

**GRAHAM FIRE & RESCUE
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
September 8, 2014**

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Skaggs called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Attendance:

Present: Commissioner Robert E. Skaggs, Commissioner Gerald W. Gustafson, Commissioner Russell T. Barstow, Fire Chief Ryan Baskett, Deputy Chief Tony Judd, Assistant Chief Todd Jensen, Assistant Chief Tom Mason, Assistant Chief Steve Richards and Board Secretary Jodi Reynolds

Commissioner Skaggs led the Pledge of Allegiance and welcomed the audience.

APPROVAL/MODIFICATION OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Gustafson moved to approve the Agenda as presented.

Commissioner Barstow seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of the Special Board Meeting of August 25, 2014, were approved as presented.

The minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of August 25, 2014, were approved as presented.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Letter of Appreciation from City of Renton Mayor and Fire Chief
- Pierce Co. Fire Prevention Bureau Monthly Reports for August
- Written request from Commissioner Skaggs to be absent from the Regular Board meeting on September 22, 2014 while attending the NAEFO Conference

Commissioner Gustafson moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Skaggs from the Regular Board meeting on September 22, 2014. Commissioner Barstow seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

FINANCIALS

Payables Check #18214 through #18250 in the amount of \$26,834.22, and Transfers (EFTs) in the amount of \$166.21, for a total of \$27,000.43, were presented for approval.

Commissioner Barstow moved to accept the payables in the amount of \$27,000.43, after proper auditing. Commissioner Gustafson seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Chief's Report

Fire Chief Baskett greeted the Board and then reported on the following:

The Graham members of Local 726, with cooperation from the District, participated in the Muscular Dystrophy "Fill the Boot" campaign with great success, collecting over six thousand dollars. Great job by everyone who participated over the holiday weekend.

FF/PM Hergert and his wife had a healthy baby girl on August 25th. Adalynn Lee weighed in at 8lbs 10oz and was 20 ½ inches long at birth.

Congratulations to Interim Fire Chief Guy Allen who was named the permanent Fire Chief of Key Peninsula last week.

Chief Baskett has been filling the Pierce County Fire Chiefs Treasurer position since taking over as the Fire Chief for Graham Fire & Rescue. Chief Baskett was nominated to fill the Vice President's position in 2015 and will accept the nomination with Board permission.

Commissioner Gustafson moved to allow Chief Baskett to accept the nomination of Vice President of the Pierce County Fire Chiefs Association. Commissioner Barstow seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Board Secretary Jodi Reynolds has been assigned the task of completing the District's submission to the State Commissioners Management Excellence award process. This is her first attempt and will do an excellent job.

M&O Levy. The citizen For Committee has met and informed us they have developed their strategy for the campaign. Their main goal is to recruit as many people as possible to assist in the education process. The Fire District found it very difficult to reach very many people with our message.

Chief Baskett presented the District's plan between now and the election. Some operational changes need to be made immediately to be able to afford the service we are delivering. The reader boards will be used to inform the citizens when stations are being closed. Chief Baskett has a press release prepared for Board approval to go out tomorrow. The Graham Business Association will be hosting two political town hall meetings at Station 94 and Chief Baskett will present our information at those meetings. He also set three town hall meetings for the department at different stations to get citizens to come and hear the message: September 30 at Station 95, October 1 at Station 96 and October 21 at Station 94. The District mailer is planned to go out on October 13, the same day the ballots are mailed.

Commissioner Skaggs asked about any changes and simplifying the mailer. Chief Baskett said staff is working to simplify the message and there would be a chance for the Board to review the mailer before it is sent out.

South Sound 911. The next Operations meeting is scheduled for this Friday. The budget is completed and we have received information on our portion of the costs. It is about \$20,000 less than 2014.

Resident/Volunteer Program Rebuilding. Chief Baskett is developing a clear set of objectives for this group based on the direction the District decides to go tonight, which will likely include strengthening our numbers to fill vacant stations. He will be working with Chiefs Jensen, Mason and Espinosa to figure out what our future volunteer program looks like. With our current numbers being down, it is likely to take six months to get new members up and running.

Commissioner Skaggs asked about the costs associated with strengthening our program. Chief Baskett stated we have the protective equipment, but would need to expend some money to put them into an academy. Chief Baskett is hoping to work with the committee to come up with a modified version of our volunteer program which may not include full firefighting capabilities. It may start with a BLS and tender response and filling third positions on the fire engines. Chief Baskett will get those numbers together for the Board in the budget.

Staff is also looking at the reimbursement policy and may look to reduce the amount of reimbursement or trade the reimbursement for training.

Commissioner Barstow asked if we will be requiring EMT training prior to joining the department. Chief Baskett said we have not gotten that far yet, but that may be helpful to us. He stated that we also receive funds from the State to cover some of the initial firefighter training.

Joint Impact Fee Committee. Chief Vellias, after meeting with Pierce County Fire Marshal Warner Webb and Attorney Joe Quinn, provided a clear plan moving forward at the Pierce County Chiefs meeting. The County Chiefs are encouraging all agencies to participate whether they plan on applying fees or not. The new deadline for completing our Capital Facilities Plan and resolution is January 1st, 2015. Five of the larger districts are involved at the moment.

Health Care Reform. The Board was provided a Business Associate Agreement to partner with Franciscan ACO. The document allows us to share information without violating HIPAA laws. This is the first step in working closer together under the new managed health care system and Chief Baskett is recommending Board approval.

Commissioner Gustafson moved to approve Chief Baskett signing the Business Associate Agreement with Franciscan as presented. Commissioner Barstow seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Burning Regulations. Several meetings ago Chief Baskett mentioned a rumor that Puget Sound Air Pollution Control was considering allowing burning in the non-attainment area. They have now opened up the public comment period on this issue. I recommend the Board discuss this and render an opinion. Either way we will be affected and staff will need direction.

Commissioner Skaggs asked if there was a time frame for comment. Deputy Chief Judd stated it looked like the review will occur in early November and this was just for residential burning, not land clearing.

Commissioner Skaggs requested a special meeting be set for a study session to review the information and evaluate the issue. Staff was directed to look at a Special Meeting on October 2nd.

Operational Changes. At the last meeting Chief Baskett presented three objectives he needed to address under our current financial situation. Chief Baskett presented his requested changes to begin immediately to make it to 2015.

Objective I: Eliminate Overtime Costs – We have expended the \$100,000 budgeted overtime and \$40,000 of the \$50,000 additional overtime approved by the Board in July.

- Reduce minimum staffing from 11 to 9 per day – It should be rare, but it will happen. Chief Baskett is anticipating 14 days per year that we will be at 9.
- Eliminate the career staffing at Station 96 – The station would eventually be staffed by residents and volunteers.
- Staff a BLS unit on the days where we have enough people, but not enough medics.
- Drop our minimum ALS units per day from three to two.
- Eliminate our additional personnel we staff on holidays.
- Close Station 95 on the days we are at nine personnel. Staffing would be (Option A):
 - Station 91 with 4 personnel, Engine and Medic 91
 - Station 94 with 3 personnel, Engine and Battalion 94
 - Station 93 with 2 personnel, cross staffed Engine and Medic 93

This staffing plan will cover all of the response zones addressed in Resolution 767 which covers our response times. Resolution 767 was to meet the requirements of RCW 52.33.100 – Standards of Cover.

Option B was brought forward by the Union. This plan brings all the resources to the center of the District on the days we are at a minimum of nine.

- Closes Station 93 and Station 95.
- Staffing would be:
 - Station 91 with 4 personnel, Engine and Medic 91
 - Station 94 with 5 personnel, Engine, Medic and Battalion 94

This option does give us a second dedicated medic unit, but does not meet the response time requirements.

Staff is recommending Option A to best meet the response requirements in Resolution 767.

Commissioner Skaggs asked when Chief Baskett wanted to start this. Chief Baskett stated tomorrow. These changes are all within the rights of the department and Chief Baskett will notify the labor group of the changes and offer to bargain any impacts.

Commissioner Barstow requested a little more time to go over it and figure out what he thinks would be best.

Commissioner Gustafson agreed and stated that our volunteers out of Station 95 would be able to help.

Commissioner Skaggs asked, while reducing the minimum from 11 to nine, if there were any safety issues to the department. Chief Baskett stated it presents no more safety issues than we currently have today. Operating Instruction 411 clearly identifies what we can do with specific numbers of people on scene. Whether they come from one station or two stations doesn't change that.

Commissioner Skaggs asked how this change will affect our mutual aid partners. Chief Baskett asked to continue with his list of changes to help address this question.

Objective II: Call Volume Management – These are to help us manage our calls better internally without calling too much mutual aid.

- All BLS calls get a single unit response – If the crew gets out there and needs additional help, they can always call for it. We only have so many resources available and we need to keep them in service for multiple calls.
- Dedicated engine companies (Engines 91 and 94) will handle all service calls to keep the medic units in service. The engines would also handle the calls in service to be available for a priority call.
- At cross staffed stations, send the medic unit on vehicle accidents and have a dedicated engine come to assist.
- Non-priority calls will be pended if the primary unit is not available until they become available. Battalion 94 would be notified if the call was not handled after 15 minutes.
- School and public events that we support now that affects our daily staffing would be stopped unless they wish to pay for the resources. Commissioner Skaggs asked if this would stop our public education program. Chief Baskett stated that part of the program would remain as it is today with a little less support from the response crews.
- Apparatus movements will occur to accommodate the new staffing.

Objective III: Revenue Increasing Options

- Move our transport billing service to EFR Recovery – This saves \$2.50 per call.
- Bill for MVAs. Haz Mat calls, spills – This is also done through EFR Recovery.
- Consider billing Puget Sound Clean Air Agency for responses to routine burn complaints.
- Increase our transport fees – This will only generate an increase on private insurance companies. It will not impact Medicare or Medicaid patients.

Commissioner Gustafson recommended we put these in place now.

Commissioner Barstow still requested time to look it over. He could come back in as early as tomorrow to make a decision.

Commissioner Skaggs asked what the transport fees would be increased to. Deputy Chief Judd stated that has not been worked out yet, but that it would be based on the fees charged by our neighboring agencies. He also pointed out that this will not affect what the citizen pays, just the insurance carrier.

Commissioner Skaggs asked if the change in burn complaint billing would be affected by the changes PSCAA is considering in burning. Chief Baskett responded that it would not be affected by the review. He and Chief Wright from Central Pierce have agreed that we should be doing it the same throughout the county.

Commissioner Skaggs asked about reducing the transport units to two units. Chief Baskett stated that we do not have enough medics and there have been times over the summer when we had 13 people, but not enough medics to open a third unit without calling back over time. He has recommended a BLS option for those days.

Commissioner Skaggs asked if there was a projection on the amount of increase to the response times with Option B. Chief Baskett stated that our response times have already increased with the loss of personnel through attrition. We built the last two stations with the goal of reducing response times to meet the resolution. They have been slowly increasing and reducing to nine personnel will cause a significant increase.

Commissioner Barstow asked if this would affect insurance rates for citizens. Chief Baskett responded that it would not currently, but if Washington Survey and Ratings Bureau did a re-rate on the District it could.

Commissioner Skaggs opened the floor to the citizens for questions or comments.

A citizen asked if there was any information on the number of times that volunteers at Station 95 respond from home and if that was taken into consideration on the closure. Chief Baskett stated that it was not taken into consideration as the volunteers that respond from home in that area have no impact on response. Whether we keep it open or close it, the volunteers will not change the response times. That is why the program must be changed and enhanced.

Lieutenant Kolibas asked, when we reduce to nine, if that would increase safety concerns. If we are trying to fight a structure fire with nine people, then there is more chance of injuring someone. If two people are out on a medical aid call, do they risk the health of the patient by waiting for additional people to help load the patient if needed or does that crew load the patient up, possibly injuring their backs because they have a good heart and want to do what is right for the patient. Chief Baskett responded that we are taking an increased risk by sending two people to a medical call and risking injury from trying to load that patient. He said that the citizen and responder expectation has to change and if we do not have enough people to load the patient safely, for the responder or the patient that we need to wait. If we could staff with 13 or 14 people every day, we would. We have to do with what we have. We are not going to respond to fires with nine people. We will continue to do as we do today and call in mutual aid to get adequate numbers of people on the scene. Lieutenant Kolibas stated he understood that but is concerned that in the long run, we may cause more injuries. Chief Baskett said this is not a short term problem. We are going to have to operate this way for some time. He has no ability to grow more money to fix the problem. We have had a 20% decrease in revenue. That is why the M&O levy was put out to the voters. If it passes, we can increase personnel. Without it, we cannot.

A citizen from out of the area stated she was concerned about the response and she is not sure if this is a good place to move to. She says there must be a better way. She did not understand how we can just send two people when someone, a loved one is having a heart attack and how the family could just sit there and watch. Chief Baskett stated that ALS calls, heart attacks, would still get a two unit response. But we only have so many resources for the calls. We need more units.

A citizen asked how much of a delay there is if we have to call mutual aid. Chief Baskett responded that it depended on the location and if the mutual aid companies are busy with their own calls. It could be a few minutes or many minutes depending on where they are coming from. Deputy Chief Judd said it would add at least five minutes.

At the request of Commissioner Skaggs, Chief Baskett stated the response goals from Resolution 767.

Lieutenant Prather stated that in regards to the decision to close Station 96 instead of 93, when looking at the area around Station 96, there is an elementary, middle and high school, the second largest commercial area in the District and over 100 homes directly across the street. Station 93 is literally surrounded by pasture land. Why close Station 96 over Station 93? Chief Baskett stated that it falls back to Resolution 767 and response times. He pointed to the three response zones and that a significant portion of the district cannot be accessed quickly without staffing at Station 93. We have a much easier time responding into Station 96's area in a timely manner from Stations 91 and 94.

Local 726 Representative Troy Flowers referred to Option B and asked why, when the District is back to 11 personnel, would Station 95 be cross staffed and then fully staffed before staffing would be placed at Station 93 if Resolution 767 was so important. Chief Baskett apologized and said that he must have misunderstood Flowers in the Labor/Management meeting. Chief Baskett thought he was presenting the plan offered by the Union. Flowers asked that Option B be modified to reflect staffing Station 93 at 13 people before the Board makes a decision.

Flowers then asked how much would be saved by switching billing companies, Deputy Chief Judd said less than \$12,000 and that Central Pierce was experiencing a higher collection rate. Flowers asked how much an overtime shift costs and receive \$1,000 as a response. He stated that the savings from the billing company change was close to the \$14,000 in overtime that could be spent to keep us at 11 personnel.

Fire Fighter Olsen asked, with the option of a BLS transport unit, if we were looking at a tiered response where an ALS call would get an engine and a medic unit and if the medic determined that it was a BLS transport if the BLS unit would then be called in to transport to keep the ALS unit in service. Chief Baskett stated that was an operational decision and we do not have that level of detail tonight.

Commissioner Skaggs asked if the Board would like to take action tonight. He confirmed that Chief Baskett was recommending Option A.

Commissioner Gustafson moved to accept Option A when staffing levels were at nine. No second was made on the motion. Commissioner Barstow stated that he would still like the night to consider the options. **Commissioner Gustafson withdrew his motion.**

Commissioner Barstow asked if we were still going to be able to help our neighbors with their calls. Chief Baskett stated that we would. It must remain mutual and if it gets out of line that might need to be considered.

Commissioner Gustafson moved to accept the Fire Chief's recommendations in Objectives II and III. Commissioner Barstow seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Skaggs stated that he is concerned with Resolution 767 and Option A. He recommended that staff put together a work session to discuss the two options of staffing at nine.

A citizen asked how many administrative personnel were working every day. Chief Baskett responded we have 5 Chief Officers, a Public Education Officer, 5 support staff, a mechanic and two IT personnel. Commissioner Skaggs asked how many personnel responding to calls. Chief Basket replied 53.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OTHER BUSINESS

None

GOOD OF THE ORDER/PUBLIC INPUT

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chief Baskett requested a five-minute Executive Session under RCW 42.30.140 to plan strategy for a grievance hearing, with no business to follow.

Commissioner Skaggs announced a five-minute Executive Session under RCW 42.30.140 to plan strategy for a grievance hearing, with no business to follow. The Executive Session was announced as beginning at 8:20 p.m.

An announcement was made at 8:25 p.m. to extend the Executive Session another five minutes.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Board, the Regular Board Meeting of September 8, 2014, was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Robert E. Skaggs, Commissioner

Anthony D. Judd, District Secretary