

Whatcom County Fire District #21
9408 Odell Street, Blaine, WA 98230
11:00 a.m.
September 15, 2022
Regular Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, ROLL CALL

Chairman Ansell called the regular Whatcom County Fire District #21 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for September 15, 2022, to order at 11:02 a.m. at Station 61 – 9408 Odell Street, Blaine, WA 98230.

ROLL CALL

Attendees: Chairman Bruce Ansell; Commissioners Scott Fischer and Kimberly McMurray; Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen; Division Chief Shaun Ward; Deputy Fire Marshal Joel Nielsen); Local 106NW Representative Scott Brown.

Vice-Chairman John Crawford was excused from this meeting.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) August 18, 2022 – regular
2. Staff Reports – Chiefs / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
 - a) Total Revenue – August \$221,345.41
 - b) Total Expenditures – September \$847,526.58
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) NWFR Employees Direct Deposit Payroll: \$418,000.96
 - b) Payroll Taxes Voucher: \$97,940.01
 - c) Benefits Voucher: \$223,656.83
 - d) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$107,928.78

MOTION: Commissioner McMurray moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fischer and approved 3-0.

Chief Van der Veen noted that the total revenue is \$221,345.41. There was an error on the Agenda.

FIRE COMMISSIONER MONTHLY REPORTS

Commissioner McMurray attended the Blaine City Council agenda on Monday, September 12, 2022. Topics included downtown revitalization, urgent care, and development.

Vice-Chairman Crawford attended the Whatcom County Fire Commissioners Meeting on Wednesday, September 14, 2022. It was reported that County Executive Satpal Sidhu is withholding the BLS payments to the fire districts for no apparent reason. This decision impacts all fire districts that depend on these funds. This action was taken after a two-year

study and recommendations by the City Council to disperse the funds to all fire agencies. Chairman Ansell noted that at this time, Whatcom County EMS has over five million dollars in excess funds. Another Whatcom County Fire Commissioners meeting is expected to be scheduled in the near future to discuss what possible actions can be taken by providers of BLS services in Whatcom County.

Chairman Ansell noted that contract negotiations had an initial meeting on Friday, September 2, 2022, to review ground rules and schedule additional meeting dates. The district has completed work on its contract proposal. The next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, September 20, 2022.

IAFF LOCAL 106 MONTHLY REPORT

106NW Representative Scott Brown reiterated that the initial contract negotiations meeting was recently completed.

Currently, four recruits are attending the Washington State North Bend Academy. The members look forward to having them on shift when they return in November.

Members continue to work a considerable amount of overtime. Labor continues to preschedule the overtime shifts. At this time, there are seventy firefighter and twenty-eight officer openings in October.

Chairman Ansell reported that the district was notified that the personnel grievance had not been resolved, and Local 106 has requested mediation. It is expected that Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) will contact the district regarding a meeting date. More discussion is expected in the executive session.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

District 4 Contract for Services Expiration Letter Update: Chairman Ansell noted he had sent a letter on behalf of the Board to District 4 Chairman Lann regarding the contract for services interlocal agreement expiration date.

Chief Van der Veen noted that the letter was received and discussed during the recent District 4 Board meeting. Chief Van der Veen and District 4 Commissioner Cooley are expected to meet to work on a response. In addition, Chief Van der Veen intends to meet with Bellingham Fire Chief Hewitt and one District 4 Fire Commissioner to organize some community outreach. Once those meetings have been completed, the District 4 Board will be able to respond regarding their alternate plans.

It is rumored that the City of Bellingham has no interest in further annexation while District 4 is in a state of flux.

Chief Van der Veen stated that a developer in the District 4 area is also interested in ensuring that the agency remains whole and has offered to work with the District 4 Board to pass the next levy.

Chairman Ansell indicated that once the information gets circulated that North Whatcom Fire and Rescue cannot continue to provide the current level of services to District 4, other developers may also be willing to assist.

Deputy Fire Marshal Update: Deputy Fire Marshal Nielsen provided an update on development around the City of Blaine and Whatcom County.

- New project Horizon Division 2 (tracks Q-T) – 164 townhome units
- New project on Birch Bay Lynden Rd – 84 apartment units

A roundabout may be constructed on Birch Bay Lynden and Blaine Roads in the near future.

Deputy Fire Marshal Nielsen indicated that he had only issued two concurrency letters in August. Development submissions have slowed, however, East Blaine continues to develop. The City of Blaine and Grandis Pond developers are investigating how to add new wells, storage tanks, and water supply layout.

The family care unit expected to be built in the City of Blaine remains in negotiations. The facility is expected to increase call volume within the city.

Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau (WSRB): There have been no updates at this time.

Apparatus Update: Chief Ward provided an update regarding the new engine cost increases discussed during a previous meeting. Chief Ward reported that the engine is \$100,000 more than the previous engine purchase. After further investigation, it was noted that the increase was still commensurate with what other departments have paid and the best price available.

The Board reviewed the pre-payment alternatives for the engine:

- OPTION #1- 100% Contract Prepayment – Due @ Pre-pay Amount = \$822,890.00: Resulting Discount = \$25,645.00
- OPTION #2- 80% Contract Prepayment – Due @ Contract signing: Pre-pay Amount = \$678,828.00 Resulting Discount = \$20,516.00
- OPTION #3- 50% Contract Prepayment – Due @ Contract signing: Pre-pay Amount = \$ 424,268.00: Resulting Discount = \$ 2,823.00

PROPOSAL PRICE BASED UPON NO PREPAYMENT \$844,103.00 (Without Performance Bond) Performance Bond Cost = \$4,432.00

The engine will not be ready until 2024 (*approximately 400 days from the time of payment*).

Chief Van de Veen pointed out that some extra items, with approval from the apparatus committee, were eliminated to cut down on costs. The purchase is in line with the current apparatus replacement plan.

Capital Apparatus funds will be utilized for payment, and once tax monies are received in October, that fund will be replenished. The current balance is \$1,065,752.

MOTION: Commissioner Fischer moved to authorize the Fire Chief to exercise Option 1 of the September 9, 2022, prepayment of True North Emergency Equipment for \$822,890.00, resulting in a discount of \$25,645.00. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McMurray and approved 3-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2022-09 Cancellation of Warrants: Chief Van der Veen noted that a check had been lost in the mail and would need to be canceled and re-issued.

MOTION: Commissioner Fischer moved to approve Resolution 2022-09 Cancellation of Warrant. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McMurray and approved 3-0.

Chairman Ansell is unclear why the district continues to write checks instead of the more cost-effective option of electronic fund transfers. Currently, the district issues over one hundred checks per month.

After some discussion, the Board directed Chief Van der Veen to move the district toward utilizing electronic fund transfers by the end of the year.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Division Chief of Operations Job Description: Chief Van der Veen presented the division chief of operations job description. He noted that although the attorney has not reviewed it, all legal parameters mirror the division chief of special services job description, which was reviewed by the attorney.

Chairman Ansell reiterated that he is pleased with the new job description format, noting that it is much easier to read.

Chief Van der Veen noted that he plans to post the position in-house on Friday, September 16, 2022.

MOTION: Commissioner McMurray moved to approve the Division Chief of Operations Job Description as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fischer and approved 3-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Northern Light article re: Sweet Rd. structure fire
- Northern Light article re: Development
- The Responder: District newsletter, September issue

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **October Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners in attendance are expected to attend the October 20 meeting at Odell Station 61. Chairman Ansell will be attending via Zoom.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Interim Fire Commissioner Welcome
- District 4 Update
- Washington Survey and Rating Bureau (WSRB)
- BLS Reimbursement
- Division Chief of Operations
- Budget Study Session Date

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Ansell recessed the meeting for an Executive Session, 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 42.30.110(h) “to evaluate the qualifications of a candidate for appointment to elective office. However, any interview of such candidate and final action appointing a candidate to elective office shall be in a meeting open to the public” at 11:36 a.m. for twenty minutes until 11:56 a.m. Action is expected to be taken.

Chief Van der Veen and Board Secretary Jennie Sand remained for the executive session.

Jennie Sand left the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

MEETING RECONVENED

Chairman Ansell called the special meeting back into open session at 12:01 p.m.

INTERIM FIRE COMMISSIONER

Interim Fire Commissioner Nomination and Appointment: Commissioner McMurray stated that the interview committee had interviewed three outstanding and qualified candidates for the open fire commissioner position on Monday, August 29, 2022.

The interview committee consisted of Vice-Chairman Crawford, Commissioner McMurray, and Board Secretary Jennie Sand. The committee recommends that the Board appoint Matthew Rigberg for the interim fire commissioner position.

The appointed fire commissioner will fulfill the number 4 position with the term ending November 27, 2023. The commissioner will be sworn in at the administrative office before the next meeting.

Chairman Ansell thanked the interview committee for their time. Chairman Ansell had also spoken to Vice-Chairman Crawford before the meeting regarding the interviews, whose recommendation mirrored the rest of the committee.

MOTION: Commissioner McMurray moved to appoint and approve Matthew Rigberg as Interim Fire Commissioner Position #4. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fischer and approved 3-0.

SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business, Commissioner Fischer moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:03 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McMurray and approved 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

ATTEST:

Bruce Ansell, Chairman

John Crawford, Vice-Chairman

Scott Fischer, Commissioner

Kimberly McMurray, Commissioner

Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief