



THURSTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT NO. 9

December 10, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Dale Putnam of District 9 Board of Fire Commissioners called the meeting to order at 1800 hours. Commissioners Mark Thompson, Mark Campeau, Rich Milligan, and Len Albert; Chief Steve North, AC Leonard Johnson, EA Davie Kindell, Lt Chris Patti, and Board Secretary Ferol Max attended the regular meeting held via the virtual Zoom platform. Viewing of the meeting was made available to the public with the Zoom meeting link posted on the District website.

BOARD FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

The regular meeting was recessed briefly to accommodate the need for a Board for Volunteer Firefighters. EA Kindell submitted invoices from Steamboat Physical Therapy totaling \$1,355 for ongoing treatment of a previous claim. A motion was made and seconded to approve the invoices; the motion carried.

The regular meeting resumed at 1803.

AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT & VISITING SPEAKERS

Several citizens from the Summit Lake Community Association requested the opportunity to discuss some concerns:

- a. Craig Edwards presented a list of suggestions aimed at recruitment efforts. He also offered the use of the Summit Lake Community reader board, and asked EA Kindell if she would be willing to set up a Zoom meeting for a question/answer period if enough community members are interested.
- b. Terry Brannberg asked if McLane-Black Fire Department would submit an article for the Summit Lake Community newsletter.
- c. Debbie Martinelli noted she recently drove someone to the hospital who was uncomfortable with the idea of waiting for aid and is of the opinion that EMS may be a higher priority than fire suppression services.
- d. Jack Benjamin was happy to see a staffed station when he moved to the area and notes the building is no longer fulfilling its purpose. He notes the community is growing and feels fire and EMS should be higher budget priorities.

All the comments and suggestions were welcomed and appreciated, and will be taken into consideration.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on November 12, 2020; the motion carried.

Approval of Vouchers and Payroll: A motion was made and seconded to approve vouchers from Fund 6690 totaling \$418,878.31; the motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Chief North reviewed a meeting that was held on December 1 to discuss the discontinuation of the FEST program. Commissioner Putnam, Craig Edwards, Mr. Swenson, EA Kindell, Chief Johnson, and Chief North were present. Chief North had compiled Board of Fire Commissioner meeting minutes dating back as far as 2012 to gather information for a timeline to present to Mr. Edwards to answer his concerns. In brief, District 9 did not cancel the FEST program, only the relationship with the fire-related experience component due to the change in credit hour requirements. The amount of time students were allowed to spend in off-campus instruction was reduced to the extent that it would not fulfill state firefighter certification requirements.

To allay any further community concerns, SPSCC president Timothy Stokes sent an email to Chief North to assure that there had been no adversarial challenges leading to cancellation of the program.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

STAFF REPORTS

Finance/Administration: EA Kindell reported the Santa Sleigh food and Toys for Tots drive had been very successful.

The MBLFD newsletter went out recently and a community member who saw the recruitment article came in to inquire about becoming a resident volunteer. Two volunteers graduated from the academy on December 8. Two new applicants have completed the CPAT but only one passed. Ms. Matinelli asked if CPAT information could be shared with the Summit Lake community; EA Kindell will pass that along to Ms. Fuchs for distribution. One EMS-only candidate is in the volunteer process and will be working on completing her Thurston County protocol test. Another couple from the Summit Lake area is interested in joining the spring academy.

EA Kindell reported the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) reimbursement report was submitted on November 30.

Operations: Chief Johnson reported 155 calls with 21 transports. Preparations are being made for vaccine deployment and Lt Patti will be the lead coordinator for the district.

Chief: Chief North reported a recent house fire had a quick knockdown with involvement limited to the kitchen and part of the attic. The homeowner and pets escaped safely.

Mobilization reimbursement is estimated at \$144,812 after expenses. Chief North reported that cumulative reimbursement from 2005 to present has totaled about \$900,000.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Putnam reminded the group that TCFCA meetings are still being held via the Zoom virtual platform and all commissioners are welcome to attend the meetings.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Board members expressed their thanks to Chief North for his years of service to the district and wished him well in his retirement.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chief North asked for an executive session anticipated to last twenty minutes with no action being taken for the purpose of evaluating qualifications of an applicant for employment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners adjourned at 1904.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

For Thurston County Fire District 9:



Dale Putnam, Chairperson



Mark Thompson, Commissioner



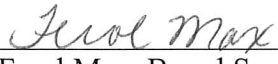
Mark Campeau, Commissioner



Rich Milligan, Commissioner



Len Albert, Commissioner



Ferol Max, Board Secretary
January 14, 2021

November 30, 2020

Dear Mr. Edwards,

I offer for your review documentation which clearly depicts the district's unwavering support and dedication to the SPSCC FEST program. The assertion that McLane Fire Department cancelled the program, or that SPSCC cancelled the program due to its inability to work with me is simply untrue and demonstrates a lack of understanding of the program.

- The FEST program was a community college program. McLane Black Lake Fire Department could not "cancel" the program, and SPSCC could have continued with the program without the Fire Related Experience component if they had chosen to do so.
- McLane Black Lake Fire Department provided notice in October of 2017 that the agency could no longer host the Fire Related Experience component of the program due to changes in course credits that limited the number of hours students could be required to stand duty to 24 hours per quarter – far below the number of hours needed to meet training requirements and ensure the safety of the students and public.
- SPSCC shopped the program to other Thurston County Fire Agencies, no other agency was willing to administer the program.

As administrators of the program, the department invested a significant amount of staff time and money to support the program. This included construction of a training facility and seeking IFSAC accreditation for the program that involved months of work and attendance at meetings across the country. These expenses were justifiable as we recognized the valuable service the students provided our citizens. When it became clear that we could no longer safely train the students due to the limitations in credit hours, the cost/benefit did not justify retaining an administrative role in the program.

The working relationship with SPSCC staff Bryan Powell and Kathy Hoover was professional and friendly before, during and after the program review and ultimate decision by the district to discontinue its administrative role in the program. We worked cooperatively with their staff but were unfortunately unable to find a solution that addressed both the district and the college needs as we had successfully done twice before.

The following documentation is attached for your review.

COMMISSIONER MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – Feb 9, 2012

- IFSAC application is being mailed. Chief North traveling to Minneapolis for the IFSAC meeting.

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – June 14, 2012

- Chief North announces the FEST program will be the twenty second community college program internationally accredited IFSAC, and the ninth worldwide to have both IFSAC and FESHE accreditation.

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – July 10, 2014

- **Chief North advises the Board that SPSCC is again evaluating contact hours which could reduce the number of duty shift hours for the students.**

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – October 9, 2014

- **Chief North and EA Kindell reported they met with SPSCC Administration and the FEST program is fully back on track.**

Note: Since the inception of the program in 1991, students were required to be on duty every third day in a district fire station. This had been relaxed over the years with students being provided a Kelly day (day off) and sick leave which reduced their hours. Following this change, duty hour requirements were reduced by ½. Students were required to spend duty from 07:00 to 7:00 PM on their duty shift and were provided the opportunity to stay on duty the second half of the shift and receive volunteer compensation – approximately 90% of the students took advantage of this opportunity.

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – January 14, 2016

- EA Kindell reports Mike Peters, who was involved with the inception of the program, has agreed to market the FEST program at schools and JBLM.

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – May 12, 2016

- EA Kindell reports Mike Peters is working with her on marketing and recruitment for the FEST program. He has been to all the high schools in Thurston County, as well as Hoquiam, Aberdeen, Centralia and Chehalis.
- The Boy Scouts have asked McLane Black Lake Fire Department to represent the FEST program at the Washington Association of Future Firefighters muster at North Bend on May 21st.

Note: I attended this event and then again in 2017 with no additional compensation from the district or college.

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – May 11th, 2017

- Chief North reported the FEST program is receiving a renewed level of support and undergoing some re-design.

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – June 8th, 2017

- Chief North reported he was working on reaccreditation and would be traveling to Oklahoma City.

Note: As this point SPSCC was reimbursing the district for travel and per diem. My wages were not reimbursed and I did not receive additional compensation for any college related work.

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – July 13th, 2017

- EA Kindell reports additional funding may be needed to support the instructor expenses.

Note: The district routinely provided additional instructors for the recruit academy to augment the funding provided by the college, and to ensure the students received the highest level of initial training possible.

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – October 12, 2017

- **Chief North reports the newly imposed method of credit calculation has substantially increased the credits for the FEST program. To achieve the State Department of Education goal of 90 credits for a two-year degree, FEST students will be limited to 24 hours of Fire Related Experience per quarter.....**

Commissioner Meeting Minutes – December 14, 2017

- **Chief North reported that changes to the FEST program required by South Sound Community College will result in discontinuing participation in the program upon graduation of the current group of students.**

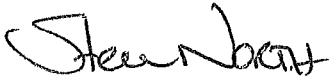
FEST PROGRAM REVIEW

The attached copy is the edited draft provided to the college upon completion of the program review by an outside consultant hired by the college. Ultimately, I was never offered a follow-up discussion with the consultant and my comments were not included in the final document - rather provided as a separate attachment.

In closing, I believe the SPSCC FEST program was the best fire service two-degree program in the country. The program brought training, education and experience wrapped together in a high-quality two-year degree program. In a conversation with Dr. Denis O'Neal, former Deputy Director of the National Fire Academy, he related the SPSCC FEST program should serve as an example for others to follow. I agree with Dr. O'Neal's sentiments and only wish SPSCC had shared that vision. That said, we fully recognize that SPSCC must comply with requirements specified by the Department of Education and their own accreditation body.

The decline of Resident Firefighters across the district is largely due to the elimination of the FEST program and the steady stream of students seeking housing opportunities it provided. Suggesting my staff or I somehow purposely cancelled the program, is devoid of fact, and ignores the countless, uncompensated hours my staff and I spent administering and promoting the program. The program closing was felt as a personal loss to those of us that worked so hard to make it a success.

Respectfully,



Steve North – Fire Chief