

Spokane County Fire Protection District 8

MINUTES

Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting

October 13, 2020
6:00 pm

*This meeting was conducted electronically via Zoom
due to Governor Inslee's Stay Home, Stay Healthy order*

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners was called to order at 6:02 pm by Chair Greg Hesse. In Attendance: Commissioner Andy Rorie, Commissioner Lee Boling, Commissioner Greg Hesse, Fire Chief Tony Nielsen, Assistant Fire Chief Lonnie Rash, District Secretary Carol Trescott, Division Chief J. Wilkins, Division Chief Marty Long, and Bob Lundy.

INTRODUCTIONS

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

The following voucher/warrants electronic payment are approved for payment:

- Warrant Numbers 112506 through 112576 Totaling \$239,193.80
- Electronic Payments 09/01/2020 – 09/30/2020 Totaling \$796,457.33

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS

A. IAFF Local 3711 Social Media Activity: Commissioner Hesse felt Local 3711's recent tweet was political in nature. The Spokesman Review published a story on the tweet which implied that it had been posted by Fire District 8. He stated the Local needs to ensure the media understands their tweets are 3711's and do not represent District 8.

Commissioner Boling said regardless of what is provided to the media it will be reported the way they want it to. He asked numerous people about the Local's tweet and said they interpreted it to mean our firefighters and paramedics would do anything to take care of our community. He said although he felt it was a good time to review the District's policies, he had no further issue with the social media post.

Commissioner Rorie was in agreement with Commissioner Boling. He said the public doesn't discern between any of our groups which is both good and bad. He acknowledged that 3711 has had a lot of good press that has been a positive for the District. Commissioner Rorie said it was a good reminder for all of us to be careful of what we say, to establish good relationships with the press, and to be guarded with them in particular.

Chief Nielsen did not believe any policy was violated. He said he appreciates the firefighters taking the side of community safety.

B. Draft 2021 Budget: Chief Nielsen presented the Board with a draft 2021 Operating Expense Plan. He stated the only change to the draft budget since the budget workshop was an increase in the Publications and Association Dues line as a result of a restructuring in the way the Washington Fire Chiefs Association calculates their annual dues. Currently, there is a surplus of \$71,628; that figure could change when state assessed numbers are received. Chief Nielsen said prior year's surplus has been dedicated to the Capital Replacement Fund; however, the Board could also elect to allocate any surplus to the dedicated reserve fund, or to specific line item or project that was not previously funded but that they would like to see completed.

The commissioners directed to allocate any budget surplus to the Capital Replacement Fund. Chief Nielsen said he will provide the final figures to the Board in November.

C. Policies/Procedures Review (PFML): Chief Rash said the District is working through the state mandates relative to the Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) program. PFML is designed to provide paid leave to employees to receive or to give care. Collections began by payroll deduction in 2019; benefits were available to employees in January 2020. Staff is working with Summit Law Group to update the District's procedures on the PFML. Chief Rash provided the Board with a draft procedure which offered several options for implementation of the program.

The Commissioners agreed to Option 4 as recommended by staff and legal. Chief Rash will move forward in drafting the procedure and return to the Board for their review and approval.

D. BVFF Pension Certification: Carol Trescott said the District's Local Board of Volunteer Firefighters consists of Volunteer representative, Bob Lundy; the Board Chair; one other commissioner; the Fire Chief; and the Board Secretary. Two former members of the Fire District, Jay Cronk and June Watson, have met BVFF age and years of service eligibility requirements and have applied for their Board for Volunteer Firefighters pension. All pension premiums were paid during the member's active service; there is no further cost to the District.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Hesse and seconded by Commissioner Rorie: **Move to approve Jay Cronk's BVFF Certificate of Pension.** The Motion carried unanimously.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Hesse and seconded by Commissioner Rorie: **Move to approve June Watson's BVFF Certificate of Pension and Invoice Voucher.** The Motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE REPORT: Chief Nielsen

A. COVID-19 Update: Chief Nielsen sent out a revised Safe Start document extending the plan four weeks to reflect that Spokane County remains in Phase 2. The 127th Daily Directive was distributed on Monday. Staff meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays via Zoom, and MSO, Tom Chavez is continuing his work behind the scenes. There are currently 156 suspected and 41 confirmed COVID cases within the District. Chief Nielsen said there was an issue at the Fire Training Academy in North Bend that led to an exposure to three of our members. Those personnel continue to do well and will be back in the stations next week to resume their training in-house. Staff is exploring options to access CARES funding. Chief Nielsen said Valley Fire is moving to the use of Zoll EMS monitors; our MSO and staff have determined Zoll would not be a good fit for District 8 at this time.

Chief Nielsen said per the Board's previous direction with respect to the awards banquet, staff has looked at holding an outdoor event in May or June of next year. Several concerns were brought forward including how to properly recognize the District's volunteer members who haven't had an opportunity to participate for most of 2020.

Carol Trescott said everyone in the District has stepped up this year and has done extraordinary work with the requirements to wear additional PPE and the additional steps required to do their work. In addition to limitations on recognizing our volunteer members, she said there is concern about what the perception of holding an outdoor event may look like to the community. She suggested providing a coin or some type of recognition for all members of the District this year.

Chief Long said the crews in the stations have had an increased work load with additional PPE to stay safe and didn't feel bringing everyone together would be the best move. He also questioned if people would be comfortable with eating in a large group setting when many have not been to a restaurant in months and potentially may not attend if they didn't feel comfortable being in a group. Chief Long said we have asked our Volunteer members to stay away from the stations which makes it a challenge to recognize and honor them at this time.

The commissioners were in agreement in as much as they want to recognize our members for their work it would be difficult to plan something with the unknowns of COVID. They also did not want to host an event that would make people feel uncomfortable about attending. They elected to table the awards banquet at this time and asked that staff monitor changes and state regulations.

Bob Lundy said he appreciates the fact that people are thinking about a recognition event under the circumstances but he is okay with tabling the event. He said gathering together and sharing a meal is always good and he did not feel holding the event virtually would have the same impact as being able to meet in person.

B. Station 82 Backup Generator: Chief Rash reported the new transfer switch has been installed. The final step is coordination between the electrician, the pump installer, and the generator technician to run the load test. This is scheduled to be done in the next week to ten days.

C. Apparatus Refinance: Chief Nielsen reported in follow up to September's BoFC meeting he spoke with Jim Nelson with D.A. Davidson, and Lee Marchisio with Foster Garvey on a potential refinance of the District's two Pierce engines. Both reviewed our current lease purchase agreement and confirmed that the earliest the District could refinance the units or make payment to purchase

them is May 11, 2021. They recommend a tax exempt refunding bond in February. Per federal tax regulations, February 10th is the soonest date we would be able to take action. They felt that is the best way to capture lower rates and is the least complex of the options available. Chief Nielsen proposed returning to the Board in December or January with additional information to move the process forward. A refinance would save about \$7,000 per year; \$84,000 over the remaining 12 years.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

CORRESPONDENCE

Attached

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Apparatus Refinance
- Policies/Procedures

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jason Wilkins, president of Local 3711, said the annual Santa float is the union's biggest event, but in the same vein as the awards banquet, they are not going to be able to host Santa this year. He said it would be a challenge to be in such close proximity with so many families and it takes a lot of personnel to put on the event. President Wilkins said the Local will put out a statement to notify the community.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Commissioner Boling will attend the Washington Fire Commissioners meeting on October 21st. He learned that the IAFF has a PTSD and abuse treatment center in Utah which was attended by 21 people from Washington State this year. Commissioner Boling said the WFCAs healthcare administrators would like to know if anyone has attended, and if the results were positive.
- Chief Nielsen announced his plans to retire effective December 31st. He said he has had a wonderful 30 plus years in the fire service and could not say enough good and thank you to the Board, the staff, and the firefighters. The Chief said it's been a huge blessing. He also said he couldn't emphasize enough and he strongly believes that Lonnie Rash would be a fantastic Fire Chief. Chief Nielsen said the sooner the Board could make a decision as well as move on a potential Assistant Chief would keep the organization moving forward.
- Commissioner Hesse thanked Chief Nielsen for his service and said it has been wonderful working with him. He said Chief Nielsen is always well prepared which makes everything easy to understand. Commissioner Hesse stated the staff, the Local, and everyone associated with Fire District 8 has loved Chief Nielsen as the Fire Chief and he very much appreciates the fine things the Chief has done for District 8 and the fire service. "We will hate to see the Chief go but he has certainly earned his retirement and will be missed. He hope Chief Nielsen is able to enjoy a long, fun retirement."
- Commissioner Boling said it was unfair for the Chief to retire at a time when we can't throw a party for him. He asked that when the time comes and things open back up that he will give us the opportunity to thank him professionally for the job well done and for being such a great friend.
- Commissioner Rorie said he appreciates how Chief Nielsen works with people, how he deals with people and how he treats them. Commissioner Rorie said Chief Nielsen has the ability to bring groups together to accomplish all that we have within the agency. "We've been very lucky to have

you and wish we could keep you longer. You are leaving us with good folks as well – thanks for all that you’ve done.”

- Jay Wilkins thanked Chief Nielsen on behalf of 3711 for treating the Local so well, openly, honestly, and with transparency. He said he is honored to work with him, alongside him, and across the table from him. “Thank you from the bottom of our hearts and for the legacy you have left.”
- The Board will hold a Special Meeting on Thursday, October 15, 2020, beginning at 6:00 pm for the purpose of holding an Executive Session to evaluate the performance of a public employee.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:53 pm Commissioner Hesse adjourned the regular meeting.

Gregory A. Hesse, Chair
Fire District 8 Commissioner

ATTEST:

Carol L. Trescott, District Secretary