

# 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

### Personnel Committee Meeting

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse  
105 Coles Road  
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Robert Donohue (Chairman), Jason Hinnners, David Colligan and Mertie Terry. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade, Commissioner Charles Epstein, Acting Fire Marshal Harold Holmes, Acting Fire Inspector Colin Whalen and Firefighter Union Local 4662 Representative Lt. Brett Hallden. There was representation present from the volunteer organization and the paid fire personnel.

- 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 Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. There was no public comment to report.
- IV. New Business
  - A. Discussion and Decision on Volunteer Recognition/Compensation Program. The Executive Director reminded everyone that the draft document for the volunteers and unscheduled Fire, EMT and Fire Police programs was distributed to Committee members at the last Personnel Committee meeting on January 11, 2022. Committee members were asked to review and be prepared to discuss at this meeting. A few edits were made from the draft document distributed last month. They were basically typos and clarifications.

The program was developed by the Chief's office. They are looking to tweak the process as it pertains to volunteers, recognizing that volunteers are expected to make commitments of their time as well as being required to be fully trained and compliant with OSHA. There is a lot of time that needs to be committed for training. This program recognizes those commitments and proposes to provide some monetary compensation for volunteer participation at certain levels. This program will not be anything like the dilemma of 2019. In 2019 the Department faced FLSA issues which made the District revisit their volunteer program as well as the process by which the volunteers are compensated. At that time volunteers were in violation of FLSA because they were being compensated much greater than the Federal government and State government what allow. The document presented uses a 10% variable which is 10% of a full-time

firefighter's salary. The law allows up to a 20% variable. It is a recognition for volunteers, but needs to be called compensation. This is a way to recognize the service that volunteers provide to the community.

A couple of years ago there was no compensation or recognition other than training. That has not changed. What has changed is that they are tweaking up part of the compensation so that they can maintain and attract new individuals. Assistant Chief Brade was one of the authors of the program as well as Chief Balletto and the Executive Director.

Commissioner Colligan wanted to make sure that the people that have been here all along are recognized. It is time to have something in place. He felt that the document only pertained to newcomers. He doesn't want any processes going forward to hinder those people that have already been a part of the volunteer organization. There have been no changes to the basic structure of the organization.

Assistant Chief Brade answered questions. The Department is trying to get away from volunteers that are on the roster, but don't show up for calls. The Department will be requiring some type of minimum participation. If people don't come on calls they will not become proficient in their skills. If they do not come to training, they will not be proficient on calls. That is why there will be requirements for drills and calls.

Commissioner Terry had concerns about some of the language in the document not being specific enough. The Executive Director took Mrs. Terry's comments into consideration and promised they will do a better job to clarify all language so that it is specific.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinnens and unanimously approved to table this item and schedule a workshop with all parties involved on Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022, at 6:30 PM after the Fire Operations Committee meeting. It was agreed that the Executive Director will follow up with an email about the workshop with the draft document attached to all committee members and staff members involved.

- B. Discussion and Approval of MOA's for Part-Time Firefighters. Chairman Donohue was instructed to table this item because some of the language needs to be modified.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnens, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to table the discussion and approval of MOA's for part-time firefighters.

- C. Discussion and Decision on Promoting the Acting Fire Marshal and Acting Fire Inspector. The Executive Director explained that the District has had an Acting Fire Marshal position for several months. Harold Holmes has been doing an outstanding job in that role. The District went through the recruitment and hiring process as instructed by the Personnel Committee. There was minimal response to the posting. Through the process of reviewing applications and criteria, there were several candidates that did not meet some of the criteria. Two weeks ago the interview process began with one outside applicant as well as the internal applicant who is currently filling the role as Acting FM. The second applicant to be interviewed withdrew his application for reasons unknown. That left the one remaining applicant who is currently filling the role as acting Fire Marshal.

After discussions with the President and other Commissioners, the Executive Director in agreement with the Chief have acknowledged that Harold Holmes as Acting Fire Marshal and Colin Whalen as Acting Fire Inspector have been doing a phenomenal job in their acting roles. They are both qualified and committed individuals. They have been there prior to Ray Sarracco leaving the FMO to take another position at Yale. After consultation with the President, the Fire Chief and Commissioners it was suggested to promote these individuals since they were both applicants for the positions they were filling, qualified for the positions and both have been doing great work. It seems like a logical solution to fill these positions.

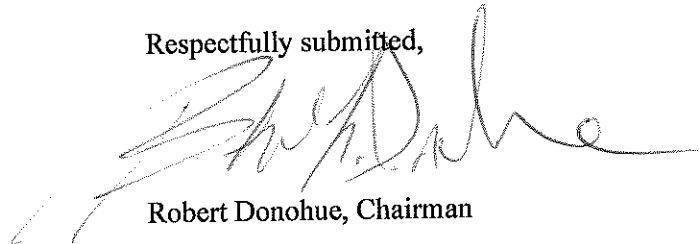
A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to promote Acting Fire Marshal Harold Holmes and Acting Fire Inspector Colin Whalen to permanent positions as Fire Marshal and Fire Inspector.

- V. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Colligan noted that the Committee is going to give the members the opportunity to come to a workshop and vent their concerns. Hopefully the Committee can help clarify all concerns.

Commissioner Terry thanked all members that were present for handling an incident that occurred on Main St. a short time ago. She was very proud to see the Fire and EMS personnel that were there for that call. They all did a great job working as a team to manage the incident. She thanked everyone sincerely for the jobs that they do.

- VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 5:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert Donohue, Chairman

N. Deegan  
Recording Secretary