

Spokane County Fire Protection District 8 Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting



MINUTES

April 12, 2022, 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners was held at Station 82 and on Zoom. Chair Lee Boling called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. In Attendance: Commissioner Andy Rorie, Commissioner Lee Boling, Fire Chief Lonnie Rash, Division Chief Marty Long, District Secretary Carol Trescott, members of the District and members of the community. Commissioner Hesse received an excused absence.

INTRODUCTIONS

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No persons attending in person wished to comment.

In regard to FMLA policy, via Zoom Local 3711 President Blaine Holman said the Local supports allowing members to utilize their sick and vacation leave for the purposes of bonding.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

A Motion was made by Commissioner Rorie and seconded by Commissioner Boling: **Move to approve the Agenda as presented.** The Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

The following warrants and electronic transfers were approved for payment:

- Warrant Numbers 113835 through 113913 totaling \$311,972.33
- Electronic Transfers 03/01/2022 – 03/31/2022 totaling \$395,566.74

A Motion was made by Commissioner Rorie and seconded by Commissioner Boling: **Move to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.** The Motion carried unanimously.

PROCLAMATIONS:

A. National Telecommunicator Week: Commissioner Boling read the Proclamation text which declares April 10 – 16, 2022 as National Telecommunicator Week in the District. **A Motion was made by Commissioner Rorie and seconded by Commissioner Boling.** Move to approve National Telecommunication Week Proclamation. The Motion carried unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

A. Part-time Program: Chief Rash said he is collecting data relative to the soft and hard costs of the part-time program and will return to the Board with a report at the May regular meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Juneteenth Holiday: Per Procedure 10.06.02 Holidays, the District observes certain legal holidays as set forth by the State of Washington schedule. RCW 1.16.050 was updated and adopted to include a new holiday, Juneteenth, the nineteenth day of June. The date is recognized as a day of remembrance for the day the African slaves learned of their freedom. The holiday was negotiated as a new holiday with Local 3711 in their January 1, 2022 contract.

Chief Rash provided an updated draft procedure which includes and recognizes Juneteenth as a holiday observed by the District.

The Board had no comment or changes; Chief Rash will post the draft procedure for the customary 30-day review and return to the Board for adoption.

B. Policy/Procedures Review: Chief Rash presented the Board with the final installment of four (4) procedures as reviewed and edited by the Policies and Procedures Committee in 2021.

The commissioners had no comment. Chief Rash will post the procedures for a 30-day comment period.

C. Policy Review; Paid Medical Leave: Chief Rash said in 2015 the Board of Fire Commissioners adopted a set of policies, and since that time there has been no review process in place to ensure those policies remain compliant with current law. The District does have a process in place to review procedures.

The District's Family Medical Leave (FML) policy states an employees on FML must use any accumulated vacation and sick leave they have available. This is in conflict with the recently adopted Washington State Paid Family Leave Act if an employee indicates they will apply for Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML). PFML states employees are not required to use their accumulated leave and that they may take leave without pay. Therefore, if both leaves run concurrently, an employee cannot be required to take their accrued leave.

Legal has recommended that the District update the standing FML policy, adopt a new PFML policy, and mirror the leave requirements for both as allowed by law.

Per legal counsel, the commissioners are to determine if they wish to allow employees to use additional sick leave and their accrued annual leave for the purpose of bonding. Per current procedure, employees are entitled to use two consecutive shifts of sick leave for the purpose of bonding after the birth or adoption of a child; any additional time off they wish to take must be taken as annual (vacation) leave, unpaid leave, or as authorized by FML.

Chief Rash provided the Board with and updated draft Policy P10.07.01, and a new draft Policy 10.07.XX Washington Paid Family and Medical Leave. Chief Rash asked the commissioners if they wish to allow employees to use additional sick leave and their accrued annual leave for the purpose of bonding. Bonding is a FML qualifying event and therefore allowable under FML; however, because FML is often taken concurrently with PFML, the District does need to determine whether employees can use accrued sick and accrued annual leave solely for the purposes of bonding when there is no medical care

needed for the mother or the child. The District's existing policy is conflict with current procedure.

The commissioners asked for a chart comparison showing how the options and changes would affect the District and how they would affect an employee.

Chief Rash will return to the commissioners with a matrix showing the differences and the choices before the Board. He also asked the Board to establish a process for review of Board Policies.

Commissioner Rorie would like to see an annual policy review established.

Commissioner Boling was in agreement with an annual policy review process and would like that review to be conducted in a workshop/special meeting setting.

When asked about the time sensitivity of the matter, Chief Rash said the District has past practice that is currently used and is directed by District Procedure but it is not in compliance with District Policy as it is currently written.

D. Snure Seminar Report: Several new laws have been enacted or are going into effect as a result of the 2022 legislative session. Chief Rash asked Commissioner Boling to share the information he obtained at a recent Snure Seminar regarding the Open Public Meetings Act.

Commissioner Boling said per 2022 changes, the public must be allowed to comment at or before any public meeting at which final action is taken. Final action is defined as any time the Board makes a motion, enacts direction, or any act other than discussion. The public cannot interrupt a meeting but their comments can be entertained as long as they are not argumentative or insulting. Comments may be submitted in writing prior to meeting or verbally at a meeting and must be allowed remotely. The Board can retain the authority to establish time limits. These changes went into effect March 24th.

Public agencies are encouraged to make an audio or video recording of their meetings, or provide on-line streaming. Recordings are to be posted and available on-line for a minimum of six months.

Chief Rash asked if it was the Board's intent to continue a remote access platform at all meetings.

Commissioner Boling said legal counsel has recommended that agencies continue to provide a remote option; he stated it may also become state law in the near future.

Chief Rash also asked if the Board would like to move Public Comments to the top of the meeting agenda, and if they wish to allow written comments to be submitted before a meeting.

Commissioner Rorie said he has seen both options; Commissioner Boling agreed and said an area could be added to the website which states written public comments will be accepted up to a specific date/time prior to a public meeting.

Chief Rash said meetings are currently recorded for the purposes of transcribing minutes only. If the District were to record meetings for access by the public they would need to be posted for up to six weeks and then archived for up to six years thereafter. The District would also need to find a venue to provide this service. He asked the Board if they had an interest in recording meetings for public access.

Commissioner Boling said the public is encouraged to make their own recordings; he will provide further detail regarding the recording of public meetings before a decision is made.

E. Station Reopening: In March of 2020, the District implemented specific rules for the Covid-19 pandemic that reduced the interaction with the community, restricted public access to facilities, and limited attendance at public meetings. The Chief said now that mask mandates have been relaxed and current data shows a reduction of Covid-19 community spread, he asked the Commissioners for their input on allowing public access to the fire stations for community meetings.

The commissioners had no issue with allowing community groups to once again use the stations for their homeowners and neighborhood meetings.

Chief Rash said he would like to continue the hybrid schedule for admin staff regular office hours of at least three days a week and additionally when required. The Chief said he has seen some efficiencies with staff working remotely without interruption. Covid has created a shift where the public does not generally stop by the office and will phone or make an appointment directly with the individual they would like to meet with. In addition, Chief Rash said there are some security issues that will need to be addressed long-term regarding direct access into the buildings.

The commissioners deferred staff scheduling to the Fire Chief. Commissioner Boling would like to ensure there is a safe, secure area for employees to work in while still remaining accessible to the community.

Chief Rash also asked the Board for their thoughts on reinstating community engagement events such as homeowner's association meetings and public education interaction.

The commissioners had no issue moving forward with such events.

F. Washington Fire Chiefs Letter of Support: Chief Rash has served on the board of the Washington Fire Chiefs (WFC) since August of 2019. His seat representing Spokane, Stevens, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, and Whitman counties is up for election in May and he asked the commissioners for their approval and support in running for re-election to the two-year position. The Chief provided the Board with a letter of support for their consideration and signature.

Both Commissioner Rorie and Commissioner Boling felt it was a great opportunity for Chief Rash and the District to provide representation to that group. They were supportive of Chief Rash continuing his position with the WFC.

EXECUTIVE REPORT Chief Rash

A. 75th Anniversary Planning: August 29th will mark the beginning of the District's 75th year of service to the community. Staff is working on some commemorative activities

including hosting an informal member gathering and service pin presentation on Thursday, June 23rd at an outdoor venue. The goal is to bring back the traditional member awards and recognition event in February.

Chief Rash presented the Board with a draft 75th anniversary logo. The logo could be put on vehicles and apparatus as well as items such as an anniversary flag. Per District policy, the Chief asked the Board if there was an issue with using the District's patch on a 75th anniversary logo.

The commissioner had no issue using the District's patch for the 75th anniversary logo.

B. Community Engagement: Chief Rash and Chief Long have been asked to speak at the Glenrose Homeowners Association meeting on April 13th, 6:00 pm, at the Moran Prairie Library.

A prescribed burn near the Morningside Boys Ranch has been put on hold due to staffing and time concerns.

Chief Rash said there has been a lot of press on the Hatch Road closure. The District has tried to emphasize that response has not changed because the closest unit responds. However, who the community sees as the first due, second, or third apparatus may change. Chief Rash received a lot of good feedback about the process and appreciated the homeowners who gave the District a heads up that the closure was happening as the District had not been provided notice in a timely manner. Chief WYROBEK initiated a group which included DEM, City of Spokane, Spokane Fire, Spokane County and the highway department and together they came up with a good alternate plan.

The Spring/Summer newsletter is out. To date, the District has received 14 fire defense assessment requests, and Chief Rash said he received three personal phone calls and an email from residents sharing their various thoughts and thanks to responders and the Fire District.

Chief Rash encouraged the commissioners to access the District's website homepage and the link that reads, "Can I Burn?". Chief Long, along with the Department of Natural Resources and Spokane Regional Clean Air, did a great job putting together the video discussion about when, what, and where burning is allowed.

C. SCBA Purchase Staff Report: Chief Rash said he will electronically send the commissioners information which shows the deliberative process that was used for the SCBA purchase. The Research and Development Committee completed their analysis and made a recommendation to staff for the purchase. The order will be placed with LN Curtis tomorrow before a price increase takes effect on Friday.

D. Support Unit 80: Support Unit 80 is back in the District's possession. The Maintenance Division is conducting some needed repairs outside of the completed accident repairs. Staff hopes to have the apparatus back in service at or by the end of the month. The total cost of repairs was just over \$50,000 and was paid by insurance.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Response Statistics
- 2021 draft Annual Report; Chief Rash asked that the commissioners respond with questions or comments by April 23rd.
- Glenrose Homeowners Association meeting notice

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Commissioner Public Disclosure filing deadline is April 15th.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None in person or by Zoom.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:50 pm, Commissioner Boling called for a 20 minute Executive Session until 7:10 pm, per:

- RCW 42.30.140(4)(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 proceeding or reviewing the proposal made in the negotiations or proceeding while in progress.
- RCW 42.30.110(1)(g) to evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee,

Chief Rash and Carol Trescott joined the commissioners in Executive Session; Chief Wyrobek joined via Zoom.

At 7:12 pm Commissioner Boling called the regular meeting back in session. No decisions were made in Executive Session.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A. Policy & Procedure Review. WFCA meeting is April 23rd; Commissioner Boling will have additional policy information at the May regular meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:12 pm Commissioner Boling adjourned the regular meeting.

Lee C. Boling, Chair
Fire District 8 Commissioner

ATTEST:

Carol L. Trescott, District Secretary