

**Whatcom County Fire District #21  
via Zoom Meeting  
1:00 pm  
November 19, 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 November 19, 2020, to order at 1:09 p.m. via Zoom Meeting.

**ROLL CALL**

Attendees: Chairman Bruce Ansell; Commissioners John Crawford, Scott Fischer, and Kimberly Calman-McMurray; Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen; Henry Hollander.

Vice-Chairman Rich Bosman was excused from the meeting.

Due to technical difficulties, Commissioner Fischer joined the meeting at 1:10 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 the executive session, but were not allowed to speak or provide public comment.

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Meeting Minutes
  - a) October 15, 2020
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
  - a) Total Revenue –October \$2,252,424.32
  - b) Total Expenditures –November \$696,589.04
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
  - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$317,958.69
  - b) Payroll Taxes Voucher: \$66,688.75
  - c) Benefits Voucher: \$203,185.36
  - d) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$101,117.62
  - e) Capital Projects Apparatus Voucher: \$7,638.62

Chairman Ansell noted that the RFA Planning Committee had made the recommendation to to split all Regional Fire Authority (RFA) invoices 50-50. The NWFR Board will pay the bills and then invoice District 4 for half the payment.

Commissioner Crawford requested information regarding the Communications Northwest invoice for \$1,399.65. Chief Van der Veen explained that Ladder 63 had

dissimilar types of headsets that would not allow crews to communicate effectively, so the system was replaced.

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

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

**Washington Fire Commissioners Association Webinar Series:** In October both Commissioner Murray and Vice-Chair Bosman attended seminars on Peer Support and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Commissioner McMurray provided a summary of the webinars and her hope to possibly incorporate those types of programs within the District to benefit all members.

Chairman Ansell stated that Vice-Chairman Bosman had reported that the webinar he had attended was very well done.

**Whatcom County Fire Commissioners Meeting:** Commissioner Crawford will forward the November meeting notes to the Board members when they become available. Things discussed at the meeting included adding a fifth medic unit, relocating a medic unit to Britton Loop Station 12, and legislative issues.

**District 4 and NWR Board Chair Meeting:** Chairman Ansell reported on two meetings he recently attended with District 4 Chairman Hanson and Chief Van der Veen that resolved some concerns and tensions that seemed to accumulate due in part to not being able to meet face to face.

The meeting was positive and both Boards are moving forward with the intent of completing a successful Regional Fire Authority (RFA) process.

Chief Van der Veen added that he appreciates the leadership and positivity from both Board Chairs.

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

The Local 106 NW members will be assisting with the Community Assistance Thanksgiving Baskets Program on November 24, 2020. Due to Covid-19, it is expected that Local 106NW members will have limited interaction with the public.

The Community Assistance Program (CAP) publicly thanked Local 106NW for their assistance with the Thanksgiving Baskets Program over the years at a recent Blaine City Council Meeting.

### **FIRE MARSHAL REPORT**

Henry Hollander continues to act as the interim fire marshal. He recently attended the Blaine City Council Meeting via Zoom.

With the COVID-19 shutdown, the Blaine City Council continues to be concerned with the local small businesses, specifically restaurants erecting tents for outside dining. Henry Hollander noted that the District will continue to work with the small businesses regarding permits, location and inspections of the tents.

Chairman Ansell appreciates that the District is trying to help small businesses while taking everyone's safety into account.

Once Phase III goes into effect, other lesser modifications are expected.

Henry Hollander noted that he is no longer in need of a vehicle to transport quarantined community members at Motel 6 to and from appointments as requested during last month's meeting. The Washington Transportation Authority (WTA) has offered to donate a van.

### **LEGAL ISSUES**

No report.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**2018-2019 Audit:** Chief Van der Veen stated that the audit is nearing the completion phase.

**Regional Fire Authority (RFA):** Chairman Ansell noted that several documents have been forwarded to the Board regarding the RFA discussions including the October 22, 2020, meeting notes, and the Shared Values Statement.

Chairman Ansell stated that the subcommittee consisting of himself, Commissioner McMurray, District 4 Commissioner Chamberlain, and Chief Van der Veen, met to discuss the District's current service level and a realistic staffing model for the future. The information will be utilized by Financial Analyst Bill Cushman. The data will allow the RFA to make decisions determining a levy rate.

The next RFA meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 3, 2020. (cancelled)

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Potential Library Levy:** Chairman Ansell provided information regarding a recent email that he had received regarding a potential Birch Bay Library levy of no more than ten cents. No additional information has been received at this time.

It is unclear if an RFA or fire district is second to a library district, which could limit the RFA to a maximum \$1.40 levy. Chairman Ansell intends to investigate.

**Resolution 2020-21 Mitigation Rates:** Henry Hollander provided information regarding an additional land use classification for a "station canopy". It has been estimated that the

service response required for this type of development will be approximately fifty percent of the current “Industrial/Manufacturing” use.

Henry Hollander noted that the classification will only be utilized outside the Blaine city limits. The City of Blaine is expected to pass an ordinance after they receive a copy of the resolution.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Crawford moved to approve Resolution 2020-21 Updated Mitigation Chart as presented. The motion was seconded by Chairman Ansell and approved 3-0.

**Resolution 2020-22 Surplus Equipment:** Chief Van der Veen stated that most of the surplus items are from Birch Bay Station 63 and consists mainly of old radios, nozzles that are out of compliance, and hose that is worn out and beyond repair.

Commissioner Crawford has contacted the Firefighters United representative who expressed a need for the surplus radios and batteries.

A firefighter on light duty worked with the maintenance shop to categorize and itemize the surplus items. Chairman Ansell acknowledged firefighter Wohlrab for his hard work.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Crawford moved to approve Resolution 2020-22 Chart as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McMurray and approved 3-0.

**City of Lynden Nozzle Request:** Chairman Ansell noted that the City of Lynden has requested to utilize some of the old surplused nozzles for a community summer activity. The Board agreed to donate those items to the City of Lynden. The District cannot be held liable for the surplused items.

Chief Van der Veen noted that if surplused items can be donated to fulfill a purpose or fill a need, the District will keep those items out of the landfills.

**Facilities and Maintenance:** Chairman Ansell noted that the District had budgeted \$75,000 to hire a facilities/maintenance person (civilian) in 2020. At this time the money (salary funds) remains in the budget however, the position has not been filled.

Chairman Ansell pointed out that some of the District’s facilities are in dire need of minor cosmetic or structural repairs.

There was discussion regarding various options including hiring a full-time employee or contracting with an individual to take a closer look at what needs to be done.

Chief Van der Veen noted that with the uptick in building around the County, it is difficult to find the right person to fulfill the District’s needs. It may be more beneficial to

contract out for services so the District would not need to acquire specific tools or supplies. To obtain a new employee will also require additional time for a hiring process.

It was also noted that 2020 has been a heavy maintenance year for the District.

Henry Hollander noted that there are financial thresholds and parameters that the District must adhere to, including going out for bid when applicable. In addition, he does not believe there is enough work for a full-time employee.

Commissioner Crawford suggested contacting various companies to receive quotes for specific projects.

Chairman Ansell requested that the significant station issues be addressed as soon as possible. Chief Van der Veen will compile a list of items that need to be completed in the near future before contacting various agencies for quotes.

Chief Van der Veen stated that he will investigate all possibilities to acquire the best person for the job.

Chairman Ansell noted that the Semiahmoo Station is not in an ideal location to be utilized as a fire station per the Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) report. It was suggested that the Semiahmoo Station be rented out as office space in the future. At the moment, the station has been slated to be utilized as a COVID-19 quarantine station for firefighters.

**Personnel Recruitment:** Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding recruitment for various positions within the district.

A temporary Division Chief of Operations will close on Friday, November 20, 2020. Chief Van der Veen has had conversations with several interested members. Interviews are expected during the last week of November.

The District is having initial speed interviews on Thursday, November 19, 2020, and Friday, November 20, 2020, for entry-level and lateral firefighters. Three firefighter spots have been reserved to attend the North Bend Academy in January, 2021.

Chief Van der Veen expressed his appreciation to those who put the process together along with those who participated in the oral board panel. Chairman Ansell acknowledged Human Resources Kelly Freeman for going above and beyond throughout the entire process.

A lieutenant, captain, and training captain process are expected in the near future.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

- City of Lynden Parks Department re: Request for surplus nozzles
- Mr. & Mrs. Vernon Dorr re: Thank you for service

- Whatcom County Auditor re: 2021 Ballot Measure information add to RFA
- Northern Light article re: A salute to our first responders
- 2020 Bid Law Matrix
- The Responder: District newsletter, November issue

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**December Special Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners present are expected to attend the December 17 meeting/public hearing which will either be held at Odell Station 61 or via Zoom Meeting.

The District plans to schedule a 2021 budget study session prior to the December 17, 2020, Special Meeting. The study will review the assessed values, capital projects, mitigation, and GEMT fund recommendations.

The mitigation fund is being tracked on a spreadsheet to keep up to date of when funds come in and the deadline of when they need to be utilized.

Chairman Ansell noted that he will be out of town for the next couple of months due to family issues, however, he will be available by phone, text, and Zoom.

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

- 2018-2019 Audit
- City of Blaine Fire Marshal Interlocal Agreement
- RFA Committee Update
- 2021 Budget Approval

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** There being no further business Commissioner Crawford moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:16 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fischer and approved 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

**ATTEST:**

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Bruce Ansell, Chairman

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John Crawford, Commissioner

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Scott Fischer, Commissioner

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Kimberly McMurray, Commissioner

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Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief