

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

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairman Ansell called the special Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for November 21, 2019, to order at 1:02 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; Division Chiefs Jason Van der Veen and Herschel Rostov; Attorney Richard Davis.

Chairman Bosman was previously excused from this meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

MOMEMENT OF SILENCE

Vice-Chairman Ansell requested a moment of silence for the City of Lynden Interim Fire Chief Michael Knapp who passed away as a result of a traffic accident earlier this month.

OATH OF OFFICE

Chief Van der Veen conducted the swearing in of newly promoted Lieutenant Chuck Shipp. Chuck Shipp's wife Kristi, also participated by pinning on his lieutenant badge and bugles.

RECESS INTO PUBLIC HEARING

Vice-Chairman Ansell opened the public hearing at 1:09 p.m. to hear comments for the proposed Resolution 2019-11 Allowing the District to Increase its Budget by Up to One Percent.

PUBLIC HEARING STATEMENT

Vice-Chairman Ansell provided background information regarding Resolution 2019-11.

The resolution is a required formality and used as a placeholder for the district to take a one percent increase if the assessed values permit. The district will be entitled to collect the additional money in 2020. Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that \$61,312.54 in additional monies will be added to the 2020 budget.

As a junior taxing district, North Whatcom Fire and Rescue is allowed to collect up to \$1.50 per \$1,000 as a taxing authority. The one percent increase can be collected provided the district is not over the statutory maximum of \$1.50. The state automatically adjusts the district's levy rate yearly, based on assessed evaluations.

There was no public comment.

RECONVENE INTO REGULAR MEETING

Vice-Chairman Ansell closed the public hearing and reconvened the regular meeting at 1:11 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Resolution 2019-11 Allowing the District to Increase Its Budget by Up to One Percent:**

MOTION: Commissioner McPhail moved to approve Resolution 2019-11 Allowing the District to Increase its Budget by Up to One Percent. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 3-0.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) October 17, 2019 – special
 - b) November 12, 2019 – special
 - c) November 15, 2019 – special
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Fire Marshal / Prevention
3. Financial Report / Revenue
 - a) Total Revenue – October \$2,467,793.02
 - b) Total Expenditures –November \$601,149.21
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$
 - b) Non-Direct Payroll Voucher: \$37,458.83
 - c) Benefits Voucher: \$
 - d) Monthly Expenditure Vouchers: \$
 - e) Capital Projects Apparatus: 52,340.73

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

NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS

- **WA Fire Commissioner Association Conference:** Commissioner Crawford attended the WCFA Conference in Tulalip on October 24-26, 2019. The conference covered bid laws, family leave and mitigation information. Commissioner Crawford will send a report to the Board members via email.
- **Contract Negotiations:** Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that contract negotiations went extremely well. The group met a total of five times. A large amount of work was completed behind the scenes via email. Vice-Chairman Ansell gave a lot of credit to lead negotiator Kevin Taylor for his knowledge and expertise. Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that this experience has created a better relationship at the bargaining table.
- **Volunteer Group:** Vice-Chairman Ansell, Chiefs Van der Veen and Rostov along with Training Captain Jorgensen, met with the tender response and volunteer group on Monday, November 18, 2019 at Delta Station 68. Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that it was a good opportunity to share the vision and direction of the Board.

IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT

- Danny Jensen announced that the labor group will once again be helping out with the Blaine Thanksgiving Baskets Program on Tuesday, November 26, 2019. Everyone is invited to participate. Lieutenant Mike Nelson is the district's contact person for the event.
- Danny Jensen thanked the entire negotiating team for their hard work on the collective bargaining agreement.

LEGAL ISSUES

- Nothing to report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Master Plan:** The district has received a copy of the draft master plan drafted by Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI), for review. This was a huge project with numerous members providing input. Once completed, ESCI will present the plan, possibly during an upcoming Board meeting. The final plan will be made available to all those interested both inside and outside of the organization.

It is expected that the plan will provide a good picture of the district, what areas need work and a roadmap for the future.

- **Whatcom County Paramedic Contract:** Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding the Whatcom County Paramedic contract. Chief Van der Veen has been in contact with EMS Manager Mike Hilley, who is currently working on a contract proposal. Bellingham Fire Department Bill Hewitt and Ferndale Fire Department Chief Larry Hoffman will assist Chief Van der Veen to ensure that the pathway to payment is secure.

The contract will include funds to cover overtime (\$103,000) for backfilling each of the two medic students on shift. Following a review by the District's attorney, it is expected that the contract will be ready to sign at the December 19, 2019 Board meeting.

- **Interlocal Agreement with the City of Blaine for Fire Marshal Services:** Chief Rostov provided information regarding the interlocal agreement with the City of Blaine for fire marshal services.

The three step process is moving forward. The fire code ordinance has been approved and due to financial management reasons, it is expected that the district's fee schedule will be implemented early next year. The interlocal agreement has been forwarded to legal for review prior to a final meeting and approval.

- **Interlocal Agreement with Fire District 4:** Chief Van der Veen noted that since the District 4 Chair was not able to attend the recent District 4 Fire Commissioner meeting on Monday, November 18, 2019, the resolution expressing their interest in a merger agreement with North Whatcom Fire and Rescue, has yet to be approved. Vice-Chairman Ansell also attended the meeting. It is expected that the resolution will be approved at the upcoming District 4 Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, December 18, 2019.

Vice-Chairman Ansell explained that it will be the District 4 tax payers that will ultimately vote on the merger.

Attorney Richard Davis noted that in order to meet the 2021 tax assessment, a vote will need to happen no later than the April 2020 election. District 4 Commissioner Andrews noted that they are currently investigating the district's estimated cost of participating in an election and whether it will be more cost effective to wait for the larger presidential election.

Attorney Richard Davis provided a merger question and answer guide that was included in the Board packet for review.

There was also discussion regarding the conflicting levy rates and the effect on the District 4 EMS levy. Attorney Richard Davis stated that the mill levy rates would be adjusted and since the District 4 rate is lower, District 21 levy rates

would be lowered as a result of the merger. One suggestion to prevent the District 21 levy rate from decreasing, is for District 4 to request a levy lid lift during the April election prior to a merger request. Vice-Chairman Ansell stated that his biggest concern is how to recoup the possible loss of funds for the future.

It was noted that ESCI recommends that the two districts will benefit by merging.

- **Distribution of Mitigation Funds:** Chief Van der Veen provided additional information regarding the cost to replace a command vehicle (AP009) as well as the current shop / plow vehicle (AP011).

The cost of the vehicles (including tax) through state bid is as follows:

- Command fire investigation crew cab pickup truck - \$69,160.99
- Shop vehicle (F550) - \$75,924.74

Both vehicles were identified in the district capital facilities plan along with when they should have been replaced. There are currently monies available in the mitigation fund (\$182,000) for the purchase of both vehicles.

MOTION: Commissioner McPhail moved to approve the distribution of mitigation funds for the purchase of a shop F550 and a crew cab pickup command vehicle in the approximate amount of \$145,000. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 3-0.

- **Bellingham Fire Department Ladder Truck Swap:** There is no new information regarding a ladder truck and engine swap with the Bellingham Fire Department. A meeting to view each apparatus is expected in the near future.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Division Chief of Operations Contract:** Vice-Chairman Ansell provided information regarding the permanent appointment of Chief Van der Veen to Division Chief of Operations.

Chief Ansell reviewed some revisions to the division chief's contract including educational requirements, routine reviews and job performance feedback.

MOTION: Commissioner McPhail moved to approve the signing of the Division Chief of Operations contract. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 3-0.

- **Fire Officer Education Request:** Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding an upcoming education opportunity. Chief Van der Veen requested to participate in the Fire Service Executive Development Institute's year long course. The program layers education, encourages mentorship and networking.

The program is partially funded by a grant through Motorola. Chief Van der Veen is requesting that the Board send a letter on his behalf endorsing his participation in the program.

MOTION: Commissioner McPhail authorized Vice-Chairman Ansell to sign a letter endorsing Chief Van der Veen's participation in the Fire Service Executive Development Institute's program. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 3-0.

- **Local 106NW Labor Contract:** Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that the labor group voted to ratify the contract at a recent meeting. More discussion is expected during the executive session.
- **Fire Chief Search:** Vice-Chairman Ansell noted Interim Fire Chief Joe Noonchester separated from the district on November 16, 2019 and is pursuing other career opportunities. The district continues to wish him well and thanks him for his time and effort with the organization.

It was noted that funds had been budgeted in 2019 to assist with a fire chief search. Vice-Chairman Ansell expressed his concern regarding finding the right fit for the district. It was agreed to schedule a special meeting on Friday, December 6, 2019 to approve the labor contract and conduct a fire chief search brainstorming work session. Commissioner, chiefs, and possibly senior staff officers will be invited to attend the open meeting.

- **Work Flow Concerns:** With the depleted command staff, Chief Van der Veen expressed his concerns regarding the command officer work flow and staying connected with the troops over the next few months. He noted that it would be beneficial to have some internal assistance to help with the day to day operations of the district.

Chiefs Van der Veen and Rostov suggested adding a temporary position (6 months) to fill the gap between now and the time a new fire chief is appointed. The Board agreed and directed Chief Van der Veen to meet with the labor group to move forward with creating an interim position to help with the day to day operations of the district.

- **Ground Emergency Medical Transportation Program (GEMT) Update:** The GEMT paperwork for 2018 transports has been updated and submitted prior to the November 30, 2019 deadline.
- **Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) Recommendations:** Chief Van der Veen pointed out that one of the preliminary recommendations brought forward through ESCI was the lack of district's policies. Chief Van der Veen has reached out to Lexipole, a company who assists organizations with

writing policy and procedures, to request information regarding updating the district's policies. The district may be able to obtain a cost savings through the organization.

The district is also expecting a presentation in the near future regarding updating maintenance and inventory software.

POLICIES & PROCEDURE

- **0400.0003.00 Division Chief of Operations Job Description:** Vice-Chairman Ansell provided information regarding the minimal changes to the policy.

MOTION: Commissioner McPhail moved to accept Policy 0400.0003.00 Division Chief of Operations. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 3-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

- From Birch Bay Preschool: Thank you for the station visit
- Community Toy Store flyer
- King County Fire Commissioner Association Flyer: Fire Commissioner 101– January 11, 2020
- The Responder: District newsletter, November issue

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **December Works Session Query:** All other Commissioners present are expected to attend the December 6 work session.
- **December Board Meeting Attendance Query:** Commissioner McPhail will not be attending the December meeting and asked to be excused. All other Commissioners present are expected to attend the December 19 meeting.
- **Fire Commissioner 101 Workshop:** Newly elected (2020) Fire Commissioner Scott Fischer plans on attending the January 11, 2020 seminar.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Public Hearing 2020 Budget Approval
- ESCI Master Plan
- Paramedic Contract
- Interlocal Agreement with the City of Blaine for Fire Marshal Services
- Interlocal Agreement with Fire District 4
- New Ambulance Purchase
- Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)

- Bellingham Ladder Truck Swap Information
- Fire Chief Search

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 2:10 p.m. following a five minute break until approximately 2:35 p.m. Division Chiefs Van der Veen and Rostov along with Attorney Richard Davis, remained for the executive session. Action is expected to be taken.

MEETING RECONVENED

Vice-Chairman Ansell called the regular meeting back into open session at 2:45 p.m.

Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that with one Board member absent and one a Local 106 member who will abstain from voting on the labor contract, the Board will not have the required quorum to approve the labor contract.

No action will be taken at this time. Vice-Chairman Ansell assured the labor group that the Board is in favor of the proposed collective bargaining agreement and will vote during the next meeting scheduled for Friday, December 6, 2019.

SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business Commissioner McPhail moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by and Commissioner Crawford approved 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

ATTEST:

Bruce Ansell, Vice-Chairman

Larry McPhail, Commissioner

John Crawford, Commissioner

Jason Van der Veen, Division Chief