



NORTH WHIDBEY FIRE AND RESCUE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Station 25, 2720 Heller Rd., Oak Harbor, WA

Phone: 360-675-1131 Email: Admin@nwfr.org

Special Meeting Minutes

September 22nd, 2026

09:00 a.m.

Location: 770 NE Midway Blvd.
Oak Harbor, WA

Approved October 13th, 2026

Call to Order: Chairman Marvin Koorn called the meeting to order at 09:00 a.m. Also in attendance: Commissioner Gerald Smith, Commissioner Robert Miller, Chief Chris Swiger, Chief Ray Merrill, Chief Dan Horton, Chief Ian Walton, and Secretary Natasha Spydell.

HQ Fence

Chief Swiger stated he received a quote from the contractor working on the neighboring home for half of the amount for the shared fence. Half of the quote for the black metal fence is \$3,621.06. Commissioner Smith asked if the homeowner will solely be responsible for maintaining the fence. Chief Swiger confirmed.

Commissioner Smith motioned to approve payment for half of the fence quote; motion seconded by Commissioner Miller.

Motion carried unanimously.

Brush 22 Repairs

Chief Swiger explained that Brush 22 is out of service. The top end of the motor is bad, and the bottom end is okay. Two quotes were presented to the board; one for fixing only the top end, and the other for a new motor. Chief Swiger stated he also looked into possibly replacing the brush truck with a new one. A gas motor truck costs about \$71,000 for the chassis and another \$40,000 - \$50,000 for a skid. Commissioner Smith asked why the current skid would not be reused. Chief Swiger stated the current truck could still be used in town, and the new brush truck would mobilize.

Chairman Koorn stated he is not happy with either of the quoted companies currently after the ambulance issues.

Commissioner Smith agreed.

By consensus, the board agreed to table the discussion until the October Regular Meeting.

2027 Budget Planning

The board was provided with the 2027 budget proposal draft.

Chairman Koorn asked why the Cash Investment line was reduced by \$361,000.

Secretary Spydell stated it was just the estimate of what is currently in the investment account and will be updated with a more accurate estimate prior to final approval.

Chairman Koorn stated he was happy the expenses were more in line with the budget, but he could easily find \$50,000 in line items that do not get fully spent. He recommended going through each line item.

Chief Swiger stated the proposal was taken from the 2026 adjustment and 5-year budget comparison.

Chairman Koorn stated the budget is \$50,000 less than income and there are line items where the district does not want to spend everything that is budgeted for them. He stated the budget needs to be gone through with a fine-tooth comb. The district is going to need money for feasibility studies, etc. Commissioner Smith stated he went through a couple of line items, and his concerns were as follows:

- The Ziply contract expires this month and suggested renegotiating for more money.
- Questioned why cost recovery was reduced and if all possible claims are being submitted.
- Volunteer Shift line item is inflated.
- Volunteer On-Call barely has any expenses this year.
- OPS Overtime Duty Crew Part-time has already been spent this year.
- According to fuel bills and current costs, he recommends decreasing gasoline to \$35,000 and increasing diesel to \$40,000.
- Academy budget is too high.
- Vehicle Repair/Maintenance could be reduced.
- Questioned if PPE should be increased.
- Suggested estimating insurance costs.
- Recommended budgeting so an adjustment is not necessary halfway through the year.

Chief Swiger stated he will go over the mentioned line items and Chairman Koorn's notes with Secretary Spydell and have an updated proposal for the October Regular Meeting.

Chairman Koorn asked if there were any further comments on budget.

None were presented.

Whidbey Health BLS Contract

Chief Swiger stated Whidbey Health is offering a \$50,000 increase of \$335,000 per year for the contract.

Chairman Koorn stated Central is at \$360,000.

Chief Swiger stated Central runs their ambulance on everything and it is not out of service at all.

Chief Swiger stated he could go back with a proposal to increase annually.

Commissioner Miller stated a comparison should be completed. If other districts are getting more per call, we should be getting the same.

Commissioner Smith asked what the cost is to Whidbey Health to staff their own ambulance.

Chief Swiger stated he can get those numbers.

Commissioner Smith stated he is sure it would cost Whidbey Health more to staff it themselves.

Chief Swiger suggested scheduling a meeting with himself, Chairman Koorn, Chris Tumblin of Whidbey Health, and Whidbey Health's Finance Manager.

Commissioner Smith stated he would like to attend that meeting also.

Chief Swiger stated he would contact Whidbey Health and discuss dates to schedule an open meeting.

Ault Field Property/RFQs

Chief Merrill stated 25 agencies requested RFQs and the district received 10 submissions prior to closing. Some agencies submitted for both RFQs, and others only did one or the other. Chief Merrill plans to go through using the scoring matrix and compile data together for the board to review and discuss at a special meeting.

Chairman Koorn stated the board will wait for the information from Chief Merrill, then look at scheduling a special meeting to review the RFQs.

Levy/Bond Discussion

Chief Merrill stated this is closely related to the previous discussion, and what the district does with the RFQs will help determine how it moves forward with a levy/bond, and marketing/negotiating, etc. Chairman Koorn asked what is currently being done to market the district and get information out to the public.

Recruitment & Retention Coordinator Kohfield stated he has been actively increasing the district's social media outlets to lay the foundation for online presence and web content, with the plan to post community oriented, organic messages to the public. Ideas such as interviews with chiefs and staff, getting out and talking face to face at community/private events such as Silver Fall Prevention meetings, HOAs, Fire Wise, etc. are being discussed.

Chairman Koorn stated the district can do a lot now.

Coordinator Kohfield stated for now, the plan is just to show the public who North Whidbey Fire and Rescue is, as a segway to levy talk. He is currently brand-building to show the district is open and transparent and has created a media group to facilitate the branding and marketing.

Commissioner Smith stated the district knows it has money issues and infrastructure issues and wishes staff was already out to HOAs, public groups, etc. promoting.

Chief Merrill stated timeline-wise, the district is on target for August 2027 ballot. The district can utilize the upcoming election to evaluate demographics and help determine the direction to go.

Commissioner Smith stated he understands but disagrees. He stated the district needs to fix in-house issues first. A senior firefighter recently asked him why the district needs money.

Chief Swiger stated he explains what the district is doing at association meetings.

Commissioner Smith stated there is an illusion out there that the district has money. He questions how the district can go to the public for a bond if in-house does not even believe it is needed.

Chairman Koorn asked if it would help if a member of the board comes to association meetings.

Chief Swiger confirmed it would help, but added members can come to any board meeting they want.

Commissioner Miller stated the district needs cohesion prior to doing this. Everyone needs to be on the same page.

Schedule Special Meeting

By consensus, the board agreed to wait for the RFQ data from Chief Merrill before scheduling a special meeting.

At 10:04 a.m. Chairman Koorn called the meeting into Executive Session until 10:30 a.m.

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 10:30 a.m. Chairman Koorn extended the Executive Session until 10:40 a.m.

At 10:40 a.m. Chairman Koorn called the meeting out of Executive Session and into Regular Session. No decisions were made.

Adjourn

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

Motion carried unanimously.

The Special Meeting of the Board adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natasha Spydell', written in a cursive style.

Natasha Spydell

Board Secretary/Accounting Manager