

**Whatcom County Fire District #21**  
**4142 Britton Loop Rd, Bellingham, WA 98226**  
**via Zoom Meeting**  
**1:00 pm**  
**April 16, 2020**  
**Regular Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Ansell called the regular Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for April 16, 2020, to order at 1:11 p.m. via Zoom Meeting.

**ROLL CALL**

Attendees: Chairman Bruce Ansell; Vice-Chairman Rich Bosman; Commissioners John Crawford, and Scott Fischer; Acting Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen; Division Chiefs Herschel Rostov and Ray Davidson; Attorney Richard Davis.

After some technical difficulties, Commissioners Larry McPhail joined the meeting at 1:36 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Due to Governor Inslee's Proclamation 20-28 issued during the evening of March 24, District 21 was prohibited from providing a location for the public to attend this meeting. Members of the public were able to hear the entire meeting via Zoom Meeting, except for executive sessions, but were not be allowed to speak or provide public comments.

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Meeting Minutes
  - a) March 26, 2020 - special
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
  - a) Total Revenue –March \$360,229.08
  - b) Total Expenditures –April \$1,348,987.24
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
  - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$350,115.42
  - b) Benefits Voucher: \$75,888.06
  - c) Benefits Voucher\_2: \$210,492.42
  - d) Monthly Expenditure Vouchers: \$54,904.74
  - e) Capital Projects Voucher: \$651,385.64
  - f) Capital Projects Apparatus Voucher: \$6,190.76

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

Chairman Ansell noted that the overtime was high last month. Overtime is expected to be lower in the future now that the four new probationary firefighters have begun shift work.

Chairman Ansell requested information regarding the purchase of nitrous oxide for the aid units. Chief Van der Veen noted that although the County has not mandated the use of nitrous oxide, it will make patients more comfortable during long transports to the hospital.

The capital projects voucher reflects the cost of the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) purchase. SCBAs need to be replaced every ten years as required by law.

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

**Chairman and Fire Chief Weekly Meetings:** Chairman Ansell stated that he has been meeting with Chief Van der Veen weekly to stay abreast of the ever-changing information regarding the coronavirus pandemic.

During the Tuesday, April 7, 2020 meeting, a contract for services was signed by retired South Whatcom Fire Authority Fire Chief Dave Ralston, who will work as a consultant for the district. His expertise will be invaluable to both District 21 and District 4.

Chairman Ansell noted that due to the recent proclamation by the Governor, Dave Ralston is able to come out of retirement to assist the district without fear of any penalties.

**District 4 Fire Commissioner Meeting:** On Tuesday, April 14, 2020, Chairman Ansell met with District 4 to discuss topics for their board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 15, 2020.

On Wednesday, April 15, 2020, Chairman Ansell attended the District 4 Fire Commissioner meeting to discuss whether a Regional Fire Authority (RFA) versus a merger would be beneficial to both districts.

Chairman Ansell noted that the District 4 Board new business agenda items were tabled:

- Hiring of the District Administrator
- District 4 Commissioner and Administrator Emails
- District 4 Website and IT Support

The Board will have further discussion during their executive meeting.

There was additional discussion regarding contacting the Lynden Fire Department to see if they may be interested in becoming a part of an RFA in the future. Chief Van der Veen intends to meet with the Lynden Fire Chief to discuss options for the future. Vice-Chairman Bosman also plans to meet with some of the Lynden Council members to ascertain their thoughts on a possible RFA.

Vice-Chairman Bosman noted that after their initial meeting with District 7 regarding an RFA, their department is no longer interested in pursuing an RFA.

Coming from an RFA, Dave Ralston noted that forming such a group is a long process but worth investigating.

### **IAFF LOCAL 106NW REPORT**

Chairman Ansell noted that the labor group acknowledged the Board for their continued support during the coronavirus pandemic.

The labor group also expressed their satisfaction regarding appointing Chief Van der Veen as the permanent fire chief for the district.

### **LEGAL ISSUES**

Attorney Richard Davis reiterated that discussion parameters during special meetings and keeping in line with the Governor's latest proclamations regarding public meetings.

Attorney Richard Davis discussed additional protections that can be offered to high-risk employees who choose to remain home. Currently, the district has two high-risk employees who are utilizing paid leave.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Fire Chief Selection Process:** Chairman Ansell announced that the fire chief's performance evaluation has been completed and the salary increase approved during the last meeting will be implemented. A resolution appointing Chief Van der Veen as the permanent fire chief will be presented for approval following the executive session.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**First Amendment to Intergovernmental Agreement for Fire and Protection Services:** Chairman Ansell stated that the District 4 Board would like to discuss an amendment to the Intergovernmental Agreement for Fire and Protection Services. Topics for the amendment include adding minor language to exhibit A and the use of administrative offices at Britton Loop Station 12.

District 4 Board Chair Dave Hanson noted that the Board has additional concerns that were not specifically addressed during their Wednesday, April 15, 2020 meeting.

Chairman Ansell indicated that the Board will send a letter of response to the District 4 Board by the end of business on Monday, April 20, 2020.

Further discussion has been tabled.

An additional letter will be sent on behalf of the Board, requesting that all future non-essential communications for Chief Van der Veen or his administrative staff be directed through the District 21 Board Chair.

## **POLICIES & PROCEDURE**

None

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

- From NWFR Board Chair re: District 4 Board fire chief communication
- From Richard Davis re: Open Meetings During COVID-19 Pandemic
- From Gretchen Anderson re: Thank you for services
- Bellingham Herald article re: Grass fires
- The Responder: District newsletter, April issue

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**May Regular Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners are expected to attend the May 21 meeting which may be conducted via Zoom Meeting.

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

- First Amendment to Intergovernmental Agreement for Fire and Protection Services
- Whatcom County Paramedic Training Interlocal Agreement
- City of Blaine Fire Marshal Services
- Dakota Creek Bridge
- Commissioner Laptop
- 2019 Budget Amendment

## **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 1:45 p.m. for at least forty-five minutes. Attorney Richard Davis and Dave Ralston remained for the executive session. Action is expected to be taken.

Dave Ralston departed the meeting at 1:55 p.m. Attorney Richard Davis left the meeting at 2:34 p.m. Chief Van der Veen joined the meeting at 2:37 p.m.

Chairman Ansell extended the meeting at 2:37 p.m. for no longer than an additional thirty minutes.

## **MEETING RECONVENED**

Chairman Ansell called the regular meeting back into open session at 2:54 p.m. Action will be taken as a result of the executive session.

**Resolution 2020-10 Appointing Fire Chief:** Chairman Ansell stated that the district has conducted many fire chief searches in the past, some of who were ultimately not a good

fit for the department. The Board is enthusiastic to have found Chief Van der Veen, who possesses the desired skill set and expertise, within the district.

As the acting chief, Jason Van der Veen continues to excel in drive and desire, his willingness to learn and his continued concern for personnel. It is expected that Chief Van der Veen will also benefit greatly from Dave Ralston's guidance.

Commissioner Crawford noted that he has been impressed with Chief Van der Veen's conduct and believes he will make a good long term fire chief for the district. He advised Chief Van der Veen to "*not forget where you come from*".

An official pinning ceremony will be conducted during a future Board meeting once the coronavirus limitations have been lifted.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Fischer moved to approve Resolution 2020-10 Appointing Chief Jason Van der Veen as the District Fire Chief. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 5-0.

Chief Van der Veen stated that he appreciates both the Board's support and the opportunity they have provided. Chief Van der Veen is committed to the district and intends to continue to learn and evolve with the position.

Chief Van der Veen beliefs include:

- The key to good service is to treat our citizens like family.
- Take care of your people
- Never forget where you come from

## **SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** There being no further business Commissioner Fischer moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:08 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

**ATTEST:**

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Bruce Ansell, Chairman

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Rich Bosman, Vice-Chairman

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Larry McPhail, Commissioner

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John Crawford, Commissioner

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Scott Fischer, Commissioner

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Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief