

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Personnel Committee Meeting

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Robert Donohue (Chairman), Jason Hinnners and Mertie Terry. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Communication Manager Justin Lonergan, Fire Marshal Harold Holmes, Firefighter Lt. Barry Wolmetz and Brett Hallden and Firefighter Nick Schenartz.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM, by Chairman Donohue.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as presented.
- III. Public Comment. There was no public comment to report.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Discussion and Possible Decision on Jarred Fongimie. The Executive Director explained that the Personnel Committee was aware that former Firefighter Kyle Gentile has resigned his position which leaves an open, full-time career firefighter/EMT position available. Jarred Fongimie is next on the list of firefighter candidates that was approved by the Personnel Committee a few months ago. The Chief and the Executive Director are asking the Committee to consider hiring Mr. Fongimie as he is the next in line on the candidate list. Mr. Fongimie is currently a part-time firefighter, so the full-time position would make him a career firefighter. The Chief added that Jarred has been with the Department since last December. He has gone above and beyond. He is a good choice right now. He was immediately following Firefighter Depaolo on the candidate list. Mr. DePaolo was #7 on the list which makes Mr. Fongimie #8. They are asking approval for Jarred Fongimie to become a career firefighter, starting full-time employment on Monday, June 20, 2022. They would like to swear Mr. Fongimie in on Tuesday, June 21, 2022, at the full Board of Commissioners' meeting. He will need to get his CPAT by December 20, 2022.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to follow up on the Fire Chief's recommendation to hire Jarred Fongimie as a full-time career firefighter.

- B. Discussion and Possible Decision on Title Change for Fire Inspector Colin Whalen. The Executive Director distributed copies of the Deputy Fire Marshal job description. Chief Balletto explained that Mr. Whalen has been with Cromwell Fire for a long time in various positions. He started as a Dispatcher, then was a Firefighter and is now a Fire Inspector in the Fire Marshal's Office. The Chief is trying to get some continuity in the FMO. He feels the easiest way to do that is by putting a second person in charge of the office in case Harold Holmes is not around. Right now the only people that can sign documents from the FMO is the Fire Chief, Fire Marshal Holmes and Fire Inspector Colin Whalen.

Fire Marshal Harold Holmes was present and discussed Mr. Whalen's character and his qualifications for the job. Mr. Whalen has worked in the Fire Marshal's Office in New Haven. He had been injured as a Firefighter in New Haven. When he returned to work on light duty, he was assigned to the Fire Marshal's Office. He learned a lot about the FMO during that time. He is eager to learn and hits the ground running. He doesn't stop until an assigned task is completed. He is a good worker and not afraid to ask questions.

Deputy Fire Marshal, Jason Brade, was given a choice when Chief Balletto came on board. He had to choose between being Deputy Fire Marshal or Assistant Fire Chief. He chose Assistant Fire Chief. That means the Deputy Fire Marshal position was vacant for one year. Discussing the character of Colin Whalen, there are a number of things Mr. Whalen did for the Department and the District. He started a Juvenile Fire Setter program which will be certified by the State of CT through DCF. He also created a Fire Prevention Program to be delivered to all age groups within the District. Colin took that project on under the direction of the Fire Marshal's Office. He performs his duties with great efficiency. The Chief and the Fire Marshal know that if Colin is given a task, they do not have to worry about the task not being completed. Mr. Whalen updates the Chief and the Executive Director on all aspects of the projects he works on.

The Executive Director noted that the Deputy Fire Marshal position is part time. There is no salary increase with the position. Colin is the right candidate for the job. He works real well with others and has the knowledge and experience to perform the job. He also has great rapport with the public.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to change Fire Inspector Colin Whalen's title to Deputy Fire Marshal.

- C. Discussion and Possible Decision to Hire a Full-Time Dispatcher. The full-time Dispatcher job description was distributed for review. During the budgetary process, they identified a way to save some money and mitigate some overtime by hiring a full-time Dispatcher. They are proposing to go back to the same staffing model that was in place 4 or 5 years ago. They had gotten away from that model by utilizing part-time Dispatchers. Part-timers bring a certain amount of instability to scheduling. By putting back the full-time schedule the way it used to be, it will stabilize the schedule so that it is more predictable. It does not negate using part-timers, but it does bring 40 hours of a stable schedule with a full-time environment.

Mr. Lonergan explained that before he arrived and under the former Executive Director a full-time Dispatch position was eliminated and the part-time staffing levels were increased. Right now there are 3 full-time Dispatchers and 7 part-time. He noted that

part-timers come and go. Full timers are more reliable, more predictable and more consistent. It is easier to manage full time employees. They know the rules and regulations. Part time people may work one shift a week, or one shift every 2 weeks. But not being consistent puts them at a disadvantage regarding new policies or changes in the work environment while they were out. He felt that the full-time positions would stabilize the budget better in terms of overtime. There are 3 part-timers that are interested in becoming full time.

They plan on posting internally for 7 days. They will interview and hire internally unless otherwise indicated through the interview process. Commissioner Terry liked the idea of opening it up to the employees interested that already work here. They are already doing the job. It would show consistency.

A motion was made by Commissioner Terry, seconded by Commissioner Hinners and unanimously approved to hire a full-time Dispatcher adding an additional full-time Dispatcher position to the roster.

- D. Discussion and Possible Decision on Approval of FTO Role/Responsibilities, MOA. Chief Balletto explained there is a constant turnover of staff in the Fire Department, specifically the part-time Local 4662 members. A lot of the individuals coming in are very young and very immature in terms of the EMS and Fire components of the Fire Department and what is expected. The Chief wants to introduce the position of Field Training Officer. These individuals would be chosen through an interview process with the Chief to determine if they would be qualified to be an FTO. The responsibilities would consist of any training, coaching or remediation to individuals that are onboarded. Even the part-timers that are already signed off on the ambulance. If there are any deficiencies, the FTO's can work with them. It was noted that every shift an FTO works, they will dedicate 1-2 hours on QA. Information from QA is sent directly to Shared Response to be sent out for billing and returned as revenue for the District. They have been getting overwhelmed with QA. This initiative will take some of the QA burden off of the Chief. For any individual that takes on the FTA role, they will receive \$1 per hour extra while they are working in the role.

The Chief is looking for one or two people per shift. Right now the Chief has Lt. Wolmetz and Firefighter Dominy who have been going above and beyond with this. The Chief also thought that this would be a way to build morale. There was discussion at the last meeting that this responsibility cannot be given to a part-timer because part-timers are not as reliable or consistent as full-timers. An MOA would be executed with the Union to document the initiative.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to move forward with the Chief's plan to institute a Field Training Officer in conjunction with an MOA from the Union.

- V. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Terry thinks the Cromwell Fire Department is one of the best in the state. She likes what she hears and sees, and she is very pleased to be a part of it. She hopes everyone continues to do good work keeping the Town of Cromwell safe for everyone.

Commissioner Hinnners discussed his experience with the Rocky Hill ambulance services that he used last week. He reported that Cromwell does a much better job than they do. Cromwell's crews are polite, professional and caring in contrast to the services of Rocky Hill.

Commissioner Donohue had some feedback from the public. Many thanks to the Fire Department for the girls softball parade and Flag Day ceremony at VCS.

- VI. Executive Session – Discuss and Review Fire Chief's Evaluation. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to enter into Executive Session at 6:06 PM.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to adjourn Executive Session and resume the regular meeting at 6:41 PM.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the Performance Evaluation of Fire Chief Balletto with a salary increase of 4.8% effective June 20, 2022.

- VII. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Terry, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Donohue, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary