

**Whatcom County Fire District #21
via Zoom Webinar
1:00 pm
December 17, 2020
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 December 17, 2020, to order at 1:09 p.m. via Zoom Webinar.

ROLL CALL

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

RECESS INTO PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Ansell opened the public hearing at 1:09 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING STATEMENT

The public hearing is specific to the 2021 Budget. Comments will be restricted to this topic. The Board will not be responding to questions or challenges. Each participant will be provided a maximum of 5 minutes to comment.

Chairman Ansell acknowledged that with the COVID-19 restrictions, the Board has not met face to face. The public has been provided several opportunities through Live Stream, Zoom Webinar and email, to provide comments or provide feedback regarding the 2021 proposed budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kathy Berg – 7585 Sterling Ave. Birch Bay: Community member Kathy Berg stated that she has followed the district long enough to know that the organization is doing a good job.

Chairman Ansell acknowledged that the district appreciates Kathy Berg's support. The district will be working on a regional fire authority (RFA) with District 4 and support from community members such as Kathy Berg will be vital.

RECONVENE INTO SPECIAL MEETING

Chairman Ansell closed the public hearing and reconvened the regular meeting at 1:11 p.m.

The proposed draft 2021 budget was presented to the Board of Fire Commissioners and the public during a budget study session held on Thursday, December 10, 2020. Members of the Board had the opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions.

Chief Van der Veen provided a comparison between the 2020 and proposed 2021 budget as requested by the Board during the recent budget study session.

Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding the capital outlays that were not discussed during the budget study session. Due to the aging fleet, many of the items requested are for the shop.

- Software and scan tools to allow the maintenance department to diagnose and work on apparatus in the field. (\$15,700)
- Heavy-duty torqueing tool (\$8,500)
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) replacement plan that allows personnel to have two sets of bunker gear that can be switched out after a fire-related call to allow soiled PPE to be laundered (\$20,000).
- Forcible entry prop (\$10,000)
- New ambulance (\$225,000)
 - Funds will be replaced by Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) funds.
 - Two Aid units ordered in 2020 will be delivered sometime in March.
 - Will provide the district with four aid cars in staggered ages.
- Stryker power load system on all first out aid units. (\$100,000)
 - The County will purchase the Stryker power gurneys for the districts out of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) funds.
 - The power load system funds will be replaced by Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) funds.
 - Safer for personnel and will limit lifting and back injuries

Vice-Chairman Bosman stated that the GEMT funds are being utilized how they were intended.

Chairman Ansell noted that there are not many changes from the 2020 budget. The district continues to work on forming the RFA, which will most likely change the funding mechanisms in the future.

Resolution 2020-23 Adopting the Tax Revenues and Budget 2021:

MOTION: Commissioner Fischer moved to approve Resolution 2019-23 Adopting Tax Revenues and Budget for 2020. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Bosman and approved 5-0.

Chairman Ansell thanked Chief Van der Veen and the admin staff for their hard work.

Commissioner Crawford left the meeting at 1:22 p.m. and returned at 1:27 p.m.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) November 17, 2020 – special
 - b) November 19, 2020
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
 - a) Total Revenue –November \$1,139,689.37
 - b) Total Expenditures –December \$729,999.41
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$306,035.80
 - b) Payroll Taxes Voucher: \$62,852.50
 - c) Benefits Voucher: \$265,092.61
 - d) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$96,018.50

Chief Van der Veen provided an overview of the chief's report.

The district recently completed an entry-level and lateral hiring process. Of the seventy-one applicants who applied, fifty went on to speed interviews, seventeen to oral boards, and eight to the final chief's interview.

Four conditional offers have been extended to exceptional candidates and if all pre-employment conditions are met, it is expected that all but one, who has already completed the academy, will be participating in the North Bend State Academy in late January. It was noted that the academy is following all COVID-19 requirements.

Chief Van der Veen thanked all personnel who took part in developing questions or were part of one of the interview panels. In addition, Chief Van der Veen recognized Kelly Freeman for her exceptional work throughout the process.

Chief Van der Veen noted that Shaun Ward has been appointed to the temporary division chief of operations position. He is already proving to be a huge asset in administration.

Chief Van der Veen and Business Manager Benita Williams met with the firm that completes the district's Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) to confirm the submitted data. They anticipate that the district will receive between \$700,000 and \$800,000 revenue in the spring of 2021.

Following a few planning obstacles in December, the Regional Fire Authority (RFA) Planning Committee will resume meeting in January. Communications continue behind the scenes.

Local 106NW members participated in the Community Assistance Thanksgiving Program. Firefighters gathered turkeys, milk, butter, potatoes, and other items needed to cook Thanksgiving dinners. The meals were donated to families in need within the Blaine area, on Tuesday, November 24. Crews also volunteered their time and were on hand to transport the Thanksgiving baskets to community member's vehicles.

Chief Van der Veen thanked the Board for their patience and gentle guidance throughout the past year.

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

Due to technical difficulties, Commissioner McMurray left the meeting at 1:32 p.m. and returned at 1:41 p.m.

NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS

As a Whatcom County Fire Commissioners representative, Commissioner Crawford has been part of discussions with the City of Bellingham regarding joining law enforcement and emergency medical communication centers. The Whatcom County Fire Commissioners are not in favor of joining the centers. The group expects to have more discussion is expected in January.

Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding COVID-19 vaccinations for first responders in Whatcom County. Although there is no clear timeline, the district is preparing lists of those who want to receive the vaccinations and may be in a high-risk category. The vaccines (2 doses) will be coordinated through the Whatcom County Health Department and will be staggered due to possible side effects.

IAFF LOCAL 106NW REPORT

Chairman Ansell thanked the members who participated in the Community Assistance Thanksgiving Program regardless of the COVID-19 challenges. Henry Hollander credited Lieutenant Mike Nelson for helping to coordinate the event.

LEGAL ISSUES

No report

FIRE MARSHAL REPORT

Henry Hollander stated that he and Lieutenant Joel Nielsen continue to work together and have begun the transition of responsibility. The goal is for Lt. Nielsen to take over as the Deputy Fire Marshal on January 5, 2021, when he will transfer from shift work to days. Henry Hollander intends to taper off his hours in January with the hope of completing his work by February or March.

Henry Hollander noted that mitigation and concurrency may take longer to master as it is more challenging. Lt. Nielsen has also been introduced to the Blaine City Council.

Chairman Ansell thanked Henry Hollander for his assistance with the fire marshal division.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Regional Fire Authority (RFA): Chairman Ansell noted that the draft November 2 meeting notes were included in the packet for review. It is expected that the next meeting will be scheduled for Thursday, January 14 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Personnel Recruitment: Chief Van der Veen noted that an upcoming officer's academy for both lieutenants and captains will be tentatively posted in early January. The district will arrange local training for the applicants which will conclude in a testing process.

Chairman Ansell pointed out that there currently remains an assistant chief's position to be filled.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2020-24 2021 Meeting Dates: The meetings will take place on the third Thursday of the month at 1:00 p.m. at either Odell Station 61 or via Zoom.

MOTION: Commissioner Crawford moved to approve Resolution 2020-24 2021 Meeting Dates as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fischer and approved 5-0.

Resolution 2020-25 Surplus Amkus Rescue Tools: Chief Van der Veen stated that the Amkus rescue tools have been replaced by a different style of tool. The Amkus rescue tools includes a power unit, spreaders, and a ram unit. Chief Van der Veen noted that the tools will be donated to the Port of Bellingham Airport, who in turn will donate their outdated tools to Mexico.

Commissioner Crawford announced that the ambulance, engine, and equipment donated to Firefighters United, aka Bomberos Unido, were relocated to Union De Tula in Mexico. They recently placed the apparatus in to service during a ceremony, and voiced their appreciation to all those who assisted with the donation. Formal recognition is expected in the future. Commissioner Crawford will keep the Board updated.

Chairman Ansell thanked Commissioner Crawford for helping to coordinate the donation and suggested posting pictures of the donation at the district administration office.

MOTION:

Vice-Chairman Bosman moved to approve Resolution 2020-25 Surplus Equipment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McMurray and approved 5-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Mrs. Lynne VanLuven re: Thank you for services
- The Responder: District newsletter, December issue

ANNOUNCEMENTS

January Board Meeting Attendance Query: All Commissioners present are expected to attend the January 21 meeting which will either be held at Odell Station 61 or via Zoom Meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- City of Blaine Fire Marshal Interlocal Agreement
- Regional Fire Authority
- 2018-2019 Audit
- Fire Chief Quarterly Review
- Board Elections

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Ansell wished everyone a safe holiday.

MOTION: There being no further business Commissioner Crawford moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:54 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