

NORTH WHIDBEY FIRE AND RESCUE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Administration Building, Station 25 Heller Road Oak Harbor, Washington
MINUTES of the Special Meeting on April 15, 2019 at 6:00pm

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Lamont called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. Also, in attendance were Commissioner Koorn, Commissioner Goen, Chief Kirko, Secretary of the Board/Accounting Manager Torgerson, Administrative Manager Damon,

Fire Fighters: James O'Connor, VanGiesen, Shane Brandhorst, Daniel Horton, Ben Browning, Ann Canto, William Cooper, Thomas Kelsey, Caitlin Krall, Skye Levandoski, Michael Maletto, Michael Pelzer, Hannah Tripp, Chris Turner, Karley Young, Jimmy Zimmerman, Jeff Amidon, Lindsay Beard, Mark Boberg, Bill Cheman, Jamie Clark, Dylan Dahl, Robert Dorr, Dale Esperum, David Hanson, Michael Henderson, Chris Hernandez, Thomas Hocht, Richard Hoover, Cliff Horr, Scott Jackson, Johnathan Lacy, Steve Lacy, Kelsie MacDonald, Stephanie Mace, Geoffrey May, Thomas Mohlsick, Michael Myrum, Lauren Nelson, Michael Powell, Timothy Schulz, Jeremy Walton, Josh Koorn, Ty Welshans, Samuel Martin, James Valencic, Justin Vasileff,

Public: Gary Cooper, Cinthia Brooks, Mary Brock, Beth Stephanes, Miriam Stephens, Kelly Brock, David Peattie, Becky Peattie, Sam Miller, Scott Damon, Jodi Kirko, Theresa Jenkins, Michael Pelzer, Lyle Zimmerman, Larry Morse, Kris O'Conner, William Brooks, Michelle Tiell George Lawson, Anabelle Mitchell's

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Richard Hoover who has lived in the community for many years, thinks there has been a struggle and a lack of transparency from the commissioners. He would like the meetings to be advertised more. There has been a lack of leadership to boost moral for FF, Volunteers and the District. He has seen first-hand how bad the Turnout gear is that all FF's have. He says there are no replacement Turnouts and all are mismatched. He spent a month and half doing inventory due to the poor conditions of the room where all the inventory is kept. It is less than desirable. Something needs to be done concerning the conditions and inventory of the Turnouts. He would like the Commissioners to go see the condition the gear is in. He is proud of wearing the NWFR uniform as he was when he was in the Navy. It is essential for him to have leaders that are transparent and take charge to improve the district and take accountability for their actions. He wants the Commissioners to have open communication between firefighters and the District. He wants the Firefighters to get to know the Commissioners and for them to get to know the Firefighters as well. He wants them to be more involved in the District's events like the pancake breakfast, training, and any other events that are scheduled.

Richard thanked all the commissioners for their time.

- He wants the Commissioners to educate themselves in the State and District Regulations
- Invest in Grant Writers and look up all the grants that are available to the District.
- Community wants transparency and to get to know them and vice versa.
- To work with them and find common ground to grow the District.
- Regular Meeting time change has been an issue for the members of this District

Why are the Regular Meetings in the Morning?

How many people can comment during the Special/Regular Meetings?

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Chairman Lamont stated that he met with Richard Hoover when he came into office and had a long conversation about what Richard thought needed improvement in the District. He answered all the questions he had concerning the Budget. He mentions that he can always come to him and discuss anything concerning the District. He would be more than happy to answer any questions he or anyone has about the District. The reason the time changed for the regular board meeting is because we need to pay overtime or comp time for the staff to attend evening meetings. We had very few attendees for the evening meetings the last few years. So we decided that it would be cost effective to change the time of the meeting to regular business hours. We can discuss the meeting times and change them to a later time if needed. Chairman Lamont has visited the stations in the past and it has been very informative for him. He also stated that anyone who wished to comment during the meeting needs to sign the comment sheet. This way everyone will have the opportunity to speak. We can use the Whidbey News- Times to advertise the monthly meetings. We tried to get a levy increase but it failed the last time. There are many components that go into asking for a levy increase, it takes time and it is costly. We are spending money on the MSAR program without any financial assistance from the Sheriff's office. We have a contract that is being revised as we speak with Whidbey Health. That contract will allow us to increase the pay for our part time duty crews. Our Duty Crews need an increase in their hourly pay and we are hoping to get that increase with the new EMS contract with Whidbey Health. We want to complete the contract with Whidbey Health before pursuing the MSAR program finances with the county. Commissioner Koorn stated that safety has always been priority and that there should always be reliable equipment available for all the FF and Volunteers. We do not want to give the impression that we are micro managing anything, that's the reason we don't visit the stations. Commissioner Koorn would not mind if the meeting time was changed to the evening. Concerning the Grants, we have used Grant Writers in the past and he does not know why we stopped but we can look into using them again. Commissioner Goen, mentioned that the revision for the EMS contract with Whidbey Health has been going on for a while and this is the closest we have gotten to a final conclusion.

Daniel Horton felt that there was a lack of progression for any negotiation for the EMS contract. He wanted to know why was it is taking so long to negotiate and come up with contract?

Chairman Lamont explained to Horton that contract negotiations take time. There are several proposals that went back and forth however he thinks we are close to wrapping things up and having a contract implemented.

Commissioner Koorn mentioned they have had several meetings with Central Whidbey concerning the EMS contact because they also have a contract with Whidbey Health. We are exchanging ideas on how to improve the contract before finalizing it.

Tom Hocter has been an FF for 39 years. He has worked in many positions throughout the years with different Fire Districts. In the last two years he has heard a lot from the commissioners. He has heard that Chief Kirko has not been allowed to do his job. He does not trust the Commissioners; however, he knows his Chief. He has been the one providing all the

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bunker gear and anything else he has needed. He feels Chief Kirko needs to be supported. He believes we have to spend money to get more money and having a grant writer would help us have more money for our District. He does not trust the Commissioners. It is upsetting that he has to go to different stations outside the district to do basic training. He discussed the gear and how bad the District is in need of good gear. The turnout bunkers are mismatched and sometimes they don't have the right size for the FFs. There is a budget section on the budget for gear. He wants Chief Kirko to be able to buy new/used gear when it is needed. He would also like the Commissioners to attend the pancake breakfast coming up. It would be a great opportunity to get to know them.

- He asked Commissioner Koorn if he was running in the next election? He stated he did not support him because he does not trust him and said that about three fourths of the District did not support him as well.

Commissioner Koorn is in favor for having a live fire training facility in our District. He would just want a detailed plan on how we can have a training facility. He wants details on cost, format of the training, liabilities, location and anything else that would involve building and operating the training facility.

Chairman Lamont stated that buying Turnout bunkers in bulk would be much cheaper than buying individual sets. He has confidence that Chief Kirko can make decisions on the equipment the firefighters need and the budget is flexible and can be adjusted as needed.

Mike Henderson has been a volunteer for the MSAR program. He has attended several meetings including the last meeting on April 9, 2019 because he read the letter that was posted in the newspaper. He felt the letter was a cry from the District for the public to be more involved in the district. He asked the Commissioner to take a pole for meeting time changes with the people that were present for this Special meeting.

- He asked how many people would like the hours to be changed to evening hours instead of morning hours?

Chairman Lamont asked the public "How many people would like the hours to be change to a later time"? The majority of the public that attend raised their hands. Chairman Lamont suggested to have it in the next agenda for the next meeting.

TJ Kelsey is an FF, home owner and small business owner. He believes it is essential to have the right training and education for all FF to be able to do their jobs. Training is an essential part in order to be safe during the job. He feels the training that the District has in place is not enough and he believes they are not efficiently equipped to do their jobs. Most of the FF have a full-time job besides NWFR. He has worked with Commissioner Koorn before and believes he is micromanaging things. He feels they have hired the best people for the job so let them do their job. Chief Kirko and Capt. Vangiesen are the best equipped leaders for the job and need to be supported. The FF's need more support from the Commissioners on the training /education aspect of the job. He believes the MSAR program is essential for the District. Capt. O'Connor

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has done a fantastic job with the program and believes the program needs more support. He asked the commissioners to support the Fire training box. He would like to see the Commissioners at different events as well.

- Kelsey asked why should you guys be the commissioner for this District?

Chairman Lamont said that he became commissioner because he didn't like how the District was running and thought he could make difference. Commissioner Koorn said that he had been working for NWFR for a long time and he had experience in Budget and Policies and thought he would be a great fit. Commissioner Goen also worked with NWFR and thought he could make a positive impact as a commissioner for NWFR.

Chairman Lamont explained that there are several steps that need to be taken in order to have a live fire training program implemented. There is research that has to be done, we need permits and approvals for the program. Chief Kirko is keeping us involved on the process. We are in the beginning stages of this program. Concerning the MSAR program he would like more involvement from the Island County Sheriff Office because it is their program that we are assisting with. NWFR spent 20k last year on the program. He hopes that the (ICSO) will contribute resources for their program so that the 20k can go toward the FF and FF operations.

Larry Morse stated there were seventeen meetings in 2017, twenty-seven meetings in 2018 and twelve meeting so far for 2019. At this rate NWFR is projected to have thirty-six meeting by the end of the year.

- Why has NWFR had so many meetings?
- Would they support the wildland fire program?
- Why has it taken over 3 years to negotiate the EMS contract? We should have a Professional negotiator assisting with the contract if you guys need help. He couldn't believe it has taken this long to have a revised contract in place.
- Has it cut into the Budget?
- What's the status for the Student Resident Program?
- What is your goal for NWFR?

He has suggested having a running list of emails to notify everyone that wants to get information from NFWR to be implemented.

Chairman Lamont has spoken to Chief Kirko about the 5-10-year plans. We sit down with Chief Kirko and go over the budget and decide if the budget would sustain the projects. Commissioner Koorn also said he sits down with Chief Kirko to analyze the budget.

Theresa Jenkins feels NWFR public image should be improved. There has been a lack of leadership and direction. She has gone to several meetings and has felt disconnected from the commissioners and the Chief. We should be more connected with the public and advertise NWFR more. The public believes we are part of Oak Harbor District and we are not.

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Theresa Jenkins noticed that there is a lot of money in the Capital section on the Budget.

- Why is the money not being spent?
- What was their 5-year plan for the District?
- How much can Chief Kirko spend at a time?
- When are they going to discuss the EMS Contract?
- When is all the Legal investigation going to be finished?
- Are you guys going to disclose what the legal investigation was all about?
- Are you guys anticipating more Special Meetings?
- What is going on with Chief Kirkos Contract?
- Why has he not had a contract yet?

Chairman Lamont said that there are many projects in place right now. They have approved the plumbing issue and have plans to remodel Station 25 because he would like the office staff be over there. We have seven stations that we need to maintain, and they all have fire apparatus and equipment to consider when dealing with the budget and spending the money that we have. We review the budget with Chief Kirko every month to see if we need to adjust anything because of unexpected spending. He does not anticipate many Special Meeting in the future. As for the Legal investigation, it is wrapping up and will be finalized soon.

Commissioner Koorn stated that Chief Kirko could handle repairs that need to be made to the stations on his level. Anything that is over five thousand has to be approved anything else can be handled at his level.

Commissioner Goen stated that it is Chief Kirko's responsibility to take care of the stations and any needs they may have. If there is something that requires less than five thousand dollars, he can make the decision to repair it or not.

Jim O'Connor, wanted to address the elephant in the room. He was referring to the going on investigation. It is a moral killer and it is very disruptive. No one knows who to put their faith in and who to trust. He wants the investigation to be done with. He also thanks the commissioners for having the MSAR program and assisting them with the money for the program. He also stated that so far, we've spent more on legal fees than on the MSAR program.

- He wanted to know when would the investigation be over?
- What is it about?
- What would the results be?

The Commissioners stated the investigation will be ending soon and everything would be public knowledge.

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George Lawson mentioned that the chain of command is not working in the District. If the FF have a problem let them speak to their LT or Capt. first. If the commissioners don't support the chain of command, they do not support the chief.

- George asked the commissioners: Can Chief Kirko make decision about FF and will you support the outcome?

Commissioner Koorn stated that issues like that do not have to come to us. I trust Chief and the decisions he makes concerning the FF. We all support the chief.

Chairman Lamont does not have a problem talking to the FF about whatever issues that have. He wanted everyone know that one commissioner does not have the power to make any decision concerning any issue they have. He supports the chief in his decisions.

Mike Henderson asked about the levy rates. He asked:

- What is the Levy Rate?
- When was the last increase of levy?

Commissioner Koorn stated we could increase the levy one percent every year with out a public vote. The last time there was a levy increase was in 1989. The current levy is .667 but with the public vote it can increase up to \$1.50.

Tim Shultz sent a letter to the commissioners a while back asking why the hours for the meeting were changed, he never got a response back. He understands that leadership changes every so often but he wants them to be committed to choose one thing and finish it before starting anything new. He would like them to consider having five board members instead of three board members that we have now. In order to satisfy the public maybe there should be several meetings during the month that have different times so that the public can attend.

- He wanted to know why the time was change for the meetings?
- What is their plan for the District?
- What are their goals for the District?
- Why hasn't the public been educated on levy's and all the different times of Meetings?
- What is you plan moving forward for the Board of trustees.?

Chairman Lamont didn't realize the letter Shultz wrote to the board didn't get response. He explained that when there are leadership changes unfortunately things get lost in transitions, but he apologized for not receiving his letter and time changes will be discussed at the next meeting. Commissioner Koorn apologies for not knowing about the letter he has sent before. He will look into having all notices for meeting be available to the public.

Scott Jackson has been an FF, Paramedic EMT. He believes the EMS contract takes away from union jobs. But he loves the program. EMTs that actually work for Whidbey Heath get paid \$18.00 an hour. Our EMTs get paid \$13.75 an hour. This wage does not cover peoples bills. He understands that this program was not intended to be a fulltime job, but we need to support our EMTs more and get them raises. FF Jackson also commented on the maintenance of the district

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and recommends hiring someone that can handle different maintenance issues.

Chairman Lamont wants the EMS contract to succeed and wants our EMTs to get paid more. The contract that we are trying to finalize should allow us to increase the pay for the EMTs. All Commissioners are going to sit down with Central Whidbey Fire and Rescue to come up with a reasonable contract that would benefit the EMS program.

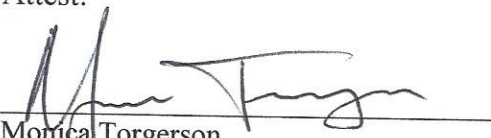
Matt Vangiesen wrote a letter to Whidbey News-Times about the Commissioners in the newspaper. He just wants the best for this great organization. He mentioned there were three things that make this organization great and they were the commissioners, volunteers/ FF Duty Crew/Office staff and the public. He is optimistic that talking in this type of setting will help everyone understand everyone's passions. He may not agree with everything that the commissioners approve or deny but by talking about in this type of forum would help everyone understand what is going on in our great district. He thanked the public, Commissioners, FF's, for coming out and supporting NWFR.

The commissioners thanked everyone for commenting and expressing their concerns and for all the support. They will try to be more transparent moving forward.

ADJOURN MEETING

- There being no further business and by mutual consent, the Special Meeting of the Board adjourned at 8:22pm.

Attest:



Monica Torgerson
Secretary of the Board/Accounting Manager