

# Whatcom County Fire District 4

## Meeting Minutes of the Board of Commissioners

### April 07, 2010

The regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held on the above date at the district office. Those who attended were as follows: Commissioners Mary Beth Neal, Steve Ness and Harry Andrews; Fire Chief Bill McLaughlin and Board Secretary Kris Parks, staff and members of the district.

Commissioner Ness called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Firefighter Hatfield inquired when the member survey will be available to the members. The Board informed that they will provide the information shortly.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

##### A: Meeting Minutes from March 09, 2010 - Regular Board Meeting

Commissioner Neal moved to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Andrews seconded; motion passed.

##### Meeting Minutes from March 23, 2010 - Special Meeting

Commissioner Andrews moved to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Ness seconded; motion passed.

##### B: Vouchers

Payments to TPSC were explained to the Board by Chief McLaughlin.

Commissioner Ness moved to approve the vouchers. Commissioner Andrews seconded; motion passed.

#### **MONITORING FIRE CHIEF'S PERFORMANCE**

#### **ENDS POLICY 1.2 MONITORING REPORT**

##### **The Public is Knowledgeable About Fire Safety and EMS Issues.**

Chief McLaughlin presented updated information on the Baseline Ends Policy 1.2.

This report includes the following for the public is knowledgeable about fire safety and EMS issues.

##### **POLICY PROVISION #1: a. The public understands and practices fire and accident prevention.**

##### **CEO's INTERPRETATION:**

The Chief interprets this to mean that the public would behave in the following manners:

Residents know about the department fire safety programs available to them.

Residents have working smoke detectors.

Residents practice safe cooking.

Residents have safe and properly installed heating devices.

Residents practice safe outdoor burning, where allowed.

Residents use appropriate vehicle safety restraints.

## **REPORT:**

There are several methods we could use to determine compliance. One method would be to conduct surveys of the public. This would be effective in measuring the response of persons interested in responding. Another method would be to measure the outcomes. This method is the simplest, as we can document all negative outcomes in which the fire department was called to intervene. As such I can report the following documentation:

Residents know about the department fire safety programs available to them. – We continue to have occasional response to most of our programs. Two programs that have seen increased response have been the bicycle rodeo, which had a strong turnout and the CPR classes, which have been at full attendance.

Residents have working smoke detectors. – During 2009, we responded to 5 fires in which smoke detectors were reported “not working” or “not present”. Four of these were fires in outbuildings or detached garages. The fifth incident was a house fire in which the battery had been removed from the detector. The majority of fire calls had working detectors.

Residents practice safe cooking. – During 2009, we responded to 1 cooking fire. The fire however, was the result of a need for an aid call due to a fallen elderly victim and did not spread from the food.

Residents have safe and properly installed heating devices. – There were 3 fires in 2009 resulting from heating sources. They contributed less than 1% of all fire loss for the year.

Residents practice safe outdoor burning, where allowed. – There were 2 escaped outdoor burns during 2009. Both were turned over to the fire marshal for investigation. In both cases, the fire marshal did not find sufficient cause for citation.

Residents use appropriate vehicle safety restraints. – During 2009, we responded to several motor vehicle accidents in which seat belt usage was reported “undetermined” (usually meaning patients were out of vehicle) and 0 incidents where seat belts were definitively not used.

Fire Chief McLaughlin reports compliance.

## **POLICY PROVISION #2: b. Priority: Children and at-risk populations**

### **CEO’s INTERPRETATION:**

The Chief interprets this to mean that the public would behave in the following manners:

Children demonstrate the appropriate behaviors for:

- Preventing burns from hot objects.
- Behavior around matches, lighters and open flames.
- Cooking.

Children use appropriate vehicle safety restraints.

Children wear bicycle helmets.

Children practice safety around potential drowning situations.

Senior citizens demonstrate the appropriate behaviors for:

- Use of smoking materials.
- Cooking.
- Preventing falls.
- Preventing pedestrian accidents.

**REPORT:**

Again, we can report on the outcomes of these behaviors.

Children demonstrate the appropriate behaviors for:

- Preventing burns from hot objects.
- Behavior around matches, lighters and open flames.
- Cooking.

The Chief can report that there were no incidents of serious injury to children playing with hot objects. There was one incident of juvenile set fires during 2009. That incident was forwarded to the fire marshal, however, the person responsible has not been identified. The department provided resources toward intervention and prevention of further incidents in the neighborhood, and there has been no repeat incident.

Children use appropriate vehicle safety restraints.

The Chief can report that we had transported no children from vehicle accidents who were not wearing vehicle restraints.

Children wear bicycle helmets.

The Chief can report that we had responded to no bicycle related incidents involving children who were not wearing bicycle helmets.

Children practice safety around potential drowning situations.

The Chief can report we had no drowning or near drowning responses involving children.

Senior citizens demonstrate the appropriate behaviors for:

- Use of smoking materials.
- Cooking.
- Preventing falls.
- Preventing pedestrian accidents.

The Chief can report that we had no incidents involving any of these, except falls. As noted above, the one cooking fire was caused by a ground level fall of a senior citizen, which prevented her from removing the food from the oven. It did not lead to further injury or damage. We responded to approximately 30 ground level falls.

Fire Chief McLaughlin reports compliance.

**POLICY PROVISION # 3: c. The public knows how to respond to medical and safety emergencies.**

**CEO's INTERPRETATION:**

The Chief interprets this to mean that the public would behave in the following manners:

Residents know how and when to call for assistance.  
Residents know how to perform first aid and CPR.  
Residents know how to exit a building in case of fire.  
Residents know how and when to extinguish small fires.  
Residents know how to respond to vehicular accidents.  
Residents know how to respond to natural and manmade disasters.  
Residents know how to keep their homes safe from wildfires.

Children demonstrate the appropriate behaviors for:

Smoke in their home.  
Clothes catching on fire.

**REPORT:**

Again, we can report on the outcomes of these behaviors.

Residents know how and when to call for assistance. – The overwhelming majority of calls we responded to were warranted. In a small number of cases, we responded to incidents that did not require fire department intervention. It is possible that there were incidents which warranted fire department intervention in which we were not called.

Residents know how to perform first aid and CPR. – In 2009, there were no calls in which citizen CPR was performed by trained bystanders. The Chief considers this **non compliant**.

Residents know how to exit a building in case of fire. – We had no incidents of fires in structures where residents required evacuation or rescue on arrival of the fire department.

Residents know how and when to extinguish small fires. – The department responded to a number of calls where the fire was out on arrival, and was cancelled from several others for the same reason. .

Residents know how to respond to vehicular accidents. – There were no incidents during the year where actions taken by victims or bystanders led to further injury.

Residents know how to respond to natural and manmade disasters. – There were no disasters during the year. Additional metric must be developed to measure community preparedness.

Residents know how to keep their homes safe from wildfires. – The department responded to more wildfires within the district in 2009 than in the past five years combined. Only one fire led to any damages; with slight damage to an outbuilding. Most of the district is considered low to moderate risk of wildfires. In those areas, the relative risk is matched by the development patterns. In one area, the risk has been assessed as high (Squalicum Mountain/Emerald Lake); and in those areas the level of development and preparedness is inadequate. The Chief considers this **non compliant**.

Chief McLaughlin therefore reports non-compliance.

We have begun offering citizen CPR classes, and we have experienced a high level of turnout. We anticipate it will take several years to significantly impact the entire community. The district added the bicycle rodeo last year which was very well accepted by the residents.

The increase in the number of wildfires is a trend that will have to be monitored. Incorporating the Firewise wildfire prevention and mitigation programs in the high risk communities will be added to the department's priorities for 2010. Commissioner Ness moved to approve the motion to accept and approve the monitoring report 1.2. Commissioner Neal seconded; motion passed.

**ENDS POLICY 1.3 MONITORING REPORT**

**The Public Receives High Value/Return on Its Tax Investment.**

Chief McLaughlin presented updated information on the Baseline Ends Policy 1.3.

**CEO’S INTERPRETATION:**

The Chief submits that this policy would be met if the subsequent provisions are met. His interpretations and reporting data are presented with those provisions below.

**GENERAL INTERPRETATION:**

The Chief would interpret this policy to be met if the department operates at a comparable or better tax rate than other departments in Whatcom County while providing the highest level of service possible with the existing funding. The Chief would further interpret this policy to be met if the department maximizes non-tax revenues.

**REPORT:**

The following shows the tax levels of the departments that provide staffed stations in Whatcom County:

<b>District</b>	<b>Tax Rate</b>
<b>4</b>	1.21
<b>7</b>	0.82
<b>8</b>	1.50
<b>21</b>	1.34
<b>SWFR</b>	1.28
<b>City of Bellingham</b>	2.25
<b>City of Lynden</b>	1.55

The figures for Bellingham and Lynden are extrapolated equivalents for the assessed value, as they do not have a direct fire property tax. ALS services, dispatch and other shared programs have been removed from the Bellingham budget.

Whatcom Fire District 4 operates at the lower end of the tax level, and provides a service that is comparable to any other department in the county.

The department continues to increase non-tax revenues, with approximately 12% of the total budget from non tax sources for 2009.

The Chief reports compliance.

**POLICY PROVISION #1:                    A. The public understands District issues, strengths and needs.**

**CEO's INTERPRETATION:**

The Chief interprets this to mean that the public would behave in the following manners:

Residents support funding measures.

Residents do not express dissatisfaction with the department's funding, operations or image.

Residents demonstrate appreciation for the department's services.

In addition, the Chief would include an absence of negative public media exposure, along with a presence of positive media exposure in the interpretation.

**REPORT:**

Residents support funding measures. At this time, we have no funding measures before the public. Prior to the need to do so, we will work extensively on public education. We have begun the process to educate the residents about the service levels they receive and the relative cost.

Residents express satisfaction with the department's funding, operations or image. We have been distributing service questionnaires, and have received excellent ratings on virtually every call. We receive almost no complaints about our service or funding levels.

Residents demonstrate appreciation for the department's services. – During 2009, we continued to receive notes of appreciation, along with donations to the firefighter's association and donations of baked goods for the firefighters.

The Chief reports compliance.

**POLICY PROVISION #2:                    B. The public receives the best ISO ratings possible.**

**CEO's INTERPRETATION:**

The Chief interprets this to mean that the department would hold and maintain an ISO rating of 6.

**REPORT:**

The department has held an ISO rating of 6 since 2005. While the district has made considerable progress in many areas to improve this rating, we are also hampered by the loss of King Mountain/Bakerview. This area was protected by fire hydrants. Losing the fire hydrants reduces the percentage of the district protected by fire hydrants, which can cause a poorer rating. Discussions with the rating bureau indicated that it would not be in our best interests to pursue a better rating until the improvements outweigh the losses. The improvements include increased staffing, increased training, pre-planning, mutual aid and hydrant testing. The ratings on these items are time-weighted, so it will take several years of hydrant testing to fully reduce the deficiency.

The district had one threat to the continued provision of a class 6; as the areas of Guide Meridian and Kline Road are now outside of the 5 mile response area from a district station. By entering into the interlocal agreement with NWFR and District 7 we have averted that risk.

Over the next two years, we will continue to work on these improvements, and should be in a position to move to a 5<sup>th</sup> class rating at that time.

The Chief reports compliance.

**POLICY PROVISION # 3: C. The public recognizes the District's innovative and proactive services.**

**CEO's INTERPRETATION:**

The Chief interprets this to mean that the public would behave in the following manners:

Residents would reply positively to questions that the department is "above average" or "excellent" in the services provided .

Residents would be able to describe innovative services provided by the department.

The Chief would also interpret this receives positive media exposure to innovative practices, and that the department has a high application rate for membership.

**REPORT:**

The surveys of the public for calls indicate excellent service overall. Continued education of the public and surveying of public attitudes will continue through 2010.

We continue to receive far more applicants for membership than we can take on. In comparison, most of the departments in Whatcom County continue to have a shortage of volunteers.

The Chief reports compliance.

Commissioner Ness moved to approve the motion to accept and approve the monitoring report 1.3. Commissioner Andrews seconded; motion passed.

**ENDS**

Nothing at this time.

**GOVERNANCE PROCESS**

Request for North Region Meeting

The Board suggested a meeting with other commissioners from fire districts 4, 5, 7, 17, 21 and the Lynden Fire Department to discuss an appointment to the Ambulance Advisory Board as well as an appointment for the Whatcom County Fire Commissioners Executive Committee and other issues.

Board Action Request: Rescue Equipment Purchase

Chief McLaughlin provided info on the Board Action Request to the Board.

Commissioner Ness moved to approve the Board Action Request.

Commissioner Andrews seconded; motion passed.

Board Action Request: Equipment Surplus

Chief McLaughlin explained the equipment surplus to the Board.  
Commissioner Ness moved to approve the Board Action Request.  
Commissioner Neal seconded; motion passed.

**BOARD SCHEDULE**

The next board meeting is scheduled for May 4th at 12:00 p.m.

**BOARD MEETING EVALUATION**

Nothing at this time.

**FIRE CHIEF'S OPERATIONAL UPDATE**

Status of Engine 13

Chief McLaughlin provided info on the status of Engine 13.  
The repair cost for Engine 13 is estimated at \$12,000 to \$20,000.  
The Chief recommends keeping Engine 12 and putting Engine 13 up for surplus.  
The Board directed Chief McLaughlin to provide information on the value of Engine 13 and on refinancing Engine 12.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

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Steve Ness, Commissioner

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Kris Parks, Board Secretary

## **Motions and Directives:**

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