

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, July 16, 2024, 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, July 16, 2024, 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 Roger Rukowicz (President), Mertie Terry, Charles Epstein, Donald Smith, Chip Darius (remotely), Donald Goranson, Steve Wygonowski, and Robert McIntyre attended. Also attending were Executive Director Roger Hart, Fire Chief Jason Brade, Water Operations Manager Joseph Palmieri, Communications Manager Justin Lonergan, Finance Director Michael Lupkas, and Fire Marshal Harold Holmes. Commissioners John Sokolowski was absent.

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Goranson, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.

APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 18, 2024

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the Board of Commissioners' meeting of June 20, 2023, as submitted.

READING OF COMMUNICATIONS & WRITTEN APPEALS TO THE BOARD

There were no communications or appeals.

REPORTS OF THE STAFF

- A. Executive Director. The Executive Director's Report for June had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Hart discussed the website rollout scheduled for August 1st. The new site will be easier for us to administer and the public will appreciate the fresh look and better pay portal.

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner McIntyres and unanimously approved to accept the Executive Director's Report for June as submitted.

- B. Financial Report. The Financial Report for June had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lupkas discussed the end of fiscal year 2023-24, the start of the next fiscal year and preparing for the annual audit. Figures presented are preliminary, with the large end of June P/R and June A/P not included. He also noted that tax revenue is about on par from last year.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the Financial Report for June as submitted.

- C. Fire Department Chief. The Chief's report for June had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Chief Brade said June was a busy month with the PGA event and end of the school year activities. Open staff positions are being filled and he is pleased that some personnel are moving up in the ranks from volunteer to part time to full time.

A motion was made by Commissioner Goranson, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Chief's report for June as submitted.

1. Fire Marshal's Office. The Fire Marshal's Office report for June had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Holmes also reported his office was busy working at the golf tournament. He is working on a program with Sal Nesci of the Town of Cromwell Health Department to provide smoke detectors and Carbon Monoxide detectors to residents at no charge. Appointments are being scheduled, and while installing, the Inspectors will also provide a home safety inspection.

A motion was made by Commissioner McIntyre, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the Fire Marshal's Report for June as submitted.

- D. Water Operations. The Water Operations report for June had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Palmieri highlighted the Nooks Hill Road water main project as being his crew's biggest accomplishment for the month. He is looking to fill a Water Maintainer position and has started advertising.

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Terry and unanimously approved to accept the Water Operations Report for June as submitted.

- E. Communication Center Report. The Communication Center Report for June had been previously distributed and reviewed. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. Mr. Lonergan discussed the upcoming camera/security upgrade as his next big project. Dispatch is also hiring; the application process just closed and he will start reviewing those applications soon.

A motion was made by Commissioner Goranson, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to accept the Communication Center Report for June as submitted.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. Executive Committee. There was no meeting.
- B. Public Safety Tower. There was no meeting.
- C. Water Operations. There was no meeting.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments to report.

CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

- A. Report of the Town Council Liaison. Councilman Brian Bonneau reported that Town has been reviewing infrastructure issues with the schools and working on identifying needs and prioritizing repairs. Drainage has been another town issue. We have had numerous periods of heavy rains which have proved a challenge to the drainage system. These problems are being addressed. Also, the Town is looking into possible grants for road improvements.
- B. Reports of the Special Committees
1. Health, Safety & Facilities – Next Meeting Scheduled, July 22, 2024 @ 10:30 AM
 2. Pension Committee – Next Meeting Scheduled, August 14, 2024 @ 5:30 PM
 3. Budget & Oversight Committee – No meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Commissioners' Comments. Commissioner Goranson noted that the KKW Water District of Maine, where he has a vacation home, is in a class action lawsuit against Dupont and 3M over PFAS contamination. Goranson read a section the KKW's Summer newsletter and ask that it be given to Mr. Palmieri, who had to leave the meeting.
- B. Budgetary Adjustments. There were no adjustments to report.
- C. Approval of Contracts/Contractors. Pullman & Comley

Executive Director Hart took the lead on this issue. He has had a long standing, successful relationship with Joshua Hawks-Ladd, managing partner from the law firm Pullman & Comley. He would like permission to enter into an agreement with them to provide legal services to the District. They are experienced with municipalities and the issues they face. The size of the firm would enable them to handle all our legal needs. We currently use one firm for labor/negotiation/pension issues and general consult, another for personnel issues, and a third for issues related to our cell tower. Finance Director Lupkas, who also has decades of municipal experience, is also familiar with this firm and believes they would be a good fit. The Commissioners were individually polled and were in agreement.

A motion was made by Commissioner Terry, seconded by Commissioner Smith and unanimously approved to allow Mr. Hart to send a letter to Pullman & Comley to provide legal services to the District for one year.

D. Discussion and Decision on Fire Inspector's Wage – Competitive with surrounding communities.

Chief Brade stated that the Fire Marshal has spoken to him about increasing the hourly rate of his 3 Inspectors in the interest of retaining good staff and remaining competitive with other towns that are currently posting openings for higher rates. This increase would be budget neutral, as the Chief will be tweaking the rates and office coverage. The Commissioners were individually polled and all were in agreement that good staff should be supported and retained.

A motion was made by Commissioner Goranson, seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and unanimously approved to increase the hourly rate of the Fire Inspectors to match the Fire Chief's Budget Neutral Plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments to report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no items to discuss under Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner McIntyre, seconded by Commissioner Epstein and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 PM.

ATTEST:

Janet Schmaltz
Recording Secretary

Charles R. Epstein, Secretary

