



## NORTH WHIDBEY FIRE AND RESCUE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Station 25, 2720 Heller Rd., Oak Harbor, WA  
Phone: 360-675-1131 Email: [Admin@nwfr.org](mailto:Admin@nwfr.org)

### Minutes

April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

9:00 a.m.

*Approved May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

**Call to Order:** Chairman Marvin Koorn called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Also in attendance: Commissioner TJ Lamont, Commissioner Gerald Smith, Interim Fire Chief Chris Swiger, Battalion Chief Dan Horton, Battalion Chief Steve Lacy and Secretary Natasha Spydell.

#### **Citizens for Safe & Humane Fireworks**

Committee member Jackie Lasater introduced herself, Lee McGuire, and Joni Panciera as the Citizens for Safe & Humane Fireworks. Ms. Lasater stated the group formed after the Fourth of July 2022 in response to an overwhelming amount of community social media posts expressing issues with the use of fireworks in Island County. Ms. Lasater stated the group was formed to look at data and information to address the concerns of the public.

The group gave a PowerPoint presentation to the board seeking support for their mission: to outlaw fireworks in Island County on the Fourth of July. The group stated the main reasons for outlawing fireworks are environmental and public safety concerns.

The Citizens for Safe & Humane Fireworks concluded their presentation and turned the floor over to Island County Commissioner Melanie Bacon.

Commissioner Bacon stated her most personal concern regarding the use of fireworks is wildfire risk and the ability of Island County residents to safely evacuate. Commissioner Bacon stated her understanding of enforcement being an issue, but explained how difficult enforcement is currently with some fireworks being legal. She explained if all fireworks were illegal, enforcement would be easier. Commissioner Bacon stated the county should not let enforcement issues impact whether a code is enacted or not. She stated if the code is changed, people will adjust and change their behaviors over time.

Chairman Koorn asked if the county would be willing to fund the sheriff's office with the resources necessary for extra enforcement on the Fourth of July.

Commissioner Bacon stated she did not see the county having an issue with that.

Commissioner Lamont stated a code must be in the books in order to enforce it.

Commissioner Smith asked if the committee has reached out to communities where fireworks are currently banned for feedback on the pressure and stress it creates on law enforcement and resources. Ms. Lasater stated the committee has heard such feedback from other communities, but the change is an ongoing process. She stated there would be more calls and stresses on resources initially, but an equilibrium would be reached over the years following.



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Commissioner Bacon stated other communities have had volunteer firefighters step-in to help law enforcement.

Chairman Koorn stated this has been done in the past and it is easier to tell illegal from 'safe and sane'.

Chairman Koorn stated his concern with such codes philosophically speaking. He stated that animals react to gunshots, cars backfiring, and thunder in the same manner as fireworks, so at what point do lawmakers draw the line?

Commissioner Bacon stated she understands the encroachment on citizens' rights issues.

Chairman Koorn stated North Whidbey has been lucky regarding fireworks related incidents, there was only one in 2021.

Commissioner Lamont stated the committee was on the right track by getting a code in place so the sheriff has something to enforce. He agreed with Commissioner Smith that resources would be stressed long-term but stated it would settle over time.

Chairman Koorn stated King County currently bans fireworks and houses still burn down every year.

Chief Swiger asked about the economic impact of banning fireworks. He stated that many organizations hold fundraisers by selling fireworks.

Ms. Lasater stated organizations in communities where fireworks are banned have found other avenues to raise money.

Lee McGuire compared the fireworks ban to the ban on indoor smoking decades ago. She stated the concerns were not as great as the public anticipated them to be.

Chairman Koorn asked Commissioner Bacon why the county does not have signs stating fireworks being illegal in county parks.

Commissioner Bacon stated she would address the issue with the county.

No further questions or comments were made. The committee members thanked the board for taking the time to hear their concerns.

### **Phone Upgrade**

Chief Swiger stated there is money in the budget for a district phone upgrade at all the stations and administrative building. He stated the current quote is less than the initial quoted costs. Chief Swiger stated the quote includes a headset for the administrative assistant and the district would be switching from Vonage to Comcast. Chief Swiger stated the monthly cost will increase but there would only be one payment to one company.

Chairman Koorn asked if these were cell phone upgrades or landlines.

Chief Swiger stated the upgrade is for the landlines.

Commissioner Smith motioned to approve the phone upgrade request; motion seconded by Commissioner Lamont.

**Motion carried unanimously.**



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### Policy Updates

#### a. Policy 102 – Purchase Policy

Chairman Koorn stated there were multiple spelling errors that need to be corrected.

Commissioner Smith stated he prefers removing specific names from the credit card holders list and only using position titles.

Chief Swiger stated the names will be removed and only position titles will be listed, but additionally state in the policy that names will be on the credit cards.

Commissioner Smith stated 1.1.3 of the policy should state the purchase order will be completed prior to making the purchase.

Chief Swiger stated sometimes the price is unknown prior to the purchase.

Chairman Koorn stated the purchase order needs to be completed prior to the purchase.

Commissioner Smith stated 1.1.7 says purchases over \$5000 must be board approved, but it should be \$2500.

Chairman Koorn stated 2.2.1 should state that purchases should never exceed the amount of the line item budget without board approval.

Commissioner Smith stated he would like certain cost categories to be broken down by commissioners. For example, all facilities costs would go to one commissioner, and all administrative costs to another commissioner for approval when designated limits are exceeded.

Commissioner Smith stated administrative manager needs to be changed to accounting manager in 2.4. Commissioner Smith stated that multiple grammatical and capitalization errors need to be corrected as well.

Chairman Koorn stated the board will motion to approve the policy after seeing the final changes.

#### b. Policy 121 - Performance Reviews

Chairman Koorn stated section III on the very last page of the performance review forms needs to be removed completely. Chairman Koorn stated the use of 'I think' is subjective, and the review needs to be solely based on performance and absolutes.

Commissioner Lamont stated that subjective statements could go under comments instead.

Commissioner Smith stated on page 1 the position descriptions full-time and part-time need to be spelled out. Also, under (b.) *volunteers*, the *station officers in charge* statement needs to be more specific as to who is responsible.

Chairman Koorn stated the first paragraph on form 121-1 should state 'the evaluator *shall*', or '*will*', and 'in mind' should be removed.

Commissioner Smith stated that comments are required regardless of rating.



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### *c. Policy 134 – Standards for Dress*

Commissioner Smith stated the policy should be completely scratched and rewritten.

Chairman Koorn stated the term business casual needs to be specifically defined.

Chief Swiger stated there were multiple policies inside other policies and administrative staff is trying to condense similar policies into one.

Commissioner Smith stated the current uniform policy does not even dictate a uniform color. He stated his preference is for a uniform policy to be recreated from scratch and have it supersede all other uniform policies.

Chairman Koorn stated specifics needed to be stated in the new policy.

### *d. Policy 152 – Conduct for all department Personnel*

Chairman Koorn stated the policy used the term 'illegal drug'. However, marijuana is a legal drug, but should still be included as prohibited by the district.

Commissioner Smith asked if the district wanted to reevaluate the zero tolerance on firearms policy.

Commissioner Smith stated it was something to consider discussing in the future.

### **SAFER Grant**

Chief Swiger stated the district has been awarded the SAFER Grant for Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention. The grant is for \$594,762 over a four-year period and encompasses costs and benefits associated with the position, as well as training, gear, tuition assistance and more. Chief Swiger strongly recommended the board approves to accept the grant, as it would be a great asset to the district's volunteer program.

Chairman Koorn stated he would approve the grant but not the job description and announcement at this time.

### *Job Announcement Discussion*

Chairman Koorn stated he would like the position announced as full-time.

Chief Swiger stated the position can be part-time or full-time.

Commissioner Smith stated the position should be listed as full-time to start.

Chairman Koorn stated the benefit package should state specifics. Chairman Koorn stated under job duties should state the position *assists* in managing the district's high school program. The next sentence should state the position manages the programs for *NWFR's* SAFER Grant, not 'federal'.

Commissioner Smith asked if we want to refer to ourselves as a district or a department.

Chief Swiger stated that however we are listed with the state is how we should refer to ourselves.

Chairman Koorn requested checking with the state to see.

Commissioner Smith stated that the salary is required by state law in job announcements and NWFR needs to be spelled out. He stated multiple grammatical errors need to be corrected.



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Chairman Koorn said to get rid of *'part-time'*, he agrees with a flexible schedule, but does not agree with Firefighter Officer I requirement. He stated the term could be changed to *'preferred'*. Chairman Koorn stated the degree preferences should be removed, and the last line under preferred qualifications should be removed.

Commissioner Smith asked if the term *'demonstrated'* should be removed or if the entire *'preferred qualifications'* section should be removed.

Chairman Koorn stated he was okay with *'demonstrated'* being removed.

Commissioner Smith asked why the position holder cannot be a volunteer also.

Chief Swiger stated he discussed it with the representative and the person must be paid their hourly wage for any work they perform for the district.

Commissioner Smith asked if the district requires a Washington State driver's license.

Chairman Koorn stated it could be changed to say *preferred*.

Chief Swiger agreed.

Chairman Koorn directed the board to page three stating that managing the bi-annual budget is the accounting manager's job, and scheduling ride-a-longs is Chief Lacy's job currently.

Chief Lacy stated currently there is not a Standard Operating Guideline that states who is responsible for scheduling ride-a-longs. Chief Lacy stated the district has not started a ride-a-long program.

Chairman Koorn stated he does not want to take jobs away from current personnel.

Commissioner Smith stated the *communicate with duty crew* part should be removed. He stated on-shift personnel should not be responsible for evaluating volunteers. If they want to talk fine, but they should not be evaluating them. Commissioner Smith stated *'finance manager'* needs to be changed to *accounting manager*, and *HR* should be spelled out. Commissioner Smith stated the position should not be required to attend every Monday night drill.

Chairman Koorn agreed it should state *'attends normally, at discretion of chief'*.

Commissioner Lamont suggested using the term *'attends frequently'*.

Commissioner Smith stated he understands meeting/greeting and attending for oversight, but it is not the best use of time to spend two hours at drill every Monday. Commissioner Smith stated to remove the training responsibility because the district will eventually have a training officer.

Chairman Koorn asked why this position should be concerned about compliance when there are three chiefs that already do that.

Commissioner Smith requested the *'run errands'* example of work performed be removed.

Chief Swiger agreed.

Commissioner Smith stated the first bullet on page four should be as it pertains to *all* personnel, not volunteer firefighters. He stated the second and sixth bullets should be removed because they were previously stated. Commissioner Smith stated the job description has a physical requirement of 20-100 lbs. and the job announcement states 40lbs. The two need to match.

### *Job Description Discussion*

Chairman Koorn stated the job description's minimum requirements need to match what was discussed in the job announcement.



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Commissioner Smith stated '*demonstrated*' needs to be removed, and '*insurable*' needs to be removed from job description or added to job announcement.

Chairman Koorn stated a separate line should be added to state '*must be insurable by district insurance*'.

Commissioner Smith stated the job description does not need to say '*meet requirements*', it is a job description, not a posting.

Chairman Koorn asked about the '*starting of a resident sleeper program*'.

Chief Swiger stated the district receives money to support a sleeper program which is a great incentive.

Commissioner Smith suggested rewording the statement as '*in budget to facilitate*'.

Chairman Koorn stated #7 under administration should state '*works with training officer*' to coordinate volunteer training efforts. Chairman Koorn stated '*main*' should be removed from #10.

Commissioner Lamont agreed the wording should be changed to *a* source. Commissioner Lamont suggested removing the policy making duties, as it is above the position's level.

Commissioner Smith stated #17 should be restructured and #18 should state '*assists accounting manager*'.

Chairman Koorn stated #4 in peripheral duties should mention taking a firefighter/EMS along if the individual is not a qualified firefighter/EMS. Chairman Koorn stated '*may perform*' should be changed to '*may facilitate*'. Chairman Koorn suggested removing line #2 under special requirements.

Chief Swiger obliged.

Commissioner Smith asked if certain vision qualities were required under physical demands. He stated he has never seen a position disqualify an individual based on this quality before.

Chairman Koorn stated the job announcement and job description documents have been reviewed and the board will approve once changes have been made.

Chairman Koorn motioned to approve accepting the SAFER Grant; motion seconded by Commissioner Lamont.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

Commissioner Lamont asked if funds were received immediately.

Chief Swiger stated funds are received on a monthly reporting basis.

**At 11:22am Chairman Koorn called the meeting into Executive Session from 11:25am until 12:00pm.**

### **Executive Session:**

#### **a. RCW 42.30.140(4)(a)**

Collective bargaining sessions with employee organizations, including contract negotiations, grievance meetings, and discussions relating to the interpretation or application of a labor agreement; or (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



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collective bargaining, professional negotiations, or grievance or mediation proceedings, or reviewing the proposals made in the negotiations or proceedings while in progress.

**b. RCW 42.30.110(1)(b)**

To consider the selection of a site or the acquisition of real estate by lease or purchase when public knowledge regarding such consideration would cause a likelihood of increased price.

**Chairman Koorn called the meeting out of executive session at 12:00pm. No decisions were made.**

**Adjourn Meeting**

Commissioner Lamont motioned to adjourn the meeting; motion seconded by Commissioner Smith.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

Meeting Adjourned at 12:02pm.

Attest:

Natasha Spydell

Board Secretary/Accounting Manager