

**Whatcom County Fire District #21
Station 61 – Blaine
9408 Odell Street, Blaine WA 98230
7:00 pm
December 15, 2016
Regular Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting
Public Hearing**

Chairman Bosman requested that the Board stand and observe a moment of silence in remembrance of Anthony Cannizzaro; District #17 Fire Commissioner who passed away early Monday, December 12, 2016. Anthony served as a fire commissioner for thirty years.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bosman called the regular Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for December 15, 2016 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, John Crawford and Bruce Ansell; Fire Chief William Pernet; Division Chief Henry Hollander; Training Captain Joe Noonchester.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Reid Campion; 4070 Fisherman's Bend Ln: Mr. Campion noted that he is part of a union not affiliated with a fire department. He stated that Vice-Chairman McPhail who has a son employed by the district, should not be allowed to vote on wages. Mr. Campion stated that it is illegal for Chairman Bosman to sell services to the fire department and make a profit. In addition, Mr. Campion stated that it illegal for Commissioner Crawford to be affiliated with the union (Local 106) and sit on the NWFR Board and vote. Mr. Campion stated that this was unacceptable and his next step will be take his documentation to the newspaper and then ask those aforementioned commissioners to step down.

PRESENTATION

- Chief Pernet congratulated Training Captain Joe Noonchester and presented him with a certificate of completion from the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program.

Captain Noonchester spent two weeks each year for the past four years at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Following each course, Captain Noonchester completed an applied research project in areas such as executive development, executive analysis of community risk reduction,

executive analysis of fire service operations in emergency management and executive leadership. Research projects included sharing North Whatcom Fire and Rescue's training facility with the Bellingham Fire Department; risks to fire and EMS crews at indoor marijuana grow operations; automatic aid in Whatcom County; and occupational hearing loss prevention and policy.

Captain Noonchester thanked the district and the Board members for their support as he pursued his degree.

- Chief Pernet noted that Captain Noonchester has successfully completed the Assistant Chief's process and will be promoted to Assistant Chief of Operations effective January 2, 2017. An oath of office and pinning ceremony will be held during the next regularly scheduled NWFR Fire Commissioner Meeting on Thursday, January 19.

RECESS INTO PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Bosman opened the public hearing at 7:10 p.m. to hear comments regarding the proposed 2017 Budget.

The Board participated in two prior 2017 budget study sessions on Saturday, November 5, and Saturday, December 3.

Chief Pernet provided a 2017 budget presentation which included the district's budget philosophy:

- Fiscal responsibility to our taxpayers
- Allocation of funds linked to the strategic plan
- Continue to streamline processes
- Improve on existing and search for new, innovative and responsible revenue streams

Chief Pernet reviewed the district's economic and financial history, call volumes and the challenges ahead:

- Reducing response times
- Recruitment and retention of full time and volunteer firefighters
- Maintaining constant staffing levels
- Keeping healthcare affordable
- Keeping up with operational and capital item expenses and needs
- Maintaining competitive wages and benefits
- Initiating additional fire prevention programs
- Staying connected to our communities
- Continued relationship building with internal and external customers

Looking forward Chief Pernet reviewed some positives including:

- Property values on the rise
- New construction taking off
- Debit payments reduced

- District 4 EMS levy passed in 2013
- Transport revenues increasing
- Grant funding opportunities
- Five percent total wage increase 2015/2016
- New Assistant Chief of Operations

Fiscal challenges remain including:

- Economy is slowly rebounding
- Statutory limitations
- Expenses out pacing revenues
- Debt payments
- Operational / Capital needs

Chief Pernet provided a healthcare comparison of the district from 2012 through 2016. Due to some high claims this year, the district will need to use monies from the healthcare savings account to balance the account. Chief Pernet reviewed the benefits and drawbacks of the current healthcare plan versus a traditional plan. The district is reviewing multiple health care plans for the future.

Chief Pernet reviewed the district's call volumes, long term debt, revenues, fund balances and expenditures by division.

The Whatcom County EMS levy goes into effect January 1, 2017 and it is expected that an inter-local agreement will cover any of the District #4 EMS levy lost revenue. In addition, the EMS levy may also cover the district's yearly dispatch fees. If that occurs, the allocated monies will be deposited as unanticipated revenue for the upcoming year.

PUBLIC HEARING STATEMENT

- None

Resolution 2016-08 Adopting 2017 Annual Budget:

MOTION: Commissioner Berkeley moved to approve Resolution 2016-08 Adopting the 2017 Annual Budget. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman McPhail and approved 5-0.

RECONVENE INTO REGULAR MEETING

- Chairman Bosman reconvened the regular meeting at 7:56 p.m.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) September 28, 2016 – Special Meeting
 - b) November 17, 2016 – Public Hearing
 - c) December 3, 2016 – Special Meeting – Budget Study Session
2. Staff Reports - Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support

3. Financial Report / Revenue - November \$839,159.71
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll #961-1020: \$271,622.55
 - b) Volunteer Direct Deposit Payroll #1021-1041-960: \$4,101.09
 - c) Non-Direct Payroll #28-30: \$5,449.15
 - d) Benefits Vouchers #130-141: \$223,507.42
 - e) Benefits Voucher 2nd set #142: \$19,394.12
 - f) Monthly Expenditure Vouchers #2119-2308: \$84,854.19
 - g) Capital Projects Vouchers #2309-2313: \$44,586.90

Commissioner Berkeley requested that the Special September 28, 2016 be removed from the consent agenda for discussion. Originally Commissioner Berkeley stated that he would not be available to attend the meeting. Later Commissioner Berkeley stated that he had attempted to contact the administrative office and Chief Pernet the morning of the meeting but his phone call/email/text was not answered. Commissioner Berkeley stated that he was also unsure of the agenda since it had been altered and resent as an email attachment.

Commissioner Ansell stated that everything he has read and heard from the district attorneys leads him to believe that the meeting was conducted legally and did not violate any public meeting or notification requirements.

Chairman Bosman noted that all the commissioners were advised of the special meeting in the same manner on September 20, 2016. A correction was sent out on September 21, 2016. Commissioner Berkeley had replied that he could not attend the meeting as he was out of town, then on the morning of the meeting attempted to make other arrangements. A quorum was met as required by law.

MOTION: Commissioner Berkeley moved to remove Special Meeting September 28, from the consent agenda as an illegal meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman McPhail and was not approved 1-4. Commissioner Berkeley voted to approve and Chairman Bosman, Vice-Chairman McPhail, Commissioner Crawford and Commissioner Ansell voted against.

MOTION: Commissioner Ansell moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman McPhail and approved 4-1. Commissioner Berkeley voted against.

NW FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS

- **Blaine City Council:** Division Chief Hollander was able to attend the December 12 meeting which consisted of year end budget discussions.

IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT

- Representation was not in attendance.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Brennick Proposal:** At a previous meeting Daryl Brennick made a proposal to either purchase or lease a small strip of land around Northwood Station 72. The land would be utilized as parking for the Brennick's store. Chief Pernet noted that he was directed by the Board to retrieve additional information on the property's lot lines and potential value. Local realtor Mike Kent provided information on the potential value of the piece of property in question including a sale/lease. Both are significantly higher than Mr. Brennick's original proposal.

Chief Pernet further informed the commissioners that a sale or lease will not impede the path of emergency vehicles from Northwood Station 72 in the future. Chief Hollander noted that a sale would change the lot line and in turn the setbacks although a long term lease would have no such impact.

Chairman Bosman noted that a lease will give the Board time to consider the options and/or ramifications of selling the piece of property while keeping the public's interest in mind. It will also allow the leasee time to decide if a purchase is the correct decision for them.

The Board will forward the realtor's information to Daryl Brennick for review. Daryl Brennick intends to gather additional information from various realtors prior to further discussions with the Board. In addition, Commissioner Berkeley requested information regarding any added value the Brennick's could bring to the public and the parking lot.

Any decision made will need to be justified to the district's constituents as well as the state auditor.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Resolution 2016-09 2017 Meeting Schedule:** The monthly Board meetings have been scheduled for the third Thursday of each month. Additional meetings may be scheduled as special meetings when needed.

MOTION: Commissioner Ansell moved to approve Resolution 2016-09 2017 Meeting Schedule. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Berkeley and approved 5-0.

- **Assistant Chief of Operations Contract Approval:** Chief Pernet announced that the assistant chief of operations employment contract agreement is very detailed and basically mirrors the district's other chief officer agreements. Chief Pernet noted that during the January 19, 2017 Board meeting, an official swearing in of the assistant chief of operations will occur. The Board congratulated Joe Noonchester on his promotion.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman McPhail moved to approve the Assistant Chief of Operations employment contract. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Berkeley and approved 5-0.

- **Board Self-Evaluation:** Chairman Bosman noted that since the Board was moving in a different direction they had agreed earlier in the year to have a year-end evaluation. The Board has been committed to being more professional and efficient moving forward. There was discussion amongst the Board members regarding the self-evaluation and suggestions to continue to move the Board forward in 2017.

Commissioner Berkeley stated that better communication other than email is still needed and has declined over the past two years. Commissioner Berkeley suggested that phone calls and texts also be utilized for better communication. Chairman Bosman noted that it is difficult to know when messages have or have not been received if there is no confirmation of having received the emails. Commissioner Ansell noted that email discussions between Board members (quorum) is against the open public meeting records act.

Chief Pernet noted that a comprehensive fire commissioner policy was passed by the Board in August 2016 providing clear guidelines for conducting meetings and official duties. According to policy, *only* the Board Chair will communicate with staff for streamlining and so staff will not be overwhelmed with multiple commissioner requests. It has taken some time for everyone to feel comfortable with the changes. Chief Pernet further noted that with the addition of the consent agenda and chief's report, the Board depicts more professionalism and can focus more of the meetings on important district issues.

Commissioner Crawford noted that the consent agenda is a good idea, allowing the Board to concentrate on key matters of the district. Commissioner Crawford has no issues with communication.

Vice-Chairman McPhail agreed with how Chief Pernet described the current Board meeting process and is confident the Board is moving in the right direction.

Commissioner Ansell noted that what the Board is currently practicing is what he has been accustomed to at another department. Although the consent agenda is new to him, Commissioner Ansell does appreciate receiving the information ahead of time for review. No major issues with communication were reported. Commissioner Ansell further stated that commissioners need to have some onus for knowing when meetings are taking place and when information should be expected and to follow up as needed.

Chairman Bosman conveyed that as chairman, the process does require additional work. Chairman Bosman further stated that he feels the current process is moving

the district in the right direction, adding professionalism to the Board. It is also relieved the administrative staff from being put into awkward positions. The fire commissioner policy will continue to be used by the Board as a valuable tool. The Board will continue to work on communication in the future.

POLICIES & PROCEDURE

- None

CORRESPONDENCE

- From Kirby Kiefer, FEMA re: Captain Noonchester completion of Executive Fire Officer Program
- Bellingham Herald article re: EMS Levy
- From Jake: Thanksgiving card to firefighters
- Rhyan Lopez, CAS re: Thank you for assistance with the Thanksgiving Baskets
- 2017 Snure Seminars
- The Responder: District newsletter, December issue

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **January Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners are expected to attend the meeting with the exception of Commissioner Berkeley who is not certain if he will be able to attend. He will keep the Board informed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Firefighter and Assistant Chief of Operations Oath of Office
- Brennick Proposal
- Whatcom County EMS Levy Update
- Semiahmoo Station 62 Easement Request
- 2016 Budget Amendments
- Board Officer Elections

OTHER

Commissioner Berkeley questioned why community member Reid Campion was not considered for a commissioner appointment following a former member's resignation. Both Chairman Bosman and Chief Pernet stated that no letter of intent or application was received from Mr. Campion. Administrative Assistant Jennie Sand concurred that no such mail was received at the district main office. All of the applicants were interviewed by the designated panel.

Commissioner Berkeley noted that he had a complaint from a citizen who sent letters to Chief Pernet and all the Board members. Apparently the letters were not received. Chairman Bosman noted that letters need to be sent to the administration office at Britton Loop Rd and must be signed to be processed.

SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business Vice-Chairman McPhail moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Berkeley and approved 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jennie Sand, Recording Secretary

ATTEST:

Rich Bosman, Chairman

Larry McPhail, Vice-Chairman

Dean Berkeley, Commissioner

John Crawford, Commissioner

Bruce Ansell, Commissioner

Chief Pernet, Board Secretary