

**Whatcom County Fire District #4
via Zoom Meeting
4142 Britton Loop, Bellingham, WA 98226
12:00 p.m.
May 15, 2023
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 May 15, 2023, to order at 12:00 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) April 17, 2023 – regular
 - b) May 1, 2023 – public hearing
2. Staff Reports – Chief / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
 - a) Expense Fund Revenue – April \$788,449.02
 - b) Total Expenditures – May \$6,842.00
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) Monthly Expenditure Payroll Voucher: \$512.00
 - b) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$6,330.00

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Liz Loomis Communications Meeting: Chief Van der Veen and Vice-Chairman Johnson provided information regarding the May meeting.

The group reviewed the results of the May 1, 2023, special meeting/public hearing. Other topics included getting information out to the community via press releases regarding the levy lid lift and having an informal open house in June. The potential open house may

include coffee with the fire chief, station tours, and surveying apparatus. At this time, a specific date has not been set.

A pancake breakfast hosted by the union is scheduled for Saturday, July 15, 2023.

A suggestion was made to post all future communications meetings as special to allow more than one commissioner to participate and the community to watch the meetings. Another suggestion was to have the commissioners participate individually on a rotating schedule.

Chief Van der Veen will discuss the suggestion with the district's attorney regarding any legal parameters.

WCFD 4 Plan B: There was a discussion regarding establishing what Plan B would look like if the levy lid lift does not pass.

Chief Van der Veen stated that Plan B includes keeping District 4 part of the NWFR and City of Bellingham's auto and mutual aid agreements as much as possible. The district would need to figure out how far their budget would go, which would determine the type of staffing.

Chairman Cooley and Chief Van der Veen will discuss a Plan B completion timeline, so it will be ready to implement if needed. A draft plan may be ready to review during the June Board meeting.

Chief Van der Veen stated that if the levy lid lift is not approved, Plan B could go into effect in a few weeks.

Even if the levy lid lift is approved, additional monies will be needed for capital projects. Chief Van der Veen cautioned that commissioner-indebted bonds could only be utilized for capital expenses, and the yearly payments would be paid from the operations budget, which will affect staffing, especially if the levy lid lift is not approved.

There was a discussion regarding inviting Financial Consultant Jim Nelson from DA Davidson to present information on commissioner indebted bonds. Chief Van der Veen will reach out to DA Davidson regarding scheduling a presentation.

The current contract for services will terminate on December 31, 2023, although the District 4 Board can reach out regarding concessions during the fourth quarter.

Chief Van der Veen reiterated that due to the current staffing levels, no firefighters would lose their jobs if the levy lid lift failed.

NEW BUSINESS

City of Bellingham Interlocal Agreement re Britton Loop Station 12: Chief Van der Veen reviewed the differences between the former and 2023 proposed interlocal agreement with the City of Bellingham for the use of portions of Britton Loop Station 12 admin offices, training room, building D and training grounds.

- Increase usage in all sections
- Unlimited usage Monday - Friday

- Additional office space for training division
- The cost will increase from \$60,000 to \$120,000. Payments are due biannually.

The district's attorney has reviewed the contract, and it has already been approved by the Bellingham City Council.

Once signed, the contract will automatically be renewed with a price inflator, although either agency can terminate.

The Board agreed that the additional revenue would assist with the station's upkeep and maintain a good relationship with the City of Bellingham.

A concern was raised regarding when the contract goes into effect and the actual 2023 cost. Chief Van der Veen will investigate and surmise that the findings will likely result in a term addendum.

MOTION: Chairman Cooley moved to approve the 2023 City of Bellingham Interlocal Agreement and Whatcom County Fire Protection District 4 concerning using Britton Loop Station 12 with the term modification discussed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lann and approved 3-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

Email from Rick Kowsky, Cascade Ambulance, re: Ambulance service presentation

Chairman Cooley acknowledged the correspondence received by Cascade Ambulance regarding presenting information regarding future ambulance service options.

As part of District 4's due diligence regarding future service options, Chairman Cooley offered to contact Cascade Ambulance and invite them to a future Board meeting.

Chief Van der Veen noted that the Board would need to make a true comparison for services, possibly after Cascade's presentation. In addition, he stated that this issue would instigate massive labor concerns that would need to be addressed.

Chairman Cooley will keep Labor up to date on this topic. A meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, May 16, 2023, with Labor representatives.

The Board reiterated that they need to consider all financial options that will best serve the members and the community in the future.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **June Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners present are expected to attend the June 12 meeting via Zoom.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT REGULAR MEETING

- Liz Loomis Public Affairs Communications Meeting Update

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: There being no further business, Chairman Cooley moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:43 p.m. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Johnson and approved 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

ATTEST:

Steve Cooley, Chairman

Tim Johnson, Vice-Chairman

Mark Lann, Commissioner

Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief