

Whatcom County Fire District #21
4142 Britton Loop Rd, Bellingham, WA 98226
via Teleconference
1:00 pm
March 26, 2020
Special Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ansell called the special Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for March 26, 2020, to order at 1:10 p.m. via teleconference.

ROLL CALL

Attendees: Chairman Bruce Ansell; Vice-Chairman Rich Bosman; Commissioners Larry McPhail, John Crawford, and Scott Fischer; Acting Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen and Attorney Richard Davis.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2020-05 Declaring Local Emergency and Delegation of Authority:

Attorney Richard Davis noted that this resolution expands the Commission's delegation of authority to the Fire Chief to act expeditiously during the pending health crisis. It also allows, among other things, for competitive bidding requirements to be waived if necessary.

Richard Davis further noted that the Fire Chief is obligated to keep the Board apprised of any actions taken as a result of the resolution. Chairman Ansell stated that he has been meeting with Chief Van der Veen on a weekly basis to keep apprised of the current issues, which will be reported back to the Board.

MOTION: Commissioner Fischer moved to approve the Resolution 2020-05 Declaring Local Emergency and Delegation of Authority. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 5-0.

Resolution 2020-06 Authorizing Payment of Claims Prior to Board Approval of

Vouchers: Attorney Richard Davis noted that if board meetings must be canceled, this resolution allows claims to be paid in advance of board action, during an emergency, to avoid delinquent payments, interest charges, etc., with the understanding that the vouchers will be approved during the next meeting.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Bosman moved to approve the Resolution 2020-06 Authorizing Payment of Claims Prior to Board Approval of Vouchers. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fischer and approved 5-0.

Resolution 2020-07 Requesting Federal Services, Equipment, Supplies, Materials, or Funds: Attorney Richard Davis stated that this resolution is a request for aid as required by the Federal Stafford Act. Since federal aid will be flowing to the state, it may be possible for the district to share in some of that aid. It does not guarantee that the district will receive federal aid.

MOTION: Commissioner Crawford moved to approve the Resolution 2020-07 Requesting Federal Services, Equipment, Supplies, Materials, or Funds. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Bosman and approved 5-0.

Resolution 2020-08 Appointing Auditing Officer: Attorney Richard Davis stated that for Resolution 2020-06 to be effective, a district auditing officer will need to certify that the claims are legitimate. Attorney Richard Davis noted that the district is required to formally pass a resolution appointing an auditing officer.

MOTION: Commissioner Fischer moved to approve the Resolution 2020-08 Appointing Auditing Officer. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Bosman and approved 5-0.

Resolution 2020-09 Electronic Signatures: Attorney Richard Davis provided information regarding how electronic signatures can be obtained for the district's monthly expenditures and submitted to the County when the Board cannot meet in person. In addition, Attorney Richard Davis reviewed the process for collecting Board member signatures for an approved resolution. The district only plans to utilize electronic signatures when absolutely necessary, such as when it is unsafe for Board members to meet in person.

MOTION: Commissioner McPhail moved to approve the Resolution 2020-09 Electronic Signatures. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Bosman and approved 5-0.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) February 20, 2020
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
 - a) Total Revenue – February \$828,010.36
 - b) Total Expenditures – March \$691,411.84
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$332,833.27
 - b) Non Direct Payroll: \$8,885.72
 - c) Benefits Voucher: \$206,170.76
 - d) Monthly Expenditure Vouchers: \$134,772.57
 - e) Capital Projects Apparatus Voucher: \$8,876.60

Commissioner Fischer requested information regarding the following warrants:

- Dewaard and Bode – old washing machine at Odell Station 61 replaced
- Communications Northwest – repair and tune-up of pagers and additional dispatch issues at Birch Bay Station 63.

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

NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS

911 Dispatch Board: Commissioner Crawford attended a Dispatch Board Meeting on February 27, 2020. The Board passed a motion for Prospect and What-Comm Dispatch Centers to remain as separate entities. Their next meeting is scheduled for May.

LEGAL ISSUES

Attorney Richard Davis provided information regarding the discussion parameters during special meetings and keeping in line with the Governor's latest proclamations regarding public meetings. Acceptable action items include routine bills, necessary costs, or pandemic related topics. All other action items will need to be deferred.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bellingham Ladder Truck Swap: Chief Van der Veen announced that the Bellingham ladder truck swap contract has been signed.

Whatcom County Paramedic Contract: Chief Van der Veen stated that the contract has yet to be signed by the County.

City of Blaine Fire Code Adoption and Fire Marshal Services: No new information was provided regarding the permit fee adoption and fire marshal services.

Division Chief/Fire Marshal Rostov is currently working at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as the operations chief in response to COVID-19 and was not available to attend this meeting.

The Division Chief of Operations, Davidson, is also spending four days per week at the EOC but may be replaced, possibly by another officer, so he can assist with the day to day operations of the district.

Additional agencies participating at the center include South Whatcom Fire Authority and Fire Protection District 7.

Missing Commissioner Laptop: No information was available regarding the return of the Surface Pro commissioner laptop.

NEW BUSINESS CONT.

Division Chief Position Compensation: Chairman Ansell provided information regarding the district's compensation issues along with the increased responsibilities and workloads expected of chief officers, specifically due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Bosman made a finding that the division chief of operations compensation topic is necessary on the grounds that the position is expected to have an increased amount of responsibility due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 5-0.

Per Chairman Ansell's request made some time ago, Chief Van der Veen conducted a salary compensation inquiry of chief officers that included some of the nearby agencies that were utilized during recent labor contract negotiations. His recommendations were then forwarded to the Board. Chief Van der Veen justified those recommendations, citing an ever-increasing workload and juggling multiple positions.

Chief Van der Veen is recommending that the division chief's annual salary be increased halfway between District 7's training and EMS division chief positions.

There was additional discussion regarding increasing wages based on comparables to allow the district to keep good employees and attract great employees who will stay with the district for an extended amount of time.

Chairman Ansell's request was based on the fact that he recognized that the administrative staff is underpaid, especially for their level of expertise.

Nationally certified Fire Marshal and Division Chief Rostov brings a lot of knowledge, education, and experience to the district. He is currently juggling his district duties with those at the EOC.

In addition, Chairman Ansell noted that in the future, the City of Blaine may reimburse the district for a portion of the fire marshal services.

Commissioner Crawford noted the importance of completing yearly performance evaluations prior to increasing wages.

MOTION: Chairman Ansell authorized Chief Van der Veen to increase the division chiefs' yearly salary to \$125,849.00 effective April 1, 2020, pending performance evaluations. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 5-0.

POLICIES & PROCEDURE

None

CORRESPONDENCE

- Attorney General of Washington re: Guidance on gifting of public funds during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Snure Law Offices re: Impacts of Federal Emergency Family Medical Leave Act
- Washington Fire Commissioners Association Legislative Report
- From Jonathan Oliveria re: Thank you for services
- From David & Yvonee Leslie re: Thank you for services
- Northern Light article re: New Recruits
- Northern Light article re: Commercial building fire
- Bellingham Herald article re: Guide Meridian structure fire
- The Responder: District newsletter, March issue

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Board Retreat Meeting: The Board Retreat has been postponed until further notice. It will be rescheduled at a later date.

April Regular Board Meeting Attendance Query: All Commissioners are expected to attend the April 16 meeting which may be conducted via Zoom Meeting. All commissioners are expected to be available.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Fire Chief Selection Process
- Whatcom County Paramedic Training Interlocal Agreement
- City of Blaine Fire Marshal Services
- Commissioner Laptop

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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.”*

at 2:00 p.m. until approximately 2:15 p.m. Acting Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen remained for the executive session. Action may be taken.

Following some technical difficulties, the executive session commenced at 2:20 p.m. extending the meeting until 2:45 p.m.

MEETING RECONVENED

Chairman Ansell called the regular meeting back into open session at 2:45 p.m. Action will be taken as a result of the executive session.

Chairman Ansell noted that on behalf of the Board, he wanted to extend their appreciation to Chief Van der Veen for his performance as interim fire chief especially in

light of current events. Chief Van der Veen has surpassed all expectations. The Board will continue to monitor his progress as he continues in his role as Acting Fire Chief.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Bosman moved to approve the Fire Chief's yearly salary to \$135,000.00 effective April 1, 2020, pending a performance evaluation completed by Chairman Ansell and Vice-Chairman Bosman. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 5-0.

Chairman Ansell noted that the salary is a starting rather than an ending place for the fire chief position.

Chief Van der Veen thanked the Board for their continued support over the past few months. In addition, Chief Van der Veen noted that the current administrative staff has been instrumental in assisting him and believes that the combination of these particular individuals are responsible for creating such a good team.

SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business Chairman Ansell moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:55 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fischer and approved 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

ATTEST:

Bruce Ansell, Chairman

Rich Bosman, Vice-Chairman

Larry McPhail, Commissioner

John Crawford, Commissioner

Scott Fischer, Commissioner

Jason Van der Veen, Acting Fire Chief