

**Whatcom County Fire District #21  
via Zoom Meeting  
11:00 a.m.  
October 19, 2021  
Special Fire Commissioners Meeting**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Ansell called the special Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for October 19, 2021, to order at 11:02 a.m. via Zoom Meeting.

**ROLL CALL**

Attendees: Chairman Bruce Ansell; Vice-Chairman Rich Bosman; Commissioners John Crawford, Scott Fischer, and Kimberly McMurray; Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen; Division Chief Shaun Ward.

Other: Consultant Heather Logan; Local 106NW Representative Scott Brown.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

- None

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Meeting Minutes
  - a) September 16, 2021
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
  - a) Total Revenues – September \$210,960.73
  - b) Total Expenditures – October \$821,772.28
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
  - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$326,164.40
  - b) Payroll Taxes Voucher: \$68,069.15
  - c) Benefits Voucher: \$288,543.21
  - d) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$130,859.08
  - e) Capital Projects Apparatus: \$8,109.05

Correction: Chairman Ansell reported that a \$27.39 credit card invoice was submitted late. To avoid late fees, the invoice was added to the monthly expenditure voucher for an updated total of \$130,866.47.

Chief Van der Veen reviewed the monthly chief's report.

2022 Budget: Two 2022 budgets are currently being prepared. The budget version that will be utilized is dependent upon the levy lid lift results.

Levy Lid Lift: The “coffee with the fire chief” zoom meetings scheduled for this week have been postponed due to recent logistical issues in the admin office. It is anticipated the future meetings will move forward as scheduled.

The Fire Chief has received levy lid lift inquiries from community members via the internet and phone calls. There seems to be more public interest.

Labor is providing an increase in community outreach.

Chairman Ansell noted that it appears that the levy lid lift information is reaching more community members.

COVID 19 Vaccine Mandates: District members are in 100% compliance regarding the vaccine mandate.

Chairman Ansell commended all personnel for complying with the mandate ahead of the deadline and for showing their commitment to both the district and the community they serve.

Personnel: The four probationary members who began in January have completed pump class training and their six-month evaluation. They will now concentrate on improving both their driver and operator skills.

Recent recruit Noah Silverman is three quarters through the North Bend Academy. He continues to do well.

Lateral hire Kat Stewart has been placed on C Shift at Birch Bay Station 63. She is an excellent addition to the team.

Chief Van der Veen recognized firefighter Steve Latham for his continued mentorship of new members. He helped the recruits to navigate through the onboarding process, prepared them for the academy, and provided a great foundation for their career at North Whatcom Fire and Rescue.

Chairman Ansell expressed his appreciation to all members who assist with new recruits. He stated that it demonstrates the quality of our membership.

Chief Van der Veen recognized Lieutenant Leslee Smith for her twenty-four years of service with the district as a volunteer, career firefighter, and lieutenant. Leslee medically retired on October 1, 2021. She changed how her peers viewed leadership and was a trailblazer for women in leadership positions in the fire service.

Chairman Ansell noted that Lieutenant Smith was a massive help when he was elected to the Board. She provided valuable information about the district, and her community involvement has been a huge asset to the district. Chairman Ansell thanked Leslee for her tireless work.

Vice-Chairman Bosman echoed Chairman Ansell's sentiments and noted that he will miss her leadership within the district.

B76 Duty Coverage: Chief Van der Veen noted that commissioned officers have been given the opportunity to gain more experience as a battalion chief. The participating members have stepped to the challenge. With Chief Ward unable to provide B76 duty coverage, Chief Van der Veen expressed his appreciation to Chairman Ansell for permitting officers to take Chief Ward's duty rotation.

Training Captain: The training captain position was recently opened both internally and externally. Five external applicants have applied. It is expected that an assessment center will be scheduled sometime in January. Chief Van der Veen thanked the union for being amenable to updating the memorandum of understanding allowing the position to be opened outside the district.

### **NWFR FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS**

Commissioner Crawford reported on his participation on the 9-11 sub-committee Advisory Board. The sub-committee had been tasked with investigating whether the consolidation of the dispatch center was the best solution for everyone involved. Although it was agreed not to consolidate the two dispatch centers, with the upcoming election, new electees may want to revisit the decision in the future.

### **LEGAL ISSUES**

Nothing to report.

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

Local 106NW Representative Scott Brown stated that labor continues to support the levy lid lift through door-knocking, flag-waving, and putting up signs in the district's response area. They have heard mainly valuable feedback from the community during their door knocking activity. The biggest concern raised was the misconception regarding how big a tax increase the district would get based on the increase in property values.

Scott Brown recognized firefighter Haley Urling-Ehinger who has been vital in organizing door knocking and flag-waving dates, especially in District 4's area. There have been two hundred signs posted throughout the community.

Scott Brown thanked Consultant Heather Logan for her assistance and hard work on the levy lid lift.

Chairman Ansell reiterated that there is a misunderstanding regarding how the district receives taxes. Even with the increase in real estate values, the one percent increase the district is allowed to request if the levy does not pass is calculated against the previous year's levy, which is well below inflation (approximately \$64,000). Chairman Ansell went on to state that if there are 34,000 people in our service area, which equates to \$2.00 per person.

Scott Brown stated that he is proud of all the Local 106NW members who have all been vaccinated prior to the deadline.

Members plan to participate in handing out candy on the berm in Birch Bay on Halloween.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Levy Lid Lift:** Consultant Heather Logan provided information regarding the upcoming election which is only two weeks away. It is expected that the end result will be predicted relatively early.

Heather Logan expressed her appreciation that the union has been so visible during the levy lid lift campaign.

Heather Logan asked the commissioners to distribute the extra levy lid lift informational flyers.

Heather Logan expressed her appreciation to the entire organization for raising public awareness and building good energy moving forward. The momentum can be directed to other areas such as a future regional fire authority (RFA).

**2022 Contract for Services with District 4:** Chairman Ansell noted that there have been no additional meetings to discuss the 2022 contract for services with District 4. The direction will hinge on the outcome of the upcoming election. Since the contract will be short-term until an RFA is formed, it is expected that only the District 4 contract payment portion will be adjusted.

Chairman Ansell noted that both districts plan to move forward with an RFA, regardless of the election outcome.

In addition, the District 4 Board Chair is up for reelection, which may stifle progress on the contract unless an interim is appointed.

Two budgets are currently in draft form. It is unknown which one will be utilized until after the election. Further discussion is expected following the election.

**Law Enforcement Response Update:** Chairman Ansell noted that both the letter to Whatcom County EMS and the quick response from Mike Hilly requesting that funds be utilized to provide one or more critical response units in the county, can be found in the board packet.

The bill signed by Governor Jay Inslee deters law enforcement from responding to calls that do not involve a direct crime from one person to another and when the presence of

law enforcement may escalate a situation. The unit would respond to those types of calls law enforcement won't.

Chief Van der Veen recently met with Assistant Chief Carlson (District 1) to provide input regarding the fire service response in the future and how that might appear. Both will work with the Whatcom County Fire Chief's Association to determine how the group will respond to these types of calls, and how the increase (20%) in call volume will be funded.

Chairman Ansell noted that it looks like there may be money available through Whatcom County EMS to fund this project, which will benefit all fire districts in Whatcom County. The request included funding the project sooner rather than later.

Commissioner McMurry noted that this topic is expected to be discussed during the upcoming Fire Commissioners Annual Conference scheduled for October 21-23. An update will be reported during the next Board meeting.

Heather Logan left the meeting at 11:37 a.m.

**Facilities Update:** Chief Ward provided information regarding the current facility needs of the district.

- Birch Bay Station 63 roof repair: An inspection was included in the packet. The roof will need to be replaced in the future. In the interim, some repairs will be made as soon as possible. An annual maintenance contract will also be necessary to ensure the roof remains safe.
- Birch Bay Station 63 training and hose tower: An inspection was included in the packet. There are cracks in the structure, both internal and external. The stairs have already been replaced. The district is completing a benefits cost analysis regarding making repairs or tearing the structure down completely. Other considerations will need to be made, including mitigating any hazardous materials regardless and whether the demo will compromise the remaining station structure.
- Bay door painting project is complete.
- Touch up painting at Odell Station 61
- A bid was received for painting the Britton Loop Station 12 admin and firehouse buildings. The bid will be forwarded to District 4.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Washington State Rating Bureau (WSRB):** A site visit to reassess the district's rating will be scheduled most likely in September 2022. The district plans on having open discussions during the visit regarding our actual needs and how we can do better in the future.

Vice-Chairman Bosman voiced his appreciation to Chief Van der Veen for being transparent and focusing on the true needs of the district.

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**Policy 0400.0326.00 Mandatory Vaccinations:** Chairman Ansell noted that the draft policy was included in the September board packet for review. No comments or concerns were brought forward by labor or any of the commissioners.

The policy was drafted by the attorney with the most up-to-date information available. It is expected that the policy will need to be updated to reflect additional federal mandates. Since the district receives Medicare, Medicaid, and Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) funds, the mandates must be followed.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Fischer moved to approve Policy 0400.0326.00 Mandatory Vaccinations as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Bosman and approved 5-0.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

- To Mike Hilley re: County critical response team
- From Mike Hilley re: County critical response team
- WSRB re: Re-rate
- Whatcom County Auditor re: 2022 Property Tax Levies
- Whatcom County Auditor re: 2021 August election fees
- Whatcom County Public Works re: Public Work's delayed response likely during winter storms
- Elisabeth Flannery re: Thank you for service
- Healthy Pet re: Thank you for service
- Janet Wright re: Thank you for service
- Vickie Rasmussen re: Thank you for service, donation
- Carole Garman re: Thank you for flowers for husband's memorial
- Cindy Coleman re: Mandatory vaccinations
- Nathan Grover re: Mandatory vaccinations
- Daily Dispatch re: Levy lid lift
- Northern Light article re: Levy lid lift
- Bellingham Herald article re: Barn fire
- Lynden Tribune article re: Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen
- Northern Light articles re: National Night Out
- Northern Light article re: Salute to first responders
- The Responder: District newsletter, October issue

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**November Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners present are expected to attend the November 18, 2021, meeting, most likely via Zoom Meeting. The time will be changed from 1:00 p.m. to 11:00 a.m.

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

- Levy Lid Lift
- Contract for Services with District 4

- Law Enforcement Response
- Facilities Update
- Possible Public Hearing
- City of Blaine Fire Marshal Interlocal Agreement (*tabled*)
- Assistant Chief Process (*tabled*)

**SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Bosman moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:56 a.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fischer 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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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