

**GRAHAM FIRE & RESCUE
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
SEPTEMBER 9, 2013**

CALL TO ORDER

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

Attendance:

Present: Commissioner Gerald W. Gustafson, Commissioner Verne M. Pierson, Commissioner Robert E. Skaggs, Fire Chief Ryan Baskett, Deputy Chief Tony Judd, Assistant Chief Todd Jensen, Assistant Chief Steve Richards, Public Prevention Education Officer Myra Merdian-Drake, and Board Secretary Jodi Reynolds.

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

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

**Commissioner Skaggs moved to approve the Agenda as presented.
Commissioner Gustafson seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.**

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

The minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of August 26, 2013, were approved as presented.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- Thank You E-Mail from a Citizen
- Invitation to "Visit with Colombian Volcano Response Delegation"
Commissioner Skaggs stated he will attend. Chief Baskett said either he or Deputy Chief Judd will attend and will have staff register them.
- Invitation to Graham Starbucks Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting
Chief Baskett informed the Board he plans to have an engine there.

FINANCIALS:

Payable Vouchers #1019 through #1046 in the amount of \$16,403.98 were presented for approval.

Commissioner Gustafson moved to accept the payables in the amount of \$16,403.98, after proper auditing. Commissioner Skaggs seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**GENERAL ADMINISTRATION:
Chief's Report**

Chief Baskett reported on the following:

Local artist Norbert Pieschel created a very detailed rendering of Station 21-4 and has donated it to the Department. Please stop by the front lobby to view Mr. Pieschel's work. The Board and Chief Baskett requested staff send a "thank you" letter to Mr. Pieschel on their behalf.

Staff secured four tickets to the Washington State Fair community leaders' luncheon on September 12, 2013, for Commissioners Skaggs and Gustafson, Chief Baskett and one additional attendee to be determined.

The Department picnic scheduled for September 15, 2013, is fast approaching. Chaplain Gillette has generously offered to host the event at his residence.

The Regular Board Meeting and Regular Volunteer Pension and Relief Board Meeting scheduled for September 23, 2013, have been rescheduled to September 18, 2013, beginning at 6:45 p.m. due to non-quorum.

The Department is again participating in the wearing pink campaign to support the Susan G. Komen Foundation. Members will be allowed to wear the shirts for the month of October.

Paramedics Davison and Daneker along with their crews had a code save at Lipoma Firs Golf Course on September 2, 2013. A combination of citizen CPR with dispatcher instructions, rapid defibrillation by engine E91 and rapid ACLS care by medic unit M95 likely saved this 65-year-old's life. The patient will be discharged from Good Samaritan Hospital soon.

Paramedic Janelle Wagner and EMT's Kyle Olson and Brian Budd have been selected by Good Samaritan Hospital as their EMS Providers of the Month. They will be recognized on Tuesday, September 10, 2013, at the Base Station meeting at Station No. 21-1 at 9:00 a.m. Chief Baskett stated he will attend. On the Board's behalf, Commissioner Pierson requested Chief Baskett pass on their congratulations to Wagner, Olson and Budd. Excellent work!

South Sound 911. Chief Baskett notified the Board he wished to discuss the 2014 FireComm budget at this time. He explained he received a proposed budget with a 17.72% increase over last year's financial obligation, equating to slightly over \$52,000 for us. He stated he and Assistant Chief Jensen attended the budget workshop to share their displeasure with the figures. As a result, the budget was reworked, eliminating the new Training Officer's position and using a portion of FireComm's reserve fund as recommended by the user agencies. With these adjustments, the Department will see an increase of 13.35%, about \$43,000, over last year. Chief Baskett reported Chief

Jensen attended the last meeting and it appears Graham Fire & Rescue and South Pierce Fire & Rescue are the only agencies still unhappy, and the proposed budget will move forward at the September 12, 2013, West Pierce Fire & Rescue Board meeting. Chief Baskett explained the assessment formula is 70% call volume and 30% assessed value, which is a disadvantage due to the District's high call volume and lower assessed value.

SAFER Grant. Chief Baskett informed the Board the SAFER Grant application has been submitted and grant funds will be awarded starting the first of November 2013.

Station No. 21-0. Chief Baskett notified the Board the wells are decommissioned and the monuments removed. The remaining barrels contain non-hazardous dirt to be spread on site, and the barrels recycled. He explained Deputy Chief Judd is completing the paperwork required by the State for grant funding. He stated the maximum award possible is \$200,000 and expects to receive this amount.

Health Care Reform. Chief Baskett updated the Board on Assistant Chief Jensen's progress on the Department's portion of the combined effort to develop a strategy in relation to health care reform. He reported a presentation will be delivered at the Pierce County Commissioners meeting on September 26, 2013, in Orting and at the Pierce County Chiefs meeting in October.

Mercedes Hose. Chief Baskett informed the Board the manufacturer is still trying to determine the cause of the hose bunching up, and now severe twisting is occurring inside the hose. They are replacing the damaged sections.

TEW Equipment Grant. Chief Baskett reported to the Board that Assistant Chief Mason submitted a grant request for \$13,700 to replace two broken and outdated Holmatro hydraulic cutters.

Maintenance and Operations Levy. Chief Baskett notified the Board staff started working on M&O levy options and would have a plan prepared for their consideration in October. Chief Baskett explained he intends to divide the plan into the following areas to be presented at one time: 1) election calendar and time lines; 2) current level of service; 3) proposed level of service; 4) financial picture and projections; and 5) levy cost and time line. Commissioner Skaggs requested Chief Baskett and staff consider this a level one priority. Chief Baskett concurred.

Press Release and Seniority List. Chief Baskett informed the Board a Press Release and Seniority List for Department personnel were created at the request of Commissioner Skaggs. Chief Baskett reported he had not yet received requests from any public agencies or the media for a press release, but with Board approval he would make this Press Release available to address any questions currently out there.

Commissioner Skaggs moved to approve the release of the Press Release as written. Commissioner Gustafson seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Divisional Updates: Chief Baskett presented the monthly divisional updates to the Board.

NEW BUSINESS

Chief Baskett deferred to Deputy Chief Judd to update the Board about proposed changes to the insurance policy. Deputy Chief Judd informed the Board he met with Gordon MacIvennie of MacIvennie Associates, representative for VFIS, for an annual review of our building and vehicle insurance policy. He reported the annual premium is approximately \$88,000, a decrease of \$2,500 over last year. He explained the Agreed Values of the front-line apparatus, i.e., engines, medic units, ladder truck and tenders can be increased to their replacement costs as determined with the assistance of Assistant Chief Richards. He stated the proposed Agreed Value for each engine is \$450,000, ladder truck \$950,000, the tenders \$250,000 each and the medic units \$175,000 each, resulting in an increase in premium of approximately \$3,150. Currently these vehicles are valued at approximately half of their replacement costs. Considering the decrease in premium of \$2,500 and the increase of \$3,150, resulting in a net increase of \$650, Deputy Chief Judd recommended to the Board this change be made. Due to the lack of a vehicle replacement fund, this option is very inexpensive in case a vehicle has to be replaced. He reported there is more in the budget than is required, so no additional funds are necessary.

Commissioner Gustafson moved to approve the increase in the insurance premium for coverage for the District's vehicles in accordance with the increased Agreed Values of said vehicles. Commissioner Skaggs seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

PUBLIC INPUT

Chris McAfee stated she and her family recently moved into the District, and she has done some research and has concerns, many of which have been addressed tonight, regarding the layoffs. She expressed concern about the Commissioners attending out-of-state conferences. She said she hoped in the foreseeable future, for staff also, all out-of-state training and conferences would cease in order to alleviate some of the cost overruns. In addition, she said the perception to the public of two Commissioners going to a conference in Las Vegas does not give a good impression.

Commissioner Pierson responded Commissioner Gustafson is the Vice President of the Association and Commissioner Skaggs is the Chair of the State Resolutions Committee. Commissioner Pierson stated he made the decision not to attend because he does not hold an office that requires him to attend.

Commissioner Skaggs added the NAEFO Conference used to be held in Washington, DC, but had been moved to Las Vegas because it was less costly and attracted more attendees. Commissioner Pierson added a hotel room costs \$35.00 per night and the training facility is donated by the Las Vegas Fire Department.

Ms. McAfee said she appreciated that; however, as a citizen, she is hoping her fire department will hold itself fiscally responsible, and the public perception of going to Las

Vegas is not going to go over well when you are talking about laying off fire fighters. She said she knows it is a minute amount of money, but any little bit saved can be put towards eliminating the need for layoffs.

Commissioner Skaggs stated at the NAEFO Conference last year they met with their federal representatives and learned about SAFER Grants. He said going to the conference in Las Vegas to see these people is much more economical than going down to Washington, D.C. He stated the Board takes these comments seriously and is concerned about public perception.

Ms. McAfee said after going back through the Commissioner Minutes, she is concerned about the lack of information regarding these layoffs, unless you read about it in the SAFER Grant. She said she had to go back to October to even learn the previous administration was letting the Board know they were robbing Peter, the Reserve Fund, to pay Paul. She asked why at that time was the M&O Levy not talked about for this year, rather than now for next year when these layoffs will already have occurred.

Chief Baskett responded they have known they had a budget shortfall for the last three years. The previous administration, in an attempt to stave that off, successfully used one-time monies in the budget, didn't fill vacated positions, reorganized the administrative team, and had some early retirements. If they would have faced the problem three years ago head on they would have been looking at a larger, more long term M&O possibly, and a larger layoff list. The state auditor recommends leaving two months' operating costs in the reserve fund at all times. They had a reserve that was above that number, so if they had gone out for a SAFER Grant, they probably would have been disqualified. They had to spend down to the level where the situation was critical in order to move forward. Chief Baskett stated everyone in the organization from top to bottom is looking at all options and ways to get the Department fiscally safe for now, and actually put them in a position to build a future and provide the service he as a citizen would want.

Ms. McAfee said she knew it had been a long time since Graham passed a levy, but now that levies are starting to pass she sees this as a "black eye" for the District that the citizens were not aware of the situation. She said she partly blames the citizens for not attending the meetings, but does the citizenry know about the layoffs? She stated she is glad she was there and hearing what she's hearing, but is still a bit disgruntled about the travel issue.

Commissioner Skaggs responded this Board would never want to lay off anybody. He said it was a very difficult and emotional decision for the Department and the Board to even send out layoff notices, knowing even though they may get a SAFER Grant allowing them to hire these people back, the reality is these individuals will be looking for another job between now and then, and we may not get these quality people back. The down side of the SAFER Grant is it is only good for a couple of years and they will be faced with this situation again.

Ms. McAfee mentioned, as a side note, she was the dispatcher on that CPR call we had (at the golf course), and hoped we would honor our personnel.

Commissioner Pierson stated he wanted to add to Commissioner Skaggs' comments. He explained the Board has been very fiscally conservative and started making drastic

cuts in 2008. He said they have attempted to keep everyone employed and keep the level of service up. He stated they were anticipating a 2-3% increase for next year, but current figures show it will only be about 1.2%, which will not even pay for the increase in fuel costs. He said the reality is call volume has increased 17% but budget has decreased, and they now have reached the point where they have to make tough decisions. He stated they are looking at an M&O Levy for next year and are researching grants in order to keep these people employed, and will continue to do so.

Commissioner Gustafson stated the Department has been cutting and cutting and cutting. Money is not being wasted. The level of service is not going down. Going to classes is necessary for them to stay informed, and they get SAFER Grants that way.

Chief Baskett added he appreciated Ms. McAfee getting involved and doing her homework. He said his door is always open and to give him a call or stop by to talk further.

Rhonda Grant asked how many of the seven are medics. Chief Baskett responded four. She asked how that is going to affect staffing for BLS engines. He responded he will eliminate one medic unit. She inquired about Station No. 21-3. He said it would remain cross-staffed, ALS.

Fire Fighter Zach D'Len mentioned receiving some comments from the public about not knowing when the Commissioner meetings are held. He said the website is great but is lacking information. He requested the dates and times of the Commissioner meetings be on the website and on the reader boards. He stated keeping the public informed is especially important if the District goes for an M&O Levy. He also mentioned sending out flyers.

Commissioner Pierson asked Deputy Chief Judd the cost of mailing out flyers and he responded \$11,000-\$12,000. Commissioner Pierson said that is the reason they have not sent anything out.

Chief Baskett said they will work hard to improve the communication of information to the citizens.

Ms. McAfee said she tried to find budget information on the website, but found nothing. She said her only option was to come in and have staff make a copy. She said she would like to see the website easier to navigate.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Pierson announced he would not be attending the NAEFO Convention this year due to budget constraints.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chief Baskett requested a ten-minute Executive Session under RCW 42.30.140 to plan strategy for collective bargaining, with no business to follow.

Commissioner Pierson announced a ten-minute Executive Session under RCW 42.30.140 to plan strategy for collective bargaining, with no business to follow. The Executive Session was announced as beginning at 8:05 p.m.

An announcement was made at 8:15 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 9, 2013, was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Verne M. Pierson, Commissioner

Anthony D. Judd, District Secretary