

**Whatcom County Fire District #21**  
**via Zoom Meeting**  
**11:00 a.m.**  
**February 17, 2022**  
**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 February 17, 2022, to order at 11:05 a.m. via Zoom Meeting.

**ROLL CALL**

Attendees: Chairman Bruce Ansell; Commissioners Rich Bosman and Kimberly McMurray; Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen; Division Chief Shaun Ward; Local 106NW Representative Scott Brown.

Vice-Chairman John Crawford and Commissioner Scott Fischer were both excused.

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR SURPLUS OF DISTRICT PROPERTY**

Chairman Ansell opened the public hearing at 11:05 a.m. to hear comments regarding the surplus of station Wisner Lake Station 70 – 633 E. Wisner Lake Rd, Lynden WA 98264.

*“Due to public health concerns and the CDC’s guidelines for social distancing, the public will not be permitted to physically attend the Commission meeting in person. In addition, and as a result of Governor Inslee’s latest proclamation, the Board will not be meeting in person and have made arrangements to have their meeting via Zoom Webinar.”*

An advertisement promoting the public hearing was placed in the local newspaper, and information was placed on the district’s website following the Thursday, January 20, 2022, meeting.

In addition, Chief Van der Veen stated that the attorney for the district informed him that the Board was under no legal obligation to have a public hearing for this particular topic. Regardless, and for transparency, the decision was made to proceed with the public hearing believing it to be in the community’s best interest.

No written public comments were received, and the two community members attending the meeting by Zoom and phone did not request to comment.

Chairman Ansell stated that the public hearing is specific to the surplus and sale of Wisner Lake Station 70 located at 633 E. Wisner Lake Rd, Lynden, WA 98264. Comments will be restricted to these topics. The Board will not be responding to questions or challenges. Each participant will be provided a maximum of 3 minutes to comment. Please identify yourself, spell your name and provide your physical address.

**PUBLIC STATEMENT**

No public statement

**RECONVENE INTO REGULAR MEETING**

Chairman Ansell closed the public hearing and reconvened the regular meeting at 11:11 a.m.

**Resolution 2022-02 Surplus Wisner Lake Station 70:** Chief Van der Veen read the resolution aloud.

Chairman Ansell noted there had been a lengthy discussion regarding the surplus of Wisner Lake Station 70 during the last meeting where Vice-Chairman Crawford seconded the motion to move forward with the intent to surplus the station. In addition, Chairman Ansell had discussed the agenda item with Commissioner Fischer, who has been absent due to medical reasons and is not opposed to the surplus of Wisner Lake Station 70. Given that both commissioners supported moving forward, Chairman Ansell stated that he had no intention of delaying the process.

Neither Commissioners Bosman nor McMurray take the surplus of the station lightly and agree that it makes the most sense fiscally for the district to sell the station, primarily since it is not being utilized and is costly to maintain.

Chairman Ansell reviewed the Emergency Services Consulting International's (ESCI) 2020 master plan review of the district, specifically regarding Wisner Lake Station 70, built in 1994.

*"Station 70 is considered to be in fair to good condition. It does not have facilities for 24-hour staffing, including sleeping quarters, laundry, or bunker gear extraction. The facility does not have an exhaust system for apparatus. Currently, this facility provides limited service to the District."*

*"Station 70 has no room for full-time staff, has no volunteers assigned to it, and does not currently provide any value to NWFR. ESCI recommends that the District sell the property and use the funds for more important priorities."*

Chairman Ansell visited the station, which is located in a residential area. He noted that the station does not have good road access. The area is currently covered within our five-minute response time by other facilities. Residents did not provide any comments during the multiple levy lid lift public hearings. Chairman Ansell further noted that this area's precinct (144-145) data from the last two elections shows a seventy-three percent (73%) overall no vote for the district's levy lid lift propositions. Given how the citizens in that area voted, Chairman Ansell was not expecting any objections to the surplus of the station from the public.

Chief Van der Veen agreed with the ESCI report, stating that the facility has not been utilized other than for storage purposes for the past ten to twelve years. He further noted that there has not been a robust volunteer response, and it is not worth spending money for insurance and maintenance on a vacant station. With auto aide agreements between multiple agencies in place, the area will continue to be covered by the City of Lynden and Laurel Station 69.

Revenue from the station's sale will be used to purchase two new tenders that will compliment the aging fleet utilized district wide. Chief Van der Veen informed the spectators that the Washington Survey and Rating Bureau (WSRB) will be rerating the district in 2022, and with the aging tender fleet, it is expected to dramatically impact the rating. Some of the current tenders are thirty-plus years old. The purchase of new tenders and surplus of the aged vehicles may also positively impact the rating.

Chairman Ansell once again referenced the ESCI report regarding the condition of the district's tenders.

Tender 12	1999	S & S	Fair
Tender 61	1986	Van Pelt	Poor
Tender 63	1994	Pierce	Good
Tender 68	1998	H & W	Fair
Tender 6802	1999	S & S	Fair
Tender 69	1998	H & W	Fair
Tender 72	1992	Pierce	Poor
Tender 6803	1990	Pierce	Poor

*"The combined average mileage of the tenders was 22,700 miles, with three of the eight rated as "Poor," four rated as "Fair," and one as "Good."*

In 2021, the tenders' maintenance costs alone were \$23,500 and \$11,700 in 2020. Chairman Ansell pointed out that the district is spending a lot of money on the tenders, and in some cases, parts can no longer be located for the older apparatus.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McMurray moved to approve Resolution 2022-02 Surplus of Wisner Lake Station 70. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bosman and approved 3-0.

Chief Van der Veen will follow up with real estate agent Mike Kent regarding the next steps.

#### **APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Meeting Minutes
  - a) January 20, 2022 – Regular
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
  - a) Total Revenue – January \$97,451.06
  - b) Total Expenditures – February \$775,985.98
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
  - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$347,912.96
  - b) Payroll Taxes Voucher: \$74,515.31
  - c) Benefits Voucher: \$204,193.38
  - d) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$144,600.60
  - e) Expenditure Voucher (2<sup>nd</sup> set): \$2,673.92
  - f) Capital Projects Apparatus: \$2,089.81

Chief Van der Veen announced that new Training Captain Mike Finley began on Tuesday, February 15, 2022. He is expected to attend the March meeting.

Covid-19 illnesses hit hard within the district in January, but members are all back at work with no lasting effects.

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

## **NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS**

Commissioner McMurray reviewed the City of Blaine Council Meeting agenda on Monday, February 14, 2022. Since there was nothing pertinent to the district, she did not attend. Commissioner McMurray will continue to review the agendas.

Chairman Ansell and Chief Van der Veen had a follow-up meeting with concerned community member Margo Savell. After the recent levy lid lift failure, Ms. Savell offered to volunteer her time and assist the district utilizing her vast knowledge and expertise in public messaging. After reviewing district data surrounding the election, she has developed a strategy regarding how the message resonated with the community and how to expand public outreach and gain their support in the future. Chairman Ansell and Chief Van der Veen will continue to work with Ms. Savell. Chairman Ansell expressed his appreciation for her commitment.

With the library levy not passing with the required sixty percent (60%) approval rate, Chairman Ansell suggested that the district will most likely need to stick with a proposal which will only require a fifty percent (50%) plus one vote threshold.

Commissioner McMurray offered to attend a free community risk reduction workshop put on by State Fire Marshal's Office on Tuesday, March 8, 2022. Topics will include:

- What is Community Risk Reduction?
- Why is Community Risk Reduction important?
- Community Risk Reduction is not a new concept.
- Is your department onboard?

The Board agreed. Chief Van der Veen is hopeful that workshop will also discuss concepts for small fire departments that could help with the WSRB ratings in the future. Commissioner McMurray will provide a report during the next meeting.

## **LEGAL ISSUES**

No report.

## **IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT**

Local 106NW Representative Scott Brown congratulated members David Comp and David Hancock for completing their paramedic training. They have officially moved from North Whatcom Fire and Rescue to Bellingham Fire Department, where they will begin their new roles as paramedics.

Scott Brown noted that he is looking forward to working with the new training captain and seeing what he will bring to the district.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for extending the Acting Battalion Chief (B76) was approved during the last union meeting. The MOU Vaccine Mandate was not approved.

The union will be sending a letter of intent to open contract discussions in the near future.

Chairman Ansell recently met with 106NW leader Kenneth Cunningham regarding the MOU Vaccine Mandate. The MOU will be readdressed during the upcoming executive session.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**District 4 Plan of Action:** Chairman Ansell recently met in person with Chief Van der Veen and District 4 Commissioner Cooley. Discussions included the future direction of both entities. The District 4 Board understands that financially they will not be capable of providing the current level of service after this year unless there is some type of increase in their levy or a change in their contractual agreement. District 4 is committed to re-engaging in discussions for future service.

Chairman Ansell noted that he impressed by Commissioner Cooley dedication and is hopeful that a lot can be accomplished in their short timeline.

Chairman Ansell reiterated that District 4 needs a complete board before any official Regional Fire Authority (RFA) discussions can be resumed. Notifications have been distributed to the District 4 constituents seeking an interim fire commissioner and interviews are expected to occur in the latter part of February.

**Future Funding:** Chief Van der Veen recently met with financial consultant Bill Cushman to discuss financial planning. Bill Cushman is currently developing a financial levy rerate model for both districts. The District 4 model will show the expected increase in payments to District 21 should they continue to contract for services and what their revenue will need to be going forward. Once complete, Chief Van der Veen will present those findings to the board, specifically the least amount needed for District 4 to continue to pay their bills.

Chief Van der Veen group planning meetings will commence in the near future and will include consultant Karen Reed. Another meeting with Bill Cushman is scheduled for Friday, February 18, 2022. Since time is of the essence, it was decided during former meetings to have one commissioner from each district participate (*Chairman Ansell & Commissioner Cooley*) in the meetings. They will report back to their respective boards for discussion, direction, and approval. At some point both boards may need to participate in a special or joint meeting.

Information will be disseminated as it becomes available.

Chief Van der Veen recently reviewed an article released by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regarding a nationwide report of alternative funding sources for fire and ems districts. In two papers, their research indicated that the highest performing, best fire departments use alternative funding sources in addition to tax revenues. Chief Van der Veen will continue to do more research to gain knowledge of other agencies' strategies.

**Facilities and Maintenance:** Chief Ward provided an update of the district facilities.

Odell Station 61: Bids are being collected to repair the sprinkler heads which froze and broke, causing flooding on the north side of the bay where bunker gear was stored.

Birch Bay Station 63: There was extensive damage to the dry system in the tower. Chief Ward received a variance from the County to disconnect that portion of the system since the cost to repair the system would be immense.

The HVAC system upgrade is in the final stages of completion.

Semiahmoo Station 62: A contractor will be providing a bid on the extensive water damage and final clean-up from the previous flood damage to the station.

The district is in the process of updating the phone system. The old system was installed pre-2005. On December 31, 2021, the supporting business shut down with no prior notice. At this time, voice mail works intermittently, which is not acceptable for government business.

After some extended research, the district has made the decision to utilize a company called Intermedia. The district's tech support company is familiar with them and will be able to assist with phone issues moving forward. The other system will not be permanently shut down until the new system is working well.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Division Chief of Support Services Contract:** Chairman Ansell stated that the division chief of support services position was offered to Chief Ward following a period of apprenticeship. The contract is similar to the fire chief's. Chief Ward has demonstrated his capabilities in this role and can manage the workload.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McMurray moved to approve the Division Chief of Support Services Contract as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bosman and approved 3-0.

**Human Resource Manager Job Description:** Chairman Ansell noted that he is more than satisfied with the job description presented. The other board members concurred. The position encompasses an enormous amount of responsibility. The person currently in the position is more than capable, and the hope is that Kelly Freeman will remain in the role for a long time.

Chairman Ansell expects that all job descriptions will be modified to the same easy-to-read format in the near future.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Bosman moved to approve the Human Resource Manager Job Description as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McMurray and approved 3-0.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

- To Local 106 President re: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) response
- Lynden Tribune article re: Birch Bay Lynden Rd. accident
- Lynden Tribune article re: Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen
- Northern Light article re: NWFR & District 4 future funding
- Father Francis Thumbi re: Thank you for service
- Whatcom County Auditor re: November 2021 election results
- To Fire District 14 Fire Commissioner Graham re: BLS Funding
- The Responder: District newsletter, February issue

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**March Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners present are expected to attend the March 17 meeting, most likely via Zoom Meeting. It is anticipated that both Vice-Chairman Crawford and Commissioner Fischer will be able to attend. Chairman Ansell will be out of town, although he will be available via Zoom.

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

- Conference McMurray report
- District 4 Update
- Future Funding
- Wisner Lake Station 70
- Facilities and Maintenance

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Chairman Ansell recessed the meeting for an Executive Session, per *RCW 42.30.140(4)(a) Collective bargaining sessions with employee organizations, including contract negotiations, grievance meetings, and discussions relating to the interpretation or application of a labor agreement; or (b) that portion of a meeting during which the governing body is planning or adopting the strategy or position to be taken by the governing body during the course of any collective bargaining, professional negotiations, or grievance or mediation proceedings, or reviewing the proposals made in the negotiations or proceedings while in progress.*"

at 11:55 p.m. for approximately ten minutes until 12:05 p.m. Chief Van der Veen remained for the executive session.

## **MEETING RECONVENED**

Chairman Ansell called the regular meeting back into open session at 12:05 p.m. The Board discussed some minor changes to the MOU Vaccine Mandate during the executive session. Once the District's attorney makes the changes, a copy of the document will be forwarded to the union for their review.

## **SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** There being no further business, Chairman Ansell moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:07 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bosman and approved 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

---

Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

**ATTEST:**

---

Bruce Ansell, Chairman

---

John Crawford, Vice-Chairman

---

Rich Bosman, Commissioner

---

Scott Fischer, Commissioner

---

Kimberly McMurray, Commissioner

---

Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief