

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, April 12, 2022

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse

105 Coles Road

Cromwell, CT

Present: Commissioners Robert Donohue (Chairman), Mertie Terry, Jason Hinners and David Colligan. Also attending were Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade, Fire Marshal Harold Holmes and Commissioner Charles Epstein.

- 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 Hinners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted with the following addition of Item VI. Executive Session regarding CHRO Update. Adjournment will be Item VII.
- III. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Discussion and Possible Decision on Hiring a Water Division Accounts Receivable Clerk. The Executive Director announced that Jane Tosto has submitted her resignation. She is retiring effective July 1, 2022. Her role in the District is payroll clerk, accounts receivable for the Water Department, answering phones and providing customer service. Most of her work is related to the Water Division. The reason the Executive Director was discussing this now is because he would like the Personnel Committee to authorize him to re-write the job description for that position to identify what Mr. Neto perceives as the needs of the District, the Water Department and the second floor. The position needs to be posted thoroughly to hire someone prior to July 1. It would be in the District's best interests to have someone in place prior to Jane leaving so some of the institutional knowledge that she has can be transferred. Jane has been working for the District for over 30 years, and has knowledge about specific things as they relate to the Water Division.

He added that Donna continues to do a great job with collections, and Mr. Neto wanted to revisit that position as well. He will be looking for input from Joe Palmieri and Mike Alibrio. He wants to make the position long lasting for the future of the District. He

believes they should hire a person sooner rather than later so they can get all their ducks in a row. Commissioner Terry agreed and believes the transition should be with Jane still in the office to help train the person.

The Executive Director explained the roles of the three women in the office. This transition will be a good opportunity to review the job description for accounts receivable to determine if it addresses future needs. The other component of that position is Payroll which is complex.

Mr. Neto has discussed with Joe the option of outsourcing water billing. They had decided that the risk was too great, and they would lose control. Commissioner Terry would like to keep the Water billing under the District's jurisdiction. Mr. Neto is proposing a salary range right now, because he does not know what skill sets will be required until a job description is done.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hanners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to authorize the Executive Director to move forward on the refill process for the Accounts Receivable Clerk position which would include rewriting the job description to assist in selecting the right person to meet the District's needs.

- B. Discussion and Possible Decision on Fire Marshal Salary Step Increase. The Executive Director apologized for an oversight that happened when the Fire Marshal went from Acting Fire Marshal to Fire Marshal. At that time Mr. Holmes was appointed Fire Marshal at the entry level rate of pay, Step 1. Mr. Neto had failed to put in a request to have Mr. Holmes' salary increased to a higher step. Mr. Holmes came to the District with many years of experience, knowledge and training. He worked for the District for many months prior to his appointment to Acting Fire Marshal. The salary step increase was not identified at the point of hire. He has discussed this with the Fire Chief, and the Chief was tasked with determining what he thinks the salary should be. Mr. Holmes has been doing a fantastic job. There are no performance issues.

Chief Balletto distributed copies of a letter he addressed to the Executive Director recommending a salary increase for the Fire Marshal. The salary he is receiving is much lower than other Departments considering the responsibilities associated with the position.

The Chief added that Mr. Saracco had resigned on Sept. 29, 2021. At that time there was no one in place to take over those responsibilities. The Chief made the recommendation at that time to put Harold Holmes in an Acting Fire Marshal position. He has been doing a fantastic job ever since. One of the first things Mr. Holmes suggested was to bring on Colin Whalen as a part-time inspector. That was a very wise decision made by Mr. Holmes. Mr. Whalen has been doing a fantastic job in the position. The transition from Ray Saracco to Harold Holmes was very smooth. The FMO has been performing without skipping a beat. Mr. Holmes has accomplished more than anyone else in that position in the short time that he has been there. He has implemented the Fire Marshal fee program, brought the FMO up to date on all inspections and has worked diligently on the day to day electronic systems within the Fire Marshal's Office so that they can track everything they are doing. He has directed Colin Whalen to start a Youth Fire Center Program which has recently been vetted by the State of CT. Their last meeting was held with the Cromwell Police Department where the program was reviewed to be presented to the Town. It should be up and running by July of this year. With Mr. Holmes' leadership,

they were able to bring Cromwell's Human Services Department, Youth Services, Social Services, Police Department, Town Manager and Board of Education on board with this program. This is one of the best things that the Fire District can be a part of. They are one of the few entities in the State of CT that got vetted by the State for this program.

He requested that Harold Holmes' salary be increased from Step 1 to Step 5. This will put his hourly rate at \$37.58, or \$68,387 annually. His current hourly rate at Step 1 is \$30.91, or \$56,254 annually. The increase is a baseline figure that would keep the Fire Marshal salary competitive with other Departments within the State. When the position was posted in October, they only received 3 applicants because the pay rate was not competitive. The Chief added that Harold works 35 hours a week, he is always available for the Chief and he is on call Monday through Friday and some weekends.

The Chief added that the Firefighters Union contract states that as Chief of the Department, he has every right to skip a salary step for any of the personnel under his jurisdiction. The Executive Director gave a brief history of the Fire Marshal position which became a Union position even though it is a management position. It was noted that there are other Fire Marshals within the State that are also in a union.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to authorize the Fire Chief to exercise his right to move Harold Holmes to Step 5.

- C. Discussion and Possible Decision on Non-Union Employees' Annual Raise. The Executive Director explained that it is budget season, and every year the Personnel Committee is charged with wages, salaries and benefits. Annual raises or COLA's are factored into Union agreements for bargaining unit employees. There are a handful of non-union employees in the District. He advised that last year the Personnel Committee agreed on a 2 ½ % COLA for the non-union employees, the year before the increase was 2%. Mr. Neto needed some guidance from the Committee as to what percentage would be considered.

The issue of the Water Division employees receiving compensation to make them more competitive with other Water Departments was discussed. This was an issue that came before the Committee last year during budget time. There was discussion about the fallout of the decision made at that time regarding who should be eligible to receive the Water Department increase. There were individuals that were left out of that compensation last year. The Committee had decided who specifically should receive the increase that worked directly with the Water Department. They determined who supported the Water Department in terms of support staff.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to authorize an across-the-board Cola increase of 2 ½ % for all non-union employees.

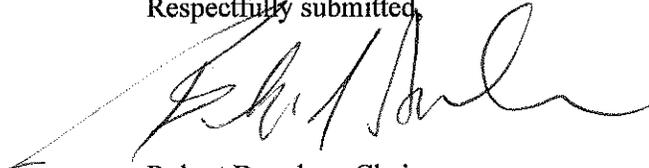
- V. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Epstein who attended this meeting supported the decision by the Committee to increase the Fire Marshal's salary from Step 1 to Step 5. Commissioner Terry commented on the wonderful swearing-in ceremony held on Sat. April 9. She thought it was well received and organized.

- VI. Executive Session. A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Hinnners and unanimously approved to enter into Executive Session at 6:12 PM for an update on a CHRO issue.

A motion was made by Commissioner Colligan, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to adjourn Executive Session at 6:36 PM.

- VII. Adjournment. A motion was made by Commissioner Hinnners, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 6:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Donohue", written over a horizontal line.

Robert Donohue, Chairman

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary