

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bosman called the special Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for November 1, 2018 to order at 12:59 p.m. at Station 61 – 9408 Odell Street, Blaine, WA 98230.

ROLL CALL

Attendees: Chairman Rich Bosman; Vice-Chairman Bruce Ansell; Commissioners Larry McPhail, Dean Berkeley and John Crawford; Chief William Pernet; Assistant Chief Joe Noonchester; Division Chief Henry Hollander; Attorney Seth Woolson.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

NEW BUSINESS

- **Response to Letters Received by Blaine City Council and Lynden Tribune:** Chairman Bosman presented two letters for approval that originated with Vice-Chairman Ansell.

Vice-Chairman Ansell explained that he was made aware of a letter that was sent to the Blaine City Council from Commissioner Berkeley. The letter was signed by Commissioner Berkeley as a fire commissioner of North Whatcom Fire and Rescue.

Vice-Chairman Ansell expressed his concern since Commissioner Berkeley was censured from making comments representing the district in January, 2017. It was also Vice-Chairman Ansell's understanding that he and Chief Hollander currently attend the Blaine City Council as representatives of the district.

Since Commissioner Berkeley signed the letter as a North Whatcom Fire and Rescue Commissioner, it gave the appearance that he was speaking on behalf of the Board.

Vice-Chairman Ansell desires to clarify in a letter that Commissioner Berkeley's letter was not based on a motion or approval of the Board. The letter explains the Board's position and that Mr. Berkeley has been censured and does not represent the district as a commissioner in that capacity. The letter further apologizes for any confusion the letter may have caused and to direct any future questions or concerns regarding the Board or district to Chief Hollander or himself.

Chairman Bosman stated that a day later, an article appeared in the Lynden Tribune regarding Chief Pernet's resignation from the district. Within the article was a comment from Chief Pernet, Chairman Bosman and Commissioner Berkeley. Commissioner Berkeley's comment sent in an email, insinuated that Chief Pernet was leaving the district due to dissention amongst the Board members, which was not what Chief Pernet nor Chairman Bosman specified.

Chairman Bosman noted that the content was not as important as the fact that Commissioner Berkeley sent the correspondence indicating that he was speaking on behalf of the North Whatcom Fire and Rescue Board of Commissioners, which is not allowed under his censure. In light of this fact, a similar letter has been drafted to the Lynden Tribune.

Commissioner Berkeley stated that this letter had gone to five additional individuals. Commissioner Berkeley stated that the contents of the letter was public knowledge and that he was not apologetic, stating that "he works for the people, not Chairman Bosman."

Vice-Chairman Ansell stated that it was his understanding that Commissioner Berkeley has the right as a private citizen to contact those people but due to his censure by the Board, he does not have the right to contact them as a commissioner. Commissioner Berkeley disagreed.

MOTION: Commissioner Crawford moved to approve having Chairman Bosman send the response letters regarding Commissioner Berkeley's correspondence to both the Blaine City Council and Lynden Tribune as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 4-1. Commissioner Berkeley voted against.

Chairman Bosman stated that the letters will be sent forthwith.

- **Appointing an Interim Fire Chief:** Chairman Bosman wanted to have an open discussion between the Board and staff regarding what their intentions are and how to go about selecting an interim fire chief. The Board expects to have an interim fire chief in place before the end of the year. Chief Pernet hopes to pass on vital information to the interim chief prior to leaving the district.

Interim fire chief options mentioned included hiring retired Fire Chief Tom Fields, appointing either Assistant Chief Joe Noonchester or Division Chief Henry Hollander.

Chief Pernet stated that the district obviously has the talent in house to select an interim fire chief however, he is concerned about the amount of work that needs to be done, both in operations as well as the facilities and fleet maintenance

division. If an in-house person is chosen to fill the position, Chief Pernet recommends backfilling the vacated position temporarily to prevent placing undue stress on the staff.

Chief Pernet reminded the Board that Assistant Chief Noonchester had successfully taken over for him for three months in the past.

Vice-Chairman Ansell agreed that the district is short staffed and if an in-house person is chosen, the vacated position will also need to be backfilled.

Vice-Chairman Ansell suggested that a committee comprised of commissioners, union representation, administration and line staff determine the best course for the district, before the end of the year. Chief Pernet will also have input into the decision making process. Once an interim chief is selected, the district can focus on a quality fire chief recruitment process.

Commissioner McPhail suggested looking at Fire Chief David Schmidt who was recently terminated without cause by the new City of Bremerton mayor. Commissioner McPhail stated that Chief Schmidt has experience and it would be interesting to have conversations with Bremerton Fire District personnel regarding his job performance and if favorable, the Board may want to consider him for the interim fire chief position.

After some discussion, Chairman Bosman created an interim fire chief selection committee as per 8.0 of the 0100.0003.00 Fire Commissioner Guidelines for Conducting Meetings and Official Duties.

“The Chair creates and dissolves committees of the Board. Representative committees are committees formed to represent the District at external groups, meetings or organizations. Ad hoc committees are committees formed to address limited, temporary issues. Committees consist of no more than two commissioners. The Chair appoints and removes memberships of the committees, including the chair of the committee.

Committees consist of no more than two commissioners. Only commissioners are voting members of committees. The Fire Chief and the District staff may consult and advise the committees, but do not have a vote in the committees.”

The hope is that the committee will make a recommendation as soon as possible. The committee will be disbanded once an interim fire chief selection has been determined.

Interim Fire Chief Selection Committee

- Chairman Bosman
- Vice-Chairman Ansell
- Union representation Chuck Shipp or Danny Jensen

- Line officer TBD (Captain Jon Ahrenholz)
- Administrative Assistant Jennie Sand
- Chief Pernet (advisor only)

Labor agreed to send out an inquiry via personnel email requesting interest in a line officer representation.

Chairman Bosman noted that if either Vice-Chairman Ansell or he are unable to attend a meeting, another Commissioner will be asked to take their place.

The Board will provide an update of the committee during the Thursday, November 15, 2018 meeting.

- **Fire Chief Recruitment Process:** Chairman Bosman noted that another fire chief recruitment presentation by Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) is expected during the next regularly scheduled NWFR Board of Fire Commissioner meeting on Thursday, November 15, 2018.

Vice-Chairman Ansell suggested that the Board be prepared to make a vendor selection following the presentation, or schedule another special meeting soon after to make a timely decision regarding a fire chief recruitment process. There was agreement that the Board does want to pursue hiring a recruitment company.

Realistically, with the holiday season approaching a process will most likely begin until the New Year and take up to six months.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Commissioner Crawford announced that he will be unable to attend the Wednesday, November 14, 2018 County Fire Commissioner Meeting to be held at Britton Loop Station 12 at 7:00 p.m. Commissioner McPhail agreed to attend the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business Commissioner McPhail moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:27 pm. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Ansell and approved 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jennie Sand, Recording Secretary

ATTEST:

Rich Bosman, Chairman

Bruce Ansell, Vice-Chairman

Larry McPhail, Commissioner

Dean Berkeley, Commissioner

John Crawford, Commissioner

Chief Pernet, Board Secretary