



## **NORTH WHIDBEY FIRE AND RESCUE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Administration Building, 770 NE Midway Blvd. #1 Oak Harbor, WA

Phone: 360-675-1131 Email: [Admin@nwfr.org](mailto:Admin@nwfr.org)

### **Special Meeting Minutes**

November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023

1:00 p.m.

**Location:** 770 NE Midway Blvd  
Oak Harbor, WA

**Call to Order:** Chairman Marvin Koorn called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Also in attendance was Commissioner Gerald Smith, Chief Chris Swiger, Chief Dan Horton, Chief Steve Lacy, Secretary Natasha Spydell, and Recruitment and Retention Coordinator Maroua Gottih.

**Chairman Koorn called the meeting into executive session at 1:00 p.m. until 1:05 p.m.**

#### **1. Executive Session:**

##### **a. RCW 42.30.110(g)**

To evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee.

**At 1:05 p.m. Chairman Koorn called the meeting out of executive session. No decisions were made.**

#### **Full-time Firefighter Selection for Hire**

Chairman Koorn motioned to offer the full-time firefighter position to Brian Sanderson; motion seconded by Commissioner Smith.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **Recruitment and Retention Coordinator Report**

Recruitment and Retention Coordinator Maroua Gottih presented a Power Point presentation to the board regarding plans for the SAFER Grant. Coordinator Gottih presented the following topics for discussion:

##### **Staffing Needs**

Coordinator Gottih stated the grant funds forty new volunteers over a four-year period. She stated there are currently six volunteers under the grant and there will be an additional four in April to stay on track with the ten per year allowed through the grant.

Chairman Koorn asked why the district is waiting until April for additional volunteers.

Coordinator Gottih stated the next physical agility test is not until then.

Chairman Koorn asked what the volunteers waiting until April are currently doing.

Chief Lacy stated sixteen people are going to the academy in 2024, are currently attending weekly training and will attend entry-level firefighter (ELF) training next month.

Chairman Koorn stated the board had previously discussed the desire for the volunteer process to be sped up.

Chief Swiger stated anyone the district brings in now, will have to wait a year before they are able to attend the firefighter academy. He stated the current process is more streamlined and the process was unorganized when people were brought in year-round.

Chairman Koorn stated his concern for losing volunteers and interest with the current process. Chief Swiger stated the district lost more volunteers with the old process. He stated volunteers go through a standard hiring process of testing, physical examination, interview and reporting to insurance. Chief Swiger stated it is hard to set up testing and interviews for one to two people intermittently.

Chief Horton asked Human Resources Specialist Crystal Swanson how many applicants have said they are no longer interested due to the hiring process waiting period.

Specialist Swanson stated no applicants have lost interest due to the hiring process. She stated one applicant withdrew their application due to being deployed by the time the hiring process was scheduled to begin.

Chief Horton stated applicants are given exact dates on when to expect the hiring process to begin. Commissioner Smith stated he does not have an issue with the dates but with volunteers having to wait so long from the time of application submission to the start of the hiring process.

Chairman Koorn stated the board reluctantly agreed to quarterly and now the process is less than quarterly. He stated the board would like to see the policy for the hiring process.

Chairman Koorn redirected the discussion back to the presentation.

Coordinator Gottih stated the current volunteer to citizen ratio is one volunteer firefighter per 916 citizens. She stated by gaining ten volunteers per year, one volunteer firefighter per 747 citizens would be the goal.

### **Budget**

Coordinator Gottih gave a 360-degree view of the budget for the SAFER Grant. She stated the grant funds are allotted based on our application and only some categories of funds can be negotiated or amended. Coordinator Gottih stated the volunteer incentives that are available through the grant are career/leadership training and tuition assistance. She stated the tuition assistance funding allotted through the grant is low and the district was not able to negotiate with colleges prior to applying for the SAFER Grant.

Chairman Koorn asked if the training funds can be used for academy.

Coordinator Gottih said funding cannot be used for costs the district previously funded through its own budget.

Chairman Koorn asked if awards for the appreciation banquet can be funded through the SAFER Grant.

Coordinator Gottih stated an amendment would need to be submitted.

Chairman Koorn stated an amendment should be submitted soon then.

### **Suggested Allocation of Funds**

Coordinator Gottih suggested giving a bonus or tuition assistance to the top five performers. She also suggested other retention efforts such as gym memberships and career training through the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC).

### **Implementation Requirements**

Coordinator Gottih made the following implementation suggestions:

- Establish a volunteer portal for feedback.
- Coordinate with local colleges.
- Awards system overhaul.

- Recognition board in administrative building.
- Gear volunteer program towards making career firefighters.
- Conduct quarterly SAFER Grant audits to evaluate the success rate of efforts implemented.

Chairman Koorn suggested using some older awards and displaying them in the administrative office to start.

#### **Applicant Tracking System**

Coordinator Gottih shared her ideas for tracking volunteer retention efforts through the creation of surveys, a retention rate calculator, and a personal development form.

Coordinator Gottih concluded her presentation to the board.

Chairman Koorn thanked Coordinator Gottih and stated her presentation was very informative.

#### **Washington State Patrol Contract Renewal**

Chairman Koorn motioned to approve the contract for renewal; motion seconded by Commissioner Smith.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

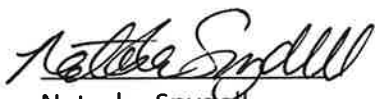
#### **Adjourn Meeting:**

Commissioner Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting; motion seconded by Chairman Koorn.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

The Special Meeting of the Board adjourned at 1:54 p.m.

Attest:



Natasha Spydell

Board Secretary/Accounting Manager