

**WENATCHEE VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT,  
CHELAN COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 1 & DOUGLAS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2  
MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 8, 2023**

Commissioners: Commissioner Castellente, Commissioner de Mestre, Commissioner Dormaier, Commissioner Fennell, Commissioner Johnson

Absent: Commissioner Zimmerman

Staff: Fire Chief Brian Brett, Deputy Chief Andy Davidson, Deputy Chief Kurt Blanchard, Deputy Chief Rick McBride, Battalion Chief Pete Rigelman, and Cindy Blaufuss

I. Called to Order: 2:00 pm.

II. Additions and Deletions to Agenda: An Executive Session was added to New Business per RCW 42.30.140(4)(a) to allow discussion regarding adoption of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Fifteen minutes was estimated for the session.

III. Public Comments: None.

IV. Public Hearing: A public hearing was opened to allow members of the public an opportunity to comment on the proposed 2024 budget and revenue sources. There were no comments. The public hearing was closed.

V. Consent Agenda: Commissioner Castellente made a motion to approve the consent agenda items. There was a second from Commissioner Johnson. The consent agenda items were approved.

VI. Correspondence:

1. The department received a thank you from Kids in the Forest for Hillary's assistance with this year's program; 495 youth participated.
2. The department is starting an internal customer service award to recognize our members for exceptional customer service to the public.
3. Commissioner Johnson shared a thank you from the Port District for providing evaluators during their drill.

VII. Staff Reports:

1. Administration:

Chief McBride reported:

- Ten applicants have been accepted for the January Volunteer Academy. Chelan Fire & Rescue will be coordinating this year's Academy.
- Volunteer members assisted with five recent public events.
- Chief McBride and Lieutenant Magee are participating in a new collaborative safety committee. The newest Healthy-In / Healthy-Out recommendations are being reviewed. The department has adopted Healthy-In / Healthy-Out and currently provides gross decontamination, supplies and equipment on-scene.

Chief Davidson reported:

- Call volume is similar to last year, approximately 500 calls per month. He estimated EMS is about 60% of the call volume and rescue at 7%. The Commissioners would like to receive a Call Volume Report quarterly.
- This is week ten of the Resident Academy. They have completed Hazmat Awareness and Hazmat Operations and will be studying Firefighter 2 over the next three weeks.

- This quarter's Chiefs drills will focus on the new Hose Manual. Battalion Chief Webley and Captain Rise have been tasked with creating a new Ladder Manual.
- Captain Flatness will be moving to the Training Division. With his education background, the Division hopes to develop and standardize curriculum, including improvements to the Probationary Firefighter program.
- The department continues to develop a common culture, bringing the two organizations together and improving internal communications.

Chief Blanchard reported:

- He appreciates the move and integration of all of the day staff at Fire Station 10.
- The department has been busy with open houses, public education in the schools and Halloween activities. He is working with the Safety Committees in the school districts to integrate programs into the schools.
- The Methow burn scar has been hydroseeded using grant funding. It may be expanded into Sleepy Hollow.
  - Chief Davidson added the hydroseeding concept started after the Sleepy Hollow fire with interest in building a fire protection line to reduce future risks. Al Murphy had suggested seeding with native plants, which burn ten times slower. This is the pilot project that came from those efforts.
- The roof replacement grant may be expanded into Douglas County.
- Knox Box standardization is budgeted for 2024.
- Work will continue on Stortz replacement in Chelan County next year.
- The department has installed 90 grab bars. There has been a good response from the community.
- The smoke alarm program will be expanded into Chelan County. Smoke alarms will be available on all first-out apparatus. Other risk reductions programs will be considered for the community.

## 2. IAFF:

Battalion Chief Rigelman reported:

- The Local is developing a relationship with the Sunshine League, a special needs bowling league. Engine 13 and a few additional members were able to participate on November 4.
- The Local will partner with Les Schwab for the NCW Community Toy drive. Events are planned during the November 21 and 24 Wild games.
- There will be a Veterans Day barbecue from 11:00-3:00 at Pybus. The Local will assist with the event.

## 3. Volunteers: Volunteers will participate in the Veterans Day Parade, and a department Christmas party is being planned. The Volunteers received the new WVFD badges during last night's business meeting.

Chief McBride reported the department is focusing on meeting the Volunteer's uniform needs. There is good spirit and morale among the Volunteers, which is good to see.

## VIII. Unfinished Business

### 1. Facilities:

Station 1: DOH provided a report on the repairs needed at Fire Station 1. The costs are included in the 2024 budget. Since no bids were submitted for the concrete work, Jay O'Connell will apply concrete over the asphalt to prevent further damage until the project can be re-advertised in the spring.

Station 17: Working with the attorney on the temporary heliport designation. The attorney believes pursuing a Conditional Use Permit is the best option.

Stemilt: The transaction is nearly complete once the easement has been corrected. Title and closing remain.

Station 3: The department may pursue breach of contract against the general contractor because of the apparatus bay floors.

2. Apparatus: Ladder 4 is being equipped. Both Ladder 4 and 10 will fit at stations 1, 4, 10, 11, 13, and 17. Work to re-logo is continuing.
3. Aviation: Chief Brett is scheduled to meet with DNR and recap the 2023 season. They will also discuss adding 1PR to the contract. He plans to visit Northwest Helicopters to see the progress on 1PR and determine the work remaining on the project.

The department's excess liability insurance does not cover a helicopter while in flight. Chief Brett will follow up to determine if an umbrella policy would provide that coverage.

4. Personnel: Jay O'Connell has transitioned to the Firefighter/Facilities Technician position. The department received ten applications for the Mechanic position. A conditional offer of employment has been made with a tentative start date of December 1.

Chief Brett would like to add another Division Chief to oversee Health & Safety; oversight would remain with the Deputy Chief of Logistics.

5. Policy Review:

Commissioner de Mestre expressed concern regarding the firearms policy. He would like an option to allow firearms to be secured in personal vehicles parked on department property.

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to accept the policies as presented. There was a second from Commissioner Castellente. The motion was amended to exclude Article III, Policy 06 Firearms. The amended motion was approved.

The attorney will be consulted regarding the firearms policy.

6. 2024 Budget and Revenue: Chief Brett reviewed the proposed 2024. The beginning balance equals 25% of the Operating Budget as required by the Budget Policy. The 2024 budget does not include funding for a Capital Facilities Fund or Helicopter Replacement Fund. The 2024 Capital Budget includes two command vehicles and one engine.

The overtime budget was discussed. Chief Brett explained there is not an industry standard regarding the percentage of overtime compared to the total budget and there is not a pattern of usage after just one year. The department will likely submit a SAFER grant application this spring to fund more firefighters.

Commissioner de Mestre made a motion to approve the 2024 budget and revenue sources as presented. There was a second from Commissioner Johnson. The budget was approved.

7. Finance: Chief Brett presented five-year projections to illustrate cash flows with a 106% excess levy and a Fire Benefit Charge. An excess levy is simpler to explain to the voters and there is a history of approval. The Fire Benefit Charge (FBC) is based upon risk, not just value. The tax assessment is reduced to \$1.00 and the FBC makes up the balance of the budget; the FBC cannot exceed 60% of the budget. Undeveloped and agricultural parcels are excluded from the FBC, but parcels inside a TIF are included.

Chief Brett will do more research regarding undeveloped and agricultural parcels and confirm that another taxing district cannot use the department's remaining levy capacity.

Chief Brett recommends hiring a consultant to assist with the final FBC research and to develop a plan to educate the public on a Fire Benefit Charge if the Commissioners decide to proceed. It is a complicated funding mechanism and there will be many questions from the public.

Commissioner de Mestre made a motion to hire an FBC consultant pending resolution of the department's questions. There was a second from Commissioner Johnson. The motion was approved.

#### IX. New Business

1. Resolution 2023-005 Regular Property Tax Levy for Collection in 2024: Tabled until the December meeting.
2. 2024-2026 Collective Bargaining Agreement: Chief Brett has negotiated an agreement with the IAFF.

The Commissioners adjourned to Executive Session at 4:45. The session was scheduled for 15 minutes. The public meeting was called back to order at 4:58.

Commissioner de Mestre made a motion to approve the 2024-2026 Collective Bargaining Agreement. There was a second from Commissioner Johnson. The Agreement was approved.

3. Memorandum of Agreement – Local 453 IAFF

Commissioner de Mestre made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement pending IAFF approval of the DBA. There was a second from Commissioner Castellente. The Agreement was approved.

4. Position Description - Deputy Chief of Logistics: With the retirement of Chief Lindemann and Chief McBride next year, the two positions will be eliminated to create a new Deputy Chief position. Chief Brett would like to announce the position now and begin the transition in January.

#### X. Other Business and Good of the Order:

- Commissioner de Mestre reported on the two red hydrants in Queens Court that were brought into question last month. Both hydrants are over 1,000 gallons per minute. Commissioner Fennell suggested flowing the hydrants to validate the information and reassure neighbors in the area that fire flows are adequate.
- Commissioner Johnson asked that the minutes be posted to the department website.
- Commissioner de Mestre thanked Commissioner Castellente for the opportunity to work with him for the past few years.

#### XI. Adjourn - 5:05 pm

Respectfully submitted, Cindy Blaufuss