

**TOWN OF CROMWELL - TOWN COUNCIL  
TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
41 WEST STREET, CROMWELL, CT 06416  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

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Wednesday, October 11, 2023 - 7:00 p.m.

**Present:** Mayor S. Fortenbach, Deputy Mayor J. Henehan, Councilman J. Demetriades, Councilwoman J. Donohue, Councilwoman P. Luna, Councilman J. Polke, Councilman A. Waters

**Also Present:** Town Manager Salvatore, Finance Director Sharon DeVoe, Chief Sifodaskalakis, Public Works Director Lou Spina

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Fortenbach called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Fortenbach asked for a moment of silence for the Middle East atrocities over the weekend.

**B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Town Council stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

**C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION** made by J. Demetriades and **SECONDED** by J. Polke to approve the agenda. All in favor.

**D. COMMISSION CHAIRMAN REPORTS/LIAISON REPORT/STAFF REPORTS**

**1. CMS Building Committee**

The CMS Building Committee report was provided in the Town Council packet.

**E. MAYOR'S UPDATE**

The Mayor submitted and read his report. See Attachment A.

**F. TOWN MANAGER'S UPDATE**

The Town Manager provided a written report and added the following:

- He elaborated on the IT Tracking process and explained that we track the issues that employees are having and the response time.
- He explained that our HR Department is tracking all issues, concerns, and requests that come to them and the response time.
- We are having conversations about construction in the Town Hall parking lot and the Community Field Road parking lot for changing stations.
- All lighting has been installed in the Community Field Road parking lot.
- He appointed Richard Donohue to represent the Town for the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commission (anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence).
- The wall has been constructed on Allen Road. It will be stained brown tomorrow to match the building and the sign on West Street.

- At the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting regarding the Middle School it was decided that Park Road will be used and concrete sidewalks will run up to that point for pedestrian safety. He said he would convey this to the Building Committee.
- Councilman Waters asked the Town Manager about South Street road conditions. A brief conversation was held.
- There was a conversation regarding if and what the Town would charge visitors for using the charging stations.

**G. FINANCIAL/FINANCE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

**1. Budget Report**

Sharon DeVoe was in attendance to present her budget report and to answer any questions of the Town Council. She informed the Town Council that her new assistant started on Tuesday. Once she gets settled in, she will bring her to a Town Council meeting to introduce her.

**2. Long Range Capital Planning Committee Memo**

This memo was included in the packet for the Town Council. A brief discussion took place.

**3. Discussion and Approval of Wage Adjustment for Tax Collector, Town Clerk and Registrars**

Town Manager Salvatore explained that this was just brought to our attention. Historically, elected officials were treated as employees. However, recently we realized that we were not following the constitution by treating our elected officials as employees with regards to wages. Therefore, we are proposing the Wage Adjustment.

**MOTION** made by J. Polke and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to approve the Wage Adjustment provided for Tax Collector, Town Clerk and Registrars.

**All in favor.**

**4. Discussion and action to approve an appropriation in the amount of \$20,000 within the CNR Fund for Andrews Technology/UKG Time and Attendance Project (time clocks)**

The Finance Director informed the Town Council that the company we use for our time clocks got bought out and they are replacing and installing our time clocks with new ones. She explained that there is a 5-year grace period but we are doing it now because the Town does not want to lose the incentives. There was a brief discussion. The Finance Director informed the Council that installation is planned for Fall of 2024.

**MOTION** made by J. Polke and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to approve an appropriation in the amount of \$20,000 within the CNR Fund for Andrews Technology/UKG Time and Attendance Project (time clocks).

**All in favor.**

**5. Tax Refunds**

**MOTION** made by A. Waters and **SECONDED** by J. Henahan to approve Tax Refunds 1-24. **All in favor.**

**H. CHIEF OF POLICE'S UPDATE**

Chief Sifodaskalakis was in attendance and presented his report to the Town Council. Councilman Waters complimented Chief Sifodaskalakis on the newly painted police cars. Councilman Demetriades recognized School Resource Officer Pete for being fantastic with the kids at the Middle School and High School. He also offered his congratulations to Sergeant Carlson and Bane.

**I. PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

Public Works Director Spina presented his report. Councilman Waters asked about the status of hiring mechanics. Public Works Director Spina replied that we have hired an Assistant Mechanic. He has a great attitude, he is flexible and has done a great job. We are still hiring for a Chief Mechanic.

A brief discussion was held about the stain for the wall on Allen Road.

Councilman Demetriades asked Public Works Director Spina about Single Stream Recycling. Specifically if it was effective and if it was expensive. Director Spina explained that it is resident friendly as it is less work for residents, but that it is definitely more work for the facility and workers who have to sort through it.

**J. CITIZEN COMMENTS** *(limited to 2 minutes per speaker, please be respectful)*

James Rude, 25 Highridge Road was in attendance and read the attached letter into the record. See Attachment B.

**K. NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Discussion and Approval of the Establishment of a Cultural District**

The Town Manager explained that he spoke to the Town Attorney and she recommended that the Town make this an ordinance rather than a resolution. In the form of an ordinance, it will be easier to find as it will become part of Code for the Town of Cromwell.

In reviewing the proposed ordinance, Mayor Fortenbach stated that the Council should continue to be brought in on all grants going forward and the Council should be included early on. There was a question about whether or not to include this in the language of the proposed ordinance. After a brief discussion it was decided that the following language from Section D satisfied this request "...all requirements of the Town Charter are followed for purposes of accepting and appropriating said funding".

There was also discussion regarding Section C. 2, the membership of the Cultural District Commission. It was suggested that a representative of a local veteran's organization be added to the membership.

**MOTION** made by J. Polke and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to establish a Cultural District.

**In favor:** J. Donohue, S. Fortenbach, J. Henahan, P. Luna, J. Polke, A. Waters

**Abstained:** J. Demetriades

**Motion carried.**

**MOTION** made by A. Waters and **SECONDED** by J. Henahan to establish a Cultural District Commission with the inclusion of "a representative from a local veteran's organization" in Section C. 2.

**In favor:** J. Donohue, S. Fortenbach, J. Henahan, P. Luna, J. Polke, A. Waters

**Abstained:** J. Demetriades

**Motion carried.**

**2. Approve and Adopt amendment to the Retirement Plan Ordinance**

See Attachment C for the proposed amended ordinance.

**MOTION** made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by J. Henahan to approve and adopt the amendment of existing ordinance: Chapter 54 Retirement Plan, Section 54-16 and Section 54-22.

**Discussion:** Councilman Waters said he is agreeable to the change in Section 54-16, but felt Section 54-22 was not a good idea. He explained that his concern is if you allow employees to become vested after five (5) years, they will leave and move to another town. He added, we have good qualified help right now but we may lose some employees if this gets passed.

Mayor Fortenbach and Councilwoman Donohue explained that this is more of an incentive to attract employees. It could also be appealing to a person who has experience in another municipality and is looking to come to work for our municipality. Councilwoman Donohue added that this is part of an employment package and people review all of the benefits offered with a position before accepting it, and this is something that would make the Town look more attractive.

**In favor:** J. Donohue, S. Fortenbach, J. Henahan, P. Luna, J. Polke

**Opposed:** A. Waters

**Abstained:** J. Demetriades

**Motion carried.**

**L. BERRYDUNN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ASSESSMENT DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION**

Town Manager Salvatore informed the Town Council that the Subcommittee met with BerryDunn and unfortunately, they want to charge us a significant amount of money for the mission statement. The Town Manager explained that he felt confident that Town Staff could create one. He passed out a draft mission statement that was worked on by several town employees. See Attachment D.

Councilman Waters said that he felt disappointed with the culture study and how it was given to them. He felt that some items were sugar coated and that this was something we could have done in-house rather than spending the money. He then commended Councilwoman Donohue on her work and guidance during the Town Council Cultural Study Workshops.

Councilwoman Donohue explained that she felt that the Town Council got caught up in moving in one direction and suggested they move away from blame culture. We need to

step back and look at things collaboratively. In doing this, we can come up with great ideas. The results of the workshops the Town Council held prove that. She continued, "let's move it forward now, and move it forward positively."

Town Manager Salvatore expressed his disappointment in this study and the statements that were made. He felt that we should have gotten a better product. The statements that were made and added to the report were not proven. Additionally, we were promised a mission statement by BerryDunn at no cost during a Town Council meeting and then later were told it would cost us a significant amount of money to create.

Councilman Demetriades stated while this was not the outcome expected, we got a glimpse to the unfiltered canvas in the Town employee's minds. Based on that, we need to do a better job setting expectations and following through. We also need to be open to feedback from employees and be proactive. He continued that he still found value in the fact finding and is proud of the results of the Workshops the Council held.

Mayor Fortenbach asked if it was the consensus of the Town Council to move forward without the assistance of BerryDunn. The Council agreed. The Mayor said he would send a letter to BerryDunn notifying them of the Town's decision.

**M. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**1. September 5, 2023 Special Meeting Minutes**

Councilman Demetriades asked that the section that references moving the security camera monitors in the Town Manager's Office be amended to point out that there was some disagreement amongst the Council with this item. Councilman Demetriades had a different viewpoint and expressed during the meeting of September 5<sup>th</sup> that the cameras should be moved to an alternate location and not be housed in the Town Manager's Office.

**MOTION** made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by P. Luna to approve the September 5, 2023 Special Meeting Minutes as amended.  
**All in favor.**

**2. September 13, 2023 Amended Regular Meeting Minutes**

**MOTION** made by J. Henahan and **SECONDED** by P. Luna to approve the September 13, 2023 Amended Regular Meeting Minutes.  
**All in favor.**

**N. APPOINTMENTS/REAPPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS**

None.

**O. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

- Councilman Henahan informed the Town Council that Karen Spotts' mom passed away. She has been going through a tough time. Give her your sympathy if you see her.
- Councilman Demetriades reported that today was Coming Out Day and LGBTQ held an event with pizza. They had 8 people attend, there were great conversations and personal experiences were shared. It was a great event. There is some new energy

behind that committee. He informed the Council that there will be a shift in membership in the future due to work commitments of some of the members.

- The Mayor and Town Manager informed the Council that there will be a Special Town Council Meeting next week at 5 p.m. for the proposed tax abatement at 100 Berlin Road.
- Councilman Waters asked for an update on Nooks Hill Road building. Town Manager Salvatore informed him that the interested party never got back to him with a proposal. However, he is waiting on another proposal. Town Manager Salvatore explained that it would be a difficult property to sell because of the location of the wetlands.

**P. ADJOURN**

**MOTION** made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to adjourn.

**All in favor.** The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Amanda Calve  
Secretary



## Town of Cromwell Office of the Mayor

### MAYOR'S REPORT

**Date:** October 11, 2023  
**To:** Members of the Town Council  
**From:** Steve Fortenbach, Mayor  
**Subject:** Mayor's Report for 10/11/2023 Town Council Meeting

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- The Town met with the Cromwell Creative District and is moving ahead with the Cultural District designation.
- The West Street Sidewalk project is in full swing. The contractor is making steady progress. (Weather Permitting)
- September 16th, I was invited to the Wings Mural Celebration event at Pierson Park. All the displays turned out great.
- September 16th, I was able to participate in the Rising Star Ceremony at Pierson Park. Congratulations to all of the award winners.
- The boys & girls high school soccer teams hosted their Cancer Awareness games. Both were well attended and raised money for cancer research.
- The High school marching band participated in the Connecticut day parade at the BIG E.

Public Comment

Cromwell Town Council Meeting October 11, 2023

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While the **tangible** items in the Culture Study PowerPoint action plan will address the workplace systems and rules elements of Town Hall culture, there has yet to be any consideration of the need for changes in the **intangible** elements of the culture- the workplace values, beliefs and attitudes of all Town employees.

Studies show that the top words used by employees to define the best work cultures include the following words- challenging; friendly, engaging; rewarding; collaborative; flexible; supportive; teamwork; integrity. Many of the BerryDunn report findings do not indicate these elements are present at Town Hall.

And I still do not understand the purpose of the surveillance cameras at Town facilities. An important **intangible** culture item is organizational trust, which is negatively impacted by the way the cameras are currently monitored. If there are legitimate crime prevention or other law enforcement reasons, the monitors should be located at the Police Station- not at Town Hall. If it is for another purpose, what is that purpose? The PowerPoint says "Make security camera feed accessible to the public by putting link on the Town website." This does not seem like an appropriate action to move the culture at Town Hall forward.

And I am curious as to whether surveillance camera usage at Town facilities, both as in use now and/or as proposed in the PowerPoint with expanded access to include the Town website, is or will be in strict accordance with Connecticut law?

Thank you.

James Rude 25 Highridge Road



### § 54-16. Early retirement option.

Each participant who shall have reached his 55th birthday and shall have at least 10 years of credited service shall have the option, to be exercised by a written notice to the Board and with the consent of the Board, to retire at any time thereafter prior to his normal retirement date. The amount of retirement benefits payable to such retired participant shall be computed as provided in § 54-13 hereof, except that the date of such early retirement shall be used in determining his credited service, and the amount thus obtained will be reduced, such reduction to be determined by the actuary in accordance with accepted actuarial practices, if such retirement benefit is to commence prior to such participant's normal retirement date. The contingent annuitant and the ten-year certain options, provided for in §§ 55-14 and 54-15 hereof, may be elected by a participant who elects to retire early under this section, in which case the term "retirement date" shall be deemed to mean early retirement date wherever applicable in §§ 54-14 and 54-15.

### § 54-22 Payments required.

#### A.

If any participant shall cease to be an employee of the Town, except upon death or as a retired participant or except as provided in Article IX hereof for leave of absence, then he shall be entitled to a return of all of his own contributions to the trust fund, plus interest thereon computed at the annual rate of 3% prior to July 1, 1976, and at the annual rate of 5% thereafter, compounded annually to date of termination; provided, however, that any participant who shall elect to leave his contributions in the trust fund shall be entitled at his normal retirement date, if he shall then be living and if such contributions are left in the trust fund, to the following percentage of the amount of retirement benefit as computed under the provisions of § 54-13 hereof, such percentage to depend upon the number of his full years of credited service under the plan following his entry date, except that the date of such termination shall be used in determining his credited service:

<b>Years of Credited Service Under the Plan</b>	<b>Percent of Accrued Benefit Vested</b>
Fewer than 5	0%
5 or more	100%

#### B.

Anything contained herein to the contrary notwithstanding, in no event shall the vested benefit to which the terminated participant is entitled be of lesser value than the amount of his own contributions, including interest as hereinabove provided, at the date of his termination of employment as determined by the actuary in accordance with accepted actuarial practice, and in no event shall the vested percentage indicated above be less than the percentage that would have been applicable if the participant had terminated employment on June 30, 1976. Any such terminated participant may elect, by written notice filed with the Board at least 60 days prior to an anniversary date, to withdraw, as of the next succeeding anniversary date, his own contributions to the trust fund, plus interest thereon, to such anniversary date computed as hereinabove provided. If any such terminated participant shall so elect to withdraw his own contributions, then he shall have no further rights whatsoever in and to any benefits under this plan.



## Mission

The Town of Cromwell is dedicated to delivering quality municipal services, public safety, fiscal responsibility, responsible economic growth, preservation and progress. It welcomes it's inclusive and diverse community through effective leadership and efficient management providing a vibrant place to live, work and play.