

**Whatcom County Fire District #4  
via Zoom Meeting  
4142 Britton Loop, Bellingham, WA 98226  
12:00 p.m.  
February 12, 2024  
Regular Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Cooley called the regular Whatcom County Fire District #4 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for February 12, 2024, to order at 12:01 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Attendees: Chairman Steve Cooley; Vice-Chairman Tim Johnson; Fire Commissioner Mark Lann; Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen.

With the rescission of Proclamation 20-28, the district continues to do its best to provide accommodations to the public. A direct link allowing the public to participate in the meeting during the public comment section was included on the meeting agenda and posted on the District's website.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Meeting Minutes
  - a) January 16, 2024 – regular
2. Staff Reports – Chief / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
  - a) Total Revenue – December \$81,599.02
  - b) Total Expenditures – February \$10,993.23
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
  - a) Monthly Expenditure Payroll Voucher: \$322.00
  - b) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$10,671.23

**MOTION:** Vice-Chairman Johnson moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lann and approved 3-0.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Levy Lid Lift Additional Funding Update:** Chief Van der Veen provided information regarding the final 2023 fire levy utilized for the 2024 taxes. The one submitted in November was based on projections.

The final assessed valuation is \$3,133,153,903. The new levy rate amount for fire is \$.99.

Vice-Chairman Johnson pointed out a greater discrepancy between the projected amount approved in the 2024 budget during the December meeting and the final fire levy amount. Chief Van der Veen pointed out that these final numbers do not include the EMS levy.

Chief Van der Veen will compare all pertinent information and calculations and report his findings via email and during the March meeting. The EMS final worksheet is expected to be provided during the March meeting.

Vice-Chairman Johnson wants to ensure that there remains funding for the capital purchasing priorities discussed at past meetings including a fire engine purchase and updating the facility at Britton Loop in 2024.

**Fire Engine Purchase and Britton Loop Station Siding Project Updates:** Chief Van der Veen reported that District 4 lacks overall policies, and much of what they have is outdated. The current purchasing policy is outdated and must be updated before they can move forward with any large purchases.

Chief Van der Veen noted that the State of Washington is revamping some purchasing limits and bidding laws that will be in effect in July.

District 21 is also in the process of updating its purchasing policy to reflect the upcoming changes. The draft policy has been sent to District 4's attorney for review. Chief Van der Veen hopes to align the policies for both districts. It is expected that the Board will be provided with a draft policy at the March meeting for final approval in April.

Chief Van de Veen has contacted the District 4 attorney to inquire about other policies that may need to be implemented before proceeding with large purchases.

The engine purchase is expected to be similar to what District 21 and the Bellingham Fire Department utilize. Once ordered, apparatus delivery will take between twenty and twenty-four months. The current apparatus spec committee, chosen for their subject matter expertise, will be utilized to provide the best recommendation to the Board. In Chief Ward's absence, the Board has offered to assist Chief Van der Veen with the Britton Loop siding project process.

**Whatcom County Council Resolution 2023-054 Protest:** There was discussion regarding whether there was a need for the Board to sign the Whatcom County Council Resolution 2023-054 Declaration of Protest letter originally drafted by the Eastside Fire Commissioners. It was noted that some but not all of the other fire agencies have signed the letter.

Chairman Cooley provided information regarding a recent article in the Cascadia Weekly summarizing the issues surrounding the fire agency protests. In addition, Commissioner Lann and fire agency representatives brought forth their concerns during a County Council meeting.

The group remains open to working with the County, provided the process remains open and transparent. In the spirit of cooperation, Chairman Lann does not believe there would be a need to add the District 4 Board signatures to the protest declaration letter.

It is unclear if the Board's opposition regarding the County's recent process was formally documented outside of the testimony given by Commissioner Lann and other fire agency representatives.

Vice-Chairman Johnson was out of town and did not have a chance to review the article. Chief Van der Veen will forward it, and the Board agreed to revisit the topic during the March meeting.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**District 21 Levy Lid Lift Process:** Chief Van der Veen noted that District 21 is in the public outreach phase of the process, which includes articles in local papers and arranging presentations to neighborhood associations. The District 21 Board will discuss the recommended levy rate during their February meeting and expect to schedule a special meeting/public hearing in March or April before the levy rate is determined.

**District 4 Public Outreach:** Liz Loomis Public Affairs is discussing how best to keep the District 4 citizens updated with how the additional revenue is utilized. Although some District 4 updates have been added to the District 21 Facebook page, there is a concern that the information may confuse the District 21 citizens who will be asked to vote on a levy lid lift this year.

Chairman Cooley met with Chief Van der Veen before the meeting to discuss the best way to clearly communicate to constituents how the additional revenue would be spent and where it would be saved until it was utilized. It was noted that the bulk of the taxes are received in April and October and will not be applied to any projects until it is received.

A draft community letter is in process that will be disseminated to each home in the District 4 response area in the near future.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **March Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners present are expected to attend the March 18 meeting via Zoom.

#### **AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Levy Amount Clarification
- EMS Levy Final Rate
- Whatcom County Council Resolution 2023-054 Protest Letter Update

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** There being no further business, Chairman Cooley moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:39 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lann and approved 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

**ATTEST:**

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Steve Cooley, Chairman

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Tim Johnson, Vice-Chairman

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Mark Lann, Commissioner

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Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief