

# Board of Commissioners Workshop

*February 21, 2006*

Jeff Cameron, Chairperson, called a workshop of the Board of Commissioners to order at 3:08 p.m. on February 21, 2006, at the 701 Vine Street District Meeting Room. The following members were present:

Commissioner Merritt	Commissioner Olson
Commissioner Hallanger	Commissioner Bergquist
Chief LaFave	Asst. Chief Headley
District Secretary Bouchard	Captain Hembree
Captain Arrera	Captain Ramey
Captain Kelly	Fire Inspector Graham
Lt. Zainfeld	FF/Medic Gilbert
Driver Operator Neely	FF/Medic Turner
FF/Medic Wood	FF/EMT Sanders
Volunteer Coordinator Gregory	Fire Secretary Ballinger
Volunteer FF Kelly	Volunteer FF Poff

## **Topics for Discussion:**

### **Factors affecting the District**

*Local Economy* – AC Headley showed a couple recent headlines from The Daily News (improved conditions at the Port, additional home sales in Cowlitz Co.) which both appear to be good indicators of where the local economy is going. Chairperson Cameron brought information from the CEDC annual meeting with the U.S. Bank economist. Highlights included several items that affect Cowlitz County in general such as the fact that Washington ranked #7 in job growth of 47 states that showed growth. Home prices have increased 15.9% over 1997. November 2005 employment is up 2.7% in Washington; at this point, everything appears to be on the upswing. Population is increasing, personal income is up, median home prices are up, and manufacturer earnings are up in this County. All indicators are that things are moving; development activity also seems to be really picking up.

Terry McGlaughlin, Cowlitz County Assessor: Terry indicated he is not surprised to see home sales up in the State; although he thought there would be more in the south end of the County, Longview is up too. Limitations and growth management in Clark County with the associated restrictions are causing people to move further north. He thinks we'll see some compression in larger cities although Cowlitz County will start growing from a depression in the housing market in big cities. The Assessor's staff is looking at the Longview area for re-evaluations this year with expected increases; new construction is where the increase in revenue is. Home sales

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themselves are indicating growth. Terry plans on his office being a little more aggressive on automatic updates this year for next year's collection. Next year's re-evaluations isn't defined yet; typically it would be West Longview, however, they may look at the North Longview (Columbia Heights) area.

*Annexation Issues* – These are occurring primarily on the west end of Longview. Currently, the only active annexation is on flat lands on the south side of the ditch off Ocean Beach with the next one the Pine annexation. The Flaskerud annexation off Ocean Beach was just completed. Mr. McLaughlin indicated that following the new proposed comprehensive plan for Longview may indicate where the City may begin its next annexations, although that will be driven by the citizens, not the City. Chairperson Cameron noted they will also be using a different process and defining procedures on annexations for the City of Longview.

Chief LaFave noted that using 2005 statistics in the Organizational Action Plan (OAP), there are five fire blocks associated with Station 22 with total first due calls of 413. Questions to consider include how future annexations will affect call volumes for Station 22, how long it will take, etc. If these annexations occur in the next two years, we will still be just over 300 calls for Station 22's first due area.

Chairperson Cameron noted that the current annexation areas don't affect the assessed value of the fire district much as there are few structures with mostly undeveloped land. As they start to look at developed areas, the City will see more opposition to the Petition method of annexation. The Legislative annexation method with a Resolution allows people in annexed area to petition in opposition to annexation; the Longview City Council has refused to do that up to this point. As they start to run out of undeveloped land though, they may look at that method to bring in developed properties. Chairperson Cameron feels it will be longer term before the annexations go all the way out to Coal Creek. The initial phases will not have as high of value. We need to be involved in developing plans and strategies now for how we service the area of the Fire District. We also need to look at Longview's Comprehensive Plan; the Chiefs have a meeting scheduled next week.

*Bridges – Lexington.* This is the fastest growing area within our jurisdiction; the call volume for first due calls in 2005 was 318. When the new bridge goes in, some of the north areas where Station 21 responds now will become first due for Lexington so their call volume will bump up to approximately 400 calls. With the new bridge, they'll be the closest response for the Ostrander and I-5 areas.

*Longview Wye* – It is anticipated that the Longview Wye project will likely have an effect on commercial development in that area. At this time, there doesn't appear to be a vision that the City of Kelso has for this area.

There are a number of areas in our district (about 45%) that only pay forest patrol assessments even though we are the primary fire protection service provider. Terry McLaughlin is working on this issue and will be able to make progress when the DNR delineates grasslands and improved property versus forestland. They provide information to him on which parcels pay only forest patrol assessments.

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The Board thanked Terry for attending the meeting and providing his input.

### **Call Volume**

There was a ten percent increase in call volume for 2005 over 2004 with 4,627 total calls in 2005.

### **Current Staffing**

At the present time, “B” shift and “C” shift have eight career personnel with “A” shift only having seven. “D” shift (Station 23 day program) has two career personnel plus Shift Volunteers. In 2003, we had eight career personnel on each shift, however, did not fill a position after a retirement in order to reduce budget expenses.

*Volunteer Staffing* – It is difficult to put our finger on the total volunteers at any given time as it is a more transient population. For example, out of 20 volunteers at Station 22, only two met the minimum requirements for the last quarter. There were four others that were close but did not quite meet the minimum. The question becomes quantity versus quality; how do we invest more resources in fewer people who represent a viable response? Volunteer Coordinator Gregory tries to screen individuals on the front end so if they get to the Academy, it is more likely they will complete it and remain a volunteer for a three- to five-year range. We are trying to put an emphasis on transitioning the high school fire science students into other areas of the volunteer program. The goal is to come to the Board in a couple years with a smaller number of highly motivated people in whom we have invested as much as we can.

*Station 23 Program* – We are conducting a trial period with a FF/Paramedic on day shift with the Station 23 program. Staffing right now is drawn from the shift staffing so it’s pulling down the current configuration on one shift. The Shift Volunteer regularly working with this program is scheduled to be deployed to Iraq in March. Station 23 members and Janey Gregory recently did a door-to-door recruitment; at this time, we haven’t received any applications from that.

The Board recessed for approximately a ten minute break at 4:43 p.m. The Board returned to the workshop at 4:55 pm.

Chairperson Cameron had a question regarding the increase in calls for fire block 211. Chief LaFave indicated we may need to reconfigure the fire blocks once the Lexington bridge is in place in order to better manage call volumes.

### **Organizational Action Plan Updates**

*Goals and Objectives* – The Board and Staff reviewed all previously set goals and objectives, along with priorities. The action plans will be relabeled as objectives in the new draft.

Goal A; Objective A-1: Staff recommends this change to High priority. Commissioner Hallanger preferred to leave it as Medium; Board consensus was to change to High.

Goal A; Objective A-5: Staff recommends this change to Medium priority. We are still involved with the feasibility study with Cowlitz Fire District #5 (Kalama); we have responded with information and are waiting for the next stage. The Board agreed.

Add Develop Deployment Standards to the table as a High priority; item #A-11.

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Add Working on Alternatives (under EMS) and Appropriate Use of Resources as a High priority; item #A-12.

Goal B: Action plan bullets one and two are done and will be deleted. Move facilities options to Goal D. Explore staff reduction options to be deleted as redundant. Add the completion date to the last item under Goal B and identify as completed. Captain Arrera is now looking at the total purchasing and inventory processes.

Change Objective B-1 to High priority.

The Board recessed at 5:33 p.m. for dinner. The Board returned to the workshop at 5:52 p.m.

Goal C: Remains as is.

Goal D; Objective D-1: Develop a facilities plan; Staff recommended change to High priority as the Bakers Corner and Lexington stations both have issues. As we plan for the future, we need to get an architect back on board to design stations. Chairperson Cameron feels this should remain a Medium priority; Staff agrees. Rephrase status to “resume work with architects.”

Objective D-2: Updates to apparatus were distributed to the Board for clarification.

Objective D-3: We will be moving into the realm of MDCs that will be purchased by the Comm Center; we should have ten total. There is some funding that we will need to provide.

Goal E; Objective E-2: Changed to what’s on the table with “citizens” (page 4) to be a Medium priority. (Delete the newsletter item.)

Goal F: Remains as is.

District Secretary Bouchard will send the revised Goals & Objective along with the re-prioritized table to the Board. Upon completion of updates to the OAP, Staff will also provide new copies to the Board.

*Facilities* - Discussed with Goals & Objectives.

*Staffing Options:*

Station 23 Program

Shift Staffing

Part-Time Staffing

Public Education

Shop Staffing – temp will probably continue until the Kelso shop contract is done

Volunteer Staffing – discussed issues with trying to increase volunteer participation

*Proposed Staffing* – Staff is proposing to bring all three shifts back up to 8 career personnel per shift; in addition, each shift will continue to use Shift Volunteers when available. When funding is available, Staff would also like to look at increasing the Day Shift program by one paramedic.

Chairperson Cameron would also like to show the career staffing levels in the OAP. He also had questions regarding Section 3, Part 2, Page 1, which discusses the number of paramedics. This information seems to be different from that in the last OAP. Chief LaFave explained we are trying to further develop the EMS section as that wasn’t previously in writing.

Chairperson Cameron requested we be consistent in language use, i.e. “Fire Management Zone” versus “fire blocks”.

*Supplemental Budget #1 for 2006* – Staff and the Board reviewed the largest adjusted items on the supplemental budget.

*5-Year Projections* – Staff reviewed the assumptions used to update the spreadsheet information.

*M & O Levy/Lid Lift* – Future funding possibilities include an M & O levy, lid lift, grants, EMS levy, capital bonds (voter approved), fees, and contracts. Chief’s recommendation is to begin work and assign tasks for research and preparation to come up with a plan to pursue. Will also continue to pursue grants as they become available, however, it appears most of those programs are planned to be eliminated. Chairperson Cameron is concerned with beginning the process too soon and burning out the group working on it.

*Review Board Policies and Procedures* - Chairperson Cameron requests the Board hold this review at another time.

**Adjournment:**

*Workshop was adjourned at 7:45 p.m. by Chairperson Cameron.*

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Chairperson

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District Secretary