

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

ROLL CALL

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

GUEST SPEAKER

Paul Wagner, a representative of Baja Bridges, provided information regarding the seven-year-old organization. The organization locates and secures used equipment (bunker gear, self-contained breathing apparatus) and apparatus for purchase or donation from all over the U.S., needed in small rural fire departments, from the Baja Peninsula to Cabos San Lucas. The local agencies conduct fundraisers to cover the cost of the equipment. Baja Bridges also provides any associated training as needed.

Vice-Chairman Crawford noted that he had become aware of the organization through his work with Firefighters Crossing Borders. Baja Bridges works in conjunction with Firefighters Crossing Borders.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) February 17, 2022 – Public Hearing
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
 - a) Total Revenue – February \$304,280.63
 - b) Total Expenditures – March \$720,624.11
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$322,165.53
 - b) Payroll Taxes Voucher: \$66,686.25
 - c) Benefits Voucher: \$205,708.06
 - d) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$80,235.07
 - e) Capital Projects Facilities: \$45,829.20

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

With respect to community concerns regarding additional monies that the fire department may receive due to tax increases, Chairman Ansell shared his property tax statement for 2022. He noted that his increase to the fire department tax for 2022 is \$1.25 per month.

NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS

Commissioner McMurray attended a free Community Risk Reduction (CCR) workshop hosted by the State Fire Marshal's Office on Tuesday, March 8, 2022. Commissioner McMurry noted that a lot of good information and conversations surrounded:

- What is CCR?
- Why is CCR important?

A six-step approach was reviewed:

1. Identify risks
2. Prioritize risks
3. Develop strategies & tactics to mitigate risks
4. Prepare the plan
5. Implement the program
6. Monitor, evaluate & modify plan

The CCR program is a proactive program that could go a long way in building a repour with the community. Programs under the CCR plan could include home safety visits, senior safe programs, medication safety, smoke alarm inspections, fire hazard awareness in homes and educating school children.

Commissioner McMurray noted that the majority of calls the district responds to are medically related (65-75%).

Commissioner McMurray agreed to provide a more detailed outline of the program to the Board.

The Whatcom County Fire Commissioner's Association Meeting was held on Wednesday, March 9, 2022. The meeting focused on BLS funding, the community paramedic gift card program and the upcoming County EMS levy. Both Vice-Chairman Crawford and Commissioner McMurray attended the meeting.

LEGAL ISSUES

No report.

IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT

Local 106NW Representative Scott Brown noted that two members have completed their paramedic training and have made the transition to the City of Bellingham.

A letter is expected to be sent to the district sometime in April regarding the union's intent to begin contract negotiations.

The district is currently down to five and soon to be six members. The hope is that the district will consider hiring in the near future.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

District 4 Update: The District 4 Board passed a resolution to surplus equipment no longer needed.

The Board remains down one fire commissioner. The deadline to appoint an interim fire commissioner is March 31, 2022. If the Board fails to appoint a new Board member, the Whatcom County Auditor will appoint a commissioner to fill the position. Since their next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 18, 2022, the Board will need to hold a special meeting to appoint an interim fire commissioner.

District 4 Vice-Chair Cooley, District 21 Chair Ansell, Chief Van der Veen, and Consultant Karen Reed met to discuss the future of both districts. The conclusion was that there is no future without a Regional Fire Authority (RFA). A merger would not be beneficial since it only reduces the overall levy rate for the district. A levy lid lift requires sixty percent approval and previous attempts have failed.

Given that District 4 needs a third fire commissioner to officially move forward, the group will focus on public outreach in 2022, including articles in local papers. A variety of opinion articles will hopefully open up dialogue with the community. Information such as monthly response graphs and postcard survey comments are also being included in the district newsletter.

The RFA levy rate would most likely be set based on the day-to-day operations of the district. Additional funds would be requested at a later time for equipment or station upgrades. Since most of the RFA plan is complete, the hope is to move forward with an RFA ballot measure in the 2023 election.

Commissioner Bosman noted that other agencies might also consider following the RFA path in the future.

Future Funding: Chief Van der Veen noted that Financial Consultant Bill Cushman is creating financial models for each district in relation to their day-to-day cost needs. Currently, District 4's combined levy rate is \$.94. If District 4 remains in a contract with District 21, their break-even levy rate through 2029 has been calculated at \$1.10. Other future district significant capital request needs would then need to be met through bonds (*commissioner indebted or voter-approved*).

The District 21 financial model will drive the levy for the RFA. Other considerations include a fee for service model, which could impede future levy requests. Additional information is expected during the next meeting.

Both Chief Van der Veen and Commissioner McMurray pointed out that if the fire department is more visible in the community prior to a time of need going forward, such as a CCR program, it may create additional goodwill.

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

Birch Bay Station 63: The HVAC project is complete.

Semiahmoo Station 62: An evaluation of the station is scheduled for early next week to discover the extent of the identified water damage in the structure itself. Other issues include rot under the stairs and recalled LP siding that will need to be replaced. The station was owned by the City of Blaine when the recall took place. The cost to reside the station will be monumental.

Wiser Like Station 71 Listing Documents: Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding the listing documents from Windemere. The documents need to be signed before the facility can be listed on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS). Chief Van der Veen noted that the district's attorney has also reviewed the documents.

MOTION: Commissioner Bosman moved to authorize Fire Chief Van der Veen to sign the listing documents for Wiser Lake Station 70. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Crawford and approved 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2022-03 Surplus Bunker Gear: Chief Van der Veen noted that two surplus sets of bunker gear will outfit the two former firefighters who recently became Bellingham medics. The former member's gear has been prorated and will be sold to Bellingham once the resolution is approved.

MOTION: Commissioner Fischer moved to approve Resolution 2022-03 Surplus Bunker Gear. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bosman and approved 5-0.

Resolution 2022-04 Cancellation of Warrants: Chief Van der Veen noted that these canceled warrant requests are for the entire year of 2021 and a requirement for auditing purposes.

MOTION: Commissioner Fischer moved to approve Resolution 2022-04 Surplus Equipment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bosman and approved 5-0.

Resolution 2022-05 Surplus Equipment: Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding vehicles that are no longer a benefit to the district, due to either high mileage or engine maintenance issues.

- 1994 WS Darley Fire Engine
- 2008 Ford/Braun Ambulance
- 2000 Ford/Braun Ambulance
- 2005 GMC Van
- 2009 Ford/Braun Ambulance

Chief Van der Veen noted that the resolution would allow the district to auction, sell, or donate the vehicles. A letter was included in the correspondence from Baja Bridges expressing a need for equipment at fire stations in Mexico. They are particularly interested in purchasing the two ambulances.

Attorney Richard Davis had communicated via email that although the district is not obligated to advertise the vehicles, it will be beneficial to have documentation that clearly demonstrates the nominal value of the aid cars, similar to the final selling price.

Vice-Chairman Crawford and Chief Van der Veen will work with the Baja Bridges regarding the sale of two aid units and to ensure that all auditing requirements are completed.

MOTION: Commissioner McMurray moved to approve Resolution 2022-04 Surplus Equipment. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Crawford and approved 5-0.

2021 Budget Amendment: Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding the proposed budget amendment to ensure that the Board understands and approves of how all the budget monies were utilized in 2021. Overall, it was noted that in 2021, the district came in two-point-five percent (2.5%) under budget.

MOTION: Commissioner Fischer moved to approve the 2021 Budget Amendment as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Crawford and approved 5-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Cascadia Daily News article re: NWFR future funding
- From Firefighters Crossing Borders re: NWFR donation
- From Lake Whatcom Treatment Center re: Thank you for service
- Northern Light article re: Regional Fire Authority
- Northern Light article re: Birch Bay structure fire
- From Baja Bridges re: Need for equipment
- Brian Snure Seminar
- The Responder: District newsletter, March issue

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **April Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners, with the exception of Commissioner Fischer, are expected to attend the April 21 meeting in person at Odell Station 61.
- **Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) Filing Deadline:** April 15, 2022
- **Fire Commissioner Required Training:** There was discussion regarding fire commissioner refresher training that must be completed every four years per RCW 52.56.150. The Board Secretary will investigate whether the 2020 Snure Seminar taken by some members will count as training and relay the findings back to the Board.

An upcoming training scheduled for Saturday, April 2, 2022, includes an online option that meets the statutory Open Public Records and Open Public Meetings training requirements. Fire commissioners can also obtain training at no charge through the State Attorney General's online classes.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- District 4 Update
- Wiser Lake Station 70
- Facilities and Maintenance

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 12:04 p.m. for approximately fifteen minutes until 12:19 p.m. Chief Van der Veen and Division Chief Ward remained for the executive session. No action is expected.

MEETING RECONVENED

Chairman Ansell called the regular meeting back into open session at 12:15 p.m. No action was taken.

SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business, Commissioner Fischer moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:18 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bosman and approved 5-0.

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