

**Whatcom County Fire District #21
Whatcom County Fire District #4
Semiahmoo Cannery Lodge
9261 Semiahmoo Parkway, Blaine, WA
8:30 am
September 20, 2014
Special Meeting Minutes
Planning Retreat**

A special meeting/planning retreat of the Board of Commissioners of Whatcom County Fire District #21 (dba North Whatcom Fire and Rescue) and Whatcom County Fire District #4 was held on Saturday, September 20, 2014 at the Semiahmoo Cannery Lodge in Blaine at 8:30 a.m. Those who attended were NWFR Chairman Bill Salter, Commissioners Dean Whitney, Rich Bosman, Dean Berkeley and Larry McPhail; Whatcom County Fire District #4 Chairman Harry Andrews, Commissioner Steve Ness and Commissioner Mary Beth Neal, District #4 Board Secretary Kris Parks; Chief Ron Anderson; Division Chiefs William Pernet and Henry Hollander; Captain Joe Noonchester, Health and Fitness Coordinator Kelly Freeman, Business Manager Benita Williams; Administrative Assistant Jennie Sand; Labor Representative Chuck Shipp, Volunteer Representatives Larry Johnston and Todd Berge.

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 a.m.

INTRODUCTIONS

Chief Anderson welcomed the attendees. The yearly retreat has been scheduled as per the Inter-local Agreement for Fire and Emergency Medical Services.

Chief Anderson further noted that this retreat provided an opportunity to begin planning for the upcoming year.

The attendees introduce themselves to the group.

RETREAT PURPOSE

Chief Anderson reviewed the purpose for the retreat.

- To discuss our future and where we want to go as an organization
- Build teamwork and develop cohesiveness
- Set goals and define expectations
- Adapt or Modify previous goals as our leadership and/or political environment changes
- Things that were relevant last year may not be this year
- Give stakeholders an opportunity for input
- Provide direction to our staff

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES STATEMENTS

The group reviewed the Mission, Vision and Values statements and made changes to the Mission and Vision Statement.

The new Mission Statement:

To protect the lives and property of our community to the best of our abilities with the resources provided while focused on compassionate care, teamwork and professionalism.

Chief Anderson informed about all the community services we offer as a department. He would like to see more public safety classes offered in the future.

FIRE DISTRICT FINANCIAL REVIEW

Chief Anderson provided information on the District 21 and District 4 mill levies, revenues, expenditures and the unanticipated funds collected.

Benita Williams and Chief Anderson presented:

- * Budget vs. Actual Revenue from January to August 2014
- * Budget vs. Actual Expenditure Report from January to August 2014
- * Budget vs. Actual Revenue for the General Fund from 2009 to 2013
- * Budget vs. Actual Expenditures for the General Fund from 2009 to 2013
- * The IAFF Local 106NW – Overtime, budget vs. the actual information from 2009 to 2013
- * The 3 Year Comparison of the Healthcare Costs, 2012 to 2014
- * Transfer/Invest from the 721 General Fund to other Funds from 2009 to 2013
- * Fund Balances of the General Fund, LTGO Fund, Reserve Fund, Healthcare Reserve Fund, Volunteer and Capital Fund from 2009 to 2013
- * December Account Balances – Carried over to April of the following year from 2009 to 2013
- * Mitigation Fund and Mitigation Payment Breakdown. The mitigation fees need to be utilized before their deadline.

District Bonds

District 21 Bonds	<u>Principal</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Purchase Andgar Property	-0-	121,475	121,975	117,130	-0-
Remodel Sta. 71	-0-	68,000	68,000	70,085	-0-
3-Engines & Ladder Truck	<u>1,311,523</u>	<u>238,562</u>	<u>242,335</u>	<u>242,335</u>	<u>245,368</u>
Sub Total		428,037	432,310	429,550	245,368
District 4 Bonds	<u>Principal</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Station 12 Campus	1,195,000	224,207	222,820	222,820	222,825
2006 Pierce Dash Pumper	90,272	60,211	60,211	30,925	30,925
2009 Pierce PUC	Sold 8/12	69,671	-0-	-0-	-0-
2009 Pierce Wildland Engine	Sold 1/13	34,975	34,975	-0-	-0-
Sub Total		389,064	318,006	253,745	253,750
Grand Total		817,101	750,316	683,295	499,118

HISTORICAL REVIEW

Chief Anderson provided a Historical Review to the group.

He provided information and delivered updates since the functional merger in July 2011 occurred. This information included the SAFER grants that both districts received, the districts debt, volunteer turnover, Chief Fields retirement, the 2011 & 2012 falling property values, the August 2012 District 4 Levy Lid Lift fail, 2012 wage concession by all staff, elimination of the Assistant Chief position and one Firefighter position and layoff notices were issued to four firefighters.

Looking at it today the property values have begun to raise slightly, the debt payments have been reduced significantly and the bonds will be paid off in five years, the District # 4 EMS levy passed, no layoffs, conservative budgeting and keeping a close eye on expenditures has resulted in increased fund balances and the number of volunteer firefighters is on the rise.

Our challenges ahead are the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters, the retention of full-time personnel, funding of capital expense needs, daily staffing issues, reducing response times, keeping members motivated and engaged and community involvement/engagement.

CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY CARDS

Jennie Sand handed out the 2014 postcard survey results and reviewed the process of how customer surveys are distributed and how the information is tracked and utilized by the district. Any customers wishing a “call back” are sent to Lieutenant Jorgensen who contacts the customer and then follows up with the appropriate firefighters and captain. The final results are also documented and tracked. Comments both positive and negative are posted on the NWFR Extranet and a few are posted in the district newsletter and annual report. Jennie noted that 99% of the comments as well as “call backs” are positive.

CULTURAL CHALLENGES INVOLVING COMBINATION DEPARTMENT

Division Chief Pernet started a discussion about opportunities for success in a combination department.

Challenges

The challenges for our combination department are:

- * Large response area –roughly 182 square miles
- * Economy (Budget) “Do more with less”
- * Staffing
- * Equipment Resources
- * Dispatch Challenges

Opportunities

These challenges are also opportunities to:

- * Promote and maintain the healthy culture of NWFR
- * Build and maintain good relationships internally and externally
- * Stay connected to our community
- * Revitalize volunteerism and station response
- * Maintain pride and ownership in our organization
- * Recognize a job well done

Organizational Culture

The organizational culture is the “personality” of an organization, comprised of the assumptions, values, norms and behaviors of the organization’s members.

How would we describe the culture of our department?

- * Diverse
- * As a young fire district
- * Family/Community oriented
- * Professional

Values shape our culture - we are a value based organization with

- * Accountability
- * Trust
- * Honesty
- * Integrity
- * Respect
- * Humility

How can we promote a healthy culture?

A healthy organization cultivates a culture of respect within a community that supports:

- * Personal and professional growth
- * Fairness
- * Open communication
- * Shared values

Relationships

Building Relationships is everything.

How can we build relationships?

- * Training together / Responding together
 - Joint training nights between career and volunteer ranks
 - Working together in the streets and on community events
- * Maintain good relationships with our public safety and community partners
 - No creating of islands
- * Community connections
 - Pancake breakfasts
 - CPR classes
 - Blood Pressure checks
 - Charity events

“If we are there for the community, they will be there for us”

Volunteer Program

We need to revitalize our volunteer program in order to:

- * Maintain Insurance Service Rating
- * Decrease response times
- * Enhance career response
- * Have more resources available
- * Start a community volunteer program

Pride and Ownership

Pride and Ownership is another aspect we have to look at.

- * Encourage pride and ownership among volunteer and career personnel
- * Develop a station theme – represent the station and community/built pride

Recognition and Fellowship

It is important to recognize people who do a great job and work hard not only on an annual basis but also on a daily basis.

Recognition events:

- * Annual awards banquet
- * Annual employee BBQ or picnic
- * Volunteer of the month
- * Firefighter/Rookie of the year

The department should look at organizational challenges as opportunities for change and success.

RECRUITMENT & TRAINING OF VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Captain Noonchester gave a presentation on:

Firefighter Qualifications

To become a firefighter comes with some challenges and qualifications. Our overall standards are the NFPA 1001/WAC 296-305 (2014).

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment

We need to reach to the community and demonstrate to them that our department is a desirable workplace; we need to understand the demographics and recruit those who live within our fire district, keep up with today's media and advertise. Currently we use our website, Facebook, reader boards, flyers and work of mouth.

There are baseline standards to become a firefighter. We use the NFPA 1001/WAC 296-305 (2014). The initial training is 220 hours, we need to follow the fitness standards NFPA1583, we teach them tools and equipment, hose drills, safety, communications and show them how to use personal protective equipment.

Interested people can fill out an interest card and come to an informative group meeting. At that meeting they will get information on the expectations of the department. The department makes the process as customer friendly as possible and explains to them that we focus on volunteers as well as career members.

Basic requirements are:

- Attitude
- Values
- Aptitude
- Physical
- Availability
- Geographic Needs

Recruit training options:

- Joint Academy
- WCRA (Whatcom County Recruit Academy)
- Washington State Academy
- Prequalified Volunteers

EMT Training

- BTC (Bellingham Technical College)
- East County EMT School
- Pre-qualified National Registry

The State offers a reimbursement grant every year. The grant is approximately \$700 per student.

Ongoing training

- Monday evenings
- On shift
- Outside classes
- Other agencies

The firefighters must keep up with the NFPA and state requirements.

Retention

How can we retain our volunteers?

- We have to make it a desirable workplace
- Create incentives and opportunities
- We want to recognize them
- Give them opportunity to advance
- Exposure to incidents
- We need to give them a sense of need
- We want to have a social aspect
- Give a sense of reaching the community
- Show them they are a social arm into the community

Some join the fire department to become a career firefighter, some want to be volunteers.

In order to keep up with the standards we have our fire district standards, state standards and there are ongoing changes in technology-tech rescue, hazmat, equipment, communication and other.

Statistics

2012-(29) Separations

2012-(15) New volunteers

2013-(23) Separations

2013-(9) New volunteers

2014-(2) Separations

2014-(11) New volunteers

Our efforts in recruitment have been better and our volunteer membership is looking better.

The attendees did a brainstorming session focusing on recruitment, recognition, retention and define the role of a volunteer.

Recruitment:

- Word of mouth
- Social media
- Career/Job fair
- Cadet programs
- Advertising/promotional hand outs
- Community newspaper

Recognition:

- Volunteer of the month
- Service awards
- Pride & ownership program
- Mentorship program

Retention:

- Career counseling services
- Increased response opportunities
- Hiring preference
- Testing practice
- Engaging training
- Recognition programs

The role of a volunteer:

- Support/Manpower
- Fiscal support
- Social connection to public
- Well trained volunteers
- Widen our sphere of influence

The training department spends at least 50% of their time on the volunteer program. The volunteer program is a very dynamic program which takes a lot of effort to keep up with but the volunteer program is a very good value for the tax payers.

DEPARTMENT IMAGE

Chief Anderson presented pictures on department images and asked the group to share their thoughts on the pictures and how a department can be seen by the public when posting pictures on websites, Facebook pages or in the media. It showed that the fire department needs to be careful what they make available to the public. He finished the presentation with several positive newspaper headlines regarding our department.

DISTRICT-WIDE CAPITAL NEEDS

Chief Anderson handed out the 2014 Capital Request list. It is not a complete list of all capital needs but also will be reduced based on the funds available in the budget.

Capital Projects (Facilities)

- Repair Asphalt Ramp in front of Bays at Station 69 (Laurel)
- Seal Coat Asphalt at Station 72 (Northwood)
- Painting Projects (Apparatus Bay Doors Stations 68 & 72 (Delta, Semiahmoo), Admin. Bldg. & Station 12)
- Install Drafting Hydrant at Station 68 (Delta)
- Remodel front Office area of Building D (Britton Loop)
- Install Folding Partition Wall in Station 12 (Britton Loop) Main Classroom
- Convert Training Tower to burn Class A Combustibles (Britton Loop)
- Re-Stain Exterior of Station 12 (Britton Loop) Admin Bldg. and Fire Station
- Sale/Lease/Retention of Custer Fire Station

Capital Apparatus/Equipment

Apparatus

- 1-Command Staff Vehicle (\$45,000) Replacement
- Engines, Tenders, Aerial Trucks?
- Tires

Equipment

- 1-Set Extrication Equipment (\$28,000) 3-years
- AED's (Automatic External Defibrillators)
- 16-Sets of Bunker Gear (\$30,000)
- 2-Bunker Gear Extractor (\$20,000)
- Pagers
- S.C.B.A. Replacement
- 2-Hose Testing Machines (\$5,500)
- Replace Dayroom Chairs at Station 12

Capital Projects

- Website Upgrades

Misc. Requests

- I-Phones for Captains
- Digital Cameras 1st out units
- Notebook Computers for Commissioners

Shop Requests

- On-line Service Manuals
- Air-Conditioner Service Unit
- Ford IDS Hardware & Software
- Light-duty Vehicle Scanner
- Shop Air-Compressor
- I-Phone for Mechanic

DISTRICT 4 & 21 FULL CONSOLIDATION

Chairman Andrews stated how important it is to get the merger voted in and get the departments together because there are benefits to become one department. We have to ask the voters of district # 4 for approval of the merger of the two fire districts. After discussions it was decided to put this issue on the ballot in the Fall of 2015. Again, teamwork is important to achieve this goal.

Chairman Salter stated that there were 5 years between mergers in the past with NWFR and that the consolidation with district 4 works well. Both districts made justification in the past years and some items still need to be discussed and we should get on the ballot next year. The tax levy rates might balance out in 2016.

CLOSING STATEMENTS

Chief Anderson stated that it is important as an organization to take time once a year to look back see where we've been and where we're headed in the upcoming year making sure that everyone is on the same page. We made a good adjustment to our Mission Statement and will go forward with the team building we talked about.

The results from this retreat will become our work platform for the next year and as we move forward with the budgeting process we are going to take input you have given us here today and we take the capital requests and take them to various groups. There are some challenges to capital projects at station 12. District 4 has to pay for their capital items and

the funds are not available for capital improvements. This is another reason to get this merger accomplished. We will take a look at these challenges and work thru them and are moving forward. Things look positive and we got a lot to look forward to at the department. We have great people, we have great leaders and the future is bright for us. However we all have to move forward pulling in the same direction.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Kris Parks, Board Secretary

ATTEST:

Harry Andrews, Chairman

Mary Beth Neal, Commissioner

Steve Ness, Commissioner