

# Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE  
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT  
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS** **Special Personnel Committee Meeting**

**Tuesday, March 1, 2022**

**5:30 PM**

**Coles Road Firehouse  
105 Coles Road  
Cromwell, CT**

Present: Commissioners Robert Donohue (Chairman), Mertie Terry and David Colligan. Commissioner Jason Hinners was absent. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balleto, Local 4662 members Lt. Brett Halden and Lt. William McKnight.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM, by Chairman Donohue.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- IV. New Business
  - A. Acceptance of the Ranking List of the Top Ten Firefighter Candidates. The Fire Chief began by explaining the recruitment process that was used. Chief Balleto stated that the process began January 13, 2022, with Local 4662 and the Chief's office. They were testing for full-time career firefighter positions because of the losses within the Department and with approval of the Board, the Chief's office wanted to add 4 additional career firefighter positions for a total of 5 new career firefighter positions.

The application process began on Jan. 13, 2022, at 0800 hrs. The Chief arranged to have the firefighter app. do the tracking process of the firefighter applications. The app. also tracked the documentation that accompanied each application. The application process was open until February 3, 2022, 1600 hrs. The Chief's office wanted to keep the application window open for a long period of time.

Since the Chief has had experience with Lieutenant/Captain promotionals and career firefighter positions, he was tasked with creating the testing process. The Chief wanted it to be broken down with a written exam and an oral exam, but he wanted to take the Fire Department out of control of the testing process. Past practices had been that everything was done internally. The Chief hired the CT Fire Academy to do the testing process for Cromwell. They were in charge of creating a test bank.

The written exam consisted of 100 questions based on certain reading material. The reading material was from the IFSA, Essentials of Fire Fighting, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. The CT Fire Academy asked Chief Balletto if he wanted any input in the testing process. The Chief did not. One thing that was done in the application process was to advise the candidates of exactly what the reading material was. They wanted to keep it fair, and they based it off a 100 point system. The written test would be 50% of the entire grade and was conducted on February 17, 2022. The Chief was present with the proctor of the CT Fire Academy to make sure the proctor had the correct list of all the candidates taking the test. The proctor verified them taking the test, asked for identification and had each candidate sign 2 attendance sheets.

There were 51 candidates that applied for the positions. There were 41 candidates for the testing process. When the testing closed on Feb. 3, the Chief contacted 10 individuals that did not have any certifications for the position. In the application process it was noted that on the date of appointment the candidates needed to have all their certifications. Those certifications consisted of Fire I, Fire II, Board certified EMTB CT registry. ICS 100, 200, 700 and 800. Also Hazmat operations to NFPA 472 or 1072.

When the Chief contacted those 10 individuals, he asked each of them if they had any intentions of getting these certifications. It would take about a year and a half to get Fire I, Fire II and EMT. Those that did not fall into that category had their applications put aside. Individuals that passed the testing process were advanced to the written portion.

Once the 41 were approved, the Chief sent them a personal email on the firefighter app. The app tracked everything. It noted that applicants received and read his email. The exam promptly began at 9:00 AM. The Chief had all the candidates there at 8:30 AM to assure they were not late for the start of the exam. Of the 41 applicants, they had 34 take the written exam. There were 5 individuals that did not show up. The Chief accessed the firefighter app and learned they did read the notification email that was sent. There were 2 withdrawals that were also documented on the firefighter app. The exam was 2 hrs. All the tests were taken to the Fire Academy in Windsor Locks in a locked suitcase. Within 2 hrs the Chief had the results of the written exams. Those results were logged in to the firefighter app. They coincide with the document that was sent to the Chief by the CT Fire Academy. The Executive Director also received the same information. There were 3 fails. There were 31 that passed the exam.

They set February 22, 2022, as the date for the oral exams beginning promptly at 9:00 AM. It is almost impossible to have 31 oral exams done all on the same day. The Chief's Office got 9 career firefighter Lieutenants around the State of CT to be proctors. There were 5 proctors at West St. and 4 proctors at Coles Road. 16 candidates were at West St., and 15 were at Coles Road. Everyone was tested at the same time. All candidates were separated. The Chief did not have a lot of interaction with the candidates. He walked them in, asked for their license, checked them off and once the proctors were ready, he escorted the candidates into the exam room and exited. Everyone had the same questions for the oral exam. There was no diversion of any questions. There was a total of 10 questions. Each candidate was given 30 mins. for the 10 questions. They had approximately 3 min. to respond to each question. The Chief kept track of time and notified the proctor of the 5 min. mark. After each candidate left, the proctor would come out and hand the Chief the person's exam and their scoring sheet.

The Chief noted that the questions for the oral exam were not created by him. He had the career Lieutenants that were proctors submit an email to the Chief with questions they would ask. The Chief picked questions from the emails he received. The Chief was the only one that had control over the questions used. It was based on a 5 point system. The Chief took every proctor's score, added them up, divided by 5 and that was the average overall score. He then multiplied that by 2 because the score was based on a 100 point system. The Chief did the scoring calculations 4 times. The Executive Director received updates from the Chief.

They also offered additional points for: veteran status – 5 pts.; the only way to receive the credit was to send an email to the Chief with the appropriate documentation. 5 pts. were also given to Cromwell residents. There also were seniority pts. given. If a person had 0 – 1 yr. in the Fire Department, they received 1 pt.; 2-3 yrs. 2 pts.; 4-5 yrs. 3 pts.; 6-7 yrs. 4 pts.; 8 yrs. or more was 5 pts. The maximum amount of points a person could receive was 5 pts. With that process the Chief was able to come up with an overall score. He put the overall 100% grade on the written exam with the 50% score. Also the overall 100% with the oral exam with the 50% score. He then added any extra points they received to come up with the overall score.

He distributed copies of the exam results and the rankings. He stated that the test cannot be challenged whatsoever. The Chief kept all confirmations and results, and he took Cromwell Fire Department completely out of the testing process. The Chief stands by the exam list. The Chief's recommendation going forward is to stick by the list and the rankings. The Chief stands by the results.

The Executive Director supported the process. He thought it was very thorough. He also supported the empirical data that the process provided. The Executive Director strongly recommended that the Personnel Committee support the top 10 candidates that were listed, and to keep the list valid for at least one year. This will provide a list with others to choose from should there be retirements or separation of FD service. At the end of one year the Board can decide to extend the list for an additional 6 mos., but not longer than an additional year. The Chief added that he interviewed and did a second interview with the top ten in case there is a diversion off the top 5. The Chief recommends that the whole list be certified for one year.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the ranking list of Firefighter candidates prepared by Chief Balletto, and to authorize the Chief to proceed with the hiring process.***

- B. Discuss and Decide on Five Candidates to Fill Five Open Firefighter Positions. After the whole testing process and the results from the Chief's interviews, the Chief recommended applicants 1-5 to be offered the position of full-time career Firefighter for the Cromwell Fire Department. A Chiefs' meeting was conducted as well as background checks. If any of the five do not accept the position, the Chief recommends going down the list of candidates to the next in line.

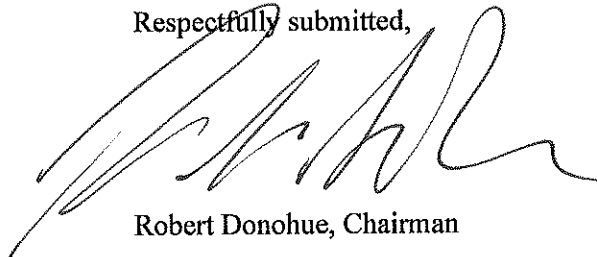
***A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's recommendation to make job offers to the top 5 candidates from the Chief's Result list, noting that if someone does not accept the position, the next candidate on the list will be offered the position.***

- C. Discuss and Decide on MOA with Local 4662 Regarding Designing a 48 Hr. Work Week. The Executive Director distributed copies of a draft MOA regarding a 48 Hr. work week. He reported that he met with the Fire Chiefs and Union officials of Local 4662. They all agreed there needed to be some improvement in the language of this MOA for clarity. This MOA identifies that the FLSA allows the Fire Department/Fire Service to have a different work week to be defined. This MOA defines the work week to be 48 hrs. per week, and this is in order to maintain the recordkeeping of a the work week. It also defines that the work week starts at 7:00 AM and ends the following day at 6:59 AM. Historically the work week started at midnight on Sunday. This eliminates the process of having someone working 24 hrs. over a Saturday and Sunday which makes working a 24 hr. shift run into the following work week. This MOA eliminates that process.

*A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the MOA as presented.*

- V. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Terry thanked the firefighters that were present for coming to the meeting, and she thanked them for all they do for the community. She let them know how much they are appreciated by the Board. Chairman Donohue and Commissioner Colligan had the same remarks.
- VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 5:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert Donohue, Chairman

Nancy Deegan  
Recording Secretary