



SOUTH WHIDBEY FIRE / EMS

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BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING October 22 2022 – 10:00 am Minute – *DRAFT*

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81802843636?pwd=U2p4UzBUSmdJUy9RVDIvaGZVK0poUT09>

In Attendance: Commissioner Noblet, Commissioner Towers, Commissioner Erickson, Chief Walsh, Chief Beck, and Kathryn Nguyen.

Audience: Chief Dilley, Chief Ney, Lt Gabeleih, Lt Kalahiki

Zoom Audience: Blake Benenati and Peter Lund.

I. Call to Order.

Commissioner Noblet called the meeting to order at 8:30 am

II. Approval of Agenda.

Commissioner Towers motioned to approve the agenda; Commissioner Noblet seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

III. Strategic Plan Review and Update

Chief Walsh presented the Strategic Plan for reviews and updates. He explained that the department was experiencing a decrease in volunteer participation over the past several years despite efforts in point value increases. The steps continue through improvement with morale, communication, website, uniforms, and involvement. Issues not outlined in the plan are response time, number of responders on scene, and station location. Issues arise when high call volume areas increase response time. The solution would be for stations placed five miles apart. The department's realtor had been investigating potential properties for a new station.

Commissioner Erickson questioned if the presented data represents the most effective placement and staffing levels for all stations in the future.

Chief Walsh confirmed that the data did represent the ideal location for essential response times.

Commissioner towers stated that the east and west stations are the most desired staff, while the central station may be the most effective volunteer station.

Lt Kalahiki commented on the data representing the need for additional stations and sleeping quarters within the stations.

THEME #1: HOW DO WE SAVE MORE LIVES?

Objective 1.1.1 – Provide a minimum daily staffing level of at least five fire responders and one chief officer (six total) throughout the district

Chief Walsh explained that the plan describes a minimum staffing level of five firefighters and one Chief, which must be maintained 50% of the time. The defined staffing levels are kept around 30% of the time. To accomplish the desired levels, volunteer participation and staffing levels must increase.

Commissioner Noblet requested that the timeline be updated to represent an accurate timeframe.

Objective 1.1.2 – Contain structure fires to the room of origin 20% of the time or better.

Chief Walsh stated that the Objective is obtainable with the increased staff and a decrease in response time.

Commissioner Towers stated that the Objective relies on the district and the community and may not be the best evaluation method.

Objective 1.1.3 – Zero civilian fire fatalities or significant injuries measured annually.

Chief Walsh expressed his satisfaction with no human fatalities during the year. The key to sustaining the Objective is continuous training, debriefing, and smoke detection installations.

Objective 1.1.4 – Arrive on the scene of structure fires within 14 minutes, 80% of the time.

Commissioner Noblet questioned if the statistics were from the district or regional statistics.

Chief Walsh stated he would have to get back with the answer.

Objective 1.1.5 – Explore the implementation of a residential sprinkler ordinance for water-deficient areas.

Chief Walsh stated that the department has an inter-code agreement with Island County. Although, the district has taken full responsibility for inspections due to the lack of participation with Island County. The island faces the same issue, with fire departments only conducting inspections. The department is hopeful for future collaboration efforts with Island County.

Objective 1.2.1 – Maintain cardiac survival rate at or above 15% (ROSC).

Chief Walsh stated that the department does a great job sustaining the Objective. The only cases that hinder results are due to calls received farther away from a station than usual.

Objective 1.2.2 – Explore accessing Cardiac Arrest Registry to Enhance Survival (CARES) data to track “Utstein” level performance.

No action was taken.

Objective 1.2.3 – Explore the feasibility of implementing the PulsePoint application for improved frequency of bystander CPR.

Chief Walsh stated that Island County deployed a program focusing on this Objective.

Commissioner Noblet asked if this Objective could be placed on the alternate list of supported items.

Chief Walsh agreed.

Objective 1.2.4 – Participate in activities that improve bystander "hands-only CPR" participation.

Chief Walsh explained that the district is entirely out of Covid stipulations and is back to normal operations.

Objective 1.2.5 – Explore the development of a BLS transport program.

Chief Walsh stated that with South Whidbey being a remote location if highways or ferries are not accessible, there are limited transport abilities. The district responded to this issue by purchasing an Aid vehicle that can get patients at least to landing zones.

Commissioner Erickson questioned the district's position in executing such transportation to hospitals.

Chief Walsh explained that the department could currently transport with the Aid vehicle, but it is not ideal. The rig equipped to make such transportation was getting repaired.

Objective 1.2.6 – Arrive on the scene of medical emergencies within 10 minutes, 80% of the time.

No action was taken

Objective 1.2.7 – Provide a minimum staffing level of at least two EMS responders for all emergency medical responses

Chief Walsh stated that the department sustains a 30% level of this Objective. To better support the Objective, an increase in staff is required.

Objective 1.3.1 – Implement policies, strategies, and training that limit firefighter exposure to high-risk operations.

Chief Walsh stated that the department's participation in L&I programs is essential in achieving the Objective.

Objective 1.3.2 – Provide at least one qualified Safety Officer at all "working" incidents.

Objective achieved and should be removed.

Objective 1.3.3 – Develop a leadership training program for all field and command-level positions.

Chief Dilley explained that a Fire One training and testing program had been established and offered participation from other fire districts.

Objective 1.3.4 – Improve radio communications.

Chief Beck explained that the department deployed a new communications tower, providing additional connections. New portable radios will be purchased if the district secures essential grant funds.

Commissioner Erickson questions if ICOMS's new system is compatible with the new radios.

Chief Beck explained that it was not compatible.

Objective 1.3.5 – Explore expanding employee health and wellness program to better protect employees over time.

Chief Walsh explained that the department has programs that engage health and wellness. Program development and additional equipment will continue to develop.

Objective 1.3.6 – Evaluate emerging technologies to improve operations and reduce risk to responders.

Commissioner Noblet stated that this Objective is an ongoing project.

Objective 1.4.1 – Improve coordination strategies with local, state, and federal partners.

Chief Walsh explained that as a member of the EMS board, there is a project underway to enhance communication and involvement. A disaster drill development is highly desired.

Commissioner Noblet stated that it had been several years since one had been conducted on the island. Sending firefighters to the national fire course would greatly benefit the department.

Objective 1.4.2 – Expand opportunities for Community Emergency Response Teams (auxiliary members) to assist with daily operations, prevention, public education, etc., activities.

Chief Walsh stated that this Objective would take enormous work from the district and the community. He suggested moving the Objective to the wish list.

Commissioner Noblet agreed to move the Objective to the wish list.

Commissioner Erickson explained that connecting with outsourced communities and groups can significantly benefit collaboration efforts. She suggested broadening the scope of the Objective by increasing resilience.

Objective 1.4.3 – Develop a "family liaison" position to provide outreach to responder families during crisis-level events.

Chief Walsh stated that the new policy regarding the Chaplain program had been a great resource.

Chief Ney suggested outsourcing more local personnel within the program.

Objective 1.4.4 – Develop an "emergency supply cache" program.

Chief Beck stated that the supply level sustained was substantial throughout the Covid pandemic. Additional supply orders are to be made in an effort to increase the level.

Objective 2.1.1 – Address fire station safety/seismic safety in current and future capital improvement plans.

Chief Beck explained that retrofitted additions have not been an option and are more expensive than new purchases.

Commissioner Erickson questioned the sustainability of current fire stations.

Chief Beck stated that existing stations are adequate, although the decision will come to either buy a new station or spend substation funds on maintaining and fixing current stations.

Objective 2.1.2 – Conduct a Standards of Cover study.

Chief Ney suggested preparing such a document internally, which can be most beneficial and instill ownership and increase involvement.

Commissioner Erickson stated that such a document if prepared within the timeframe, can set the tone for upcoming Strategic Plans.

Chief Walsh suggested adjusting the timeframe to the end of 2023.

All meeting participants agreed.

Objective 2.1.3 – Enhance fire station accommodations to better meet changing staffing patterns and Programs.

Chief Beck suggested the development of additional rooms within the fire stations.

Objective 2.1.4 – Improve the health of the apparatus fleet to ensure reliability for response and on-scene capabilities.

Chief Beck explained that the Objective had not seen attention in previous years due to the financial effect of purchasing and building Station 36. With the completion of Station 36, the department can focus more on the Objective. However, the lack of past apparatus improvements has caused the issue where all department vehicles, tenders, and rigs are due for updates simultaneously.

Objective 2.1.5 – Develop a research and development policy for new innovations, technology, tactics, etc.

The Objective is an ongoing effort within the department.

Objective 2.1.5 will be removed.

Objective 2.1.6 – Continue the practice of reviewing all SWFE policies and procedures every two years for accuracy and provide training to all members as updates occur.

Chief Walsh explained that a new practice would require new and current staff to read and acknowledge all new and existing policies on a web-based system.

Commissioner Noblet requested to pause the meeting and schedule a follow-up time to finalize the Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to recess the meeting; Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting recessed at 3:00 pm.

The meeting was called back to session on November 9, 2022, at 4:30 pm.

In Attendance: Commissioner Noblet, Commissioner Towers, Chief Walsh, and Chief Beck.

Audience: Chief Dilley, Chief Ney, Lt Gabelein, Lt Kalahiki.

Zoom Audience: Kathryn Nguyen.

Objective 2.2.1 – Maintain Workers' Compensation costs below 3% of the annual budget.

Chief Walsh explained that the department plans to participate in an L&I Safety program to reduce L&I premiums by ten percent and reduce injuries.

Commissioner Noblet asked if the stated 3% was a regional or district number.

Chief Ney explained that it was compiled from the department's budget.

Objective 2.2.2 – Pursue grant opportunities with a positive return on investment.

Chief Beck explained that a few of the previous grants applied for that were not granted due to the lack of substantial need.

Chief Walsh explained that the department would continue to explore grant opportunities in the coming years.

Objective 2.2.3 – Develop a succession plan for all levels in the organization.

Chief Walsh asked if the Objective referred to filling and retailing vacant positions in future years.

Commissioner Towers stated that the Objective refers to how a position will be filled and backfilled.

Chief Walsh explained that his Objective is to develop and train internal personnel to move up within the department.

Objective 2.2.4 – Develop a community risk reduction plan to reduce/mitigate demand for service (fall prevention, fire prevention, etc.).

Chief Ney proposed that the department develop a project that elaborates on smoke detection replacements, connects with the community, and offers additional services to look around the home and make safety recommendations for the public.

Objective 2.2.5 – Develop a program that formalizes how new ideas from throughout the organization can be submitted for review and tracked.

Chief Beck explains that the program was developed to encourage members to bring forth ideas that can be presented and considered in the upcoming budget.

Commissioner Towers suggested that the district develops a tracking system and policy update better to serve the department in a more effective formality.

Objective 2.2.6 – Explore strategies to improve recruitment and retention of personnel/percentage of turnover.

Chief Walsh explains that there has not been much collaboration from the committee, but he would like more interaction.

Jon Gabelein stated that this Objective is one that the administration should lead, and the committee should be used to communicate progress.

Commissioner Noblet requested that the timeline be updated to 'ongoing.'

Chief Walsh stated that he would come up with additional recruitment ideas.

Objective 2.2.7 – Explore implementation of a cost recovery program to address nuisance calls, and incidents caused by extreme negligence or intentional criminal acts.

Chief Beck explained that the Objective was due to frequent calls from non-compliant residents.

Commissioner Towers explained that pursuing the Objective might take an unrealistic amount of time and funds.

Commissioner Noblet requested to strike the Objective.

All members agreed.

Objective 2.2.8 – Develop a method of providing/communicating rapid organizational updates to all members.

Chief Walsh stated that the department had effective methods in place already.

Commissioner Noblet suggested striking the Objective.

All members agreed.

Objective 2.3.1 – Invest in station improvement projects that provide economic savings measured in lower ongoing maintenance or utility costs.

Chief Beck explained that the department continues to invest in cost-efficient improvements throughout the district.

Commissioner Towers suggests keeping the Objective as ongoing.

All members agreed.

Objective 2.3.2 – Invest in high-quality equipment/apparatus that can withstand deferred replacement when necessary.

Chief Beck explained that through the development of electric vehicles, the department has been discussing upgrading the current apparatuses with electric and hybrid options. There are grants available to upgrade older apparatuses to electric.

Chief Walsh stated that the department would pursue grants to fund electric apparatus replacements.

Objective 2.3.3 – Develop/identify cutback strategies that can be implemented for immediate cost savings during an economic crisis.

This Objective will remain ongoing.

Objective 3.1.1 – Provide rapid and accurate information on important SWFE services and activities.

Chief Walsh stated that the new website development and Facebook interaction efforts align with the Objective.

Chief Ney suggested that the department deploy a volunteer dedicated to developing a community outreach newsletter.

Chief Walsh said he would rework the Objective phrasing to include the new ideas.

Objective 3.1.2 – Improve community recognition of the differences in roles and responsibilities between SWFE and Whidbey Health.

Commissioner Noblet suggested updating the timeline to 'ongoing.'

All members agreed.

Objective 3.1.3 – Improve community recognition of the performance, successes, and challenges of SWFE.

No action was taken.

Objective 3.1.4 – Implement a citizen’s advisory committee.

Commissioner Noblet suggested striking the Objective.

Commissioner Towers agreed.

Objective 3.1.4 removed from Strategic Plan.

Objective 3.1.5 – Develop an "After the Call" follow up program to provide correspondence and feedback with victims.

Chief Ney explained that he had developed a brochure previously that could be distributed if approved.

Chief Walsh agreed.

Objective 3.2.1 – Maintain a Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau (WSRB) - Class 6 Rating or better.

Chief Walsh explained that the department is continuing efforts by purchasing new apparatus, updating training, and continuing inspections. The timeline and status will be updated to reflect more accurate data.

Commissioner Towers suggested pushing the fire inspections during the new rating period.

Chief Beck suggested that the department continues its efforts to become socially interactive with the community and continuously provide alerts and updates.

Objective 3.2.2 – Prioritize salvage operations on emergency incidents to lower post-fire damage due to salvage and overhaul activities.

Commissioner Noblet asked what the Objective was about specifically.

Chief Walsh explained that the Objective was dedicated to enhancing efforts to preserve personal property from water damage due to fire elimination.

Objective 3.2.3 – Provide fire prevention education and its impact on insurance rates to target audiences within the community (homeowners, business owners).

Commissioner Towers suggested that the Objective remains in the current plan but should be stricken from upcoming Strategic plans.

Objective 3.3.1 – Explore partnerships to participate in a Mobile Integrated Health Care (MIHC) program.

Commissioner Noblet suggested that the Objective should be brought to the Board but should not remain on the Strategic Plan.

Chief Walsh agreed.

Objective 3.3.2 – Continue to recruit for a workforce representative of the community demographic profile (compare to appropriate census data).

Chief Walsh suggested striking the Objective.

Commissioners Towers and Noblet agreed.

Objective 3.3.2 was removed from the Strategic Plan.

Objective 3.3.3 – Continue to recruit members from the local community and off-island for better service to the community.

Objective 3.3.3 was removed from the Strategic Plan.

Objective 3.3.4 – Recruit community business leaders to the Board of commissioners.

Commissioner Noblet suggested striking the Objective

Objective 3.3.4 was removed from the Strategic Plan.

Chief Walsh opened the floor for questions and suggestions.

Commissioner Towers suggested adding an Objective to replace the two older fire stations with a new one.

Chief Walsh agreed.

Commissioner Towers suggested that the next Strategic Plan be conducted internally. It is difficult for an outside company to come into the department and have an essential understanding within a week to develop a Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Noblet and Chief Walsh agreed.

Chief Beck suggested adding an initiative that states continuous involvement and improvement with joining Districts.

Commissioner Noblet and Towers agreed.

IV. Adjourn.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Towers seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

The Special Meeting of the Board was adjourned at 7:05 pm.

Kathryn Nguyen,
District Board Secretary