

Upcoming Events

Apr. 16, May 21, Jun. 18 – Commission meeting, 6 PM, Coles Rd. firehouse

Apr. 11 – Special Commission meeting to approve the budget, 5:30 PM, Coles Rd. firehouse.

Apr. 17 – **Budget presentation to the public with Q&A**, 5:30 PM, Coles Rd. firehouse.

May 14 – Public vote to approve the budget, 6-8 PM, Coles Rd. firehouse.

New Executive Director Roger Hart Takes Office, Julius Neto Retires

Following an intensive search, the Board of Fire Commissioners voted unanimously to hire Roger Hart as the new Executive Director. Mr. Hart has decades of public service administration experience, including positions in East Windsor, CT as Deputy Chief, and Interim Chief of Police, and Deputy Director of Emergency Management; and in Wallingford as a police officer. He holds a Master's degree in Public Administration, and a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice – Law Enforcement Administration. Mr. Hart (below, right) has very quickly and capably come up to speed on District business, with onboarding from retiring Executive Director Julius Neto (below, left).



Mr. Hart said, "I am proud to have been chosen as the new Executive Director, and I look forward to working with the dedicated people in this organization who serve the citizens of Cromwell so well."

Mr. Neto noted, "Mr. Hart brings a great wealth of experience to this position. He has quickly shown keen insight into District issues and operations, and is working seamlessly with the department heads. I am very, very pleased to hand off my role to such a qualified successor – the District is in good hands."

Julius C. Neto served the Cromwell Fire District as Executive Director from 2017-2024, and previously as a Commissioner. He led the District through 5 years of great growth and change, including the COVID-19 pandemic, with extraordinary professional skill and integrity. His strategic leadership has positioned the District well to continue providing Cromwell residents with quality fire/rescue, EMS, and water service.

Cromwell Mayor James Demetriades issued a proclamation declaring March 28, 2024 as Julius Neto day. **The Board of Fire Commissioners extends its deepest thanks to Mr. Neto** for his service to the District, and wishes him all the best in his retirement.

Changes Require a Budget Increase

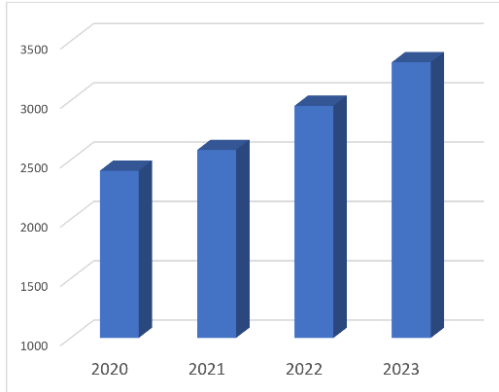
District staff and Commissioners closely examined the 2024-2025 budget line by line, and determined that an increase is necessary to properly meet rising needs in Cromwell. Some of the major reasons supporting a budget increase include:

- Recent, massive cost increases for emergency apparatus maintenance and replacement, during and since the COVID-19 crisis.
- Accelerated ordering is now required for new emergency vehicles, due to supply chain issues and delivery times up to, and longer than, 2 years.
- Multiple new residential and elderly housing developments in town have increased our calls.
- Emergency calls are increasing by about 370 calls each year. We have multiple fire/rescue and EMS emergency calls at the same time. We need more staff, resources, and vehicles to meet demands.
- The state Office of EMS requires a first responder from CFD on EMS calls in town, in addition to an ambulance. The police have often responded with us in the past, but CFD was recently required to take on increased first responder responsibilities. It is clear that more first responders and vehicles will be needed in the very near future.

- Mutual aid ambulance availability has recently dropped sharply. We can no longer rely on commercial or nearby ambulance services as we did in the past. Mutual aid ambulances have responded to Cromwell from as far away as Colchester. **Cromwell deserves better than that, and this budget will meet the need.**

3,324 calls in 2023, busiest year, 4th year in a row

- Responder wages must remain competitive.
- It has been increasingly difficult to recruit, train, and retain volunteer emergency



responders to supplement our paid fire/rescue/EMS staff. This is a known major issue in our state, and across the country. To inquire about joining the CFD, call the Chief's office at (860) 635-6155.

- Costs to the District for overhead, supplies, and insurance have risen across the board.
- Telecommunications, security, and cybersecurity upgrades are essential to safeguard our infrastructure.
- A new OSHA standard for Emergency Services is expected to take effect within the next budget cycle, requiring capital investments in firefighter turnout gear, station ventilation systems, medical screenings and monitoring, decontamination of equipment, and other health and safety issues.

The 2024-2025 proposed budget is **posted** at www.cromwellfd.com. A **public meeting** to present the proposed budget will be held Wednesday, April 17, from 6-8 PM at the Coles Road firehouse. The **vote** to approve the budget will be held on May 14, from 6-8 PM at the Coles Road firehouse.



Fire Hydrants & Water Main Flushing

Cromwell Fire District Water Division is performing Spring fire hydrant maintenance, and flushing water mains. These crucial activities ensure fire hydrants work properly, and help maintain high quality drinking water for our customers.

If cloudy water occurs, it may be due to flushing mains and hydrant servicing – simply run the water until it clears. Fluctuating water pressure may also occur, but it should return to normal within a brief period of time. If either of these issues persist, or you have any water concerns, please call (860) 635-4420.

Water Meter Upgrades Continue

The CFD Water Division continues to upgrade water meters, to ensure accuracy and to comply with state regulations. If you receive a letter requesting an appointment to upgrade or repair your water meter, please follow the instructions in the letter and call (860) 635-4420 to set up your appointment. An upgrade generally takes about 15 to 30 minutes.

2023 Consumer Confidence Report

Cromwell's water is safe to drink! The 2023 Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) will be mailed out within the next month. The CCR informs consumers about regulated and unregulated contaminants detected in our water in 2023, including PFAS, and their potential health effects.

None of the samples taken to date in the Cromwell Fire District's Water Division supply system have exceeded any federal or CT Dept. of Public Health action levels for PFAS. If you do not receive a copy of the CCR, please call (860) 635-4420, or you can download a copy at www.cromwellfd.com.

Water Interconnection Project Update

Cromwell Fire District continues to take steps to ensure that Cromwell will maintain reliable access to safe drinking water, even in the unlikely event of any major issue with our water source, treatment plant, distribution system, or storage facilities. We are in final design phase of an emergency interconnection project involving Middletown Water, Berlin Water, and the MDC, and hope to receive approvals to break ground next year. The CT Dept. of Public Health strongly supports water system interconnections.