

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Fire Operations Committee Meeting

Monday, April 18, 2022

5:30 PM

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

Present: Commissioners David Colligan (Chairman), Charles Epstein and Robert Donohue. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Fire Marshal Harold Holmes, Communication Manager Justin Lonergan, Fire Lt. Brett Hallden (Local 4662) and Firefighter Michael DePaolo. Commissioner Jason Hinners 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 submitted.
- III. Approval of Meeting Minutes of March 14, 2022. A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to accept the meeting minutes of March 14, 2022, as presented.
- IV. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- V. Communications Report. Mr. Lonergan reported that he has been in touch with Paul Zito to get a status report on reprogramming. Mr. Zito has been sending multiple reports to the State. The State has been inundated with templates and requests for access to the system so they have been backed up significantly. Originally Mr. Zito did hear back from them, but the access was denied. The reason for the denial was adjusted and resubmitted. There is nothing new to report.

He also noted that he along with the Fire Chief and two dispatchers are attending the Navigator conference in Nashville next week from Tuesday through Saturday.

Regarding the radios, there have been no problems reported. There have been a few microphone issues with loose screws, etc. But everything has remained online and working properly. No complaints have come to Mr. Lonergan regarding radio coverage or quality issues.

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's Report was available for review. The Chief reported that it has been a busy month. The call volume had picked up substantially. The Fire Department had their Swearing-In ceremony on Saturday, April 9, 2022. The Chief thanked all that attended. It was a morale booster for the Fire/EMS personnel. There will be a separate swearing in of Firefighter Depaolo at the Board of Commissioners' meeting tomorrow evening.

There was a total of 6 EMS turnovers to mutual aid departments. There has been 21 total year-to-date. Direct turnover to mutual aid was 7. Everything has been going well with Shared Response. The Chief received numbers from last month and has more information should anyone want any more details off line. A training session was held last week with the Chief, Ass't Chief Brade, Lt. Wolmetz and EMS Coordinator Petrucelli. They are doing everything correct with the QA. The Chief is working with Local 4662 to come up with a possible plan going forward with FTO's to assist with reports.

Commissioner Donohue asked if the Department was doing anything to replace two part-time firefighters. The Chief has hired four part-time staff. They were on the list of the original 21 that were ranked for the career positions that were posted. They are getting their physicals done this week, and plan to come in on Saturday for an orientation. Training coming up is Infection Control on Monday April 25. The following two Mondays from there is HazMat Ops. It is a total of 8 hrs. Participants will receive 12 hours of continuing education credits for EMR/EMT.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Chief's Report for March as presented.

- A. Fire Marshal's Office Report. Mr. Holmes reported there have been no changes to his report since he submitted it. He will be submitting a new report in the future to reflect the Fire Marshal fees recently put in place to keep track of permits issued and Fire Marshal services provided. This program was started on March 26, 2022. Since then the FMO has collected \$1,525. He has not received any negative feedback about the fees.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Marshal's Report for March as submitted.

- VII. Firefighter/EMT Staffing, Hiring and Response Capability. The Chairman stated that this was discussed previously on this agenda. The Chief noted that he has been working with Melissa Roming on the volunteer program. They went to a collaboration seminar last week at CFA. They received a lot of good information. Melissa was not able to make this meeting to share what she learned to build a better recruitment and retention program. He would like to have Melissa attend the next Fire Ops meeting or schedule a workshop so Melissa can present her findings.

VIII. Old Business

- A. Update on Utilization of Court Street and Coles Road Firehouses. The Executive Director noted that he and the Chief had previously requested a full assessment from a couple of electrical vendors. That was 5 weeks ago. Mr. Neto will reach out to them again. The quote or assessment is in answer to the question, "What will it take to get the generator system to accommodate Coles Road?"

Commissioner Epstein discussed his suggestion which he has mentioned over the last couple of years which is requesting the District to consider solar power for its buildings. Solar power companies work to provide back-up battery systems. He asked the Chief and the Executive Director to include a solar power vendor in their search for quotes. He would like the quote for solar to include solar on premises with a battery for a backup.

The Executive Director noted that solar is extremely expensive. The battery alone is between \$30,000 and \$40,000. A solar project would need to be a complete solution. Maybe it can be started at Coles Road. It will require a full assessment, possibly an RFP. Mr. Neto thought that what is needed is an energy footprint of the District. Once an assessment is done, the District could then look at vendors. Come up with recommendations, i.e., lease vs. buy. It could be phased in or done all at once.

Chairman Colligan reported there are companies in Town that do solar energy, i.e., solar farms. He had proposed to the District that they look into it. At the time the District was involved with many projects and it was not feasible financially at the time. The Chairman noted that if the Board is interested, he could contact the person he knows. Commissioner Epstein pointed out that there is Federal and State money available for municipalities interested in renewable energy. He added that the battery vs. generator is a fairly new concept. It was agreed to leave this item on the agenda until more information is received.

IX. New Business

- A. Discussion and Possible Decision on Truck #1, Long Term Strategies. The Executive Director put this on the agenda based on discussions that were held a couple of months ago. A workshop with the Apparatus and Fire Operations Committees to address this issue was never scheduled. It is again budget time. The strategy is to maintain the status quo. They will need to invest in some equipment through the budget for the SCBA's. There has been some discussion about opportunities to do something different with the truck. No decisions have been made. There has been lots of discussion.

Chairman Colligan asked the Chief about the status of Truck #1. He thought they were still waiting on parts. All the parts are in, but they are now waiting for DOT to inspect it. The ladder inspection also has to be done. That has not been done in 2 years. It should most likely be in service within the next month. The Chief took all the Scott Packs off of it because he had to take the 50's out of service and replace them with 75's. The SCBA's that were on Truck #1 had to be taken off so the Chief could have spare pieces for Engine #1, Ladder #3 and anything else that goes out of service.

The Chief had heard he was the reason Truck 1 was out of service. He pulled records for Truck 1 from 2019 through 2021. In 2019, Truck 1 responded to 175 calls. In 2020, it responded to 22 calls. In 2021 it responded to 33 calls. It was taken out of service on Feb. 19, 2021. It was put back in service on June 1 that year, and responded to its first call on June 9. The last call it responded to was Sept. 11, 2021. The Fire Department has spent \$15,000 on Truck 1 this year. They were repairs that needed to be done from November. When a full inspection of the apparatus was done, they continued to find more things to repair. He promised the Executive Director he would not exceed \$60,000. When they reached \$13,000, they were waiting for more parts to come in. He had asked Mr. Logan if it would be better to bring the truck to Greensboro, MA for the rest of the repairs. Mr. Logan recommended that as the best solution. When the truck returned from

Greensboro, MA, Chris Logan found a crack in the boom. This was not identified in Greensboro. Chris had to repair the crack as well as a couple of sensors that he also found needed repair. They were waiting for many parts to come in. The price of repairs continued to climb.

Chris Logan submitted an email to the Chief with his recommendations for Truck 1. He was unable to attend this meeting. The comments reflect his personal opinion about Truck 1. He stated that the day-to-day operations of the Cromwell Fire Department is very different now compared to when they first purchased this truck. It is a very complex truck to run, and with the daily staff changes it is hard to keep people trained. Truck 1 needs operators not just drivers who understand how Truck 1 works. All it takes is one little mistake to have the truck stop working and disrupt operations. Regarding the mechanical side of the truck, it is very expensive for replacement parts, and it takes forever to receive them. Truck 1 will need new tires this year and has many hydraulic hoses and valves that are starting to corrode which will need to be replaced within the next 2 years. There is no customer or mechanical service in the State of CT because there are no trucks like it in the State. His opinion is to sell Truck 1 while it is still worth something along with Ladder 3 to purchase a 100 ft. bucket truck.

The Chief noted a price of \$1.8 million for a new bucket truck. There is only \$350,000 in the truck account. The Chief reached out to Alabama which sells apparatus. They have given the Truck a fair market value of \$350,000 for the truck. The price was based on research and documentation, pictures and a video inspection of the vehicle. If Alabama sells the truck they would get a 10% commission. The District would receive \$315,000 that would go into their truck replacement account. If it is decided to keep Truck 1, the Chief will need \$67,933.77 to replace Scott Packs (6) and hoses. If they keep the truck and it does not get used, they are losing more time. They are putting more and more equipment on it. When this truck was purchased, it fits Needs and Risk Assessment. A Needs and Risk Assessment done today would not identify this truck as a need. Now is the best opportunity to push the Department forward, come up with a 5 year plan and admit this is the best opportunity to move forward. The Chief does not know what they would do if one of the engines broke down as well as this truck. There is no money to replace anything. This is the opportunity to set up a plan.

The Chairman stated he would discuss this with the Chairman of the Apparatus Committee. He would like to see Fire Ops. and the Apparatus Committee get together to discuss. This will eventually have to be brought before the Commissioners if it is decided that new air packs and hoses are needed. The Chief needed clarification because he was advised by the Apparatus Committee that this issue needed to be brought before the Fire Operations Committee. It is noted in the minutes. That was when the workshop was to be established. The Chairman was going to discuss with the President of the Board and stated he would get back to the Chief. The Chief asked for a timeline for this meeting. The Chairman noted today was the first time the Committee had received any figures from the Chief. The Chief clarified that he identified what was going on with Truck 1 along with figures. That was why a workshop was suggested, but there has been no action on this for two months. The longer this is tabled, the more the value of the apparatus will be reduced.

Commissioner Epstein wanted to ask for a Fire Ops mtg., an Apparatus Committee mtg. and a Commission meeting just for this issue.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to request a Special meeting of the Apparatus Committee, Fire Ops. Committee and the Commissioners to discuss Truck #1. The Chiefs, mechanics, and all staff involved with Truck 1 and decide if the apparatus should be sold or spend \$67,000 to equip it for use. The Chief intends to keep Ladder 3.

There was discussion between the Chief and the Chairman regarding apparatus replacement and funding for the future. The Chairman will contact the President and follow up on this discussion to set up a workshop or special meeting.

- B. Discuss and Establish Virtual Inspection for New Apparatus. The Chief reported that the new apparatus will be ready April 27. The company would like to do a virtual inspection. Staff can be invited to the inspection. It could be set up in the Conference Room at Coles Road. The Chief will be in Nashville at that time but will bring his computer to take part in the inspection. The President wanted to travel to Wisconsin to physically inspect the truck. The Chief does not have the funds to travel to Wisconsin. He has other issues he is addressing such as the budget and trying to determine what funds he has left to replace multiple sets of gear.

The new apparatus is a stock engine so there really isn't much that can be changed around because the plans have already been approved with a stock engine. There were some modifications to the cab area. The virtual inspection will be very lengthy. They have I-pads that they use to look at every single area. The virtual inspection would be a better opportunity for everyone to be involved including the officers instead of only 3 people going to Wisconsin. Those 3 people will never be riding this apparatus. After the inspection, the company will have a week or two to fix any issues. It should be received by the first or second week of May. The ultimate goal is to have the apparatus in service the first week of June.

The Chief had advised the President and the Chairman of the Apparatus Committee of the inspection information. The President was trying to determine if his schedule would allow him to go to Wisconsin. He was given a deadline of April 12. The Chief did not hear back from the President. The Chief needed specifics for the company if he was going to schedule an inspection there. The Pierce facility is closed on the weekends so nothing could be scheduled unless it was scheduled Monday through Friday. The reason this was brought before this committee tonight was because the Chief needed a decision on this to move forward. The Chairman was going to contact the President to clarify. The Executive Director noted that if the President was not able to arrange his schedule to go to Wisconsin, the backup option would be the virtual inspection. The Chairman suggested that the virtual inspection be scheduled for April 27.

- X. Commissioners' Comments. There were no comments.

- 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 6:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

David J. Colligan, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary

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