process is to have the Commissioners sign the resolution before they leave the meeting tonight. The resolution will then be submitted and the District will be compliant until the next six years taking full ownership and responsibility to maintain the plan under the Pension Protection Act. Mr. Neto read the resolution.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to accept the Pension agreement as presented.

- F. Discussion & Approval of Berlin Water MOU. The Executive Director requested that this be tabled until the next meeting. Berlin is agreeable to the water rates given, however, there needs to be a few changes to the language of the agreement. This was a last minute request today for the wording changes. It is all good news, nothing is being changed in terms of the rates or basic information. Mr. Neto asked the Water Committee Chairman, Commissioner Epstein, if he wanted to have the amended document reviewed by the Water Operations Committee. Commissioner Epstein suggested that the revisions be brought before the Water Operations Committee. He will call a Special meeting to review the revised MOU. The rates noted in the MOU are an increase of 25% the first year of the agreement and 3% for the following 4 years. The Water Department anticipates receiving from \$11,000 to \$13,000 above and beyond what is already collected from them for water.

A motion was made by Commissioner Spotts, seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and unanimously approved to table the Berlin Water MOU and forward it back to the Water Operations Committee for revision.

- G. Approval of Holiday Premium Pay for Part-Time First Responders. Mr. Neto reported that this item is just a formality. The Personnel Committee a couple of months ago approved and identified five premium holidays for part-timers that if they are working, will receive compensation of time and a half. This is not a new policy. This was approved at the Special Personnel Committee meeting of June 30, 2020. The purpose of the vote is to identify the five key holidays that part-timers will be paid time and one half if they work them.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to authorize the part-time first responders to be paid time and one half if they are working premium holidays. Those holidays are: Christmas, New Year's, July 4, Labor Day and Thanksgiving.

- H. Financial Hardship Requests There were two requests received. One was from a Cassandra Coughlin, 72 Court St. It was read by Mr. Neto. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The outstanding amounts are one bill for \$775.87 and the other \$793.38. There was a discussion regarding the billing and why the insurance company did not pay most of those charges. The Executive Director felt that the District should not interfere with the insurance company and the patient. The Commission's job is to bill, and decide whether or not we can provide some financial relief. There is usually never enough information for the Board to make a sound decision. The District may need to try to find more information. He has discussed with Mike Alibrio to see if there is perhaps a form that can be submitted with more financial data and explain why they feel the Board of Commissioners should provide financial

relief for the bill. Commissioner Colligan stated that over the years these requests are presented, and it has reached a point where the Board needs to come up with some rules and guidelines. Commissioner Spotts stated that based on his experience, it is the insurance deductible that is so large, customers can't pay it. The billing company should be doing the investigation and talking to the insurance company to find out what is paid and why. It was suggested that the District treat this case like the previous case where they had the person submit their expenses and explain why the bill is a hardship. The Board needs more information before they can make a decision on this.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to table this item until more information is received from the party making the request.

The second request for financial relief for ambulance billing was a total amount of \$868.58. This was for services rendered April 14. It was a BLS emergency charge of \$758.00 plus mileage for \$110.58. The patient was Judy Clapp. There was some discussion similar to the previous case. More information is needed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and unanimously approved to table this item until more information is received.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no Executive Session planned for this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Hamlin, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM.

ATTEST:

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary
9-15-20

Lee Brow, President, Acting Secretary