

**Whatcom County Fire District #21  
Station 61 – Blaine  
9408 Odell Street, Blaine WA 98230  
9:00 am  
December 6, 2019  
Special Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Bosman called the regular Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for December 6, 2019 to order at 9:03 a.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 and John Crawford; Division Chiefs Jason Van der Veen and Herschel Rostov.

District 4 Fire Commissioners: Harry Andrews and Anna Melillo.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

- None

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Collective Bargaining Agreement 2020-2022:** Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that during the last meeting held on Thursday, November 21, 2019, there was discussion during the executive session regarding the collective bargaining agreement. Since there was no quorum (*one Board member was absent and one, a Local 106 member, would abstain*), no decision was made during the November meeting.

The district's attorney has also reviewed the contract and added his input. At this time, the contract is ready for Board approval.

It was noted that the employee's salary raises will impact the budget by approximately \$192,000, however, it was agreed that it was time that member's wages be adjusted appropriately and more closely match the surrounding comps. The district may need to look for a levy lid lift in the future to address rising costs.

Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that the three year contract is fair and recommended that the Board approve the labor contract which has already been ratified by the Labor group during an earlier meeting.

Chairman Bosman thanked Vice-Chairman Ansell for his hard work on the contract. Lead Negotiator Kevin Taylor was also recognized for his hard work, preparation and diligence.

An official thank you letter for Kevin Taylor will be signed by the Board during the Thursday, December 19, 2019 meeting.

**MOTION:** Vice-Chairman Ansell moved to approve the 2020-2022 Collective Bargaining Agreement as ratified by the Local 106 NW labor group. The motion was seconded by Chairman Bosman and approved 3-0. Commissioner Crawford abstained.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Fire Chief Search:** Vice-Chairman Ansell provided background information regarding how various fire chiefs had been appointed in the past and some of the consequences that resulted.

The Board discussed possible options and ramifications.

- If the district hires an outside organization to conduct a nationwide fire chief search, it will be expensive and there is concern that the candidate may not fit within our organization. There is also a potential concern for an out of state candidate understanding Washington Labor Laws. It was noted that monies had been budgeted in 2019 to pay for a fire chief search, which could potentially be utilized in 2020. Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) has almost completed a district master plan and already has a vast amount of knowledge they can utilize for a hiring process.
- The district is hoping to hire a chief who will stay for an extended amount of time. Other risks of hiring an outside candidate include considerations such as the chief may be using the district as a temporary stepping stone or end of career, which would not be long term.
- There is a list of potential candidates from the surrounding area put together by the Board. Most candidates could potentially fill the vacancy short term (up to 3 years) giving the “acting chief” some mentorship and guidance to fill the position in the future. One candidate may consider a longer tenure, if his current position in another agency is eliminated. Chief Van der Veen stated that he could work well with the individual for an extended amount of time. Vice-Chairman Ansell will contact the names on the list over the next three months to see where they stand however, at this time there has been no commitment for any individual.
- Retired Chief Ralston has offered to mentor and regularly meet in the short term, to assist the “acting chief” with the budget and long term financial planning until he becomes more educated and gains additional experience. There was discussion regarding how to legally compensate a

retired fire chief receiving retirement benefits. Further discussions with the district's attorney is expected.

- Chief Van der Veen acknowledged that he has had some valuable discussions with several local area fire chiefs to gain a better understanding of leadership, district finances and developing a long term financial plan. Chief Ralston has routinely checked in with Chief Van der Veen to offer assistance and has encouraged him to network with Chiefs Bill Hewitt and Larry Hoffman. Chief Van der Veen noted that he has no plans to leave the area, he is rooted to this community as well as the organization.
- A district captain has submitted a letter of interest to act as the temporary division chief of operations to assist with the day to day operations of the district. He will be available to help in the near future and has given a six month commitment. Other members of the organization have pledged their support to the current chiefs and organization.

#### **RECESS**

Chairman Bosman recessed the meeting for a short break at 10:a.m.

#### **MEETING RECONVENED**

Chairman Bosman called the regular meeting back into open session at 10:13 p.m.

The Board agreed that if they have not made a decision on any of the candidates on the list by the end of February, they will hire an outside company to conduct a fire chief search on the district's behalf.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- None

#### **SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** There being no further business Commissioner McPhail moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 a.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Jennie Sand, Board 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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John Crawford, Commissioner

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Jason Van der Veen, Division Chief