

**Whatcom County Fire District #21
Station 61 – Blaine
9408 Odell Street, Blaine WA 98230
1:00 pm
July 19, 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 July 19, 2018 to order at 1:02 p.m. at Station 61 – 9408 Odell Street, Blaine, WA 98230.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Attendees: Chairman Rich Bosman; Vice-Chairman Ansell; Commissioners Larry McPhail and John Crawford; Fire Chief William Pernet; Attorney Rich Davis.

Dean Berkeley was excused from this meeting for medical reasons.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) June 21, 2018
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report / Revenue
 - a) Total Revenue –June \$65,557.39
 - b) Total Expenditures – July \$504,649.10
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$275,720.49
 - b) Non-Direct Payroll: \$312.00
 - c) Benefits Voucher: \$168,366.54
 - d) Monthly Expenditure Vouchers: \$55,136.81
 - e) Capital Projects Apparatus: \$5,113.26

MOTION: Commissioner Crawford moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 4-0.

NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS

- Chairman Bosman reminded the Board to alert him when they are unable to attend meetings so he or another commissioner can attend if available, in their absence.

IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT

- None

LEGAL ISSUES

- Attorney Rich Davis noted that the labor contract mediation meeting is scheduled for September 24, 2018. The Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) hearing has been rescheduled if needed, for October 22, 2018.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Resolution 2018-11 Fire Chief Financial Authority:** Chief Pernet noted that during the last meeting the Board and Attorney Rich Davis discussed developing a financial authority document for the fire chief. The document will better outline the permissions given to the fire chief from the Board.

Attorney Rich Davis composed a document that was sent to each Commissioner for review prior to the meeting.

There was discussion regarding Policy 0100.0001.00 Fire Chief Financial Authority.

2.1.1 Awarding of Public Works Contracts: The Fire Chief shall have the responsibility for following all required statutory procedures in connection with all public work contracts. The Fire Chief is authorized to carry out all procedures required by applicable statutes preliminary to the acts required to be performed by the Commission at an open meeting. The Fire Chief may, without prior Commission approval, execute on behalf of the Fire District public work contracts for \$20,000.00 or such lesser amount as authorized by RCW 52.14.110 so long as the expenditure is within the limits of overall budgetary authority. In addition, the Fire Chief may, without prior Commission approval, execute on behalf of the Fire District, public work contracts for public work identified in a specific budgetary line item and where the contract price and all other charges do not exceed the amount authorized in that specific budgetary line item by ten percent (10%), but in no case in excess of **\$300,000.00**.

Attorney Rich Davis stated that there is no specific standard excess amount that fire districts observe. The \$20,000.00 work contract limit coincides with the amount that fire districts can hire off the public works roster without going out for a formal complete bid process.

Attorney Rich Davis recommended that the fire chief be able to sign contracts for up to \$300,000.00 provided that monies have already been budgeted. The fire chief will continue to report any actions taken to the Board. An example provided was a station remodel that was pre-approved in the budget.

2.2.2 Budgeted Acquisitions: The Fire Chief may, without prior Commission approval, execute on behalf of the Fire District, contracts for materials, equipment, supplies or services identified in a specific budgetary line item and where the contract price does not exceed the amount authorized in that specific budgetary line item by **fifteen percent (15%)** if the budgeted line item is \$50,000 or lower; provided, however, that such contract has been awarded pursuant to any competitive process required by law and the contract has been reviewed by the District's legal counsel in advance of execution.

Vice-Chairman Ansell stated that if items are already pre-approved in the annual budget, permits the fire chief to complete district business in a timely manner. New items not previously approved in the budget will continue to get brought before the Board for approval.

Chief Pernet provided an example of when he would ask for prior approval. The district recently passed a policy for gross decontamination. Along with the policy a directive was circulated on how to complete those tasks which included decontaminating turnouts. Part of that program includes eventually providing all first responders with two sets of turnout gear. To accomplish this the district will purchase five to six sets of bunker gear to replace expiring gear. Since those monies were not approved in the 2018 annual budget, Chief Pernet would seek approval from the Board prior to moving forward with the plan.

Chief Pernet noted that in an emergency situation he would do what was necessary monetarily to stabilize the emergency and then seek Board approval for those and any additional expenses at a later time. Attorney Rich Davis concurred noting that declaring an emergency is required for exempting the district from the public works statute.

2.1.2 Emergency Public Work Contracts: When any emergency shall require the immediate execution of a public work contract, the Fire Chief, pursuant to the procedures of RCW 39.04.280 (and as amended), is authorized to make a finding of the existence of such emergency and execute any public work contract necessary to respond to the existing emergency, provided that the Fire Chief shall, at the first Commission meeting following the Fire Chief's finding of the existence of an emergency, request Commission ratification of the finding of an emergency and any contract awarded or executed pursuant to this authority. From the inception of any such emergency, the Fire Chief shall continuously advise the Commission of the status of the emergency situation and the progress of any such public work contracts executed to remedy the emergency. Emergency public work contracts executed pursuant to the authority herein shall contain a clause which states that the contract is subject to ratification by the Commission and that if ratification does not follow, the contract shall terminate, and the Contractor shall be compensated for his work and materials used to the time of termination.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Ansell moved to approve Resolution 2018-11 Fire Chief Financial Authority with the inserted numbers. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 4-0.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Volunteer Station Condition:** Chairman Bosman commented on the condition of a volunteer station. Chairman Bosman questioned whether there should be further discussion regarding selling some volunteer stations in the future. Chief Pernet stated that the station property in question can be better maintained immediately and does provide a tender response when needed. At this time the volunteers are in charge of maintaining Haynie Station 65.

Chairman Bosman noted that all stations need to be taken care of with pride and he needs to be able to explain to taxpayers why a station looks neglected. Chief Pernet noted that members have been given assignments regarding station upkeep. Given the distance between the stations, administration is not able to routinely visit all facilities. In addition, Chief Pernet requested that he be contacted if any of the Board members are concerned by a station's condition.

Chief Pernet noted that if selling the station is the direction the Board wants to go, he would be happy to provide input. Things that will need to be taken into consideration include but are not limited to response times, cost to run the station, how many volunteers respond out of the station, insurance factors and response radius. Chief Pernet cautioned the Board against making rash decisions but to rather include the topic with a bigger district wide study encompassing many factors as stated in the current strategic plan.

Vice-Chairman Ansell questioned if the Board should set a timeline or goal regarding when a study should be completed and by whom. Chief Pernet stated that it will be very difficult to complete this project in-house and recommended seeking additional outside assistance to complete a district wide study. Endeavors already being initiated include a meeting with Washington State Rating Bureau (WSRB) to look at impacts of eliminating stations and beginning Geographic Information System (GIS) work to look at response times and radiuses.

Vice-Chairman Ansell requested information regarding where the GIS data is being originated. Chief Pernet noted that the district has some existing data and is also working with the City of Bellingham. Chief Hollander is heavily involved with this project. Chief Noonchester has also been involved with interpreting GIS information including call types and responses based on information provided by dispatch. It is anticipated that the outcome will provide a visual map of the district's calls and response history. Chief Noonchester is unsure of when the project will be complete but is hopeful that some information will be available within the next couple weeks.

Chief Pernet suggested having further discussion regarding bringing in an outside agency to complete a district wide evaluation including operations, response times, station placement and apparatus. Chairman Bosman concurred noting that an outside consultant will be impartial. Both Chairman Bosman and Chief Pernet stated that the topic will can be placed on the August agenda. Chief Pernet will

do research on agency costs prior to the next meeting and possibly suggest potential vendors.

Commissioner Crawford noted that recently the City of Blaine Police Department completed an overall department provided by an outside consultant. The agency made suggestions and recommendations for the department. Chief Pernet is not aware of the cost of that particular undertaking.

Vice-Chairman Ansell questioned District 4 Commissioner Andrews regarding their plans to sell or renovate volunteer stations. Commissioner Andrews stated that the District 4 Commissioners are discussing the matter however, they have yet to reach a decision.

POLICIES & PROCEDURE

- **0400.0020.00 Resident Policy:** Chief Noonchester recently emailed a copy of the draft resident policy to the commissioners for review. Chief Pernet noted that policy has yet to be finalized and will be brought before the Board for approval when complete. In addition, Chief Pernet stated that the district plans on beginning a resident program in August with two residents that have already completed the process. Two more are expected to be brought on in the fall. The hope is to bring on a total of four to five residents in the near future.

Vice-Chairman Ansell shared some questions regarding the draft policy including shift coverage and accountability. Chief Noonchester noted that the district's goal is to provide training to the residents who will then provide shift coverage in lieu of rent. The residents will also be assigned to a specific shift for oversight. Residents will commute to Skagit Valley College during the week days and can provide coverage during the evenings and on weekends.

Commissioner Crawford requested information on how the district will ensure that resident volunteers stay below the seventy hour per month threshold enforced by the Department of Labor (DOL). Chief Pernet noted that the district currently has a volunteer policy that addresses the volunteer threshold. The policy will be revisited to ensure the district remains compliant with the law.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Northern Light re: John Swobody obituary
- Northern Light Letter to the Editor re: NWFR service
- From Jody Johnson re: Memorial Day event
- From Chris Mattson re: Thank you for service
- Flyer: Hogs and Horses Motorcycle and Car Show
- The Responder: District newsletter, July issue

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **August Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners present are expected to attend the August 16 meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- District Consultant
- 0400.0020.00 Resident Policy

SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

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 1:40 p.m. until approximately 2:15 p.m. Assistant Chief Joe Noonchester and District 4 Fire Commissioner Harry Andrews remained for the executive session.

MEETING RECONVENED

Chairman Bosman called the regular meeting back into open session at 2:13 p.m. No actions were taken as a result of the executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business Chairman Bosman moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:28 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

John Crawford, Commissioner

Chief Pernet, Board Secretary