

**Whatcom County Fire District #21  
Station 61 – Blaine  
9408 Odell Street, Blaine WA 98230  
1:00 pm  
September 19, 2019  
Regular Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chairman Ansell called the regular Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for September 19, 2019, to order at 1:03 p.m. at Station 61 – 9408 Odell Street, Blaine, WA 98230.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL**

Attendees: Vice-Chairman Bruce Ansell; Commissioners Larry McPhail, and John Crawford; Interim Fire Chief Joe Noonchester; Division Chief Jason Van der Veen; Attorney Rich Davis.

Chairman Bosman was previously excused from this meeting.

Commissioner Berkeley was not excused from this meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

- None

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Meeting Minutes
  - a) August 15, 2019
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Fire Marshal / Prevention
3. Financial Report / Revenue
  - a) Total Revenue –August \$1,326,881.80
  - b) Total Expenditures – September \$711,788.89
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
  - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$328,305.02
  - b) Benefits Voucher: \$275,227.23
  - c) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$75,807.76
  - d) Capital Projects Voucher: \$32,448.88

Vice-Chairman Ansell requested information regarding when Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) will be conducting their site visits. Chief Noonchester stated that anticipated site visits will be conducted in late October. He will inform the Board when the date(s) are solidified.

Vice-Chairman Ansell requested information regarding the district's third-party billing service line item that is almost double the budgeted amount. Chief Noonchester reminded that Board that the district had not budgeted for the required three-year health insurance audit which will be included in a budget amendment towards the end of the year.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Crawford moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 3-0.

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

- **County Fire Commissioner Meeting:** Commissioner Crawford attended the County Fire Commissioner Meeting on Wednesday, September 11, 2019. Commissioner Crawford forwarded a copy of the meeting minutes.

In addition, Commissioner Crawford announced that a WHAT-COMM meeting will be held on Thursday, October 3, 2019, at noon, to be held at the Fireplace Room in the Municipal Court building. Chief Blankers requested that area chiefs and commissioners attend the meeting. Chief Noonchester and Commissioner Crawford plan to attend the meeting.

- **Meridian High School Fire Program:** Commissioner Crawford provided information on Chairman Bosman's behalf regarding the Meridian High School Fire Program. The program out of Skagit Valley provides Firefighter 1 and CPR to high schoolers who may be interested in a fire service career. More information will be provided as it becomes available.
- **Contract Negotiations:** Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that he has been participating in negotiations between the district and Local 106NW.
- **Birch Bay Drive and Pedestrian Facility Project:** Chief Noonchester attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the Birch Bay Berm Project. The forty-year project will provide safer and better access to the community in the area.
- **Semiahmoo Resort Association (SRA):** Chief Noonchester attended the SRA meeting on Wednesday, September 11, 2019. Chief Van der Veen and some of the crews also attended the meeting. Introductions were made and Chief Noonchester provided information regarding the services the district offers.
- **Birch Bay Chamber Meeting:** Chief Noonchester attended the Birch Bay Chamber luncheon on Thursday, September 19, 2019. Introductions were made and Chief Noonchester provided information regarding the services the district offers.

## IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT

- Six union members (4 pipes and drums members and 2 who will present the flag to John's family) traveled to Colorado Springs to attend the IAFF Fallen Firefighters Memorial on Saturday, September 21, 2019. Fellow Firefighter John Swobody who lost his battle with cancer in 2018, will be honored and added to the memorial wall.

Kenneth Cunningham provided the Board with a link to the live stream of the memorial.

## LEGAL ISSUES

- None

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Master Plan:** Chief Noonchester provided an update regarding the progress of the district master plan being conducted by Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI).

At this time ESCI is occasionally requesting additional information as they work on the comprehensive plan. Chief Noonchester reiterated that site visits are expected in late October. The goal continues to have the plan presented to the Board by the end of the year.

- **Ground Emergency Medical Transportation Program (GEMT) Update:** Chief Noonchester noted that the district is providing medical transport information to GEMT for services rendered from June 2018 to July 2019.

Chief Noonchester stated that GEMT will no longer require that the district provide an administration payment upfront. In addition, all funds for the June 2018 – July 2019 time period are expected to be distributed by May 2020.

- **Paramedic Consortium:** Chief Van der Veen provided an update regarding the two district members who are participating in an Anatomy and Physiology class. Both members are doing exceptionally well and looking forward to moving on to the next phase of the paramedic program. The two members participating are Zach Scott and Sean Roberts. Chief Noonchester stated that he is very proud of both individuals.
- **Contract Negotiations:** Vice-Chairman Ansell provided additional information regarding the current negotiations. The group has met three times thus far and he regarded the majority of the meetings as positive. Vice-Chairman Ansell is pleased with the district's lead negotiator, Kevin Taylor. The next meeting has been scheduled for late October, allowing the Healthcare committee to review additional healthcare programs before making a recommendation. The results will

be shared with the negotiation team. The goal is to have the contract completed by the end of the year.

Vice-Chairman Ansell has also attended one of the healthcare committee meetings to gain some background information and is receiving all of the healthcare material.

Chief Noonchester noted that he is pleased with the group's progress.

- **Interlocal Agreement with the City of Blaine for Fire Marshal Services:** Chief Noonchester stated that the agreement process is progressing. Chief Rostov has been in constant communication with the City of Blaine regarding the agreement. The hope is to be able to put the final touches on a draft and have legal review the interlocal agreement in the near future. Chief Noonchester commended Chief Rostov for his hard work.
- **Interlocal Agreement with Fire District 4:** Chief Noonchester noted that during the Wednesday, August 14, 2019, District 4 Board meeting, there was no further discussion regarding the contract for services interlocal agreement.

The current contract automatically renews unless one or both agencies desire to terminate the agreement.

Chief Noonchester noted that he remains in constant contact with Fire Chief, Bill Hewett, from the City of Bellingham regarding the annexation in District 4's response area. The chiefs will discuss how things may look in the future and how to work together operationally and effectively during calls.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Resolution 2019-07 Cancellation of Warrant:** Chief Noonchester reported that a check has been lost in the mail. The check will be canceled and reissued.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McPhail moved to approve Resolution 2019-07 Cancellation of Warrant. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 3-0.

- **Check Fraud:** Chief Noonchester provided the Board with information regarding a recent multiple check fraud attempt on the district's bank account. The finance department is doing a good job of halting the thieves in their tracks. At this time, none of the fraudulent checks have gone through nor cost the district any money. Even so, the finance department along with the fire chief decided to close the current account and open a new one to ensure everything is being done to protect the district.
- **Transport Billing Fee Adjustment:** Chief Noonchester provided information regarding the fees the district is currently charging for basic life support (BLS)

transports. The district has not increased their rates for many years. Chief Noonchester recommended adjusting the fees to be in synch with the surrounding agencies such as the City of Lynden Fire Department, South Whatcom Fire Authority, District 7 and District 17. The increase will bring the district up to the current industry standard.

Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that the majority of BLS fees are covered by private insurance.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McPhail moved to approve raising the district's basic life support transport billing fees from \$590.00 to \$653.00 effective immediately. The motion was seconded by and Commissioner Crawford and approved 3-0.

- **Ambulance Purchase Approval:** Chief Noonchester requested approval regarding a proposal to purchase two additional front line ambulances. Currently, the district has some aging equipment. The aging equipment could affect the district's overall Washington Surveying and Rating class and has also been identified through the Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI). It was further noted that ambulances are beginning to need increased repairs regularly.

Chief Noonchester also requested that the district utilize monies from the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) Program for the purchase.

The process will take approximately one year to complete. Chief Van der Veen stated that the recently purchased TriVan ambulance will not be put into service until the end of September. His preference is to have time to evaluate the ambulance before an informed decision can be made regarding purchasing additional TriVan units or going with another manufacturer.

Vice-Chairman Ansell would like to also hear feedback from the crews.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McPhail moved to authorize Chief Noonchester to move forward with the process to purchase two new ambulances utilizing a portion of the Emergency Medical Transportation Program (GEMT) funds, in the amount of \$350,000. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 3-0.

- **Commissioner Attendance at Regular Meetings:** Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that Commissioner Berkeley has not attended nor been excused for the past two regularly scheduled NWFR Board meetings.

Vice-Chairman Ansell reviewed RCW 52.14.050:

*“Vacancies on a board of fire commissioners shall occur as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW. In addition, if a fire commissioner is absent from the district for three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings unless, by permission of the board, the office shall be declared vacant by the board of commissioners. However, such an action shall not be taken unless the commissioner is notified by mail after two consecutive unexcused absences that the position will be declared vacant if the commissioner is absent without being excused from the next regularly scheduled meeting. Vacancies on a board of fire commissioners shall be filled as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW.”*

The Board discussed Commissioner Berkeley’s past attendance at NWFR Board meetings. It was noted that this is Commissioner Berkeley’s second in a row unexcused absence, his sixth unexcused absence and twenty-fourth absence since his appointment.

The Board agreed to send Commissioner Berkeley a certified letter alerting him to the statute and the consequences.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Crawford moved to draft a letter to be sent by certified mail to Commissioner Berkeley alerting him to RCW 52.14.050 and stating that if he misses the next regularly scheduled meeting as an unexcused absence, the Board will vacate his office. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 3-0.

- **Roof Repair at Britton Loop Station 12:** Chief Van der Veen announced that the leaky roof at Britton Loop Station 12 was caught early and has been repaired. District 4 paid for the repairs.

## **POLICIES & PROCEDURE**

- None

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

- From Alison Ellis-Noonchester re: Thank you for flowers sent due to an injury
- Bellingham Herald article re: Wiser Lk wildfire
- KGMI re: Wiser Lk wildfire
- Lynden Tribune article re: Car crash causes structure fire
- Bellingham Herald article re: Ten Mile Rd. structure fire
- The Responder: District newsletter, September issue

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **October Board Meeting Attendance Query:** Chairman Bosman will not be attending the October meeting. All other Commissioners present are expected to attend the October 17 meeting.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- None

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

- Master Plan
- Paramedic Consortium
- Contract Negotiations
- City of Blaine Interlocal Agreement
- City of Bellingham Annexation Process
- New Ambulance(s) Purchasing Process
- Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) Presentation
- Mitigation Fund Information

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Vice-Chairman Ansell 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.” And;

*per RCW 42.30.140(4)(a)* “Collective bargaining sessions with employee organizations, including contract negotiations, grievance meetings, and discussions relating to the interpretation or application of a labor agreement; or (b) that portion of a meeting during which the governing body is planning or adopting the strategy or position to be taken by the governing body during the course of any collective bargaining, professional negotiations, or grievance or mediation proceedings, or reviewing the proposals made in the negotiations or proceedings while in progress.”

at 1:56 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. Interim Fire Chief Joe Noonchester and Attorney Rich Davis remained for the executive session.

## **MEETING RECONVENED**

Vice-Chairman Ansell called the regular meeting back into open session at 2:21 p.m. Action will not be 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 2:29 p.m. The motion was seconded by and Commissioner Crawford approved 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Jennie Sand, Recording Secretary

**ATTEST:**

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Bruce Ansell, Vice-Chairman

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Larry McPhail, Commissioner

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John Crawford, Commissioner

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Chief Noonchester, Board Secretary