

**Whatcom County Fire District #21  
Station 61 – Blaine  
9408 Odell Street, Blaine WA 98230  
1:00 pm  
October 18, 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 October 18, 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 Bruce Ansell; Commissioners Larry McPhail, Dean Berkeley and John Crawford; Fire Chief William Pernet; Assistant Chief Joe Noonchester; Division Chief Henry Hollander; Attorney Rich Davis.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dale Rutgers: 439 Birch Bay Lynden Rd. Lynden: Dale has been a firefighter and tender support volunteer for the district for the past forty-three years. Dale Rutgers inquired as to why the district cannot keep a fire chief. Dale Rutgers stated that he has volunteered under fifteen fire chiefs, which he finds very concerning. Dale Rutgers noted that the current Fire Chief William Pernet, who is resigning at the end of the year, is a very good man. Dale Rutgers stated that changing fire chiefs so often is hard on everyone and indicates that something is wrong within the district. In addition, Dale Rutgers noted that other districts employ fire chiefs who remain for many years.

Dale Rutgers noted that it is up to the Board members to figure out the problem.

Chairman Bosman thanked Dale Rutgers for his comments and noted that the Board is also sorry to see Chief Pernet go and is working on a hiring process. Chairman Bosman also shared Dale Rutgers disappointment and stated that there may be many reasons chiefs leave, including stress related to the position.

**BLAINE CITY MANAGER INTRODUCTION**

Recently appointed Blaine City Manager Mike Jones, introduced himself during the meeting. Mike Jones has been with the City for the past eleven years, seven of which were in the planning department.

Mike Jones pointed out some the City's main focus areas related to budget and financial solvency.

- Managing workforce including transitions due to many upcoming retirements.

- Communications
- Economic development, specifically future growth and upcoming projects.

Mike Jones noted that the City Council has approved fire impact fees for future development in the City of Blaine that will be forwarded to the fire department for increased services as the City grows. The City continues to look for additional revenues that may include a public safety levy lid lift or sales tax, to help balance the budget in the future.

Mike Jones stated that he plans to attend future Board meetings and expects to return in a couple months to discuss a multi-family tax exemption program for the City's downtown area.

Due to the frequent railway delays at Bell and Blaine Roads with regards to the proximity of the x-ray terminal, the City alongside Senator Erickson and other representatives, plan to attempt to obtain funding to reconfigure the exit 274 interchange area.

Commissioner Berkeley expressed his frustration regarding the removal of the right turn lane at the Portal Way / Bell Road intersection, making it problematic at times for first responders. Mike Jones stated that the lane in question was actually the shoulder used by vehicles used to avoid the back-up caused by the train crossing. Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will not allow the City to put in a right turn lane at that intersection. The City continues to investigate reconfiguring aspects of the interchange.

Chairman Bosman offered Mike Jones Board input, if requested, regarding the Portal Way / Bell Road intersection. Chairman Bosman invited Mike Jones to future Board meetings.

Mike Jones extended his appreciation for the districts' regular attendance during Blaine City Council meetings.

Attorney Rich Davis arrived at 1:18 p.m.

#### **APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Meeting Minutes
  - a) September 20, 2018
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report / Revenue
  - a) Total Revenue –September \$121,125.06
  - b) Total Expenditures –October \$643,086.37

4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
  - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$314,518.45
  - b) Non-Direct Payroll: \$174.86
  - c) Benefits Voucher: \$253,936.94
  - d) Monthly Expenditure Vouchers: \$66,360.60
  - e) Capital Projects Voucher: \$2,686.14
  - f) Capital Projects Apparatus: \$5,409.38

**MOTION:** Commissioner McPhail moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Berkeley and approved 5-0.

#### **NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS**

- **Semiahmoo Men's Club:** Vice-Chairman Ansell attended the Semiahmoo Men's Club Breakfast on Thursday, October 18 as a private citizen. The sheriff also attended and spoke regarding current public safety issues such as the increase of mental health patients who require an EMS and law enforcement response, ongoing drug problems and the Whatcom County Jail issue.

In addition, Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that the Birch Bay / Blaine Tsunami earthquake warning was tested today.

- **Peer Support Training:** Chairman Bosman announced that he along with three district members recently attended a Whatcom County Peer Support Training led by Pat Ellis. Chairman Bosman noted that a total of seven district members have completed the worthwhile program.

#### **IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT**

- None

#### **LEGAL ISSUES**

- Attorney Rich Davis announced that the State Family Medical Leave Act has been adopted in four states, including Washington. The Act allows employees to take extended leave for medical reasons with partial compensation. The Act will go into effect in phases with the first in January, 2019, when employers as well as employees will begin paying premiums into the system. Employees will be able to take advantage of the system beginning January 1, 2020.

Rich Davis stated that one of the concerns regarding the Act is that employees who are covered by a collective bargaining agreement and prior to October 19, 2017 are exempt, at least until a the bargaining agreement expires. Attorney Rich Davis will pass on additional information as it becomes available.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Northwood Store:** Chairman Bosman and Chief Pernet recently met with Lane Brennick to discuss the Board's concern that the initial request to use a portion of Northwood Station 72 grounds for a pumpkin patch has evolved into a beer garden with parking. Lane Brennick relayed his frustrations to Chairman Bosman and Chief Pernet regarding dealing with city and state for egress. Lane Brennick stated that he very much wants to work with the district to enable progress on an agreement.

Chairman Bosman noted that Lane Brennick is willing to take care of all the maintenance around the fire station in return for utilizing some parking. There is concern about parking in front of bay doors which could hinder a timely tender response if needed.

Chief Pernet noted that Lane Brennick's request includes the ability to use the easement to allow traffic to enter their store by crossing the station's driveway off of Badger Rd. In addition to the initial request, Lane Brennick is requesting to lease the station's parking lot spaces on the west side of the district's property for overflow parking.

Chief Pernet noted that during a recent visit to Northwood Station 72 it was discovered that parking was being utilized over the station's entire parking lot. There was discussion with Lane Brennick regarding paying for improvements (striping / tow away signs), alerting patrons that parking is not allowed in certain areas.

Vice-Chairman Ansell clarified that the goal will be to have patrons only use the parking section on the west side of the parking lot.

Chief Pernet noted that he is in the process of getting an evaluation of the property for the easement and the parking lot in order to come up with a cost. The district must be able to report information to the auditor in order to have the excise tax be appropriate.

Chief Pernet noted that the Board may want to discuss if they are willing to accept maintenance around the station in lieu of rent in the future after a value of the property has been established.

Chairman Bosman asked the Board if discussions should continue with Lane Brennick with the intent to come to an arrangement regarding the easement and parking limitations.

Chief Pernet recommends moving forward with the easement and use of parking on the west side, as long as rules are followed regarding the east side of the parking lot including the addition of striping and tow away information. In

addition, an evaluation needs to be completed to be able to determine what rent or trade off would be necessary.

Commissioner Berkeley questioned why the Northwood Store didn't utilize their own property behind the store for additional parking. Chairman Bosman noted that the area in question is slated for outside seating.

Attorney Rich Davis stated that a lease agreement would include an effective enforcement remedy which could include termination language if they didn't comply. Once the Board comes to an agreement regarding what they are willing to let Lane Brennick lease and in order to meet the auditor's scrutiny, the district needs an opinion of value to compare to the value of services offered.

Vice-Chairman Ansell stated that he is not comfortable allowing all the parking lot to be utilized but is amiable to what Chief Pernet recommended.

Commissioner Crawford agreed with Chief Pernet and Vice-Chairman Ansell but voiced his concern regarding who would enforce the parking stipulations. Chief Pernet stated that it would be included in the agreement that the Brennicks will need to monitor the parking lot and the duty chief could also spot check the station.

Chief Hollander reminded the Board that cameras could be installed at the station that can be monitored 24/7. In addition, there are two doors on each side of the station that should keep a tender response viable.

Commissioner McPhail commented that he believes that the area will be annexed by the City of Lynden within the next five to ten years, possibly taking over the station, thus eliminating the problem. Commissioner McPhail noted that it may be wise to have a discussion with the City of Lynden's fire committee in case they inherit the issue in the future.

Attorney Rich Davis noted that even if the city annex's the area where Northwood Station 72 resides, the station would remain with the district unless it was decided to transfer the station to the City of Lynden. Rich Davis suggested having a clause in the lease stating it could be terminated should the district decide to sell the station.

The Board agreed to move forward. The attorney will continue to draft the lease agreement and request a broker's evaluation. The Board will revisit the topic at a future board meeting(s).

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Resolution 2018-15 Surplus Equipment:** Chief Noonchester noted that district has purchased new rescue tools to replace the older equipment. The equipment

will be sold on an online nationwide public auction which meets all the auditors' surplus requirements. The district can also offer the items to other local districts for fair value.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Crawford moved to approve Resolution 2018-15 Surplus Equipment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Berkeley and approved 5-0.

- **Fire Chief Recruitment Process:** Chairman Bosman noted that the Board is in the process of considering various fire chief recruitment processes.

Prothman representative and owner Greg Prothman provided information regarding their executive recruitment process.

Greg Prothman noted that the company was formed in 2001 and during that time they have completed five to six hundred searches, many of which include fire chief positions. All members of the Prothman team are public sector professionals who take pride in and stake their reputation on finding the right fit for their clients.

#### Process

- Project review including examining district logistics and meeting with various members including shifts, volunteers, admin, stakeholders as well as the Board to gain a better understanding of the district.
- Develop a position profile of the ideal candidate which will include qualifications, organization and community specific information, compensation details and how to apply for the position.
- Identify, target and recruit viable candidates by using print and ads, targeted direct mail recruitment brochures, focused candidate outreach and posting the position profile on Prothman's Facebook, website and LinkedIn pages.
- Conduct preliminary screening including application review, background search and personal interviews with the top eight to fifteen candidates. A detailed summary report and binders will be submitted to the Board for review.
- A final interview process will include assisting with identifying interview panel participants and facilitators, facilitating an evening reception, background checks including extensive reference checks, candidate travel coordination, panelists and decision makers debrief, candidate evaluation session and facilitate an employment agreement.

#### Fees

- Professional fees - \$18,000 which covers consultant and staff time for recruitment process.

- Expenses vary depending on the design and geographical scope of the recruitment.
- Additional expenses may include candidate travel and on-site background checks.
- The district can expect to pay a total cost of approximately \$25,000 - \$26,000.
- The district can choose to utilize a more hybrid program although it was not recommended for an executive position.

Warranty / Guarantee

- If the process is followed and a top candidate is not chosen, Prothman will repeat the process with no additional professional fee. In addition, Prothman will guarantee that if the selected finalist is terminated or resigns within one year from the employment date, they will conduct a replacement search with no additional professional fee.

Another option and someone the district has worked with in the past includes Ron Hiraki Consultation. Although not all-inclusive, the cost for his services is approximately \$7,000.

Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) also provides recruitment services. Commissioner Crawford will contact ESCI and invite them to the next meeting for a presentation.

Chairman Bosman hopes the Board can evaluate a few companies before a final decision is made.

**POLICIES & PROCEDURE**

- None

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- Northern Light article re: First Responders tribute
- The Responder: District newsletter, October issue

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **November Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners are expected to attend the November 15 meeting.
- **November Work Session Attendance Query:** Originally the Budget Study Work session was scheduled for Saturday, November 17 however, the consensus was to schedule the session for following the Thursday, November 15 regular meeting.

- **Fire Commissioner Compensation:** Chief Pernet announced that the Office of Financial Management has adjusted the rates for commissioner compensation effective January 1, 2019. Currently, commissioner compensation is \$114 which will change to \$128 and rise the maximum annual compensation to \$12,288. Due to the economy, some of the Board members had elected to not take the increase in 2013 and kept their compensation at \$104.

Chairman Bosman stated that options the members can take into consideration include \$104, \$114 or \$128. Further discussion is expected during the next Board meeting.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- None

#### **AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

- Career firefighter Oath of Office
- Auto Aid Agreement
- One Percent Increase Resolution
- Northwood Store

#### **SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** There being no further business Commissioner Crawford moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:18 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Jennie Sand, Recording Secretary

**ATTEST:**

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Rich Bosman, Chairman

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Bruce Ansell, Vice-Chairman

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Larry McPhail, Commissioner

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Dean Berkeley, Commissioner

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John Crawford, Commissioner

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Chief Pernet, Board Secretary