

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Bylaws Committee Meeting

Tuesday, May 2, 2023

5:00 PM

Coles Road Firehouse

105 Coles Road

Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Charles Epstein (Chairman) and John Sokolowski. Also attending was President Rukowicz and Executive Director Julius Neto. Commissioner Mertie Terry was absent.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:16 PM, by Chairman Epstein.
- II. Approval of the Agenda. A motion was made by President Rukowicz, seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. James Rude, 25 Highridge Rd., commented that he wanted to thank the Bylaws Committee for all their hard work in reviewing and making changes to the Bylaws for the Cromwell Fire District. There is a poster on the wall that says, "to achieve greatness we must be brave enough to take the first step." He again congratulated the Bylaws Committee for taking the first step in some substantive pages and in his opinion improvements to the Bylaws of the organization. One of the things that happens in a position of leadership is that recommendations many times need to be made that can be countered to what would be in the best interest of an individual. The suggestion to current changes to the Bylaws that Commissioners cannot be active members of the Fire Department or any other division of the Cromwell Fire District is certainly an example of that. Keeping in mind what is best for the Town of Cromwell and the employees of the Division always should supercede what is best for somebody that is an individual elected on the Commission. As it relates to some of the detailed elements of the Bylaws, there were a few things on there that Mr. Rude would like to have the Committee continue to think about. There is an awful lot of important information in the Procedure Manual and the Operational policies of the organization. He thinks it would be helpful to have the Board of Commissioners review and approve that procedure manual every year as it relates to the ongoing operations so that the paid staff can do what they are being paid to do under the direction and supervision of the organization. The procedure manual gives a lot of good information in that regard. He knows that this proposal no longer has the President of the Commission being the Chief Executive Officer. It does not say that the Executive Director is the Chief Executive Officer. He suggests that the Committee should think about having the Executive Director be named the Chief Executive of the Organization. As it relates to the removal of a Board officer, he believes that the dereliction of duty definition is a very narrow definition. He thinks there should be other elements

included in that so they can be sure to avoid any poor behavior of anyone that is on the Commission going forward. He thanked the Committee for its time this evening.

IV. New Business

- A. To Discuss and Approve Proposed Changes to the Bylaws. Chairman Epstein moved on to the business at hand which was to adopt the Bylaws with the changes that the Bylaws Committee has been proposing. He asked for input from each member as far as what they would like to do. He asked if the Committee would like to address the issue just raised under Public Comment. Commissioner Sokolowski believed that the intent was when the change was made that the President was no longer to be considered the Chief Executive Officer of the District, the intent was to have the Executive Director be considered the CEO.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by President Rukowicz and unanimously approved to add Chief Executive Officer to the job description of the Executive Director for the District.

Chairman Epstein stated they will make the above change to the Bylaws document. He recommended that the working draft document with the change just made and all didactions and additions be sent to every Commissioner with a note to review both copies, the working copy and the final draft and be prepared to vote in the affirmative or the negative one month from today so that they then can hear any objections or any possible changes and if necessary can continue with the full Commission at a Commission meeting or vote to pass it and set a date for a public vote. Executive Director Neto noted that if the Bylaws are not passed by the Board, that will be the end of the objective of the Bylaws Committee until the Board decides to reactivate the Bylaws Committee. There was lengthy discussion regarding the Bylaws Committee and how to proceed with approval or disapproval of the Bylaws. It was suggested to have a separate meeting from the monthly Board meeting to just focus on this one item and review every Article one by one to be voted on individually.

There was a discussion about the Bylaws Committee and the difficulties they have had getting a quorum over the last couple of years due to changes in Commissioners. It has been difficult for the Committee to get their work completed and voted on. There was a discussion about attendance at Committee meetings by committee members. President Rukowicz will discuss with the Executive Director a date for a Special Board meeting to specifically address the proposed changes to the Bylaws. The date was confirmed as Tuesday, June 6, 2023, at 5:30 PM.

Chairman Epstein asked that all Commissioners receive two copies of the Bylaws, the working draft and the final copy, with an explanation as to what they are and how important it is for them to review.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by President Rukowicz and unanimously approved to send copies of the Bylaw documents to all the Commissioners for review for the June 6, 2023, Special Board meeting. Send both copies with a note of explanation of what the copies are and the importance of them. Mr. Neto added that once the Bylaws are voted on and possibly approved, he would like to have them vetted through the District's Attorney.

- V. Commissioners' Comments. There were no further comments to report.
- VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Sokolowski, seconded by President Rukowicz and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 5:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles R. Epstein, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Sec'ty

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