

SOUTH WHIDBEY FIRE/EMS
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING
5579 Bayview Road, Langley, Washington
October 20, 2022 – 4:30 pm
Special Meeting Minutes – Draft

<https://meet.goto.com/181273717>

Meeting ID: 181273717

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In-Person Attendance: Chairman Noblet, Commissioner Towers, Commissioner Erickson, Fire Chief Walsh, Deputy Chief Ney, Deputy Chief Beck, Lt. Jon Gabelein, Lt. Leah Kalahiki, and Kathryn Nguyen

Attendance via GoTo Meeting: FF/EMT Blake Benenati, Peter Lund

- I. **Call to Order.** Chairman Noblet called the meeting to order at 4:36 pm.
- II. **Approval of Agenda.** Commissioner Erickson motioned to approve the agenda, Commissioner Towers seconded.
- III. **Swearing in of Board Secretary.**
Kathryn Nguyen took the Oath of Office at 4:40 pm
- IV. **2023 Preliminary Budget – First Reading**
Chief Walsh stated that he would go through a narrative of each fund. He explained that one of the presentations was generated from the accounting system, and he would go through each line item and describe the increases and decreases. The second presentation, an excel spreadsheet, allows for more descriptive details for each line item. They worked through the budget with a small committee by taking the previous year’s totals and making the best assumption for 2023. Chief Walsh described the anticipated changes the district will need to take with expenses and strategic plans. The current staffing levels were concerned with recent activity and not seen as a good practice to continue. Chief Walsh stated that the district would need to hire three additional full-time firefighters to get to adequate staffing levels. To meet the current demand, a proposal for a new station was presented. The first step in this process would be identifying the cost and the revenue gained from selling the property.
Chief Walsh explained that there would be significant areas within the budget that require assessing and redistributing. The transition from a primarily volunteer fire district to a staffed department will require the reduction of non-essential expenses to cover additional staff expenses. Another area of focus is increasing volunteer participation through increasing the pay system. Chief Walsh expressed concern about establishing a Capital Fund plan to ensure proper revenue for future expenses.
Chief Walsh asked if there were any questions.
None
Chief Walsh went through the payroll and benefit worksheet and explained the calculations regarding the salary, benefits, and pay increases for all positions.
Commissioner Noblet explained that the full-time red items indicate a 2023 impact.

Chief Walsh stated that a current list of candidates could be used to hire if additional staffing is approved.

Commissioner Towers if the wages budgeted were for the entire year.

Chief Walsh explained that the wages take into consideration the August step increase.

Commissioner Erickson asked for an explanation of the 'Floater' positions.

Chief Walsh stated that a floater is to float between duties while the two other positions are assigned to fill shifts.

Commissioner Erickson asked if there have been any Union interactions or input on the staff increases.

Chief Walsh explained that he received positive feedback overall but has not officially brought the proposal to the Union representative. He stated that most Unions are highly supportive of staff increases.

Chief Walsh describes the revenue worksheet indicating an increase in property taxes due to a higher AVI percentage.

Commissioner Noblet asks for an explanation of the items under Lieu/Local taxes.

Chief Beck stated that the school district had not increased its AV payment in the past 18 years. He explained that the ports have improved property by almost \$50 million. In regards to the hospital contract, revenues will increase with the increase of AVI.

Commissioner Noblet thanked Chief Beck and Chief Walsh for investigating the matters.

Commissioner Erickson asked if Chief Walsh could explain the total anticipated fund amount.

Chief Walsh stated that the amount in tax revenue would be reserved, and the other revenue accounts show the expected dollar amount. He continues to explain the possible budget options that outlay staffing and reserve fund levels.

Commissioner Towers said he would like to increase the amount put into the Reserve fund, putting the amount over \$600,000. He also expressed the desire to improve the Contingency Fund so there would be no need to pull from the Capital Fund when unexpected expenses arise.

Commissioner Erickson stated that getting proper permits for a new station may become an issue and asked what the timeframe looks like.

Chief Beck explained that the current station's conditions are not critical and will be maintained until the new station is built.

Commissioner Noblet stated there are no severe issues with keeping the current facilities. However, if it is expected to build and replace the stations, he would not wish to spend ample funding on the existing stations. He asked if the Chief would like to make a vote on the new station.

Commissioner Towers stated he fully supported the three firefighters and the new fire station. Although, it dilutes funding for any new sleeping quarters at the other stations. The previous staff increases have been very beneficial but have not reduced response times below 10 minutes. It can be presumed that a new station will be established within six years.

Commissioner Erickson expressed her concern with the low bottom line figure. She asked if it is in the community's best interest to increase spending on personal rather than material purchases.

Chief Walsh explained that a big part of the WSRB rating is attributed to reducing response times.

Commissioner Noblet stated that a special meeting in October or November might be essential if a decision is to be made by December.

Commissioner Erickson agreed.

Commissioner Towers suggested putting it on the agenda for a regular meeting in November and taking time to

evaluate all of the documents presented.

Commissioner Noblet stated that the staff needs to discuss if a special meeting before the regular meeting is necessary. He expressed his full support in funding a new station and increasing staffing levels.

Chief Walsh stated that he was hearing that the board favored funding a new station and additional firefighters.

Chief Beck addressed the bottom line by explaining that it is low due to the majority of funds being moved transferred to the contingency and reserve funds.

Commissioner Noblet asked if there were any additional questions.

None

V. **Adjourn.** Chairman Noblet concluded the meeting at 6:34 pm.

Kathryn Nguyen,

Board Secretary