



Pierce County Fire District 13

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Minutes Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting March 8, 2016

Present: Commissioners Zuluaga, Ballantyne, and Noll, Chief McCollum, Captain Wassall

Members of the Public and Staff: 2

Commissioner Zuluaga called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Minutes:

Motion- A motion was made by Commissioner Noll to approve the minutes of February 9, 2016.

Seconded: Ballantyne

Passed

Vouchers:

Motion- A motion was made by Commissioner Ballantyne to approve vouchers #12789 through #12830 in the amount of \$36,258.13 for payables.

Seconded: Noll

Passed

Correspondence/Public Testimony:

Commissioner Zuluaga read 1 of 2 thank you notes received from Northpoint Co-op Preschool. He also commented on the nice article about PCFD 13 in the "Life at the Points" magazine.

Special Reports and /or Standing Committees:

March 8, 2016 Chief's Report:

Calls: 23 calls since last. 16 EMS, 1 fire, 1 service call, 2 mva, 1 water rescue, 2 mutual aid.

Staffing and Recruiting: Our academy graduation was February 27th at the BPIC. It went very well I thought. The academy project was a stool for the classroom. The recruits are now probationary firefighters and pulling their training shifts. We now will shift some support to assist Buckley since we have 6 enrolled out there. Two laterals have applied and are being checked out. Both look good.

(Chief aired the video the latest Academy completed as their project. It will be put on our website as an informational and recruiting tool.)

Financial Report: Pierce County Budget and Finance trial balance sheet is submitted for your review. It shows we have \$21,249.92 balance after this months payables. We paid out the academy instructors this month and have a state training reimbursement receivable of \$4,800. We also were awarded a State Trauma Grant of \$1,430 (not yet received).

Training: Training focuses around the probationary folks as well as our monthly training schedule.

SS911: Meeting is this Friday. Radio user group MOU has been signed by SS911 and the City of Tacoma. SS911 has agreed to pay the user fees down to \$30 per month, per radio, billed quarterly. (Monies for SS911 comes from cell phone tax & 1% sales tax.)

Good of the Order: Japanese exchange as well as the 6 preschool tours went very well. As I reported via email yesterday the Scott Columbia Tower Stairclimb was a success with 12 climbers reaching the top and raising over \$6,000 for the Leukemia Lymphoma society. Yesterday, March 7th, Roger Hurlbut, representing the Norpoint Area Boosters, came to my office. He explained that the Norpoint Area Boosters was formed in the early 1970's by Dr Jim Davidson (Madeline Davidson, surviving spouse) to foster and support community service. The athletic field next to Browns Point Elementary school which bears his name was one of the projects. Mr. Hurlbut is the last surviving member of the Boosters and wanted to close out the organization. As the last official act he has donated \$2,231.00 to our fire district to be used where it could benefit the community. I explained to him that we had a couple of projects started such as our nozzle replacement and upgrade that this would allow us to finish. He stated that he wished that I use the money anyway I saw fit to benefit the fire department. Once I decide which project to use these funds on I will follow up with a letter of appreciation and inform him on how this donation made a difference.

Commissioners Report:

Legislative report: Commissioner Noll shared that from the latest legislative report the bills that could have affected us appear to be dead. There are attempts to get mobilizations treated the same between organizations. He suggested we work through WFCFA (Washington Fire Commissioners Association) as they are our voice with the Legislature.

Commissioner Noll shared the WFCFA (Washington Fire Commissioners Association) comments on SS911.

Commissioner Noll asked about whether we were participating in the upcoming 4 day seismic event for responders. Chief McCollum reported counties and cities did not get necessary funding so it is impacting participation. Therefore, it is mostly State departments at this time.

Commissioner Noll met with Firefighter Jude Courmier regarding updating our website, and was pleased with the new draft version presented.

There was discussion among the Commissioners regarding a 2015-2016 draft work plan.

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Commissioner Ballantyne brought up Hazard Mitigation. Due to his experience and education in seismic activity, he will be attending some training for seismic evaluation of wood frame houses and thought this would be valuable information to share with our community. The training is to show how wood frame houses respond to seismic activity, and what can be done about it.

Commissioner Zuluaga asked about CERT training (Community Emergency Response Teams) that Firefighter Monica Watchie was previously involved in. He thought that having this training again in our community would be helpful. Commissioner Ballantyne will contact PC Emergency Management to learn more.

Lid Left Analysis: Commissioner Zuluaga prepared and read the following report after he and Chief McCollum met with the Pierce County Assessor's office:

“Current funding issues 2/16/16

Fire departments in Pierce County are authorized to collect \$1.50 per thousand of assessed value for fire services. Fire departments are authorized under an EMS levy to collect \$.50 per thousand of assessed value. Our EMS levy is a permanent one meaning it never has to be renewed by the voters. Fire departments can fund items like maintenance and operations with excess levy approval. Fire Departments can ask voters to approve bonds for capital expenditures like facility improvements and new apparatus.

PCFD#13 levy rate for 2016:

Fire services \$.71 per thousand, EMS, \$.39 per thousand, M&O \$0.00, Bonds \$0.00

Translated that means Browns Point and Dash Point residents pay \$1.10 per thousand of assessed value where most jurisdictions pay \$2.00, and many pay fire district residents for M&O levy's and Bonds for apparatus. Why is this levy rate dropped to this level? The exact formula is very complex but the short version is that in the years 2008-2011 property values dropped by 30-40%. Values have climbed back but our taxes by (Tim Eyman) law can only increase by 1% per year without a vote of the people. As we look ahead five years towards sustainability we have a budget crisis looming.

Administrative Staff

We are led by Chief Cliff McCollum, assisted by Captain Jim Wassall and supported by Lynnett Stevenson, part time administrative assistant. Wages are at the low end of the scale and there is more work daily than can get accomplished by staff.

Volunteers

We have a great number of volunteers, 95% live and work outside the district. They come for the training, for the intrinsic reward, in the hope of landing a full time job with a living wage paying department, and for a small stipend. \$10 per 12 hour shift, \$7 per call, and \$10 per drill. This stipend has not been raised in 20 years. Volunteer stipends average less than \$1000 per year for an average of 700 hours of shift work and an additional 400 hours of training. It's less than \$1 per hour.

Training

We provide industry standard training for our volunteers. 400 hours in the first year alone. As the industry changes and WAC updates its standards our per volunteer cost goes up. There are also the consumables as we train large #'s of volunteers. Boots, gloves, face pieces, turnout equipment, and books. Training aids, instructor fees, training venue fees, and wear and tear on apparatus must also factor in to the equation.

Facilities and Apparatus

Our two fire stations are bought and paid for but there is annual maintenance. Station 77 needs a roof, paint, and seismic retrofit. The classroom and dorms need new carpet. The office needs a new copy machine and a computer upgrade. Both stations will require new station alerting systems mandated by the FCC. The state will mandate paperless EMS reports in 2017 and that involves field computers. We need to update our Life Pak cardiac monitors. The parking lot at station 77 needs asphalt repair. Station 76 needs a new concrete apparatus bay and a bathroom remodel.

Our apparatus are 16 years old and in good condition. Twenty years is usually the replacement point for front line apparatus. January 2016 we paid over \$20,000 in repair and maintenance bills. Our Aid Vehicle is well beyond replacement time and our Wildland Brush Apparatus is borrowed and very old. We transport an average of 4 patients a month without billing. We deploy firefighters to Eastern Washington (and Western) for brush fires. They get experience, make wages and we make sizable apparatus reimbursement fees. The last two years this revenue has gone for vehicle repairs, and bills.

Community Outreach

Our turnaround began in 2005. We have changed our business model and transformed our operations to provide top shelf Fire and EMS protection for the residents of our district. We are staffed 24/7/365 with trained responders who have talent and commitment. We support local schools, churches, community groups and all local events with the time and talent of our organization. In 2015 per the “Washington State Survey and Ratings Bureau’s” scale of 10-1, our Fire district improved from a 4 to a 3, one of less than 50 departments statewide. This is very high praise for a volunteer department, and our residents save money on insurance!

Communications

South Sound 911 Is changing our dispatch future. Radio user fees are impacting our budget as well as dispatch fees.

Conclusion

Fire service is not free. It is supported by taxes assessed on home and land within the district boundaries. We are collecting \$1.10/\$2.00 or 55% of the legal levy rate set by the State of Washington and Pierce County. Property values can fluctuate but our revenue increases by law can only go up by 1% per year without a lid lift levy.”

The commissioners further discussed the lid lift analysis.

***Motion:** A motion was made by Commissioner Ballantyne for the Board to pursue a lid lift. We will do a needs analysis and learn the impact of the levy amount to other taxing authorities.*

Presentation to be made at the April Commissioner meeting.

***Seconded:** Noll*

Passed

Old Business:

1. **Hazard Mitigation Grant:** Chief reported on the seismic analysis status. He has applied for 6 different grants, 3 for seismic and 3 for electrical power. Of those, 2 are federal grants, 1 seismic and 1 electrical are state. Any other disaster declarations open up another window of grants. Chief McCollum is setting in motion drills to get doors opened if there is any shaking. Commissioner Ballantyne suggested we look at having a 2nd switch upstairs for opening the fire engine bay doors.

New Business:

1. **Station 77 Roof Damage:**

Chief McCollum asked for a motion to strip and replace roof over the classroom portion as there are multiple leaks after exhausting repairs.

***Motion-** A motion was made by Commissioner Ballantyne for a roof repair on Station 77, subject to reasonable bids.*

***Seconded:** Noll*

Passed

2. **Lid Lift Analysis Public Meeting:** Commissioner Noll will meet with Chief McCollum and staff to help with the needs analysis.

***Motion-**A motion was made by Commissioner Ballantyne for a special public meeting on Wed., May 4th at 7 pm, location to be announced.*

***Seconded:** Noll*

Passed

3. **Laminated Folding Detail Map:** Chief McCollum shared a new map showing driveway and hydrant details in our area that will be laminated and carried in each of our engines.

Announcements:

The next regular meeting will be April 12, 2016 at 9:00 AM.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 11:43 AM

Approved By:

Chairman Zuluaga

Commissioner Ballantyne

Commissioner Noll

Fire Chief/District Secretary