

**Whatcom County Fire District #21
Station 61 – Blaine
9408 Odell Street, Blaine WA 98230
7:00 pm
June 15, 2017
Joint Fire Commissioners Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bosman called the joint Whatcom County Fire District #21 and Whatcom County Fire District #4 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for June 15, 2017 to order at 7:02 p.m. at Station 61 – 9408 Odell Street, Blaine, WA 98230.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Attendees: Chairman Rich Bosman, Vice-Chairman Larry McPhail, Commissioners Dean Berkeley and Bruce Ansell; Fire Chief William Pernet; Assistant Chief Joe Noonchester; Division Chief Henry Hollander; Attorney Seth Woolson.

District #4 Attendees: Chairman Harry Andrews and Commissioner Mary Beth Neal.

Chairman Bosman announced the Commissioner Crawford requested to be excused due to a family illness.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) May 18, 2017 – Regular
2. Staff Reports - Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
 - a) Total Revenue – May \$675,345.04
 - b) Total Expenditures –June \$508,471.16
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll #416-475: \$278,122.16
 - b) Volunteer Direct Deposit Payroll #476-498: \$3,981.16
 - c) Benefits Voucher #55-64: \$165,886.75
 - d) Monthly Expenditure Vouchers 978-1154: \$54,985.41
 - e) Capital Projects Apparatus Vouchers #1155-1156: \$2,889.51
 - f) Capital Projects Facilities Voucher #1157: \$2,606.17

Chairman Bosman pointed out that the revenue and expenditure data on the consent agenda has been moved to a more noticeable location on the consent agenda.

Chief Pernet noted that this month's Chiefs report is missing some response time data. The County recently changed over to a new computer aided design (CAD) system and some anomalies were discovered regarding downloading response time data into the district's fire and EMS software program. The district will go back and correct the inaccurate response time data.

Chairman Bosman requested information on the retirement rate increase. Chief Pernet noted that the district was recently notified by the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) that the district employer and employee contributions for LEOFF and PERS retirement are going to see an increase in beginning in July. Initially the increase for employees was one percent and a four percent (\$180,000) increase for the district. Since the first notification the DRS has been inundated with concerns from multiple agencies and may in fact recalculate the increase. Chief Pernet will follow up and keep the Board updated on any new information.

Commissioner Ansell requested information regarding the district, employee and state's retirement responsibility amount. Currently the state's contribution rate is twenty percent; the employee's rate is fifty percent and the district's rate is thirty percent.

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

NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS

- **Blaine City Council Meeting:** Commissioner Ansell did not attend the recent meeting however he brought up concerns regarding whether the district has pre-incident action plans on some of the buildings that have been ordered to either be demolished, repaired or vacated at a recent Blaine City Council meeting. Chief Hollander noted that the district may possess pre-incident action plans however, the plans may be antiquated and not carried in all apparatus. Commissioner Ansell surmised that due to the recent press and current condition of the buildings, it may behoove the district to have an increased awareness of those structures. Chief Hollander will follow up on the request.
- **Birch Bay and Blaine All Hazards Alert Broadcast Radio Siren Dedication:** Both Commissioner Ansell and Chief Hollander attended the siren dedication on Monday, June 5 at the Birch Bay Community Park. Commissioner Ansell attended informally and not as a district representative. Commissioner Ansell noted that Chief Hollander spoke at the event and represented the district favorably.

IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT

- Nothing to report

LEGAL ISSUES

- Seth Woolson provided an update regarding a recent case involving the open public meetings act (OPMA), Executive Sessions RCW 42.30.110© (c) *“To consider the minimum price at which real estate will be offered for sale or lease when public knowledge regarding such consideration would cause a likelihood of decreased price. However, final action selling or leasing public property shall be taken in a meeting open to the public.”* After working its way through the Supreme Court, the ruling was upheld. Seth Woolson informed the Board that “dollars only” associated with real estate transactions, can be discussed in executive sessions. All other information regarding the transaction including concerns about the environment, jobs, location and use of the property must be discussed in open session. In executive session those concerns can be discussed with regards to how they may impact the price. Seth Woolson announced that a detailed memorandum will be sent to the district in the near future.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Washington State Rating Bureau (WSRB):** Chief Pernet announced that he has yet to be notified regarding the district’s ratings. WSRB has requested some additional information. Chief Pernet noted that WSRB is being very thorough and is hopeful he will hear results in the near future. Chief Pernet further noted that not all insurance companies across the nation are continuing to utilize WSRB statistics because they are so antiquated. Either way the results may not have a major impact on the district. Commissioner Ansell requested information regarding a time line of when any changes would go into effect. Chief Pernet will investigate and provide a follow up.
- **Brennick Agreement Update:** Chairman Bosman reviewed the revocable license agreement for the land use at Northwood Station 72 suggested by the attorney, allowing the Brennicks to utilize a piece of the land prior to the closing of the sale.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Inter-Local Agreement for Fire and Emergency Services:** Commissioners from both D#21 and D#4 reviewed and discussed the current inter-local agreement for fire and emergency services as required.

Chief Pernet shared information regarding potential future annexations by the City of Bellingham in the District #4 area. Handouts were also distributed showing the City of Bellingham’s urban growth area (UGA) and annexation history. The City of Bellingham can only annex within their UGA. The potential annexation is approximately sixty five acres which begins on the south side of the Mt. Baker Hwy, goes all the way to Britton Rd, covering the Hillside Estates and other property to the west. The area encompassed accounts for approximately twenty five million dollars of assessed value in the District #4 area (close to 2%) and will not trigger the mitigation clause in the 1997 agreement as a financial impact. Chief Pernet recently attended a meeting with the Bellingham Fire

Department Chief to discuss the probability of the citizen driven annexation and its impacts to both departments. Additional discussions with the BFD and the City of Bellingham including annexations, mitigation and how to serve the area better are probable. Chief Pernet expects to have additional information the week of June 19, 2017. Chief Pernet requested that both districts consider the information as they ponder future mergers or a regional fire authority (RFA) together or separately. At this point Chief Pernet recommended both districts continue with the consolidation for the next year, until they see how the future plays out.

Commissioner Berkeley recalled past conversations regarding the concern about how much the City of Bellingham will annex in the District #4 area and questioned why the districts would continue to move forward with a merger or RFA.

Commissioner Ansell asked how much in total of District #4's area has been annexed by the City of Bellingham. Chief Pernet has begun the complicated process of figuring out how much District #4 has already been annexed. The 1997 agreement states that once the City of Bellingham has annexed sixty percent of District #4's area the city must acquire the entire district. Chief Pernet noted that there are differences of opinion regarding the intent of the statement. Cumulatively if annexations in a five year timeline reach a total five percent of the assessed evaluation, the City is required to meet with the district to discuss financial impacts. The proposed annexation is under two percent. Chief Pernet also pointed out that the City of Bellingham is not aggressively looking for annexations.

Commissioner Andrews announced that Commissioner Ness may discuss his research of RFAs during the upcoming District #21 July meeting.

Commissioner Neal noted that during the recent District #4 meeting it was decided to keep working together and proceed with caution. The concern would be that if the two district's merge it could open the door for the City of Bellingham to annex more of the combined districts with little chance of ever hitting the sixty percent threshold. If however the districts formed an RFA they would become their own taxing district and annexations would affect them differently.

Commissioner Ansell requested information regarding the inter-local agreement. The current inter-local agreement is automatically renewed yearly. District #4 pays twenty five percent of the District #21 budget, minus the District #4 transport and rental fees. It would take one year to separate if either district makes the decision to terminate the contract.

Commissioner Ansell requested information regarding the District #4 budget and expenses. The budget consists of the quarterly payments to District #21, bond payments for Britton Loop Station 12 and one apparatus, minor capital expenses,

burn tower upgrades, commissioner pay and attorney fees. Commissioner Ansell requested a copy of the District #4 budget book. Both budgets can be found in each commissioner's budget book.

Commissioner Neal emphasized that both districts have worked and grown well together and agree that this is the future of fire service.

Chairman Bosman restated that the consensus is to continue with the agreement with the freedom to have discussions and make changes at a later date. In addition, Chairman Bosman stated that both Boards will do what's best for their constituents.

Chief Pernet reiterated that an auto aide agreement should still proceed with the City of Bellingham regardless of any annexations.

Commissioner Ansell noted that one of the issues the district agreed was important to explore as a result of the strategic planning session, is mergers and consolidations. This committee made up of mainly commissioners, will be a good place to continue RFA and merger discussions.

POLICIES & PROCEDURE

- None

CORRESPONDENCE

- From: Thank you for service
- Bellingham Herald Article re: Vehicle crash
- Bellingham Herald Article re: Birch Bay Drowning
- Northern Light article re: Birch Bay Drowning
- Northern Light article re: Alert siren dedication
- Northern Light article re: Emergency response drill
- Bellingham Herald article re: Semi truck crash at Blaine border
- The Responder: District newsletter, May issue

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **July 20 Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners present are expected to attend the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Washington Survey and Rating Bureau (WSRB) Update
- Brennick Purchase Update
- Inter-Local Agreement for Fire and Emergency Service / RFA
- Possible Annexation Update

- Washer / Extractors and Dryer Update
- Hearing Conversation Policy

SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business Vice-Chairman McPhail moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ansell and approved 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jennie Sand, Recording Secretary

ATTEST:

Rich Bosman, Chairman

Larry McPhail, Vice-Chairman

Dean Berkeley, Commissioner

Bruce Ansell, Commissioner

Chief Pernet, Board Secretary