

**SPOKANE COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT NO 8
Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting**



MEETING MINUTES

November 14, 2023, 6:00 pm

Commissioner Boling thanked Chief Wyrobek for the excellent job he did serving as Interim Fire Chief for the past two months.

CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS

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

INTRODUCTIONS & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SWEARING IN OF FIRE CHIEF RASH

Commissioner Boling administered the Fire Chief Oath of Office to Chief Lonnie Rash.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

L3711 President, Blaine Holman, said the District has not kept its promise to the community to maintain a three-person engine crew and ALS coverage at all stations. He said from 2018 to 2024 the District's budget has increased 76% but staffing levels have increased 23%. He felt there is money in the 2024 budget to hire six more people, which Holman said would put the District at full staffing with 16 on each shift, and move the MSO to day shift. He said this would reduce overtime and mandatory callbacks, and improve moral. Holman asked the Board to consider increasing staffing in the 2024 budget.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

- Add: Executive Report, 8C, WFC
- Move after Introductions: New Business, 7A, Swearing in Fire Chief Rash following Introductions

A motion was made by Commissioner Rorie and seconded by Commissioner Hesse: move to approve the Agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

The following warrants and electronic transfers were approved for payment:

- Warrant Numbers 115207 through 115265 totaling \$342,100.60
- Electronic Payments 10/01/2023 – 10/31/2023 totaling \$511,212.63

A motion was made by Commissioner Rorie and seconded by Commissioner Hesse: move to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Board Secretary: Discussion took place on who would serve as Board Secretary after the current Secretary's retirement.

Commissioner Boling said agencies may appoint an outside person, an attorney, the fire chief, or a commissioner as the Board Secretary.

Chief Rash said if the Board were to appoint the Fire Chief as the Board Secretary much of the work would be delegated to the Executive Assistant or the Office Assistant but the final responsibility would be with the Fire Chief.

Commissioner Boling suggested appointing the Fire Chief as Interim Board Secretary and then following up with the Executive Assistant to see if she had an interest in the position.

A motion was made by Commissioner Boling and seconded by Commissioner Hesse: move to appoint the Fire Chief as Interim Board Secretary. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Administrative Sick Leave Buyback: The Executive Assistant and the Office Assistant are retiring in December and submitted a request to buy back 25% of their accrued sick leave as is consistent with the Fire Chief and Assistant Chief's contract, as well as members represented by the Local. At the October meeting, the Board asked that Chief Wyrobek contact legal counsel to seek their opinion because the District has no policy addressing sick leave buyback for non-represented retiring personnel. Attorney Brian Snure provided a Severance Mutual Release Agreement which provides a legal means for granting the buyback of accrued sick leave to retiring employees. Chief Rash said moving forward the District may want to implement a policy and procedure for any new hire but could continue using the Severance Agreement until that occurs.

Chief Wyrobek clarified there is existing policy regarding sick leave, however it very broad and does not specifically address the Office Assistant or the Executive Assistant positions.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rorie and seconded by Commissioner Hesse: move to utilize the Severance Mutual Release Agreement for non-represented employees until which time as the policy is changed. The motion carried unanimously.

C. PTFP Program and L690: Teamsters L690 currently represents the District's part-time firefighters. The District has not recruited or hired part-time personnel for several years, and there are no longer any employees in the part-time program. Funds previously allocated to that program have been moved to the full-time program. Chief Rash said the District's labor attorney suggested the Board vote on the discontinuation of recruitment and hiring of part-time firefighters which would remove that position from the agency's roles. Because of the position discontinuation the District would no longer

budget for those positions now or in the future. Chief Rash said L690's business agent is in agreement. If the Board chooses to move forward in this process a letter will be sent to PERC by District legal counsel to begin the decertification process.

A motion was made by Commissioner Boling and seconded by Commissioner Hesse: move to discontinue the recruitment and hiring of part-time firefighters, eliminate the position in Spokane District 8, and no longer budget for part-time positions in the future. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Capital Project Discussion – Facilities: Chief Wyrobek contacted ZBA Architects regarding the original concrete specifications in Station 81's annex. ZBA was not able to determine the exact specification of the concrete, rebar size, or depth and is awaiting a proposal from a company that can X-ray and secure a core sample of the concrete. Chief Wyrobek said the concrete tests will show whether the building is viable for use as a shop; and if it is not, if there would be an option to remove one bay of concrete and re-pour it with something that will have the psi required for lifts. With that information staff can contact the lift vendor to ensure the concrete and lift system will be safe and begin design and pricing on the building. This will provide the Board with the information they need to make a decision on the location for a maintenance shop.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Swearing in Fire Chief Rash: Moved after Introductions above.

B. 2024 Budget and Public Hearing: Chief Rash reviewed the process used in development of the 2024 expense plan. He said the budget was created with a number of placeholders until the Strategic Plan was complete. Now that the District has a new Strategic Plan, long term priorities will be identified for future staffing, facilities, and apparatus during the first quarter of 2024. Chief Rash said mid-year budget amendments can be made if required.

At 6:22 pm, Commissioner Boling closed the regular meeting and opened the Public Hearing for the purposes of receiving comment on 2024 revenue sources.

Chief Rash outlined the process used in drafting the 2024 budget which included a Budget Workshop in September, presenting the Board with a draft budget in October, and tonight's public hearing to receive comments on revenue sources. The Board will be asked to adopt a resolution for an increase in the EMS levy from the previous year, and adopt a 2024 Expense Plan. A Levy Certification and balanced budget must be submitted to Spokane County before November 30th.

Chief Rash reported that both assessed value and new construction have increased. Fire taxes on new construction are estimated to be \$122,729; EMS taxes on new construction are estimated to be \$25,686. Revenue from the Fire levy is projected to be \$7,670,590 (inclusive of new construction); revenue from the EMS levy is projected to be \$1,605,424 (inclusive of new construction); revenue from the M & O levy will be \$2,798,217; and, state assess property taxes are projected to be \$5,000. Total 2024 projected revenue is \$12,079,231.

Commissioner called for public comment.

Blaine Holman provided documents to the Board and the Fire Chief showing what he calculated to be the increases in revenue and expenditures for the last several years.

With no further comment, Commissioner Boling closed the Public Hearing at 6:27 pm and resumed the regular meeting.

Chief Rash presented highlights of the 2024 budget which include: meeting all labor contractual obligations and salary adjustments; a 3.5% COLA for non-represented staff; 6% healthcare and 2% dental premium increases; funding for Ready Rebound, Peer Support, SCBA Compressor, LDH Hose Dolly, admin office and parking lot security; training and professional development, company officer professional development, recruit academy instructor, sim lab, airway mannequins; capital projects including Station 84 maintenance and architectural work, Station 85 remodel, equipment for the new engines, facility and infrastructure projects, and two brush trucks.

The 2024 General Fund revenue and expenditures total \$15,002,411; the General Reserve Fund 2024 ending balance is projected to be \$966,338, which includes 8% of estimated annual revenue per policy; and, the Capital Improvement Fund 2024 ending year balance is projected to be \$3,397,872, which includes 10% of estimated annual revenue per policy.

Discussion followed on staffing. Chief Rash said there are currently two FTEs on the books and two budgeted for in 2024 for a total of four FTE personnel. The District is currently actively recruiting for a spring academy.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rorie and seconded by Commissioner Hesse: move to approve Resolution 23-03, Authorizing an Increase in the District's Tax Levy From the Previous Year - EMS. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rorie and seconded by Commissioner Hesse: move to adopt the 2024 budget and expense plan as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Fall/Winter Newsletter: The Board received a draft copy of the Fall/Winter Fire & Flyer for their review.

D. Custer Lane Road Signs: Chief Long provided history and context of the Custer Road / Custer Lane area sign blockage. The area is privately owned and maintained by the neighborhood association. There is also a non-conforming road, and a section maintained by Spokane County. The homeowners who live on East Custer Lane want to block the road at Custer Road and Custer Lane. Chief Long reviewed the site in 2020 and informed the landowner that he would not support blocking the road but that they may be able to install a fire gate on the road and that Spokane County would need to be involved in that decision making.

Chief Rash said he has visited the area in question and discovered it is a field and technically not a road. He said there should be no expectation that the Fire District will respond through that location if it not maintained all year.

Commissioner Boling said the matter is personal to him and also expressed concern for fire safety reasons. He said the landowners were authorized to put signs up and that every time someone goes around the sign another pole is installed; there are currently seven poles blocking the area. Commissioner Boling said the road is on land that is designated as a county right-of-way and does not belong to the homeowners association. Residents are allowed use of the road but not to block someone's property. The family wants the blockage removed and asked Commissioner Boling why the Fire District signed off on a road closure. Commissioner Boling said summer roads county-wide do not have gates or blockage and he feels the District needs to take a look at it as a safety issue. He acknowledged the present situation is not working and felt a gate would be an option.

Chief Long said there are numerous summer roads but the area in question is not a road and does not exist in the eyes of the county.

Chief Rash said the Fire District has no legal authority to approve or not approve land use in that area; the District can say it does not support its use, but the county will make any determination. Dispatch will not route emergency vehicles through that direction.

Commissioner Hesse stated the county is the enforcing agency not the Fire District 8 or the homeowners. He suggested Commissioner Boling contact the HOA to schedule a meeting with the county.

Chief Rash said the original option of an emergency access gate can be revisited.

EXECUTIVE REPORT: Chief Rash

A. 2023 Capital Purchases: Most all 2023 capital expenditures are complete. The extractor and fire hose have been purchased; however, Station 81 painting has been deferred to 2024.

B. Ponderosa Neighborhood Update: In 2021, the District was notified of a plan in the Ponderosa area to develop 17 acres into 81 lots. The City of Spokane Valley adopted a resolution that included a requirement for setbacks and sprinklers in that area, and Fire District 8 accepted those mitigating factors for development within the City of Spokane Valley portions of the Ponderosa. In the same area, county property is designated as less dense and 16.4 acres are to be developed into 43 lots. The District worked through access and egress concerns with the community supporting mitigating standards for the 81 lots, however, none of those standards are in place for the county property. The developer believes emergency evacuations are specific to the incident commander, which Chief Rash said is correct in guiding documents and the emergency response plan. He said developers provide traffic study data to the City or the County and fire agencies do not look at or have never weighed in on it. Staff will meet with the community to determine their interest and share the Fire District's role relative to evacuation in the area.

C. **WFCA:** Commissioner Lee Boling was elected as President of the Washington Fire Commissioners Association.

OPERATIONS REPORT: Chief WYROBEK

D. **FTE Recruitment:** The District is currently recruiting for up to two full-time Firefighter/EMTs and/or Firefighter/Paramedics. An area recruit academy is scheduled to begin March, 2024.

E. **2024 Officer Drills:** Two professional development officer drills have been scheduled in 2024. The first is a progressive discipline class in January presented by the District's labor attorney; the second is an annual evaluation course in October or November presented by the District's HR Manager.

F. **Wildland Season After Action Review (AAR):** The annual county wildfire After Action Review is scheduled for December 13th. The Gray and Oregon will be the main topics. Outside moderators will facilitate.

Chief WYROBEK said it has been an honor to serve as Interim Fire Chief and he is looking forward to returning to the Operations role to continue doing good work for the District and assist our members with what they need to help the community. He thanked the Board for the opportunity.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Commissioner Boling recognized and thanked commissioner-elect, Jeff Larson, for attending the meeting via Zoom.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A. First Quarter Items including budget items, allocation of resources, and Strategic Plan items

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:18 pm Commissioner Boling adjourned the regular meeting.



Lee C. Boling, Chair
Fire District 8 Commissioner

ATTEST:



Lonnie J Rash, Interim District Secretary