

**GRAHAM FIRE & RESCUE
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
August 8, 2016**

CALL TO ORDER

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

Attendance:

Present: Commissioner Gerald W. Gustafson, Commissioner Russell T. Barstow, Commissioner Adam G. Rosenlund, Fire Chief Ryan Baskett, Deputy Chief Tony Judd and Board Secretary Jodi Reynolds

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

APPROVAL/MODIFICATION OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Barstow moved to approve the Agenda as presented.

Commissioner Rosenlund seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of July 25, 2016, were approved as presented.

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter from Firefighters Crossing Borders – Chief Baskett showed the Board the framed picture referenced in the letter.

Flyer for “Fresh Look at Pierce County Agriculture” Meetings

Pierce County Fire Prevention Bureau Monthly Report for July 2016

Additional: Chief Baskett distributed to the Board copies of a “thank you” email submitted by a citizen through the Department’s website.

FINANCIALS

Deputy Chief Judd distributed to the Board a revised check register to replace one in their books. He explained Braun NW sent an invoice for the third and fourth medic units, in error, and these medic units are being paid for directly by the insurance company. Staff inadvertently included the invoice in the payables initially, then discovered the error and reversed the transaction. The revised payables subtotal is now \$75,794.59 and the Transfer (EFT) remains the same, \$218.38, which brings the new total to \$76,012.97.

Payables Checks #21138 through #21184 in the amount of \$75,794.59 and a Transfer (EFT) in the amount of \$218.38, for a total of \$76,012.97 were presented for approval.

Commissioner Barstow moved to accept the payables in the amount of \$76,012.97, after proper auditing. Commissioner Rosenlund seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Fire Chief's Report

Chief Baskett greeted the Board and audience members and then reported on the following:

Pierce County Fair. Preparations are underway for the Pierce County Fair which runs from Thursday, August 11th through the 14th. The dedication for the Betty Backstrom memorial bench is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Thursday. He, Public Prevention Education Officer Merdian-Drake and the crew assigned to the fair that day will attend the ceremony. He invited the Board members to join them for the dedication, and said he planned to arrive at 9:30 a.m.

Firefighter/Paramedic Testing Process. As requested by Commissioner Gustafson at the last Board meeting, staff contacted those candidates still remaining on the current eligibility list to determine their availability. Of the seven remaining on the list, three currently have jobs in the fire service. Of those, one is not interested in leaving, one is interested in continuing with our process, and the other could not be reached. A total of five may be interested. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Rosenlund asked when the list expires and Chief Baskett responded that it is valid through December 31, 2016.

Chief Baskett then distributed to the Board copies of the standard Firefighter/Paramedic Information Packet outlining the application and testing process. He explained the dates listed are tentative and can be changed if necessary. Commissioner Rosenlund asked if the District has an obligation to utilize a list that has not yet expired. Deputy Chief Judd explained if we establish a new list before the beginning of 2017, we must end the current list, and provisions exist to do that. The Board can choose to not use the list any longer. If we do a new process that becomes effective January 1st, 2017, we would not need to do anything with the current list; we would just let it expire. We can run a testing process prior to the expiration of the current list.

Chief Baskett added that if we hire anyone from the current list, we would not have a fire academy for them to attend until February 2017; but, we could bring them on early and put them through their paramedic preceptor portion. He explained a hire date of November 1st would allow the 1 to 1½ months required to complete the initial screening including background checks, psychological and medical exams, etc. If we decide to do this, he recommended extending preliminary offers with a hire date of November 1st. This would allow three months for in-processing, training and preceptorship, then they would attend the academy in February. This would speed up the hiring process. The other option is to run a testing process to establish a new list effective January 1st.

Commissioner Rosenlund stated he preferred to get someone on sooner rather than later, and asked Chief Baskett if he was confident in those individuals still left on the list. He stated he was and deferred to Commissioner Barstow to give his opinion, since he had sat in on the Chief's interviews for that group. Commissioner Barstow said he recalled they were all strong candidates.

IAFF Local 726 Firefighters Bargaining Unit Vice President Troy Flowers expressed that if the tentative hire date is November 1st and we hire off the current list and with the Special Board Meeting to discuss staffing scheduled for September 6th, depending on

the outcome of that meeting, we may not need to hire anyone off the list if we stay at a minimum staffing of 13. He stated he preferred the Department hold off on contacting anyone on the list until after the September 6th meeting. Chief Baskett stated he concurred with Mr. Flowers. He stated we still need to adopt a process to establish a list for 2017; accordingly, he recommended the Board move ahead with the hiring process to establish a 2017 eligibility list, whether we hire from it or not. He added that the list could be a two year list for 2017 through 2018.

Commissioner Rosenlund moved to approve staff to begin the testing process for the position of Firefighter/Paramedic as presented in the Information Packet to establish an eligibility list effective January 1st, 2017 through December 31st, 2018. Commissioner Barstow seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Rosenlund returned to the topic of the September 6th Special Board Meeting and inquired if, in addition to the topic of staffing at 15, could the topic of whether to hire off the current list be added to the agenda. Deputy Chief Judd stated it could be added as a question whether or not to offer conditional offers of employment to any candidates from the list, or the Board could decide to table it until later. He added that the agenda only needs to be posted 24 hours in advance, so any additional questions the Board comes up with can be discussed at the next regular Board Meeting and then added to the September 6th meeting agenda, if desired.

South Sound 911. Chief Baskett reported to the Board that during the South Sound 911 joint Board meeting, they approved moving forward with the due diligence process for purchasing the old Puget Sound Hospital site for the new dispatch center. He explained the property is owned by Pierce County who previously had planned to build an office building on it and had done some preliminary site work. Director Neiditz is working with Pierce County to determine a fair market value for the land only, and has made it clear South Sound 911 will not pay for Pierce County to demolish the old building. The Boards also examined the preliminary 2017 budget and the projected fees. Our District will likely see an increase of approximately 3.5% over last year for dispatch service fees.

Chief Baskett also reported they discussed radio user fees. The Combined Communications Network (CCN) was present as was Pierce County. South Sound 911 is working to find a fair and equitable process to assess user fees for all agencies. Director Neiditz has penned a 10-point agreement he is attempting to negotiate with the CCN to bring every agency's fee to \$31.50 per radio per month. This would be a three-year agreement, with no guarantee after that. The CCN is proposing a fee of \$109 per radio per month, which is completely unacceptable. This issue has now entered the political arena. Chief Baskett assured the Board he will continue to work with the Operations Board to establish fair and equitable radio system user fees for all public safety agencies. He stated staff is projecting a \$31.50 per radio per month radio user fee and a 3.5% increase in dispatch fees for the District's 2017 budget.

WSRB Rerate / Station 92 Living Quarters. Chief Baskett informed the Board he has not yet had an opportunity to reach out to and start negotiations with Mr. O'Neill on the purchase of the adjacent property.

2016 Elections. Chief Baskett reported to the Board the permanent EMS levy is currently passing with 62% approval, and only about 100 votes yet to be counted. He

said this is a testament to the work our personnel do out there every day and the support of the citizens. Commissioner Gustafson expressed his thanks to everyone who worked on the levy.

Apparatus Purchase. Chief Baskett notified the Board new medic units are continuing to go into service, and three of the four are now in service. He understands the crews operating out of them are providing positive feedback. Assistant Chief Richards is purchasing steps to mount on the side door of each medic unit to address safety concerns.

GEMT. Chief Baskett updated the Board the GEMT team is preparing to move forward into phase three of the financing piece for the consulting firm assisting with this project. Assistant Chief Wright has reached out to the original stakeholders for funding for phase three. Chief Baskett asked the Board if they were interested in contributing to phase three, up to \$50,000, from the Contingency Fund. He said he expects to recoup most of these costs when the program is implemented. Commissioner Gustafson asked Chief Baskett why not all of the money will be recouped, since we were one of the leaders. He responded he did not expect to receive phase one money back, but did expect to receive phase two and three money back. Chief Baskett commended the Board for having the vision to move forward on this endeavor and chose to pioneer this along with our partners Central Pierce, West Pierce and Gig Harbor. Commissioner Rosenlund asked Chief Baskett if he had any reservations about continuing with this process. He responded he did not and reiterated he expects to recoup the majority of the money spent.

Commissioner Rosenlund moved to direct staff to expend to Central Pierce Fire & Rescue up to \$50,000 from the Contingency Fund line item no. 522.10.49.099 for the District's contribution to the Phase Three consulting expenses for the GEMT Program. Commissioner Barstow seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Strategic Plan. Chief Baskett recalled for the Board he and staff have been working to reconcile the 2009 Strategic Plan before moving forward with the new plan. He explained this is a very time consuming process and now appears to be in competition with direction previously provided by the Board. He requested clarification and assistance prioritizing the staff work load; and, he asked the Board if they wished to postpone the Strategic Planning process. He listed the following current major projects staff is working on: preparation for the September 6th Special Board Meeting, 2017 Budget workshops, Firefighter Bargaining Unit contract negotiations, contract for promotional testing, testing for response and front office positions, merger talks with Orting Valley Fire & Rescue, negotiations for a property purchase for Station 92, along with the Strategic Planning process. Commissioner Rosenlund inquired if the decision could be tabled until after Chief Baskett completes his Chief's Report. Chief Baskett agreed.

Orting Meeting. Chief Baskett reported he and Commissioner Gustafson met with Commissioner Mahoney and Chief Gibson of Orting Valley Fire & Rescue (OVFR) last Wednesday afternoon. The meeting was well received and very informative. OVFR shared they are not actively looking to merge with another agency at this time, but do see value in collaborative efforts. They expressed they want to start slow and take small

steps as they move forward. The areas they are interested in collaborating on are Fleet Maintenance, Training and Command Support. Commissioner Rosenlund asked if they have anything to offer that will help us. Chief Baskett responded he was very clear with them we do not have extra capacity with our Administrative Staff, considering we have just one Assistant Chief in Training and one in Fleet, so they would have to bring something to the table. He said Chief Gibson agreed, and said he is interested in bolstering his administrative support and this may be someone who could work with and assist with training, Chief Baskett said they know they have to bring something; otherwise, the cost would be too great for us without it. Commissioner Rosenlund said training is the biggest area and he is in favor of assisting with command support as long as it is set up the right way. Chief Baskett stated labor would be involved in the consideration of providing command support because it would affect both bargaining units. Based on preliminary discussions he has had with labor they seem to be interested in discussing this further. Chief Baskett asked the Board whether they were comfortable with him meeting with Chief Gibson in September and he would report back to them, or did they want to be involved. The Board agreed he could continue on and provide reports to them.

ARL Zoning Meeting. Chief Baskett referred the Board to the piece of correspondence in their books regarding a meeting titled “Fresh Look at Pierce County Agriculture,” mentioned earlier. He recalled for the Board his involvement beginning last year when Pierce County announced their decision to arbitrarily rezone several thousand acres of land inside our District to ARL, which he believes would lower the value of that land which would, in turn, affect our tax base. He explained in the end, due to the resistance by the school districts and fire districts, the County postponed putting this into the Comprehensive Plan and agreed to do a study. The study is complete and they are ready to release their findings. The “Fresh Look” meetings will address these findings. Chief Baskett stated he will attend the meeting in Kapowsin on August 9th and invited the Board to join him.

Commissioner Rosenlund asked what this looks like for the District’s budget. Chief Baskett responded the initial impact was a 5-6% drop in overall land value. Then, perhaps as a result of the letter he wrote, the County repositioned the boundaries to include less of Graham Fire’s District and more of East Pierce’s District, with South Pierce being hardest hit. With the changes, they are predicting a 3-3.5% drop in assessed valuation. He acknowledged this is no longer a huge number for Graham, however, the County did not do their due diligence in making decisions about what a landowner can do with their property. In addition, he expressed his concern that they have not yet addressed how this will impact the services we provide, and the recent study does not address this, either. Commissioner Gustafson provided more insight into the effects of ARL rezoning from a landowner’s perspective. Chief Baskett informed the Board he may speak at the ARL meeting on behalf of the District.

Executive Sessions. Chief Baskett stated staff researched Commissioner Rosenlund’s inquiry in regards to closing a public meeting prior to entering into an executive session if there is no business to follow. Commissioner Rosenlund is correct. The public meeting should stay open until executive session concludes, the meeting will then be reconvened and then adjourned. Staff will be certain to follow this procedure in the future.

District 23 Letter. Chief Baskett referred the Board to the letter from the South Pierce Fire & Rescue (District 17) Board of Commissioners to the Ashford/Elbe (District 23) Board. He said he has discussed the situation with Chief Vellias and is aware District 17 has been providing ALS services to Ashford/Elbe (District 23) without compensation and agrees with Chief Vellias this is unfair to the District 17 citizens and is a gift of public funds. Chief Vellias brought this to District 23's attention and the two districts were working on an agreement for compensation for ALS services over the past several months. District 23 has yet to sign and return the agreement, so the District 17 Board sent the attached letter to the District 23 Board stating they would discontinue ALS services if a signed agreement was not received by August 1st. It was not. Chief Baskett assured the Board he is monitoring the situation and if District 23 attempts to circumvent the system and go to us instead, he will notify them that we, too, will not provide ALS services without compensation.

Strategic Plan (continued). Chief Baskett returned to the topic of the Strategic Plan. He distributed to the Board the July 6th Pre-Planning Meeting notes. He explained what was covered during the meeting, reviewed the general topics and then focused on the "Next Steps" section. He gave a detailed analysis of the work required for each step. He mentioned to the Board an interesting concept arose from the Pre-Planning Meeting discussions: Maybe we should focus on a "Strategic Philosophy," rather than a Strategic Plan, in which we would develop five specific philosophies and base all decision-making on these. Then, we would build one-year work programs based on these five philosophies. Chief Baskett explained the Chief Officers concluded a Strategic Plan works well in the business world which is not as dynamic as the fire service, and we have so many competing factors—the budget, finance, levies—that are always changing. Adopting a Strategic Philosophy with work plans might be a better format for us moving forward.

Chief Baskett stated he initially had promised the completion of the process by the end of the year, but that timeline is now unrealistic. He asked the Board to state their priorities for staff. Commissioner Rosenlund asked what a realistic timeline for the Kick-off Meeting would be. Chief Baskett stated he still has much to do prior to that meeting, but he could be prepared by the first quarter of 2017. Commissioner Rosenlund requested staff work toward a Kick-off Meeting in January 2017. He expressed he can appreciate Chief Baskett looking at and re-evaluating the 2009 Strategic Plan to identify what we have accomplished and what we have not, to determine any goals we set that do not make sense anymore, and to see if there are things we should be doing, and are not, so we can make those changes. He said that if we do all this we are meeting the intent of the 2009 Strategic Plan.

NEW BUSINESS

Chief Baskett stated the September 6th Special Board Meeting is currently scheduled to begin at 7:00 p.m. He asked the Board if they were interested in moving it one hour earlier in case it runs long. The Board agreed.

Commissioner Rosenlund moved to change the September 6, 2016, Special Board Meeting start time from 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Barstow seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chief Baskett informed the Board the annual Kiwanis Leadership Luncheon is scheduled for Thursday, September 15th at 11:45 a.m. in the VIP tent at the Washington State Fairgrounds. The cost is \$20 per person. He asked the Board to notify staff in the next five days if they wish to attend.

GOOD OF THE ORDER/PUBLIC INPUT

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Board, the Regular Board Meeting of August 8, 2016, was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Gerald W. Gustafson, Commissioner

Anthony D. Judd, District Secretary