

**GRAHAM FIRE & RESCUE  
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
February 26, 2020**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Portmann called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

**Attendance:**

Present: Commissioner Ryan Portmann, Commissioner Gerald W. Gustafson, Commissioner Adam G. Rosenlund, Commissioner Gina Blanchard-Reed, Commissioner Robert Homan, Fire Chief Pat Dale, District Secretary Brenda Barker and Board Secretary Jodi Reynolds

Absent: Deputy Chief Oscar Espinosa has an excused absence.

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Citizen Carolyn Benum commented they invited some people to attend this meeting, but they did not show. She plans to attend the house burn tomorrow.

**APPROVAL/MODIFICATION OF THE AGENDA**

**Commissioner Rosenlund moved to modify the Agenda to include under New Business, discussion for filling the apparent vacancy for a Board of Commissioners representative to serve on the Volunteer Pension & Relief Board, and to approve the Agenda as modified. Commissioner Homan seconded the motion.**

Commissioner Blanchard-Reed asked District Secretary Barker if she will be bringing more information back to them. She wants to make sure they have the information necessary to have a robust discussion. District Secretary Barker reiterated what she was told by the representative at the Board for Volunteer Firefighters. Commissioner Rosenlund responded he would still like to have a discussion tonight.

**Motion carried.**

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

Regular Board Meeting Minutes of February 12, 2020

Financial Documentation:

General Fund:

Payables: Checks #27812 through #27887 =	\$99,385.63
Payables (Payroll): Checks #27796 through #27811 =	\$539,708.87
Payroll: Checks #27790 through #27795 =	\$12,382.57
Payroll Transfers (EFTs) =	<u>\$884,840.48</u>

**TOTAL: \$1,536,317.55**

**Commissioner Rosenlund moved to approve the Consent Agenda in the amount of \$1,536,317.55 after proper audit. Commissioner Gustafson seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

None

## **GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

### **Fire Chief's Report**

Fire Chief Dale welcomed the Board and audience members and reported on the following:

A training burn of the house owned by the Bethel School District, located across the street from Headquarters, will take place tomorrow beginning in the morning, with the actual burning down of the house in the afternoon. We are setting up citizen parking and viewing areas.

Myra's retirement reception is scheduled for Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. here at Station 94.

The District's Annual Awards Banquet will take place on Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup> at Frontier Park Lodge from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Please RSVP to Jodi Reynolds no later than March 17<sup>th</sup>.

Social Media Excellence: Firefighter Jasper Stenstrom continues to do an outstanding job managing the District's social media sites, consistently posting meaningful content. Recently, he featured a puppy rescue performed by our crews. Several news feeds picked up the story and it went far and wide. In addition, Jasper has done a wonderful job capturing the training taking place across the street related to the upcoming house burn featuring the Skills Center kids and our crews.

Government Social Media, LLC Conference, the GSM Con, awards agencies for their use of social media in several categories. Graham Fire is one of five government agencies nominated in the "Best Use of Live Video" category. The conference is in Seattle, and on March 24<sup>th</sup> the award will be made. He will inform the Board when the winner is announced. Jasper will attend the conference. Commissioner Portmann stated he is interested in analytics – how many views, shares, etc. He requested staff inform the Board of the specific analytics the next time a post really takes off. He remarked about the power of social media. Excellent work by Jasper. Chief Dale responded he would pass this on to him.

The Graham Business Association is holding its annual live/silent auction to raise dollars for scholars the evening of Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. Graham Fire, along with our Association, is offering as an auction item a "Deluxe Fire Station Birthday Party." District Secretary Barker handed out flyers. Commissioner Homan asked Chief Dale if he could confirm for him the time of the auction. Chief Dale stated he would.

The Change Conference that he and our Department are involved in takes place Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup>. He anticipates up to 300 attendees. The Department will pay the registration fee for any Board member who wishes to attend. The conference will last from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the McGavick Center at Clover Park and will feature four guest speakers.

### **Standing Committees**

Budget, Finance and Audit – No report

Policy and Procedure – No report

Mergers/Consolidations – No report

Joint Labor/Management – No report

Strategic Leadership Plan – No report

Legislative Affairs – No report. Commissioner Homan said he saw that the volunteer pension bill passed. He asked the committee if they knew the status of any other legislation they were supporting. They did not.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### 2020 Meeting Schedule

Commissioner Portmann recalled the Board has been discussing for the past one and one half months the idea of changing the Board Meetings from twice monthly to once a month. He also pointed out the two resolutions associated with the proposed change. He requested they now continue their discussion to see where they are at as a Board.

Commissioner Rosenlund stated he was personally in favor of one meeting per month due to less time involved and being the efficient way to do things. But, he has decided it is more effective to have two meetings per month. Communication problems occur with a lack of contact. Although our meetings are short, they are an effective way to communicate and stay in touch with each other, the Administration and citizens. Therefore, he is against the resolution to change Board Meetings to once a month.

Commissioner Blanchard-Reed stated she agrees with Commissioner Rosenlund. In consideration of her obligation to help govern the District, she would not feel as in-touch if the meetings were changed to once a month. Community and face-to-face interaction hold her accountable as an elected official, and the meetings allow her the opportunity to meet with citizens. Therefore, she is against the resolution to change meetings to once a month.

Commissioner Homan stated he is in favor of changing the frequency of meetings to once a month. He considered what would be gained from this particular change. Sometimes a conflict occurs between what a Board is doing for themselves versus the organization. Chief Dale is moving the Fire Department forward, making many positive changes. Looking at the big picture, he believes in being respectful of staff's, citizens' and Board members' time. However, if effective and efficient, then he is in favor of keeping the number of meetings at two. He understands the Benum's opinions and their desire to attend meetings, but they are the exception. Being engaged is important for the Board; however, being present for the meetings does not mean they are engaging with the citizens. He suggested to the Benums if they want to meet more frequently, he would be happy to meet with them.

Commissioner Homan continued by stating the financial impact of the change, although not large, is a savings of \$7,000-\$8,000. It is the responsibility of the Board to be fiscally sound and save money where they can. He feels one meeting is efficient and effective. With the Administration led by the Chief, and with direction by the Board, this staff can operate fine one month at a time, with occasional special meetings called if necessary. Historically, these have been rare. With the Fire Benefit Charge issue coming up, he sees perhaps one special meeting being necessary to address citizen questions. In addition, reducing the monthly meetings opens time up for Board members to attend other community or board meetings. He concluded that we will not know the impact until we make the change; and, we can always change back if it is not working. Therefore, he is in favor of looking at the resolution.

Commissioner Gustafson stated he voiced his opinion against the change to one meeting per month at the last meeting.

Commissioner Portmann stated he agrees with Commissioner Homan. Efficiency and effectiveness are key components. His position has not changed, but it appears the Board is

three against and two in favor of changing meeting frequency to once a month. Therefore, they have come to the end of this discussion. He appreciates everyone sharing their viewpoints.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Composition of Volunteer Pension and Relief Board. Commissioner Portmann stated District Secretary Barker explained at a minimum, the Board must include the Board Chair, another Commissioner, Fire Chief, Secretary and a Firefighter. District Secretary Barker elaborated that when she contacted the Board for Volunteer Firefighters last week, they explained to her they do not keep a list of the names of the individuals on our Board. Commissioner Blanchard-Reed asked if more than two Commissioners can serve on the Board. District Secretary Barker responded she did not ask that question. Commissioner Homan asked if the Volunteer Pension and Relief Board has bylaws. District Secretary Barker responded she is certain they do. He suggested they look at those. She said she would do more research and will email out the information to them for discussion at the next meeting.

Commissioner Blanchard-Reed asked if this Volunteer Board meeting is associated with the end-of-the-month, every-other-month meeting that Volunteer Glenn Barcus has mentioned. District Secretary Barker responded no, she believes that is the meeting of the Graham Fire Association. Commissioner Blanchard-Reed requested a calendar of the meetings of the Graham Fire Association so that she may attend. District Secretary Barker responded she would get that information for her.

Commissioner Portmann requested clarification of the WAC and RCW as to whether we need to hold a Volunteer Pension & Relief Board Meeting if there is no business to conduct. District Secretary Barker responded she would research that as well.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Citizen Robert Benum stated he had three issues: First, with regard to the public comment times, although there are now two, he wants open discussion prior to any vote. Second, when Commissioner Homan gave his comments (re: in favor of reducing number of meetings), he focused on the positive, but not the negative. He would have liked to hear some of the negatives. He commented Commissioner Blanchard-Reed was very up front about the positives and negatives for her, and he appreciated that. Third, from the Chief's Report he learned that Graham Fire is up for a great award. It is great to be affiliated with such a good Fire Department.

Citizen Carolyn Benum commented that she appreciates that Commissioners Rosenlund and Homan put a lot of thought into their arguments (regarding the number of meetings), which she really appreciated. She is very glad they chose to stay with two meetings per month, and that they were allowed to have some input. She asked if the public can attend the presentation for the social media award. Commissioner Portmann responded probably not, as it is during a conference. Chief Dale assured her if we win the award, we will celebrate here.

Citizen Brian Estes inquired about previously when the Chief gave his 2020 budget proposal, did he hear there were more funding proposals coming up this month, FBC or anything coming up in 2020? Chief Dale responded there were not. Mr. Estes commented he just received his property taxes for this year and they were up \$2,100. \$4,700 of his \$8,400 bill is for state and local schools. He warned that you (the District) will probably hear some negative comments and pushback from the community.

Luke Wahl, IAFF Local 726 Vice President, responded that it should benefit taxpayers for the District to go to a Fire Benefit Charge (FBC). Based on the research done to date, most of the citizens in the District should see tax savings.

Citizen Robert Benum commented he agrees with everything that has been said. He reminded everyone their power is with their pen, and that those responsible for the increase can be voted out. They experienced the same increase, and he wants to find out why there was such a large increase in one year.

Citizen Carolyn Benum mentioned a meeting sponsored by the County Assessor was held to explain all of this, but she did not attend. Then Mrs. Benum asked for clarification on the Fire Station Birthday Party flyer. Commissioner Portmann explained more, and Chief Dale stated he could discuss it with her following the meeting.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Blanchard-Reed commented it will be important as they move forward with the Fire Benefit Charge that they really understand the District. After meeting with Senator Becker, she looked at the results of a district-wide survey and 95% of the constituents are concerned most about taxes. She agrees the Fire Benefit Charge needs to be explained well. It is the best for our District, because it is a fairer, more conservative way that will resonate with our constituents, if communicated in the right way. She added that most of the tax increases were due to the schools.

Commissioner Gustafson related a story about Puyallup Fire personnel who he observed during a past Daffodil Parade.

Commissioner Homan commented he appreciates the Benums coming to the meetings and their involvement on a regular basis. Also, he stated that not often do you have a Board of five people that can respectfully and professionally disagree. Because he was in favor of going to one meeting, he emphasized that side more. He appreciates everyone's comments. He commended Jasper Stenstrom on his work on social media. He agrees with Commissioner Blanchard-Reed's comments about the importance of marketing the FBC so that it is understood, because it is very complicated.

Commissioner Rosenlund stated he agrees that taxes is biggest issue we have, both locally and regionally throughout the state. They were elected to be good stewards of taxpayer money, and he commended staff for their excellent work making the most of it. Early indications show the FBC would benefit both the District and citizens. He asked the audience members to share any feedback they have with the Board as they go through the process. With regard to the discussion earlier about the number of meetings, this is not a black and white issue. He addressed Mr. Benum and expressed his appreciation for their input and involvement and adherence to decorum.

Commissioner Portmann reminded the Board the District is hosting the Pierce County Fire Commissioners Association meeting here tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. The March 14<sup>th</sup> training on commissioner ethics taught by the Quinns is at West Pierce Fire & Rescue. He encouraged all Board members to consider going.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Commissioner Portmann announced a 15-minute Executive Session under RCW 42.30.110 (1) (g) to evaluate qualifications of public employees or review their performance, with no business to follow.**

The Executive Session was announced as beginning at 7:38 p.m.

At 7:53 p.m. the Executive Session was extended five minutes.

The Executive Session was announced as ending at 7:58 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**With no further business to come before the Board, the Regular Board Meeting of February 26, 2020, was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.**

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Ryan Portmann, Commissioner

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Brenda L.B. Barker, District Secretary