

**Whatcom County Fire District #21
Station 61 – Blaine
9408 Odell Street, Blaine WA 98230
1:00 pm
February 15, 2018
Regular Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bosman called the regular Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for February 15, 2018 to order at 1:06 p.m. at Station 61 – 9408 Odell Street, Blaine, WA 98230.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Chairman Bosman requested a moment of silence for the victims and their families in the recent shooting at Douglas High School in Parkland Florida on Wednesday, February 14.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Attendees: Chairman Rich Bosman; Vice-Chairman Bruce Ansell; Commissioners Larry McPhail, and Dean Berkeley; Fire Chief William Pernet; Division Chief Henry Hollander.

Commissioner Crawford was excused from this meeting.

The Board welcomed longtime resident Don Ruitford. Don was a volunteer for District #13 for many years. During his tenure, he served as a volunteer firefighter, fire chief and fire commissioner. The Board thanked him for his service.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) January 18, 2018 – Public Hearing
2. Staff Reports - Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report / Revenue
 - a) Total Revenue –January \$525,423.20
 - b) Total Expenditures – February \$639,104.18
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll #78-140: \$288,694.77
 - b) Volunteer Direct Deposit Payroll#141-158: \$1,914.22
 - c) Benefits Voucher#12-21: \$276,775.94
 - d) Monthly Expenditure Vouchers: \$64,248.95

- e) Capital Projects Apparatus: \$7,828.90
- f) Capital Projects Facilities: \$40.33

Chief Pernet noted a couple of clerical errors that were corrected on the original document.

3. Finance: Vice-Chairman Ansell requested information regarding why there was a discrepancy on the interest reporting between the county treasurer's office statement and the district's. Chief Pernet pointed out that both entities use different accounting software and track things differently however, both statements are correct. The auditor had requested that the district track health care a certain way, which is done differently at the county.

Once the district transitions to the new accounting software, the issue should resolve itself, although the district will check with the auditors to ensure it is being completed appropriately.

2. SCBA Grant: The district's SCBAs have reached their ten year mark and although they do not need to be replaced immediately, the district does want to upgrade to newer, more modular models in the future. The district has teamed up with other local agencies to apply for a regional SCBA grant.

Vice-Chairman Ansell agreed that this is a good opportunity for the district to collaborate with other agencies to apply for a regional self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) grant.

If the SCBA grant is approved, a SCBA committee representing all organizations will be formed to research the types of units prior to making an informed recommendation. Commissioner Berkeley stated that in the past not all agencies have purchased the same SCBA units making it difficult to be consistent. Chief Pernet plans to follow the committee's recommendation and is hopeful other agencies will follow suit, resulting in uniformity throughout the county.

Chief Pernet noted that the completed grant was reviewed by a local grant writer prior to submittal. Both Chiefs Noonchester and Hollander were recognized for their work on the grant. Chief Pernet is hopeful that because this is a regional grant where multiple agencies came together, their chances may be greater.

Chief Pernet further noted that each agency will be responsible for a small portion of the cost of the SCBAs.

2. County Fire/RMS: Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that the Whatcom County Fire Commissioners secretary Sandra Dalessandro, recently sent an out an email update regarding the new Image Trend software for the county-wide collection of fire records management (RMS) and electronic patient care reporting (EPCR). The software will be funded by the County ALS/EMS Levy. Image Trend will replace the district's current

RMS provider and will integrate with both our crew scheduling program (Crew Sense) and new finance software (BIAS). The software has been approved by the Council and will be launched following the new EMS manager's start date of March 5, 2018. The district hopes to see a savings of approximately \$12,000 per year.

2. Gurney Maintenance: Vice-Chairman Ansell recognized longtime volunteer Dale Rutgers from Delta Station 68 for his assistance with the recent gurney maintenance day. Chief Pernet noted that Dale represents the tender operators during the monthly officer meetings and is very active in the community.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Ansell moved to approve the Consent Agenda as corrected. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Berkeley and approved 4-0.

NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS

Whatcom County Fire Commissioners: Commissioner Crawford forwarded the January 10, 2018 meeting notes to each NWFR Fire Commissioner.

Blaine City Council: Vice-Chairman Ansell attended the January 22, 2018 council meeting. Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that city manager Dave Wilbrech, praised Chief Hollander for his attendance, participation and for providing pertinent information during council meetings.

IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT

- None

LEGAL ISSUES

- None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Washington Survey and Rating Bureau:** Chief Pernet reiterated that the district had received a preliminary rerate from the WSRB which was not favorable to the district. Both agencies have worked together for the past twelve months to gather and provide accurate information. Chief Pernet noted that the rerate has finally been completed with the districts' protection classification (City of Blaine - 4, District #4 - 5, NWFR - 5) remaining the same for the next five years.

The areas reviewed by the WSRB included water supply, communications, fire department staffing and fire safety controls. Chief Pernet offered to review the findings in more detail at another time if needed.

The chiefs plan on meeting with the WSRB evaluator to review the data and develop an improvement plan for the future which will be utilized alongside the strategic plan to improve services.

Chief Pernet credited Chief Noonchester, who headed up the program and Chief Hollander for their hard work on this project.

- **Semiahmoo Station 62 Roof Update:** Chief Hollander announced that the recent roof leak at Semiahmoo Station 62 has been temporarily repaired however, the twenty-seven year old roof needs to be replaced. Chief Hollander noted that the district is in the bidding process and plans to complete the project sometime this summer.

NEW BUSINESS

- **2017 Budget Amendment 2018-01:** Chief Pernet reviewed the 2017 budget amendment.
 - General Expense Fund increased from \$7,480,580.67 to \$7,721,466.31
 - Attorney fees
 - Audit fees
 - Overtime
 - Medical claims
 - Capital Projects Fund increased from \$132,625.00 to \$194,277.46
 - New flooring Birch Bay Station 63
 - Washer extractors
 - Mobile data computers (MDC) in vehicles

Chief Pernet noted that savings due to additional revenue and other cost savings including health care reinsurance, were utilized to cover the overages.

MOTION: Commissioner McPhail moved to approve the 2017 Budget Amendment 2018-01. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Ansell and approved 4-0.

- **Resolution 2018 -01 Surplus Vehicle:** Chief Pernet announced that the 1971 Ford water tender is the oldest in the fleet and currently stored at Wisner Lake Station 70. Chief Pernet noted that the district has plenty of water tenders and having older apparatus in the fleet actually lowers the WSRB rating.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Ansell motioned to approve Resolution 2018-01 Surplus Vehicle. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 4-0.

- **Resolution 2018 -02 Surplus Personal Protective Equipment:** Chief Pernet announced that the exhibit “A” turnout equipment is old, beyond repair or out of NFPA compliance. The gear may be able to be donated to a needy department.

MOTION: Chairman Bosman motioned to approve Resolution 2018-02 Surplus Personal Protective Equipment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 4-0.

- **Resolution 2018 -03 Surplus Generator:** Chief Pernet announced that the underpowered Laurel Station 69 generator was replaced, which in turn replaced the old generator at Delta Station 68. The old generator is no longer repairable and the district would like to surplus it.

The new generator was already budgeted and will better support the load of the computer terminal equipment including telephone and mobile data housed at Laurel Station 69.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Ansell motioned to approve Resolution 2018-03 Surplus Generator. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 4-0.

POLICIES & PROCEDURE

- **0400.0360.00 Suppression Personal Protective (PPE) Equipment:** Chief Pernet provided information regarding the suppression personal protective equipment (PPE) policy. The policy includes bunker gear care, inspection, maintenance, cleaning, contamination, decontamination, repairs, along with eye, hand, foot and head protection.

The policy is compliant with current WAC standards and clearly defines how to provide a decrease in exposure to possible carcinogens.

Management reviewed the policy with the Labor group.

Chief Pernet noted that an accompanying directive will also be distributed district wide, which will cover specific procedures within the policy.

Vice-Chairman Ansell questioned some wording in the policy:

- 4.4.4 Gloves should not be kept in direct contact with flame or molten metal. Structural gloves are not intended to provide protection neither for proximity fire entry applications nor from radiological or chemical hazards.
- 4.5.3 Protective footwear must not be kept in direct contact with flame or molten metal. Protective footwear is not designed to provide protection for proximity or fire entry applications nor from radiological, biological or chemical hazards.

Chief Pernet interpreted those as manufacturer's statements and further noted that firefighting gear is not designed to have a flame impinging directly on the equipment for any length of time. Nonetheless, the gear can be in a very hot environment and perform as designed.

MOTION: Commissioner McPhail moved to approve 0400.0360.00 Suppression Personal Protective Equipment as presented. The motion was seconded by Chairman Bosman and approved 4-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS CONT.

- **Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) program:** Chief Pernettt reiterated that this is a voluntary Certified Public Expenditure based program that provides supplemental cost based payments to eligible providers that render GEMT services to Medicaid enrollees. For qualifying agencies, the supplemental payments cover the funding gap between a provider's actual costs per GEMT transport and the allowable amount received from Medicaid and any other sources of reimbursement. Other agencies including hospitals have been taking advantage of the program for the past thirty years. The district can retroactively apply for fees as far back as July 1, 2016.

Chief Pernettt noted that during the last Board meeting, the Board gave him direction to submit the district's annual provider participation agreements to the Washington State Healthcare Authority, to meet the deadline for participating in the program.

Since there were additional questions, Chief Pernettt provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) Program, specifically regarding how the program will be implemented. The presentation included participation requirements, a GEMT overview, history, process and implementation.

Information was also included regarding Public Consulting Group's (PCG) partnership with Systems Design, experience, feasibility study, cost reporting portal and fees.

Commissioner Berkeley questioned why the district outsources their basic life support (BLS) billing. Chief Pernettt noted that some agencies hire in-house billing professionals to do EMS billing however, they usually have specialized skills to understand specific medical billing and insurance data. The district does not employ such a specialist and at this time it is more cost efficient to contract outside for services.

Chief Pernettt reviewed the necessary steps and timeline to implement the GEMT program.

1. Enroll in GEMT Program
2. Provide PCG with necessary data (*Feb. 15, 2018*)
3. Prepare cost report (*complex*)
4. Review and submit cost report (*March 31, 2018*)
5. Comply and complete desk review process

Chief Pernet noted that the Amendment to the Professional Services Agreement between Systems Design and the district will allow Systems Design to provide all the billing data to PCG to assist them in the cost analysis. The contract will remain in effect for one year, after which time it can be reevaluated.

Chief Pernet further stated that he has met with Fire District 7 who is further along in their progress with the GEMT program, to gain a better understanding of the process. He feels it is a “win win” if the district takes advantage of this program which will be a new source of federal revenue, allowing the district to ultimately provide better service to the public. The district currently does not charge what it actually costs to perform emergency medical services (EMS). In addition, the district does not have an EMS levy, but partially funds the service through fire taxes. Chief Pernet noted that he does not intend for the district to charge non Medicare patients the increased cost, especially since it may produce a hardship for community members.

Chairman Bosman stated that the fees will not be reflected by increasing current BLS charges. Chief Pernet noted that it is strictly a reimbursement program through the federal government and State of Washington.

Commissioner McPhail inquired about scheduling a date for an upcoming retreat which can be utilized in part to ask additional operational questions about the program. Chief Pernet noted that a board retreat date can be set anytime.

Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that he has had discussions with multiple people involved with the GEMT creation including Keith Wright, the president of the Washington Fire Chiefs, who helped write the GEMT legislation. Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that Keith Wright actually works as a consultant for AP-Triton.

Vice-Chairman Ansell stated that he has recently spent some time reviewing the information on the AP-Triton’s website. He noted that the company is similar to PCG, although in his opinion, AP-Triton was more specific to the fire service. AP-Triton has worked for the California, Hawaii, Idaho, Washington, Skagit County Fire Chief Associations and many other jurisdictions throughout California. The company was started by two retired chiefs in the Sacramento area. The chiefs have approximately thirty two years of experience each and have both received Fire Chief of the Year awards in the state of California. Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that it sounds like they are a reputable company. He was unsure of what they charge for their services.

Although Vice-Chairman Ansell is aware that the district is on a tight timeframe, he noted that if the district does decide to go with PCG, he hopes that they will look at AP-Triton in the future to see what other services they can offer. He stated that the company seems to be a clearing house for making agencies a better, more efficient fire department. Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that he would like to meet with them or have Chief Pernet talk with them regarding their services. Vice-

Chairman Ansell noted that the district has stalled with its master plan and hopes that with the help of AP-Triton, they can jumpstart the process.

Vice-Chairman Ansell announced that he did a complete Google search of PCG and noted that they were more of a broad spectrum company, not tied specifically to the fire service as is AP-Triton. He is concerned the PCG may be overextending itself and may not be able to provide the service they promote.

Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that he is looking for assurances that the district will not be locked into a multiple year contract. Chief Pernet noted that there is no specific language in the contract stipulating the length of time however, a thirty day notice to terminate is required. Attorney Rich Davis agreed noting that this is an addendum to the contract that the district has with Systems Design allowing PCG access to the district's information.

Chief Pernet noted that PCG already has a working relationship with Systems Design and is unsure any relationship with AP-Triton. In addition, Chief Pernet noted that he has not had sufficient time to research AP-Triton thoroughly however, he has heard both favorable and unfavorable information about the company, including the lack of audit support.

Attorney Rich Davis noted that many fire departments his company represents are also working on contract addendums with System Design to utilize PCG. In addition, Rich Davis noted that PCG works with both providers (fire districts, hospitals) as well represents the payers via audits.

Vice-Chairman Ansell questioned the early compensated transport costs claims forwarded by Chief Pernet. Chief Pernet noted that the information forwarded was initial data and may no longer be accurate. More up to date numbers will be available in the near future.

Vice-Chairman Ansell expressed his concern that the district may come to depend on the money being offered by the government which could diminish in the future. Chief Pernet noted that any dividends received will not be utilized for salaries but for capital items. The cost of having PCG develop our cost analysis will be included in the analysis, and we will not be invoiced until we receive GEMT reimbursement. Chief Pernet stated this program has been in place in other states for other health care providers for the past thirty years and that the district should take advantage of the funds while they are available.

Vice-Chairman Ansell was also concerned that even though the district may be charging Medicare patients the actual cost of a transport, the public may perceive the district to be overcharging those customers. Chief Pernet noted that current BLS transports are undercharged and subsidized by the district fire property tax. We will not be passing on any new fees for transports. We will only be invoicing the federal government for cost reimbursement.

Chairman Bosman is comfortable moving forward with the knowledge the program can be re-evaluated after one year and more research can be completed on AP-Triton.

Chief Pernet noted that he has tried to consider all the concerns and if the Board does not move on this now with PCG, they will run out of time and miss the deadline. There is not enough time to properly evaluate other agencies for fiscal year 16-17, but we can in the future if the commissioners' desired.

Chief Pernet is confident he has the resources to respond to any questions regarding the program that may come up in the future. In addition, the Board has always given Chief Pernet direction to search for alternative sources of revenue, which this program provides.

Vice-Chairman Ansell would like to participate in a retreat that discusses the use of any unanticipated revenue and future plans of the district.

Vice-Chairman Ansell stated that he appreciates all the work the Chief Pernet has put into this project thus far. Both Commissioner McPhail and Berkeley were supportive of Chief Pernet's decision.

Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that the upcoming cost analysis will enable him to enlighten the community on why the district has not been moving forward on substantial projects.

Chairman Bosman appreciates that Chief Pernet was so well prepared for this presentation and how fiscally responsible he is to the district as well as the community. In addition, Chairman Bosman noted that he appreciates Vice-Chairman Ansell's attention to detail and the good dialog it evokes.

Chief Pernet will keep the Board advised as the process moves forward.

MOTION: Commissioner Ansell motioned to authorize Chief Pernet to sign the System Design Contract Amendment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Berkeley and approved 4-0.

Fire Chief Evaluation: Chairman Bosman Commissioner Crawford and possibly Vice-Chairman Ansell will be performing Chief Pernet's evaluation. An evaluation template will be sent out to the Board and any input will be forwarded to Chairman Bosman. It is anticipated that a more detailed and in-depth evaluation will be utilized.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Northern Light article re: Land-use applications for apartment complex
- Northern Light article re: North Whatcom Fire and Rescue statistics for January 2018

- Email from Whatcom Support Officers re: Cake baking contest
- The Responder: District newsletter, January issue

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **2018 Fire Commissioner Training:** It is anticipated that a Board training will be held sometime in April. District #4 Board members may also participate in the training.
- **March Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners present are expected to attend the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Fire Chief Evaluations
- Semiahmoo Station 62 Roof Update

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Bosman recessed the meeting for an Executive Session, per RCW 42.30.110(g) *“to evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee.”*

at 2:58 p.m. for approximately twenty minutes until 3:10 p.m. Division Chief Henry Hollander and Attorney Rich Davis remained for the executive session.

MEETING RECONVENED

Chairman Bosman called the regular meeting back into open session at 3:12 p.m. No actions were taken as a result of the executive session.

SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business Commissioner McPhail moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:17 p.m. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Ansell and approved 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jennie Sand, Recording Secretary

ATTEST:

Rich Bosman, Chairman

Bruce Ansell, Vice-Chairman

Larry McPhail, Commissioner

Dean Berkeley, Commissioner

Chief Pernet, Board Secretary