

Whatcom County Fire District #21
via Zoom Meeting
1:00 pm
March 18, 2021
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 18, 2021, to order at 1:03 p.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.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

NEW BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) February 18, 2021
 - b) February 25, 2021 - special
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
 - a) Total Revenues - February \$682,165.45
 - b) Total Expenditures –March \$1,118,829.02
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$329,235.04
 - b) Payroll Taxes Voucher: \$67,761.50
 - c) Benefits Voucher: \$214,356.05
 - d) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$120,957.53
 - e) Capital Projects Apparatus: \$386,518.90

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

NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS

Commissioner Crawford provided information regarding the Whatcom County Fire Commissioners Association (WCFCA) meeting held on Wednesday, March 10, 2021.

The WCFCA has requested assistance with the upcoming 2022 Whatcom County EMS levy. Anyone interested can contact Whatcom County EMS Manager Mike Hille.

Commissioner Crawford will forward the minutes from the meeting when they become available.

In the past, the North Whatcom County area reports (Region 5) were completed by a group of commissioners and fire chiefs, and the gathered fire district information was forwarded to the state twice a year. These reports have not been completed for some time, which may be in part due to the pandemic. Commissioner Crawford has been tasked with restarting those meetings once the pandemic restrictions are relaxed and the meetings can take place in person. Commissioner Crawford will keep everyone up to date. When the time comes, Chief Van der Veen and Administrative Assistant Jennie Sand will help coordinate those meeting.

Commissioner Crawford announced that the 9-11 Board meeting has been postponed until April 1, 2021, at 1:00 p.m.

IAFF LOCAL 106NW MONTHLY REPORT

Chairman Ansell announced that he and Chief Van der Veen recently met with the new Local 106NW representatives, Chris Hollander and Scott Brown. He reported that the meet and greet had been positive and it is expected that both groups will continue their open dialogue and supportive relationship.

LEGAL ISSUES

Nothing to report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Regional Fire Authority (RFA): Chairman Ansell provided information regarding the RFA meeting held on Tuesday, March 9, 2021.

Since it had been approved during a previous RFA Committee meeting, District 4 Chairman Hanson suggested that both Boards pass a formal motion to continue to split any RFA associated costs equally between the districts.

September 24, 2020, RFA Committee Meeting: “*Commissioner Crawford moved to have both boards split any costs associated with the regional fire authority 50-50. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Fischer and approved 6-0*”.

Chief Van der Veen noted that during the District 4 Board Meeting held on Thursday, March 11, 2021, concerns were brought up regarding the discrepancy in the number of mailers each district will need to send out to households and if those costs should be divided based on district size. One of the District 4 Fire Commissioners noted that it was more important that the information be disseminated, specifically in District 4’s response area, since their levy increase will be potentially higher than District 21’s.

It is expected that Chairman Ansell, District 4 Chairman Hanson, and Chief Van der Veen will meet for additional dialogue prior to the next District 4 Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 14, 2021.

Chairman Ansell stated that when the RFA planning first began, both districts had agreed to split all RFA associated costs as stated in the official September 24, 2020, RFA Planning meeting minutes. The Board has moved forward with that assumption. Chairman Ansell noted that he is in favor of pointing out the “gentleperson’s agreement” during the next RFA meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 23, 2021.

MOTION: Chairman Ansell moved to reiterate the Board’s understanding to have both boards split any costs associated with the Regional Fire Authority 50-50 during the next RFA meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 23, 2021. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crawford and approved 5-0.

Assistant Chief Process: Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding the progress of the permanent assistant chief’s process. An information flyer outlining District and area information has been completed. Following the job description approval, the position will be posted both internally and externally in the near future.

Chief Van der Veen noted that there are some qualified internal candidates interested in the position.

Facilities: Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding the facility repairs.

Currently, the district is involved in finalizing the aid car purchasing process and RFA planning, which has put some station repairs on hold.

Outside lighting at both Northwood Station 72 and Birch Bay Station 63 have been upgraded.

It is expected that a repair list will be finalized on Semiahmoo Station 62 in the near future.

NEW BUSINESS

Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) Deadline: Chairman Ansell reminded the Board that the deadline to file is April 15, 2021. The Public Disclosure Commission was created and empowered by Initiative of the People to provide timely and meaningful public access to accurate information about the financing of political campaigns, lobbyist expenditures, and the financial affairs of public officials and candidates, and to ensure compliance with and equitable enforcement of Washington's disclosure and campaign finance laws.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Policy 0400.0002.02 Assistant Chief: Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding the revised assistant chief's job description. The policy was reviewed by Attorney Richard Davis and Chairman Ansell. The policy/job description contains elements of previous operations and training chief's positions.

There was discussion regarding the elimination of language, "*directing fire suppression and emergency medical care efforts.*" Chief Van der Veen noted that hopefully with the addition of battalion chiefs in the draft RFA Plan, the assistant chief can offer higher-level supervision without delving into company-level operations. The assistant chief will be better utilized as overall incident command, allowing the company officers/battalion chiefs to make decisions, grow and utilize their talents more effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Chairman Ansell noted that the responsibility of "*directing fire suppression and emergency medical care efforts*" was not eliminated and will be utilized on larger scale incidents such as the recent train derailment.

5.2.1 "*Develops and maintains an effective emergency response system to provide the Fire District with the established levels of service as defined by the Board of Fire Commissioners in the delivery of hazard mitigation and emergency medical services.*"

5.2.2 "*Responds to major incidents when requested and may assume command of the incident when appropriate. May be assigned other areas within the Incident Management System as designated by the Incident Commander.*"

Vice-Chairman Bosman noted that eliminating the language will give authority to the company officers/battalion chiefs, allowing them to make decisions without feeling like they are being micromanaged.

Although policies are only required for financial impacts to the District, Chief Van der Veen requested approval since this policy is tied to the voter approval of the RFA.

MOTION: Commissioner Fischer moved to approve revised Policy 0400.0002.02 Assistant Chief as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Bosman and approved 5-0.

Policy 0400.0006.03 Shift Lieutenant: Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding the revised shift lieutenant's job description. This policy has not been updated since 2007 and with a promotional process in the near future, it is crucial to correct any discrepancies, including required certifications and how courses may be taken.

In addition, the fire chief cannot waive any of the required qualifications (training, education, and experience), ensuring that the lieutenants have the necessary training prior to moving up the ranks.

It was agreed to send the last page of the policy to the attorney for review. Since it is not utilized and only outlines the chain of command and the synopsis of the position, it will most likely be removed.

The labor representatives have also reviewed the shift lieutenant's job description and have not expressed any concerns.

Due to the inconsistencies of the old lieutenant's job description, the promotional process has been put on hold until the revised policy is approved. The position will be reposted, and all candidates have been informed of the delay and reasoning behind the postponement. It is vital that all commissioned officers complete a clear and sanctioned process that will set all future lieutenants up for success.

Chief Van der Veen noted that feedback from the members regarding the rationale behind the postponement has been positive.

Both the shift and training captain's promotional process will continue as scheduled. A retirement in late June will open up a shift captain's position and the training captain position has been vacant for the past year. Additional lieutenants will not be needed until those positions are filled.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Bosman moved to approve Policy 0400.0006.03 Shift Lieutenant as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fischer and approved 5-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

- To Lieutenant Jeff Hofstad re: Letter of Appreciation for the in-house officer training class
- Lynden Tribune article re: Bender Rd. garage fire
- Sandy O'Neil re: Thank you for service
- Kristi Martin re: Thank you for service
- D4 Commissioner Dave Hanson re: Disclosure of lawsuits, liabilities, and indebtedness
- The Responder: District newsletter, March issue

Chairman Ansell asked Chief Van der Veen to pass along the Board's appreciation to Lieutenant Hofstad for his involvement in the officer training class.

Chairman Ansell recognized Van der Veen for his continued leadership and direction. Since he has become the fire chief, members are more excited about their jobs, learning their craft, and stepping up to assist when needed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

April Board Meeting Attendance Query: All Commissioners present are expected to attend the April 15, 2021 meeting via Zoom Meeting.

Fire Commissioner Candidate Filing Announcement: The deadline for candidate filing for the upcoming election is May 17-21, 2021.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- City of Blaine Fire Marshal Interlocal Agreement
- RFA Planning Committee Update
- Assistant Chief Process
- Facilities Update

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 1:43 p.m. for at least thirty minutes until 2:20 p.m., following a five-minute break. Action is not expected to be taken. Chief Van der Veen remained for the executive session.

Chairman Ansell extended the executive session at 2:23 p.m. for another ten minutes.

MEETING RECONVENED

Chairman Ansell called the regular meeting back into open session at 2:41 p.m. Action will not be taken.

SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business Commissioner Crawford moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:42 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fischer and approved 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

ATTEST:

Bruce Ansell, Chairman

Rich Bosman, Vice-Chairman

John Crawford, Commissioner

Scott Fischer, Commissioner

Kimberly McMurray, Commissioner

Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief