

**Whatcom County Fire District #21  
Station 61 – Blaine  
9408 Odell Street, Blaine WA 98230  
1:00 pm  
August 15, 2019  
Regular Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Bosman called the regular Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for August 15, 2019 to order at 1:02 p.m. at Station 61 – 9408 Odell Street, Blaine, WA 98230.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL**

Attendees: Chairman Rich Bosman; Vice-Chairman Bruce Ansell; Commissioners Larry McPhail and John Crawford; Interim Fire Chief Joe Noonchester; Division Chief Herschel Rostov; Attorney Rich Davis.

Commissioner Berkeley was not excused from this meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Kathy Berg, 7585 Sterling Ave, Blaine: Kathy Berg and good friend Doralee Booth, both Birch Bay residents, requested to be involved with the districts' master plan development. Both community members have been very involved with Birch Bay comprehensive plans for the past twenty years and desire to be involved with the planning process prior to any public hearings.

Chairman Bosman thanked Kathy Berg for her comments and noted that the district does expect to have community input developing the master plan.

Chief Rostov noted that Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) typically involves community members from all levels during the development stages prior to completing a final version.

- Henry Hollander, 3980 Pipeline Rd., Blaine: Former Division Chief Henry Hollander expressed his appreciation for his recent retirement ceremony and barbeque organized by the district.

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Meeting Minutes
  - a) July 20, 2019  
Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Fire Marshal / Prevention
2. Financial Report / Revenue

- a) Total Revenue – July \$413,565.20
- b) Total Expenditures – August \$604,364.17
- 3. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
  - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$322,970.10
  - b) Benefits Voucher: \$192,411.42
  - c) Monthly Expenditure Vouchers: \$88,982.65

Vice-Chairman Ansell requested information regarding the current overtime budget. Chief Noonchester noted that while the overtime budget will be exceeded prior to the end of the year, the current vacancies will compensate for the difference. Chief Noonchester noted that the crews are stepping up and filling overtime, enabling the district to continue to maintain minimum staffing levels.

In addition, Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that the districts' call volume continues to rise in 2019, which according to Chief Noonchester, is not a direct result of the Bellingham auto aide agreement as suspected. Chief Noonchester noted that the bulk of the increases are located in the Birch Bay and Blaine areas, possibly due to the time of year, growth and increased tourism.

The district has had multiple call backs during demanding times to ensure that the district remains adequately covered. The chiefs will continue to monitor the situation and meet to discuss strategies for the remainder of the year.

**MOTION:** Chairman Bosman moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McPhail and approved 4-0.

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

- **City of Bellingham Proposed District 4 Annexation:** Vice-Chairman Ansell, District 4 Commissioner Andrews and Chief Noonchester attended the Britton Road / Northern Heights proposed annexation on July 30, 2019. The City of Bellingham has proposed a 142 acre annexation which includes the Britton Loop Station 12 admin office, training grounds and fire station. The process could take up to fourteen months to complete.

Vice-Chairman Ansell sent out a response to the members regarding possible ramifications. Vice-Chairman Ansell stated that the main goal is for the district to continue to provide excellent service and to not lose firefighter positions.

The Board, chiefs and the labor group will continue to monitor the situation closely.

- **Blaine City Council:** Chief Noonchester attend the Blaine City Council Meeting on Monday, July 22, where he recognized Division Chief / Fire Marshal Rostov

for successfully completing the Center for Public Safety Excellence's (CPSE) process that awards the professional designation of "Fire Marshal" (FM).

Chief Rostov attends all the Blaine City Council meetings providing information on the districts' current activities, chiefs' report and newsletter.

## **IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT**

- None

## **LEGAL ISSUES**

- None

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- **Master Plan:** Chief Noonchester provided an update regarding the progress of the district master plan being conducted by Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI).

At this time all pertinent district information has been provided to ESCI by each division. ESCI is in the process of compiling the first portion of their report. ESCI will conduct site visits to interview line staff, admin, commissioners as well as the public in the near future.

Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that the master plan should provide a recommendation to where administration should be located within the district.

Chief Noonchester noted that ESCI case manager John Stouffer, is aware of the potential annexation and current issues as they move forward with developing a master plan. Chief Noonchester will keep the Board updated.

- **Ground Emergency Medical Transportation Program (GEMT) Update:** Chief Noonchester provided an update regarding collecting the anticipated reimbursement check(s) from GEMT. The district continues to wait for the last reimbursement request. Chief Noonchester will contact the Board upon its arrival. The district has already filed the necessary documents for next years' reimbursement. *(The payment arrived Monday, August 26, 2019)*
- **Paramedic Consortium:** Chief Noonchester provided an update regarding the paramedic consortium timeline:
  - Friday, August 16, 2019 – application deadline
  - Monday, August 19, 2019 – written test general EMT knowledge
  - Tuesday, August 20, 2019 – panel interview
  - Thursday, August 22, 2019 – chiefs interview
  - End of August - Anatomy and Physiology class begins
  - January, 2020 – Paramedic course begins at Bellingham Technical Institute

For consistency, the district will utilize the already established Bellingham Fire Department and Fire District 7 testing process.

Four applicants have applied for the two positions.

- **Sweet Rd. Hughes Ave. Road Closure:** Chief Rostov provided an update regarding the traffic congestion at Sweet Rd. and Hughes Ave. The project is mostly complete and all vehicles have had access for the past two weeks.
- **Contract Negotiations:** Vice-Chairman Ansell noted that he continues with pre-negotiation preparation meetings prior to the upcoming contract negotiations. The meetings are going well with the lead negotiator having a lot of good experience and excellent ideas. Another meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 27, 2019. Both management and labor are expected to have their combined initial meeting in September. The Board will have further discussions during the executive session.
- **Interlocal Agreement with the City of Blaine for Fire Marshal Services:** Chiefs Noonchester and Rostov are in the process of working on an interlocal agreement with the City of Blaine for fire marshal and correlating services. The chiefs will provide additional information as the process moves further along.

Chief Rostov pointed out some areas that the City of Blaine need to complete including:

- City of Blaine has yet to adopt the 2015 Fire Code and code amendments
- Review fire marshal contract for services proposal

The fire marshal services proposal includes plan reviews, inspections, operational permit fees, fee structure and fire marshal fees.

The next steps will include meeting with city officials to determine what direction the City wants to take before having a legal agreement drafted. It is expected that the entire process may take some time to complete.

**Interlocal Agreement with Fire District 4:** Chief Noonchester noted that there was no further discussion regarding the contract for services interlocal agreement during the Wednesday, August 14, 2019 District 4 Board meeting.

The District 4 Chair has yet to contact the District 21 Chair to set up a meeting to discuss the current contract and additional options.

The current contract automatically renews unless one or both agencies desires to terminate the agreement.

- **Budget Study Session:** The first 2020 budget study session will be held on Saturday, September 14, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. at Odell Station 61.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **July Monthly Expenditure Voucher Amendment:** Chief Noonchester reported that the July monthly expenditure voucher included two payments that were also included on the benefits voucher. The amounts have been removed from the July Expenditure Voucher and now needs to be amended with the correct amount.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McPhail moved to approve the corrected July Monthly Expenditure Voucher in the amount of \$62,038.09. The motion was seconded by and Vice-Chairman Ansell approved 4-0.

- **Health Care Three Year Audit:** Chief Noonchester announced that the district needs to complete a three year state required health care audit. Since the audit was not originally budgeted for 2019, an amendment will need to be approved at the end of the year. The cost is anticipated to be between \$17,000 and \$20,000.
- **Washington Fire Commissioners Association (WFCA) Annual Conference:** Commissioner Crawford will be attending the WFCA conference scheduled for October 24-26, 2019 in Tulalip.

## **POLICIES & PROCEDURE**

- None

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

- Bellingham Herald article re: Clark Feed & Seed and Avalon Records structure fire
- Northern Light article re: 9<sup>th</sup> St structure fire in Blaine
- Bellingham Herald article re: Peace Arch Café dumpster fire
- Northern Light article re: Peace Arch Café dumpster fire
- From Clover and Johnny Dixon re: Thank you for services
- From Brianna Neyens re: Thank you CPR class
- From NWFR Board of Fire Commissioners re: Proposed District 4 area annexation
- Hogs & Horses Motorcycle and Car Show Flyer: Sunday, August 18, 2019
- The Responder: District newsletter, August issue

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **Fire Chief's Wife Injured:** Chief Noonchester provided information regarding his wife's recent injury.

- **September Board Meeting Attendance Query:** Chairman Bosman will not be attending the September meeting. All other Commissioners present are expected to attend the September 19 meeting.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- None

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

- Master Plan
- GEMT
- Contract Negotiations
- City of Blaine Interlocal Agreement
- Paramedic Consortium

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Chairman Bosman 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.” And;

*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 1:43 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. District 4 Commissioner Andrews and Attorney Rich Davis remained for the executive session.

Interim Chief Noonchester and Division Chief Rostov were invited into the executive session at 2:06 p.m.

## **MEETING RECONVENED**

Chairman Bosman called the regular meeting back into open session at 2:14 p.m. Action will be taken as a result of the executive session.

## **SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** There being no further business Vice- Chairman Ansell moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:43 p.m. The motion was seconded by and Commissioner McPhail approved 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Jennie Sand, Recording Secretary

**ATTEST:**

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Rich Bosman, Chairman

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Bruce Ansell, Vice-Chairman

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Larry McPhail, Commissioner

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John Crawford, Commissioner

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Chief Noonchester, Board Secretary