



Pierce County Fire District 13

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Minutes

Board of Fire Commissioners Special Meeting

May 4, 2016

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

Members of the Public and Staff: 23

Commissioner Zuluaga called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introduction of Board and Staff:

Commissioner Zuluaga introduced the Commissioners, Chief, Captain and administrative staff. He explained the Commissioners responsibilities, shared some history about our farm team approach, explained various Fire Department business models and provided some information about fiduciary forecasting. He also explained the levy rates and the Tim Eyman 1% increase limitation.

Presentation of Needs Analysis:

Commissioner Noll gave some personal background info and discussed the property owner/voter info packet distributed. He reviewed the Fire Department's stakeholders, mission, deferred maintenance issues, district statistics, staffing, call counts, insurance savings, grants, farm team environment, funding structure, station needs, equipment needs and operational needs, and the lid lift levy proposal. He shared the deferred maintenance expense totaling -\$406,104 over 5 years, and shared the 5 year budget forecast showing a deficient of -\$206,404 for a grand total of -\$612,508.

Board Discussion:

Discussion ensued among the commissioners regarding the Needs Analysis. Commissioner Ballantyne explained the seismic concerns.

Commissioner Zuluaga shared that any replacement engines needed in the future are typically handled via bond issues. He also explained the South Sound 911 alerting system narrow banding FCC mandate and required field computers for paperless EMS reporting.

Commissioner Zuluaga asked the Chief to explain the volunteer stipends and proposed cost of new aid vehicles. Chief McCollum shared our low volunteer stipends, which haven't been increased in approximately 20 years. He also reviewed the plan to replace our aging and deteriorating aid vehicle (which is costing more and more in maintenance) with a newer used, well maintained aid vehicle from another department. The brush truck would also be a used vehicle purchase to continue to assist in wildland fires, which allows us to continue to receive rental income for the use of our equipment. The prior brush truck we had been using was borrowed and had to be returned.

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A member of the public asked whether additional equipment would be needed for the brush truck. Chief McCollum shared that he had already accumulated the equipment needed for the brush truck and that we received about \$22,000 in revenue last year for our participation in wildland fires.

Commissioner Ballantyne discussed the Dash Point State Park area and would like us to continue to search out how to get revenue for providing fire coverage for the State Park. He shared his concern about the Chief's replacement once the Chief retires, which is anticipated in approximately 3 years, and what it will take to fill the void to cover both the leadership and the training for academies.

Commissioner Ballantyne asked the Chief to talk about the Dash Point station as it had been brought up previously by a community member at a prior Commissioner meeting. Chief McCollum shared that the expenses for the Dash Point station had been reviewed and the cost is approximately \$20,000 per year, which he feels is a low annual cost for what it includes. Its newer construction offers benefits and features not currently available at the Browns Point station including a standby power unit, air compressor, decontamination station, archive storage, additional residence quarters and laundry facilities for the firefighter turnout gear. Former Commissioner Desimone stated a prior board had studied this issue and taken no action because the value of the building equates to a residential lot due to zoning for a fire station reverting to residential if the fire station is decommissioned. Commissioner Ballantyne asked that the Dash Point station info be included in the Needs Analysis. Chief McCollum shared that it also acts as a back-up responder station since currently 5 staff members live close to the Dash Point station.

Public Comment and Discussion:

Commissioner Ballantyne asked the community members in attendance for their comments. A community member asked about the possibility of whether it would make more sense to replace the Browns Point station due to the seismic concerns. It was discussed with the outcome being the cost of replacing the Browns Point station would be extremely high.

A community member asked about whether we can get any money from other junior taxing districts. Chief McCollum explained that the formulae for junior taxing districts is complicated but the \$0.29 cent lid lift to \$1.00 per thousand doesn't impact other junior taxing districts like Metro Parks.

A community member asked about Pierce County Fire Districts funding vs. City Fire Districts. Commissioner Zuluaga explained that the City of Tacoma has a totally different funding structure with funding coming from the City's general funds.

A community member asked about whether Fife is part of the City of Tacoma. Commissioner Zuluaga discussed the options of contracting with other departments. He explained Fife contracted with the City of Tacoma Fire Department. Pierce County Fire District #10 and Fircrest were folded into the City of Tacoma in 1994. University Place and Lakewood merged to become West Pierce. Summit, South Hill, Spanaway and Parkland merged to become Central Pierce. Edgewood, Bonney Lake, Milton, and part of Sumner merged to become East Pierce. Puyallup merged with Central Pierce in approximately 2003. Commissioner Ballantyne stated that he thought that response times would likely increase if we were to consider a contract for service.

A community member shared that City of Tacoma had years ago considered taking on the Browns Point station. They agreed at that time they would man it. Due to funding issues prior to this
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happening, the City had to close a couple of stations and consolidate them. The City did not want to say they would close our fire station knowing the people in the district would be very angry so the issue dissolved. Commissioner Zuluaga shared the advantage of service from the district within the district.

A community member asked about whether we had considered pricing on contracting the service. Commissioner Zuluaga responded that we focused on how to sustain our existing business model since is working well. A paid staffing model would be much more expensive. Commissioner Zuluaga indicated that \$1.3 million is typical cost for a Tacoma fire station. The City of Tacoma averages 96% of their budget for labor compared to our 60% labor cost.

Commissioner Ballantyne suggested including a basis for cost of a paid station in the Needs Analysis. Chief McCollum shared that the average cost for a one engine station is \$1.25 million.

Summary and Comments:

Commissioner Ballantyne asked about what else the public would like to see in the document.

A community member asked about when we are thinking about the lid lift and about the deadlines for the elections. Chief McCollum shared that May 13th is the deadline for August election, and Aug. 2nd is the deadline for the November election. Commissioner Zuluaga shared that timing is important for voter turn-out.

A community member asked for an explanation of what a quorum was for the meeting. It was explained that it related to the commissioners only so a minimum of 2 commissioners had to be in attendance at a regular or special commissioners meeting to meet the quorum requirement.

A community member asked about the number of votes required. The commissioners agreed there were about 530 votes in the last general election where residents voted for Pierce County Fire District commissioners. A community member believes there are about 1,500 registered voters within our district.

A community member pointed out that we can put a lid lift levy on the ballot a maximum of 2 times a year, and that if the lift levy was put on the primary election, there would still be time to put it on the election ballot if needed.

Announcements:

The next regular meeting will be May 10, 2016 at 9:00 AM.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:36 PM.

Approved By:

Chairman Zuluaga

Commissioner Ballantyne

Commissioner Noll

Fire Chief/District Secretary

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