

**SOUTH WHIDBEY FIRE/EMS
REGULAR MEETING
5535 Cameron Road, Freeland, Washington
April 12, 2012– 5:30 P.M.**

Minutes

In Attendance:

Chairman Kenon Simmons
Commissioner Mike Helland
Commissioner Bob Elliot
Chief Rusty Palmer

In Audience: AC Busch, DC Beck, Wayne Morrison, Bob Walters, Ben Watanabe, John Hyde, Allison Tapert, Betty Freeman, Mike O., Gary West, Margaret Andersen, Ken Kieling, Frank Mestemacher, Curt Gordon, Vince Bond, Charles Bieber, Gary Gabelein, Don Carscadden, Stephen Kahu, Mike Noblet, Eileen Jackson

- I. Call to Order – Chairman Simmons called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.
- II. Approval of Agenda – Chief Palmer requested the new business to approve the Video Project Contract be removed from the agenda until further notice. Commissioner Helland moved to approve the amended agenda; motion carried.
- III. Public Input – none
- IV. Consent Agenda - All matters listed within the Consent Agenda have been distributed to each member of South Whidbey Fire/EMS's Board of Commissioners for reading and study. They are considered to be routine, and will be enacted by one motion of the Commissioners with no separate discussion. If separate discussion is desired, that item may be removed from the Consent Agenda and placed on the Regular Agenda by request.
 - a. Approval of Minutes
 - i. Regular Meeting March 15, 2012
 - b. Finance Officer's Reports –
 - c. Monthly Vouchers –
 - i. Payroll Warrants – \$61,487.84
 - ii. Vendor Warrants - \$113,837.64
 - d. Chief's Report
 - e. Resolution 2012-08 – canceling warrant 650297

Commissioner Elliot moved to approve the consent agenda; motion carried.

- V. Unfinished Business –
 - a. Lid Lift – Chief Palmer entered 9 comments from Citizens into the record; David Erickson, Shelly Ackerman, Rod Mourant, Ken & Shannon Wolfe, Kaarin Clarke, Mary Lee Griswold, Mike Williams, Christensen, Bob Wolters. Chief Palmer explained the charts made available to the public before the meeting for Revenues/Expenses and Call Volumes/Population since 1990. Chairman Simmons then opened the floor to the public to discuss the possible Levy Lift.
 - Q. Vince Bond – Is the population change on the graph full time residents only?
 - A. Chief Palmer – The information came from the State of Washington, I believe it is full time and part time tax paying citizens. The effective population yearly due to tourism is approximately 25,000.
 - Q. Don Carscadden – Why is the Recruitment/Retention expense almost \$400,000 a year? It appears the District has a retention issue, why is the retention rate so low?

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A. Chief Palmer – Much of the money spent last year and budgeted for this year is from Federal Grants. After the Grants are expended the expense will decrease. The retention rate is low due to members leaving quickly for off island jobs or to pursue full time careers as Fire Fighters/EMT's. The District has the same pattern as other Volunteer Departments throughout the country.

Q. Don Carscadden – Why does the District have so many Capital expenses? Why are the Fire Trucks for urban departments rather than for rural areas? What will happen if Maple Ridge has a fire?

A. Chairman Simmons – We have high Capital expense to buy the trucks and equipment required by law. It is a contradiction to state that we have high Capital expense by purchasing trucks and equipment meant for urban areas, and then question our ability to handle a fire of a large multi-story structure.

Q. Bob Walters – Thank you for providing the details of the revenues, expenses, call volumes and population for the public to review. If 80% of the calls are medical then why is most of the budget spent on fire apparatus and equipment? I believe the District should cut back on Capital expenses for fire suppression. Many other government entities are currently asking the public for more tax dollars as well in this hard economic time. I am asking the Commissioners to not go down this road for a levy lift. I also would like to see the District publish their response time goals for the public.

Q. Chairman Simmons – Do you feel we are too invested in Fire rather than Medical?

A. Bob Walters – Yes

C. Chairman Simmons – The District spends a large portion of the budget on Fire suppression due to the cost of the equipment and facilities required to keep response times up. Medical is 80% of the calls but is much less expensive to support. Are you suggesting we allow the Fire response times to drop?

A/Q. Bob Walters – Not really. Why not build one larger station centrally located in Bayview rather than Langley, Saratoga, and Maxwellton? The reality seems to be one station located in the center of the District rather than several spread throughout the District.

A. Chairman Simmons – To keep response times up the Volunteers should live within 3 miles of a station. Finding enough Volunteers within one station to respond would be very difficult.

A. Commissioner Elliot – Your insurance rates are also based on the location of the closest station.

Q. Commissioner Helland – Do you think the District's population will decrease in the next 10 years?

A. Bob Walters – No, but the age will increase.

Q. Charlie Bieber – Do we have to meet state requirements?

A. Chairman Simmons – Yes, we are required to keep up with Government regulations which accounts for some of the rising costs.

C. Fred – Freeland had two stations that were combined when this station was built.

C. Chairman Simmons – We could look at combining other stations that are close in the future.

C. Don Carscadden - Many of the calls are unnecessary.

C. Chief Palmer – Yes, but if we are dispatched we must go.

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Q. Don Carscadden – Then why are we paying for the Fire District and the Hospital?

A. Chief Palmer – If you look at the budget we are now receiving reimbursement for supplies from the Hospital.

C. Gary Gabelein – The ambulance can't cover the area with good response times, we support them so they don't need to increase their stations and personnel.

C. Chairman Simmons – We often send a Volunteer EMT to ride along during transport for patient care rather than the paramedics traveling to the Hospital and out of their response area.

C. Eileen Jackson – I am a nurse and I believe many of the calls are due to the lack of an Urgent Care facility on the south end of the Island.

Q. Don Carscadden – Do the Hospital Paramedics go on all medical calls.

A. Chief Palmer – Yes, we are currently working on a Criteria Based dispatch system. This would allow the dispatcher to dispatch the appropriate personnel rather than everyone available.

Q. Wayne Morrison – The insurance rating is down for the District and rates for homeowners are going up. Why did the rating change? Would another Tender, Fire Truck help improve the rating?

A. Chief Palmer – WA State no longer recognizes Tender Shuttle operations in their rating criteria.

Q. Wayne Morrison- What would increase the insurance rating?

A. Commissioner Helland – A Hydrant System.

A. Chief Palmer – Water supply is 50% of the rating. Another Tender would not improve the rating.

Q. Wayne Morrison – What is the current rating for the District?

A. Chief Palmer – 7, 1 is high and 10 is the lowest.

Q. Wayne Morrison – Do you have a balance sheet available to go with the Profit and Loss Statement?

A. Cindy Rehberg – The District is on Cash Basis Accounting, there is no standard Balance Sheet for the District that shows Assets.

Q. Wayne Morrison – What is the current amount of cash and investments held by the District?

A. Chief Palmer – 1,000,000 in the state pool, \$164,000 in cash.

C. Eileen Jackson – I am a CareNet member and would like to thank the Volunteers for all they do.

C. Wayne Morrison – The board has done an outstanding job managing the budget throughout history.

C. Chairman Simmons – As a taxpayer the question really is where is the Levy money going to be spent.

Q. Don Carscadden – Is it possible to have a meeting later in the evening, maybe 7pm?

A. Chairman Simmons – The regular meeting will remain at 5:30pm but we are planning a meeting to discuss the Levy with the public held later in the evening. The time and date will be announced when it is available.

C. Commissioner Helland – Thank you for coming to discuss your concerns and give us input about the potential Levy Lift. Please email or call the District office with any questions that arise before the next meeting.

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- VI. New Business –
 - a. ~~Video Project Contract—approval of a contract for service to update the department's recruitment/retention video.~~
- VII. Announcements – none
- VIII. Varia – none
- IX. Executive Session – The Board, Chief Palmer and District Secretary Rehberg entered the session at 6:25pm to discuss a personnel performance matter. The session ended at 6:30pm.
- X. Action taken as result of Executive Session – Chief Palmer requested the board dismiss Andrew Wheatley from membership due to lack of participation. Commissioner Helland moved to dismiss Andrew Wheatley; motion carried.
- XI. Adjournment – 6:32pm

Cindy Rehberg
District Secretary