

**GRAHAM FIRE & RESCUE  
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING  
April 14, 2017**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Gustafson called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

**Attendance:**

Present: Commissioner Gerald W. Gustafson, Commissioner Russell T. Barstow, Commissioner Adam G. Rosenlund, Commissioner Gina Blanchard-Reed, Commissioner Ryan Portmann, Deputy Chief Tony Judd and Board Secretary Jodi Reynolds

Commissioner Gustafson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Interim Fire Chief

**Commissioner Gustafson announced a 10-minute Executive Session under RCW 42.30.110 (1) (g) to evaluate the qualifications of public employees or review their performance.**

**Commissioner Gustafson announced a recess at 12:04 p.m.**

**The Executive Session was announced as beginning at 12:05 p.m.**

**The Executive Session was announced as ending at 12:15 p.m.**

**Commissioner Gustafson reconvened the Special Board Meeting at 12:16 p.m.**

Commissioner Gustafson stated the interviews of the three candidates would commence, at which time Deputy Chief Judd left the room and proceeded to the front lobby to bring in the first candidate, Pat Dale. The interview commenced with each Board member asking the candidate two questions from a list of eight. The questions were as follows:

1. What is your understanding of the interim position?
2. Tell us what you know about Graham Fire and Rescue.
3. Describe any experience that you have with mergers or consolidations.
4. We have just gone through a very difficult period in which we eventually severed ties with a long term Chief. This has divided the Department and the community. What, if anything, can you do as Interim Chief to start the healing process and set the next Chief up for success?
5. Describe any experience you have with a combination Department.
6. What is your experience with overcoming organization communication challenges?

7. Do you have any experience with transitional leadership (leading an organization through change)?
8. Why are you the best candidate for this position?

The interview concluded, Mr. Dale exited the room, and the next candidate on the list, Mike Harris, was summoned from the lobby by Deputy Chief Judd. The Board asked Mr. Harris the same eight questions. At the conclusion of the interview, Mr. Harris exited the room.

**Commissioner Gustafson announced a recess at 1:42 p.m. for five minutes.**

**Commissioner Gustafson reconvened the Special Board Meeting at 1:47 p.m.**

The process continued and the Board interviewed the final candidate, Gary Franz. At the conclusion of the interview, Deputy Chief Judd escorted Mr. Franz out to the front lobby. This concluded the interview process.

Commissioner Rosenlund requested a 20-minute Executive Session under RCW 42.30.110 (1) (g) to evaluate the qualifications of public employees or review their performance, with possible business to follow.

**Commissioner Gustafson announced a 20-minute Executive Session under RCW 42.30.110 (1) (g) to evaluate the qualifications of public employees or review their performance, with possible business to follow.**

**Commissioner Gustafson announced a recess at 2:17 p.m.**

**The Executive Session was announced as beginning at 2:19 p.m.**

**An announcement was made at 2:39 p.m. to extend the Executive Session 15 minutes.**

**An announcement was made at 2:54 p.m. to extend the Executive Session 10 minutes.**

**An announcement was made at 3:04 p.m. to extend the Executive Session 20 minutes.**

**An announcement was made at 3:24 p.m. to extend the Executive Session 10 minutes.**

**An announcement was made at 3:34 p.m. to extend the Executive Session 5 minutes.**

**The Executive Session was announced as ending at 3:39 p.m.**

**Commissioner Gustafson reconvened the Special Board Meeting at 3:40 p.m.**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### Permanent Fire Chief Process

Commissioner Portmann explained the Board has been considering the impending discussion with Orting on a possible merger. If we were to move forward with a process to hire a permanent Fire Chief, potential candidates would likely be concerned about where they would end up in the shake out of all this. This should be considered when discussing a permanent Fire Chief process. He would prefer to vet the Orting arrangement first and come to a decision if we are moving forward with Orting or not, before beginning a process for identifying the permanent Chief. Commissioner Blanchard-Reed asked if he intends to have that decision made prior to beginning the search for a permanent Chief and complete the process of the actual merger with the Interim Chief. He responded we could begin researching firms to assist us in the search for a new Chief, but no more than that until we have a decision on Orting. If we decide not to go forward with Orting, then we have the firm already selected and ready to start the process. If we decide to go the Orting route, we can have a discussion about not hiring a permanent Chief, instead operating under an Interim Chief to work with Orting's Chief to bring this marriage together. Commissioner Blanchard-Reed asked if the Interim Chief would be the person who brings us to the merger. He responded it could be the person who brings us to the actual merger date or to the time when we have a discussion about Orting's Chief being the permanent Chief from a certain point on through the merger. Commissioner Blanchard-Reed commented that we may not need a permanent Chief if we merge. Commissioner Portmann concurred. He said we may come to a consensus to hire Orting's Chief. This may be more than a four or six month process. This is something to consider when deciding on an Interim Chief and their current employment situation.

Commissioner Rosenlund stated we need to consider that going from the concept of an Interim Chief to a possible merger, to this, results in a lot of instability for an organization. From what limited experience he has had, and in talking with a couple of the Orting Commissioners, he is aware a term has been used in the past—'baby steps.' Orting has been slow and cautious to move on such matters. It is difficult to know what that timeframe would really look like for the Interim Chief position. He is all for pursuing a merger. He originally made the motion. He would love to have it happen quickly, but his experience tells him Orting may not. The current vacancies and different dynamics may change that, but he thinks it will be a slow-moving process.

Commissioner Portmann stated he would like to compress the timeline with Orting, if possible. He has not yet seen the facts or anything down on paper, but if he makes a motion and/or votes on it he would like to see it happen sooner rather than later, in order to provide some stability. Boards change over time; two members of our 5-member Board could be changing next year due to the election. As these things occur, we lose momentum. So, if we can enter into an Administrative Services Agreement with Orting a few months down the road, we keep the momentum going.

Commissioner Blanchard-Reed expressed that the Interim Chief, now that the Board is changing its focus, is not to help us find a permanent Chief, but to get us through a potential or actual merger. Commissioner Portmann responded we are not sure what the Interim Chief will be doing, because we do not know what we are doing as a Board. Deputy Chief Judd summarized that it sounds like to begin with, an Interim Chief will be going and talking with Orting to see if they are still interested in moving forward, considering everything that has occurred the past few months. The Board needs to

make a decision in six to eight weeks whether that is something to go forward with or not. At the same time, the Board will research a few companies that can do an internal or external search, or a combination, for a permanent Chief. The first step is to have a discussion with Orting, see if it is even viable, and then make a decision at that point on how to proceed. Commissioner Rosenlund stated the problem lies in that we are going to offer the position of Interim Chief that is very open-ended in timeline, which does affect one of the candidates. Commissioner Blanchard-Reed added that if the door closes six to eight weeks into this process and the merger is not going to happen, and we have offered a six to eight month position to the candidate, it is almost like wasted time. Deputy Chief Judd offered that an option is to put it on the candidate and not try to absorb it yourselves. Offer a six month contract with possible extensions, and if you go through this Orting process and it does not pan out, you then go out for a permanent Fire Chief and just move your testing process up so that it ends at six months. Discussion concluded.

**Commissioner Gustafson passed the gavel to Commissioner Barstow. He moved to create an Interim Fire Chief position for a duration of six months with possible extension(s). Commissioner Portmann seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Commissioner Blanchard-Reed moved to extend a conditional offer of employment to Pat Dale for the position of Interim Fire Chief. Commissioner Barstow seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.**

Commissioner Portmann stated the Board now needs to discuss the compensation package they will offer Mr. Dale.

**Commissioner Gustafson passed the gavel to Commissioner Barstow. Commissioner Gustafson moved to offer a compensation package to Pat Dale consisting of the past Chief's base salary, medical coverage and a car. Commissioner Blanchard-Reed seconded for the purpose of discussion.**

Discussion was had regarding the compensation package. Discussion concluded.

**Commissioner Portmann moved to amend the previous motion and moved to offer a compensation package to Pat Dale consisting of the past Chief's base salary, the medical benefits package, use of a District vehicle and use of a District cell phone. Commissioner Portmann then rescinded his amendment. Commissioner Gustafson rescinded his motion and Commissioner Blanchard-Reed rescinded her second.**

Discussion was held between the Board and Deputy Chief Judd to clarify the details of the compensation package.

**Commissioner Portmann moved to offer candidate Pat Dale the same contract as the previous Fire Chief minus longevity, deferred compensation, sick leave buy back and a separation agreement. Commissioner Barstow seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.**

Commissioner Portmann stated one of the Board members would call Pat Dale, following adjournment, with the conditional offer of employment and explain that Deputy Chief Judd would be sending him the parameters of the contract.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**With no further business to come before the Board, the Special Board Meeting of April 14, 2017, was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.**

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Gerald W. Gustafson, Commissioner

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Anthony D. Judd, District Secretary