

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 Operations Committee

Monday, January 24, 2022

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners David Colligan (Chairman), Robert Donohue and Charles Epstein. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Assistant Fire Chief/Deputy Fire Marshal Jason Brade, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan, Acting Assistant Chief Brian Petrucelli and Acting Fire Marshal Harold Holmes. Commission President Lee Brow was also in attendance. Commissioner Jason Hinner was absent.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM, by Chairman Colligan.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as presented.
- III. Approval of Meeting Minutes of December 20, 2021. The Chairman noted that the minutes had been approved and voted on at the last Board of Commissioners' meeting last week. They did not need to be approved at the Committee level.
- IV. Public Comment. There was no public comment to report.
- V. Communications Report. Chairman Colligan asked about the status of the programming. He felt that at this point the programming should be completed. Mr. Lonergan reported that it is in the works. but Commissioner Colligan felt it has been in the works for the last 2 or 3 months. Mr. Lonergan explained that there was a slight miscommunication between himself, Paul Zito and Norcom. It has been worked out, and the final template is in Norcom's hands right now being worked up. It will then need to go to the state for approval. Once the State approves it, it will go in a portable. The State will then test it, and Cromwell will get it back to test it. Once all parties are satisfied that everything works, they will schedule the reprogramming. The programmer at Norcom is actively working on it. They have reached out to Mr. Lonergan over the last couple of weeks, but he does not have a final timeline. Chairman Colligan asked Mr. Lonergan to send Norcom an email to find out if they can provide a timeline and then follow-up with the Executive Director, Chairman Colligan and President Brow. Mr. Lonergan explained that he has been spending some time this week catching up with work. He had been out all of last week.

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

- VI. Reports of Chief Officers. The Chief reported that his report for December has not changed. It shows that his staff have been going above and beyond especially with community and public outreach. They have been very busy. Their numbers are going to continue to increase with the winter season here. They are doing well with keeping up with COVID precautions. Everyone is wearing masks when in the firehouse, and everyone is wearing masks and proper PPE when out on calls. Everyone is back to work that was on a 5-day hiatus from a COVID outbreak. Everyone is doing well.

Commissioner Colligan repeated a comment he made at the last meeting that the Chief's office is doing an outstanding job getting the volunteer program going and providing a lot of information out there on social media. He also asked the Chief to think about and provide some type of acknowledgement of the firefighters in Baltimore which is a situation that happened today.

Commissioner Epstein asked about the back-up situation with the ambulances. The Chief noted that there are still concerns but not all the time. They are working on some Mutual Aid agreements that will be discussed later in the meeting. He is working on agreements with Middletown, Westfield, Portland, South District Middletown, Middlesex Hospital. He plans on meeting with Rocky Hill, Berlin and Newington. He would like to brainstorm with them. He has a meeting on Feb. 1, at 4:30 PM, at Town Hall in Middletown to discuss the possible purchase of the R-2.

- A. Fire Marshal's Office Report. Acting Fire Marshal Holmes was present and stated that nothing has changed in his report. The year end numbers were 553 inspections with 211 violations found. Most of those have been corrected. There are only a few outstanding.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the reports of the Chief Officers as presented.

- VII. Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response Capability. Chief Balletto reported that they will be conducting some interviews this week. There were seven part-timers that were coming in for an interview. These are individuals that applied for part-time firefighter positions prior to the Department stopping the part-time application process. These individuals had applied in December. On February 1, the requirements for a part-time firefighter will change. He wanted to get these individuals in for full-time status. There are 18 applicants, 16 external candidates and two internal. The Fire Marshal process has been completed by the Chief and the Executive Director. They are filling shifts as much as possible. They did a rehiring today of an individual who resigned in December because he was unable to get his EMT certification. He has since received his EMT certification, and was rehired today.

Within the last two or three weeks there have been 5 or 6 resignations. These were individuals that were hired by other departments. The Department is moving forward although it has been difficult at times. The Chiefs' Office has everything under control. On February 1, there will be a new posting for part-time firefighters. One of the qualifications will be CPAT certification. He has been using the firefighter App on his phone. He has been using it more for the career side. It has been an outstanding tool for getting information out. He will be using it again for the part-time recruitment.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the report on Firefighter/EMT staffing, hiring and response capability.

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

IX. New Business

- A. Discussion and Update from Firematic on Apparatus. Chief Baletto introduced Mike Hanraty from Firematic in Rocky Hill. The District signed a contract with them to order a Fire Engine which could be received by March 2022. They also ordered a fire rescue which may be available in Sept. or Oct. of this year. The Chief and Chris Logan have been working with Mr. Hanraty to include all the specs for the Fire Engine. Mr. Hanraty is at the point where stencil work, lettering and coloring of the apparatus needs to be determined. The Chief gave all the information to the Executive Director who distributed it to the Fire Operations Committee members. The Chief was not comfortable making any decisions on the lettering and coloring of the apparatus because he is not that familiar with Cromwell or the history of Cromwell. He felt it would be better to approach the Commissioners for their input. He spoke to a couple of individuals that have been around for 20-30 years. They really liked Ladder 3. The gold leaf and everything was on it. That was part of the history of the Cromwell Fire Department. Chief Baletto asked Mr. Hanraty to add that lettering to the new apparatus. He asked the Committee to review the information and direct any questions to Mr. Hanraty.

President Brow was present and wanted to suggest to the Apparatus Committee a grey color to match the original grey in the original uniforms which has always been the Department's color. He was suggesting grey over red. There was some discussion about the Apparatus Committee's involvement in these decisions. The Chief and Executive Director have been working with the Chair of the Apparatus Committee because they are under the gun to get new apparatus as soon as possible. Mr. Neto has been using email to communicate with the Apparatus Committee.

Mr. Hanraty introduced himself. He identified Firematic as the Pierce dealer of CT. He thanked the District for giving Firematic their business. Regarding the first truck to be delivered, they are at the point now where the District needs to decide on paint and lettering. A blueprint drawing was supplied and distributed by Pierce. The first model was based on Ladder 3. Regarding timing, Mr. Hanraty explained that the order was placed last week. The first truck to be delivered will be the Engine. It is in their schedule to be delivered on March 22. That is the preliminary date. There is not a lot of time to change colors or graphics patterns. The cutoff for paint change is two weeks. The change of color will not change the price unless it is metallic.

Mr. Hanraty distributed copies of the blueprint layout of the front dash and storage areas of the new Engine. The electronic switches were also displayed. There is some space to move around, but not a lot. This is a stock unit in terms of the type of truck being built. The first page is the representation of the dashboard. The second page is the switch panel layouts. If there are any other changes that could be proposed, they need to be made within the next 2 weeks. That is the cutoff since the apparatus is actively being built. They will be releasing pictures of the apparatus starting next week. The first pictures will be of the cab. Once the first set of pictures are received, pictures will be sent every Friday until the truck is complete.

Graphics issues and approving the instrument panel layout are the two outstanding items, but other than that they are just waiting for the truck to be built. The process is that once final inspection happens, or Pierce commits to a final inspection date, there will be 2 opportunities for a final inspection at that point. There can be an in-person final inspection in Appleton, WI; or a virtual inspection via the computer. Pierce would send approximately 300 pictures specific to each compartment and switch panel along with operational videos of the truck driving and lights flashing in lieu of an in-person inspection. They provide an online inspection because of COVID and limited travel. The same process will happen in CT. The apparatus will be delivered to Rocky Hill. They will follow the same inspection that would happen in Appleton or virtually. They can also mount the tools if requested.

Regarding the second truck, the order is being processed now. They will have a set of blueprints to approve in the March timeframe also. The build time has been compromised because of COVID and those related issues with supply chain. Their delivery time on a standard built unit order is 20 months. Prior to COVID, orders had never been over a 12 month waiting period in Mr. Hanraty's 30 years with the company. Now with supply chain issues, it could be a wait on any part, any day.

Chairman Colligan suggested that an email be sent to the Apparatus Committee to inform them about the lettering and paint decisions, explaining the short time frame to provide input. Red/grey, red/white or red/black. He suggested that a meeting be scheduled for next week to keep this moving along. Any final decisions can be made at that meeting. Chief Balletto will help to schedule a meeting for early next week. Mr. Hanraty suggested he be given a paint sample of the color grey to match the grey of the uniforms. Chairman Colligan also suggested that Commissioners not on the Apparatus Committee be informed about the meeting next week in case they have suggestions.

The Executive Director thanked Mr. Hanraty and his group for providing the best customer service to meet the needs of the Fire Department. Mr. Hanraty thanked the District for their order. They are privileged to have the Cromwell Fire Department as a customer.

- B. Discuss and Approve MOU's for Joint Mutual Aid with Surrounding Communities. Chief Balletto had discussed mutual aid agreements with the Chief in Portland. He noted that a mutual aid agreement was signed between Middletown, Westfield, Portland, South Fire District and Cromwell dated 2019. They decided to keep the same language in the updated document. They will just need to change the names and entities going forward. The document the Chief has, is the same language he would use for Newington, Berlin and Rocky Hill.

Cromwell is one of the only departments that does not use Task Force 51 even though they are part of that Task Force. With the help of the Communications Manager they decided to do alarms; first alarms, second alarms, third etc. They would take the individuals and plot them out instead of using Task Force 51. The Chief would like to have a Mutual Aid agreement with the entities so they can go forward and supply what they need to supply. The other important factor with Middletown and Westfield is to start assisting with highway calls and special tech and rescue calls until they can get their new equipment. The Chief suggests updating the agreements every 5 years so they are continuous.

Chairman Colligan had questions about Task Force 51. The Chief explained that Task Force 51 was created for volunteer fire departments. Since June, the Chief has noticed

when the Task Force is activated, they only look for certain things they want. They make every entity from the Task Force stage at their firehouses and man the firehouses. Every time Task Force 51 is activated, it costs the District money because they have to call in overtime because they are a career department, not volunteers. The Chief would like to see the Task Force activated only when needed.

There was discussion regarding the meeting for the volunteer organization. The Chief noted that Acting Assistant Chief Petrucelli was in charge of that program. Ass't Chief Petrucelli was not concerned with scheduling this on a specific night. He was more concerned that the Board of Commissioners would give their permission and support the program. They will make it work, no matter what date or time is decided. It will be scheduled for February. The Executive Director explained that the proposal has been introduced to the Personnel Committee as a new program. Because there was a lot of information and detail, the Personnel Committee opted to review and discuss this at their next meeting on February 8. The proposal was introducing a stipend of 10% of the average full-time firefighter salary which is approximately \$50,000. Anyone who volunteers will get a stipend up to \$5,000. Through the FLSA, they are allowed 20%.

- C. Firehouse "Safe Haven" Discussion. Chairman Colligan gave some background on this topic. He was asked to bring this up at this meeting. There had been some discussion about scenarios at firehouses that would involve an emergency response. The District is in the process of looking into security systems with cameras. Commissioner Colligan suggested having some type of double lock system on firehouse doors with the ability to communicate with the person trying to access the firehouse. He would like to see this at each firehouse. Commissioner Colligan wanted to introduce the thought at this meeting.


The Communication Manager has been tasked with coming up with a new and better security system than the District presently has. With the new access controls and camera systems, the Dispatchers will be able to buzz doors. Right now the system is set up for only exterior doors. If a new air-lock type system is desired, it will have to be re-engineered. The ability to buzz people in with the new system is already in place. But adding additional services should not be a problem once the system is paid for and installed.

Chief Balletto added that he created a couple of safe havens when he was working for the City of Norwich. He reached out to the State of CT. They are in the process of getting the Careline for the Cromwell Fire Department. They also will get signage for all three fire houses. A phone number will be displayed on the signage which should be posted on walls. Dispatch will be provided with the Careline number. If there is any type of emergency brought to the firehouse, Dispatch will automatically call that number. Someone would come to the firehouse and handle the situation. Police will also be notified for any infant that could be left at the doors.

The Chief noted that when he first started in Cromwell, he had information about safe havens, but they were out of New York. The Chief thought it would be best to keep it local. The State of CT provides resources and services just like New York. He is working with the Department of Children & Families to dedicate Cromwell as a safe haven with a Careline number. The Chief noted that it will probably be 6 to 12 months before Cromwell is officially recognized as a safe haven. Commissioner Colligan wanted to keep the Safe Haven issue on the agenda under Old Business so the Chief will be able to provide updates.

- X. Commissioners' Comments. Chief Balletto also reported that they are completing the repairs on Truck 1. It should be coming back to the Department at the end of the week or early next week. He has copies of all repair invoices. He added that they had to rebuild the shift valve and the transfer case. Chris Logan has all the parts for that repair. This means they stopped the repair process so Mr. Logan could do the work he needed to do.
- XI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



David J. Colligan, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary