Snohomish County Fire District #4

MEETING MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

DATE: Monday, March 18, 2019
LOCATION: Headquarters Fire Station #43 – Lauterbach Room
1525 Ave. D – Snohomish, WA

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: MARK HINTZ, Chairman
JIM SCHMOKER, Fire Commissioner
Richard Flath, Fire Commissioner

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Ron Simmons, District Secretary/Fire Chief
Mike Gatteman, Deputy Chief
Samantha Larkin-Sinn, Office Assistant

ROLL CALL
Chairman Hintz called the meeting to order at 1902 hours. All members of the Board were present.

ADOPT/ADJUST AGENDA
Executive session was removed from the agenda. Chairman Hintz moved to approve the amendment and agenda, it was passed unanimously.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
Discussion: There was an error noted in March 4th minutes; the date noted for the special meeting was listed as March 4th instead of March 6th. Chief Simmons is to make the correction. There were no other comments or questions regarding the minutes for the March 4th regular meeting or March 6th special meeting.
Action: Commissioner Hintz made a motion to approve the minutes; the motion was seconded and passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Two public members were in attendance tonight. Jason Hodkinson was present and wished to express his concerns regarding the proposed EMS Levy. He is worried that this year’s levy will fail if the Board presents a Permanent Levy that would require a Super Majority Vote of the public. He recounted past levy attempts where a levy failed in the Primary, and then did so again in the general election when the word did not get out about the first failure. There is also concern on his part that a failure would create a strain on our operation considering even if a Special Election were held and passed that we would not see that funding until 2021. Chairman Hintz thanked him for coming and expressing his concerns to the board. The Chairman also states that the Board has discussed these issues and shares the same concerns.
2019 EMS LEVY

Chief Simmons reminded the Board that the resolution for the proposed EMS Levy is due at the county by May 10th. Currently the district is only collecting $.34 per $1000.00 of assessed valuation, but Chief Simmons proposes a permanent EMS Levy and that the District collect $.50 per $1000.00 assessed valuation. Chief also states they have had many conversations on how EMS funding should be utilized. It is Chief Simmons belief that the district should redesign how funding is spent within the district. Currently, the biggest concern Chief Simmons has is expanding our staff roster. Chief states that the money collected from this levy is required to be spent on only the EMS program and that the biggest part of that is for full time staffing.

The Chief said that our other option is to renew the 6 year temporary levy that will only need to pass with a vote of 50% +1. It is strongly advised by Chief Simmons that we need to educate and communicate with the public more to help support this levy.

Chief Simmons discussed using the Facebook page for this purpose. It is mentioned by Chief Simmons that our 2007 levy was so successful because there were so many of our district members involved with the public. Commissioner Hintz agrees that was a major factor in the success and believes that “door-belling” would be very beneficial.

Commissioner Schmoker believes that social media will be a big help to our cause. Commissioner Hintz expresses his concerns on social media “being a double edged sword”. Commissioner Flath then asked if there are any concerns from the 2007 and 2013 levy that could rearise and would keep the district from getting a permanent levy. There was a discussion about different issues that were going on at the time.

The Chief discussed the rough cost of EMS for our department. The Chief noted that GEMT estimates the District cost to provide EMS at $2,834.00 a call. Rough calculations using our current budget estimates our cost at $1,835.00 a call. It is noted that the EMS Levy funds only pay for a small portion of the actual EMS costs.

Chief Simmons said that the District is still struggling to fill one paramedic position. He continued that ideally we would like to have a total of 9 medics, 3 on each shift. if the district could collect the maximum from the EMS Levy, he said that we could consider hiring 4-6 full time firefighters as well, alleviating our continuous dependency on the Part Time employees who are getting harder to keep on staff. However, he said that this will not correct our overall staffing problem. Chief Simmons believes we need 12-14 more full time firefighters, but the district cannot support that with its current funding. In addition to staffing, Chief Simmons explains his concerns on the use of our ambulances. There are more miles being put on the apparatus than expected and they might last the anticipated 5 year life span.
Chief Simmons also explained that ems supply costs are going up as well. The Chief discussed other projects that we were attempting to work on and said that if this first attempt to approve the levy failed, any project not begun would need to wait.

Commissioner Flath asked if we have a breakdown of everything that makes up our EMS costs. Chief Simmons said no, that would be considered a program budget and we have never believed that kind of detail in our budget was necessary. Chief Simmons talked about our call volume as a selling point for the need for the Levy. Looking at our statistics you can see that in some instances the number of calls has gone down. Hodkinson clarifies that when we are called out of district to assist other Districts, a station is closed to in District calls and that will affect our local call volume. Jason also says that the Tender has been on 4 or so fire in and out of our District. Commissioner Schmoker asks what our year-to-date call volume is now in comparison to last years. Chief Gatterman says we are about 8 calls behind from last year as of this morning.

Commissioner Schmoker agrees that we need more firefighters. Chief Simmons asked the Commissioners if they wished to propose the permanent levy or a renewal of the temporary. He stated that it will all boil down to communication with the public. Chief Simmons will speak with the Local to see what their level of involvement will be, and will continue looking into the social media option to assure that it will be useful. He believes that this is going to be the most effective way to reach the people of District 4. Commissioner Schmoker agrees, but Chairman Hintz still has his reservations on the matter.

Commissioner Hintz wishes to urge the district to use face to face communication, like going door to door. Chief Simmons asked the board if the district should look into hiring a communication consultant and he states that he would like to put out a newsletter. Commissioner Hintz believes a newsletter would be too obvious and would discourage people from voting yes. The Chief expressed that this impression is obvious to the public – he has been told this during previous elections, however the District is limited as to what we can do and the only way we can get a factual message out is the use of simple mediums like the newsletter and flyers.

Simmons explains that no matter which route the district decides to take in being more involved with the public, it needs to be an organized decision. Chief Simmons then asked the board if they wish to go for a levy amount that would keep their head above water or do they go for the maximum? Commissioner Hintz says to only go for what we need. Commissioner Schmoker suggests that we ask for the extra, however, since the district has only ever asked for what was needed. He states that if we ask for a little more than what we need, then we will have the budget needed for the extra staffing.

Commissioner Schmoker asked if the $.75 amount had made it through the legislature and that if we were to pass the levy and receive the permanent $.50 levy, would we have to pass another supermajority levy to receive the $.75 cents? The Chief believes that we would because again, it would be a change, not in the way we collecting but in the amount.
Chief Simmons then asks if there are any other questions; none were presented by the Board or the public that attended. With no further questions or comments on the matter, Chief Simmons stated that depending on attendance we should plan to have this same discussion for the next 4 meetings and then for the April 29th meeting the Board can vote on the resolution that fits the intent of the District.

OLD BUSINESS
None

ACTION ITEMS
Financial Business
Accounts Payable and Payroll
Discussion: Batch #346994 is in the amount of $63,472.82 and for March payroll 2019 is in the amount of $387,275.36. Commissioner Flath refers to page 14, item number 18; he asked what the CPR cards were for. Chief Simmons explains that we are still teaching CPR classes at the schools and the cards are needed for that purpose. Commissioner Flath then addresses item number 29 on page 17 and asks what those repairs were for. Chief Simmons explains it was general maintenance aid cars. Commissioner Flath also asked about the hearing testing, for he was told that some people were not able to attend. Chief Simmons clarifies that yes, some people were not able to make it on the scheduled days and those people will be sent to Kaiser for their hearing test. It will not cost the same as the past testing. The last item addressed by Commissioner Flath is Commissioner Hintz pay; it appeared to Commissioner Flath that Commissioner Hintz was being underpaid. After comparing the payroll to the commissioner time cards, it was discovered the error was in the amount of meetings attended not pay amount. This error will be addressed with Kristina and fixed on the county level.

Action: Commissioner Hintz moved to accept the warrants and payroll. It was seconded by Commissioner Schmoker and passed unanimously.

Purchase Authorizations: Honda Generator
Discussion: Chief Simmons explains this purchase unfortunately has already been made and he has discussed the process with Tim already. The Chief did ask Tim to get other bids as well to justify this purchase and it was on the lower end.
Action: Commissioner Schmoker moved to accept the purchase authorization, Commissioner Hintz seconded, the vote passed unanimously.

Transport Waiver
Discussion: Chief Gatterman presented the board with two transport waivers. First being incident #2018-2318, in the amount of $275.00, second being incident #2018-3365, in the amount of $165.00.
Action: Commissioner Schmoker moved to waive the total balance on both accounts. Second by Commissioner Flath, passed unanimously.
NEW BUSINESS

Social Media Policy

Chief Simmons explained that this discussion is really a continuation of one that the Board has had in the past but was never finished. It comes about now because the Chief directed Samantha to create a quick page to communicate with as many members as possible last week in order to get the message out about our meeting related to Sharon's death.

He also told the Board about a meeting that he had with the Officers last week relating to the proposed EMS Levy and the idea that Social Media could be a big factor in getting this message out. The Chief believes that we should continue with this process now that we have made a start. He said that nothing more will be done until the Board is satisfied that we are safe in the way we intend to operate.

The Chief explained that what he has provided for them is a sample policy created by our attorney. He said that Samantha has also done some research and collected examples from other departments; parts of these he feels could also be useful to us.

Chief Simmons asked the board if they were opposed to having a Facebook or if there are any questions they may have regarding it. Commissioner Hintz observed that the sample policy appears to very in depth and also has a procedure in it, which he believed could cause problems. It is then addressed by Commissioner Hintz that the district needs to make sure there is one person in charge of the page. Chief Simmons remarks that Samantha will have full control of the page. The Chief explained that procedure, including who will be allowed to do what, must be a big part of what we put together.

The Chief notes that there needs to be a discussion on how the district will respond to the public and who has access to photos and posts. Commissioner Hintz asked if the plan is just to have a Facebook or will the district be looking into any other social media accounts. Chief Simmons explains that at this time, he wishes to just maintain a Facebook account. Commissioner Hintz then asks if Chief Simmons, Chief Gatterman, and Samantha will be the administrators of the account. Commissioner Flath then asks if Cherie will also be an administrator. Chief Simmons says that this will all part of the discussion and policy making.

Chief Simmons stated that barring objection from any of the member he would begin drafting a policy.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no questions or comments at this time from the public.

DISTRICT STAFF AND WORK GROUP COMMENTS

Chief Simmons noted that although there is still time to register for the Saturday Seminar in Chelan June 1, the members need to consider whether they want to attend. Commissioner Schmoker states that he plans to go.
Chief Simmons explains that Tim feels we are spending a lot on fuel. He will be getting fuel cards from Nelson Petroleum so that we can get fuel directly from their dispensary on the west end of the trestle. He will be able to get diesel for the tank in the utility truck, and the hope is that we can get gas for the aid cars. We will not stop using the Co-Op as an option for fuel. There is reason to believe, however, that by going this route, Tim is certain the district could save a dollar a gallon on fuel.

Chief Simmons asks if the commissioners are aware of the letter he received from South Snohomish County Fire and Rescue. After Chief Simmons replied to the received letter, there was a response that partially explained that the original letter was misinterpreted. However, there was no other information given to further explain the true intent of the original letter. The latest correspondence also noted that he had talked with Chairman Kenney and that they would like to meet. The chief reminded the Board that he had intended to have help in researching our data and that has now gone away. He believes that we should still entertain this meeting but that it may now just take a little longer for us to review our facts.

Chief Simmons states that the City Council still wants to have a workshop to talk about common interests. He says that the Council President is coordinating a meeting between the 2 Council members on the Public Safety Commission and he. The Chief believes that we should hold off on the workshop until the property evaluations have been completed.

The Chief said that the School District Board Chair, Jay Hagan, and Superintendent Kent Kultgren came by the office and offered a facility for Sharon’s service if we can work out the timing. Chaplain Dana will be talking with her sons on when they want to hold a memorial service, but Chief Simmons explains the expected time frame will be the first or second week of April. Chief Simmons then thanked the board for their appearance at the meeting Monday night, regarding the districts loss. Commissioner Schmoker says he was surprised at the turn out, given the short notice. The Chief then thanked Chief Gatterman for his role in all of this and being one of the first on scene that day to work with the crew. Commissioner Schmoker thanks Chief Simmons for calling and informing everyone.

Chief Simmons will be out of town starting Wednesday this week and will be back next week.

Chief Simmons said that the Local VFW Chapter has asked the last couple of years for a nomination from us for a deserving Firefighter and EMS provider to be submitted for consideration of their annual award. The Chief was able to talk to the other officers and submitted Chris Jorve for Firefighter of the year and Jason Leighty for EMS Provider of the year. Three of the Local Chapters chose both of them as the area recipients for the award. Their Washington State association has selected Chris Jorve as firefighter of the year and will submit his name for National consideration. The Chief is working with the group to have them recognized locally, and Chris will be recognized in Vancouver in June.
COMMISSIONER COMMENTS
Commissioner Flath says that the Monday meeting for Sharon was a very thoughtful way to approach the situation. Commissioner Schmoker agrees and Commissioner Hintz thanked Chief Simmons for putting that together.

Commissioner Hintz says he spoke with a city council member and the conversation went well. The Commissioner mentioned that the city council member is having numerous new Council members come to him for advice and it's all been positive.

Commissioner Hintz will be out of town starting Friday and will be gone until next Wednesday.

ADJOURN
At 20:40 hours, the Regular Board Meeting was adjourned.

MINUTES OF REGULAR FIRE COMMISSIONERS BOARD MEETING, March 18, 2019

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

[Signature]

Samantha Larkin-Sinn, Office Assistant

MINUTES APPROVED BY FIRE COMMISSIONER: [Signature]

Date [4/1/19]