

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Fire and Water Divisions

Tuesday, May 17, 2022

6:00 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, May 17, 2022, at 6:00 PM, at the Coles Road Firehouse, 105 Coles Road, Cromwell, CT to discuss and act upon Fire and Water Division business.

Commissioners Lee Brow (President), Roger Rukowicz, Robert Donohue, Chip Darius and Robert McIntyre attended. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan, Fire Marshal Harold Holmes and Firefighters William McKnight, Alan Dominy and Lt. Barry Wolmetz. Commissioners Mertie Terry, Jason Hanners, David Colligan and Charles Epstein were absent.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM, by President Brow. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Brow.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted adding Item F. under New Business, "Union Proposal."

PUBLIC COMMENT

Roger Ambler, Life member of the Cromwell Fire Department addressed the Board. He is having an issue collecting his pension. He was eligible to start receiving benefits in January but has been unable to collect anything as of yet. He distributed copies of his 2012 pension statement. He contacted Mr. Neto to advise that there was a mistake on his date of birth. The Executive Director assured Mr. Ambler that the error would be taken care of. As of this year, 2022, Mr. Ambler will be 62 and would like to find out what paperwork he needed to fill out to take care of this. Mr. Neto assured him it would be taken care of. When it came time to process paperwork, Mr. Neto advised Mr. Ambler that there was an issue. When information was transferred from the old pension company to the new one, he was told he did not exist in the census, and he would

only be able to collect a benefit for 8 years of service instead of the 15 or so that he thought he had. He contacted the Chairman of the Pension Committee to look into the issue. Although Commissioner Colligan was not present at this meeting, he informed Mr. Ambler that he would be looking into the issue. Mr. Ambler is now waiting to hear back from someone. The President assured Mr. Ambler that this issue will be looked into.

James Rude, Highridge Rd., stated that the minutes of the meeting of April 19, 2022, document Commissioners' Comments, "regarding accusations that the Board held an illegal meeting." Mr. Rude respectfully requested that during this evening's Commissioners' Comments section on the agenda that the Commission clarify whether this comment was directed at him.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
APRIL 19, 2022

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of April 19, 2022, as submitted.

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF
MAY 5, 2022

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to accept the Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting minutes of May 5, 2022, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

There were no communications or appeals to report.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's Report for April had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. He added to his report that the Water Division has turned the water on with Berlin. They are operating with a temporary permit provided by DEEP. The issue that had been discussed last month has been resolved. The Water Division is also seeking a permanent permit. This allows Berlin to receive the water that they need through the summer months. They continue to work with the State in the next phase of the grant or loan process for the interconnection project. This month the District brought in Adnet to do a cyber-security audit. An assessment will be done to see if the District's system can be compromised or not. The assessment will take at least a couple of weeks. He will also be looking at the equipment at the Tower and Chemfeed. Mr. Neto also reported that last week the Fire Chief and Executive Director spent some time at Covenant Village after an invitation by Don Smith and his group. They gave a lot of information out about the Fire District and answered questions. Commissioner Darius asked about the new fee process for the FMO. Mr. Neto explained the process for payment of fees and how it is handled in the District office.

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

- B. Financial Report. Mr. Neto explained that Mr. Alibrio was not able to attend as his schedule was modified due to his recovery from COVID. The Financial Report had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Commissioners were directed to forward any questions to Mr. Neto who will follow up with Mr. Alibrio.

The President asked if the District was fully onboard with the new ambulance billing company. Mr. Neto confirmed that they are doing great work through the Chief's office using QA. There are a few accounts that owe money to Quick Meds, but after the 90 day grace period, all accounts will roll over to Shared Response. A report will be available at the end of May to provide more details on the reporting process and monies collected.

Commissioner Darius had a question about the report under EMS and Fire Operations. The item ending in account number 5381 for Volunteer Medicals and Physicals has no money allocated to it. Mr. Neto explained that all medicals and physicals are associated with 5380 not 5381. They have done that to simplify accounting. He will have Mike eliminate the 5381 account.

Commissioner Donohue had questions regarding the activity fund for the old Fire Department. He wanted to know where he could find balances for things like the Trust fund or Activity fund. Mr. Neto stated that the Activity fund is not part of the financials that are published. In the past the Chiefs were responsible for the Activity fund. All information was retrieved from the former Treasurer of that account, which was Boyd Clark. Bernice Jalbert served during Boyd's medical leave. Mr. Neto is keeping a box in his office with all of the activity fund information in it. He will not touch anything in it unless Melissa Roming is present. The Association does not have a Treasurer yet. They have a President, Vice President and Secretary thus far. Bank statements are issued every month to the District. There is a balance of \$29,987. Chief Terenzio and Boyd Clark were the old signers on the account. It was a challenge to work with the bank to get new signers. Melissa is the President of the new association and now has the ability to write checks. The District administrative offices cannot be active participants in the process with the activity account because it exists separately from the Cromwell Fire District financials. It is only mentioned briefly in the District's audit. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the responsibilities of the new Association and the District and its finances.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for April as presented.

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's Report for April had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The Chief reported there have been no changes to the report. The Department was very busy last month with a total of 210 calls. There were 7 mutual aid calls within the last month. There were 13 turnovers last month. The Chief also reported they are still in negotiations with the TPC for the golf tournament. There was an operations meeting yesterday with Trinity Hospital, the Fire Chief, the Cromwell Police Department and the TPC. They are planning to have 3 or 4 firefighters and a fire engine with 2 EMT's. They will also have 2 in corporate row. The Fire Department will have full control of the surrounding homes and residents on the golf course. Middlesex will be assisting with ALS if needed. A strategic plan is in place. Another meeting will be scheduled soon. He is hopeful that Cromwell's Emergency Management team will be involved, but the Chief has not heard anything about this. Mr. Neto added that

the District will be invoicing the Tournament for the coverage of the firefighters. The taxpayers will not subsidize any of the fire operations there.

1. Fire Marshal's Office. Mr. Holmes reported there have been no changes to the report that was submitted yesterday. He announced that Tom Duff's last day in the office was last week. He will do his last on call duty the first weekend of June. There was a small luncheon for him in the office, and he was given a plaque to thank him for his years of service.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Chief and Fire Marshal's reports for April as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Operations Report for April had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri had nothing further to add to his report. Commissioner Rukowicz noted the amount of new meters that were installed/replaced was a record number of 50. There were a lot of old meters that did not read properly or not at all. The Board recognized the hard work of the Water Department.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Operations Report for April as submitted.

- E. Communication Center Report. The Communication Center report for April had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lonergan had nothing to add to the report. He continues to work on projects that have taken longer than expected to complete.

Commissioner Darius had concerns about the mapping for Country Squire. The maps need clarity especially for mutual aid. The GPS system will bring someone to Country Squire Road, and that is it for direction. It does not give further information on building numbers or apartment numbers. They may have some drawn maps in their property data base to show what buildings are what. Mr. Lonergan will review the Country Squire situation to see if it can be improved. Lt. Wolmetz explained that property maps are in the MDT's under site plans.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Communication Center Report for April as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. District Operations. There was no meeting.
- B. Executive. Meetings were held on April 25, 2022, and April 27, 2022. Minutes had been previously distributed and reviewed. Copies are attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. The President thanked the Executive Committee members for all their hard work on the budget. It is greatly appreciated that there was no tax increase.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the Executive Committee meetings of April 25, 2022, and April 27, 2022, as submitted.

- C. Fire Operations. A meeting was held on April 18, 2022. 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 Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Operations Committee meeting minutes of April 18, 2022, as submitted.

1. Communications Committee. Mr. Lonergan gave an update, which was that the reprogramming of the radios is pending. They continue to wait for the State to make their determinations.
2. Apparatus Committee. The Chief reported that the new fire engine is in. It is in Rocky Hill right now. The Chief went to check out the engine along with Justin Lonergan and the Executive Director. He reported the lettering has been changed. The "I" was changed to a "1". The wheel wells will be painted. He had a sample of the color that he gave to the Executive Director which will be forwarded to the Apparatus Committee. The Chief is hopeful that the apparatus will be here in Cromwell in 3 weeks.

He worked with Mr. Alibrio to sign the P.O. for the fire/rescue to pay for the chasis. The cost was approximately \$360,000. With that paid up front, it will take \$11,000 off the overall price. The vin number was approved. They should receive the red chasis within the next couple of weeks. Everything should be received by the end of the year. The rescue and rope equipment has started to come in. He is looking at having a class on the new rope equipment before it is put into service. They also will be getting some old cars in the back of Coles Road so crews can practice extrications.

The President asked about the telescope lighting. Because of the cost of the lighting, the Chief wanted to suggest portable telescope lighting which is battery operated. The Chief feels they are better and can be positioned at any location instead of just on the apparatus. He had gotten a price of \$1,500 for one light. There would be a 12 week turnaround time for one light. For two battery operated ones he could pay the same price. As a pump operator the difficulty is raising those lights so that they hang correctly.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the reports for the Communications and Apparatus Committees as presented.

- D. Pension. There was no meeting.
- E. Personnel. The meeting scheduled for May 10, 2022, was canceled.
- F. Water Operations. A meeting was held on May 4, 2022. Minutes were not available. A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to table the Water Operations Committee meeting minutes of May 4, 2022.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. There was no one present from the Town, therefore, no report.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
 - 1. Public Safety Tower Committee. There was no meeting.
 - 2. Health & Safety/Building Committee. There was no meeting.
 - 3. By-Laws Committee. There was no meeting.
 - 4. Publicity Committee. There was no meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. President Brow began by reading the Rules for Public Comment which are noted on all Board agendas published. President Brow commented that after reading the rules, in answer to a question that was brought up under the previous Public Comment item, the Board is not going to engage in debate. If there is a specific question that needs to be answered, he asked that it be written down and handed to the Executive Director, and the Board would be more than happy to hold a meeting specifically to address that.

Commissioner Donohue commented on a call from the TPC the other day. He commented on how the call was answered and the response. He was very impressed and thanked the Chief and his department.

- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There was one adjustment to report in the Water Enterprise Fund. Mr. Neto read the adjustment. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to be it resolved, that the Board of Commissioners of the Cromwell Fire District consider and act upon a resolution to approve budgetary adjustments to the Water Enterprise Fund budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, as reflected in the worksheet provided by CLS at the Board of Commissioners' Meeting of May 17, 2022. The purpose of the adjustment is to reallocate available funds to cover the sale of excess water permit expenses taking \$10,000 from Transmission & Distribution – Maintenance of Reservoir (05904-5436) and \$9,000 from Transmission & Distribution – Maintenance of Hydrants (05904-5440) TO Power & Pumping – Other Expenditures (05902-5800) totaling \$19,000.

- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. There were no contracts or contractors to approve.
- D. Update on Navigator Conference. Mr. Lonergan reported on the Navigator Conference in Nashville that he attended along with two dispatchers and the Fire Chief. He reported there were lots of vendors there, and they had the opportunity to see a lot of the new technology in communications. The Chief agreed and stated he attended a lot of seminars regarding recruitment and retention. There were also topics on leadership and

COVID-related topics. There was a lot of networking. They also sat with the Chairman and CEO of Navigator. He gave some recommendations on EFD and EMD.

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Rukowicz and unanimously approved to accept the Navigator Conference update as presented.

- E. Discussion of Budget Presentation to Public Including Public Outreach/Advertising. The Executive Director discussed this item. One of the reasons is to remind everyone that the Annual Budget meeting has been scheduled for this coming Monday, May 23, 2022. A budget presentation will be given from 5:30 PM to 6:00 PM. Voting on the budget will take place between 6:00 PM and 8:00 PM. In preparation of this meeting there was a lot of discussion about publishing meeting notifications and where they are advertised. He asked the Board if there was a different or improved process they wanted the Executive Director to take. Currently, the administration is doing what they normally do to get the word out. He added they plan on using the bay again at Coles Road for the vote. All publishing opportunities were reviewed. Mr. Neto asked if a budget presentation would be necessary at future budget meetings. There will be 2 questions on the ballot after feedback from last year. The Water Enterprise Fund and the General Fund will be two separate questions, separate issues to vote on.

Commissioner Donohue had some questions regarding the interconnection project with the Water Division. The Executive Director explained how the project effects the Water Division budget next year. The Water Division has planned to have money in their budget to cover costs for the engineering study as well as some of the costs for bonding or borrowing. Commissioners were asking these questions in order to be prepared to answer questions from the public if asked.

Commissioner Darius suggested having something tangible as a marketing strategy going forward when advertising public meetings. At this point there are no guidelines to follow in writing.

- F. Union Proposal. Firefighter Alan Dominy, Vice President of Local 4662, introduced himself to the group. He was part of a Committee within the Fire Department reporting on the utilization of the Coles Road firehouse compared to the Court Street firehouse by the Fire Department. He distributed copies of the Committee's report which was put into a Power Point presentation with bullet points. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. He stated that his committee consisted of himself, Lt. Wolmetz, Firefighter LaFontaine and Firefighter DePaolo. The objective of the committee was to determine what would be the best, operation-wise, for the staff to operate for day-to-day operations.

Court Street was built in 1966 and has multiple renovations. Currently it is 7,644 square feet. There is 4,100 sq. feet of bay area and 920 square feet for dispatch. He reviewed the report on the overhead. There is living space on the second floor. There is one shower on that floor and is only accessible through the living space such as the day room which also has access to the administrative offices. There are two bathrooms on the first floor, two toilets and one urinal. It has on site a bottle fill system, alerting system and is centrally located in Town. Court Street has a chronic bird issue that they have been dealing with for quite some time. The feces contaminate the firefighter's gear and clothing, etc.

Coles Road was built in 1996. It is 10,978 square feet. There is 5,673 ft. of bay area. There are 6 bays, two are dedicated to the fleet for maintenance. The mechanic also uses other bays that are out there. It is a single floor. There are two regular showers accessible from the bay area and two de-con showers accessible from the exterior of the building. There are two bathrooms on the first floor, 4 toilets, 2 urinals and 2 separate showers. There is an on-site decon area, extractor and laundry, larger onsite parking.

If comparing Court St. and Coles Rd., the kitchen and dining area at Court St. has table space for 6 people, has residential grade appliances and a concrete floor surface. Coles Road has table space for 10 people, has commercial grade appliances, carpeted floor surfaces and vented hood.

The bunk room at Court St., is located on the second floor. There is room for 5 bunks with limited spacing between bunks. There is no female dorm. Currently there are 6 females including part-time and volunteers. On the overnights, they are sleeping in recliners. They are not comfortable sleeping in the bunk room with the men. It creates an issue because if they have a busy night, the females are lying in recliners in the day room. It is not an adequate space for someone to have the proper rest. There is limited egress options. There is a small office bunk, but there is no space for Lieutenants to meet with their personnel, especially the females.

At Coles Road, the bunk room is located on the main floor. There is room for 7 bunks with space for dividers and storage. If this was an option there is space to put lockers between the beds. That would give adequate storage for clothing, etc. There are small lockers in the bathrooms now that could be used for toiletries, etc. or exchange them for larger lockers at a minimum cost. There are also secondary egress options available. He also had pictures of the bunk room at Court St. There are boards placed under certain beds for support because the beds are very old and very used. They would like to determine where they will be going before they order any new beds for any new bunk rooms.

Mr. Dominy also distributed copies of a map or blue print of the layout of Coles Road. He explained the various rooms. Having a gym at Coles Road is helpful. Firefighters are able to keep up on health and safety, but it is not accessible on a day to day basis. He discussed the conference room at Coles Road. They would consider putting up the divider in the room to separate so there would be a meeting room with roughly 24 seats available. He noted that all the issues discussed are keeping in mind that Coles Road would be a temporary solution to the current space needs. According to NFPA, there should be 60 square feet per spot per bed. He added that considering there are residents that live close by to Coles Road, he is certain that the firefighters will be respectful and not be blasting sirens.

Mr. Dominy reviewed the considerations. The meeting and training room size will be reduced by sharing spaces. They will still be able to rent space at Coles Road, there may be some septic vs. sewer issues to evaluate as well as electric and generator issues. Certain areas may need to be upgraded such as the vehicle emission removal system. There will be more shared spaces with the fleet. Coles Road is less centrally located in Town. Coles Road would have less construction than Court St. Sleeping areas should be 60 square feet per NFPA.

Firefighter Dominy feels that Coles Road would be the safest bet for the Fire Department until they can come up with a final solution for Court Street.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. James Rude, Highridge Rd., thanked the President for reading the Public Comment rules. He would be very happy to work with the Executive Director to process through the comments the President made earlier this evening. He also mentioned that at the last meeting of April 19, he commented on the likeliness of meetings to talk about the budget. There was no comment made at that meeting and no comment made after the meeting, and within a couple of days later the same week there were 3 meetings that were posted meeting with the Executive Committee to talk about the budget. The Commission met on the 19th. The Executive Committee meetings were scheduled for April 25, 27 and 28. He was disappointed that no one provided him the courtesy of comment that evening telling him to keep his eyes open for meetings that were going to be scheduled in just the next week. He sincerely believes that the taxpayers and the Town deserve to be treated a little better.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Donohue, seconded by Commissioner Darius and unanimously approved to enter into Executive Session at 7:25 PM.

A motion was made by Commissioner Darius, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to adjourn Executive Session at 7:30 PM. No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 PM.

ATTEST:

LeRoy Brow, President

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary

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