

Board of Commissioners Meeting

October 25, 2006

Jeff Cameron, Chairperson, called a regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners to order at 5:30 p.m. on October 25, 2006, at the 701 Vine Street Conference Room. The following were present:

Commissioner Hallanger	Commissioner Olson
Commissioner Bergquist	Commissioner Merritt
Chief LaFave	Asst. Chief Headley
District Secretary Bouchard	Deputy Fire Marshal Graham
EMS Administrator Ribelin	Fire Secretary Ballinger
Captain Ramey	Lt. Zainfeld
Driver/Operator Fix	FF/Medic Huff
FF/EMT Fisher	Driver/Operator Neely

Approve Previous Minutes:

A motion was made by Commissioner Bergquist to approve the October 11, 2006, Board meeting minutes. Commissioner Olson seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried.

Chairperson Cameron noted a change to the top of page 3; delete the word “information”.

Administration of Oath:

None

Awards & Recognition:

Chief LaFave would like to recognize Fire Secretary Ballinger for her efforts with the entire fire prevention program, especially delivery of the programs for Fire Prevention Week including the final day with the Open House. She indicated all of the support and effort from all of the crews help to make it a big success. The Chief applauds her for her effort – along with all of the crews involved including Jack Smith’s high school students. They are also part of the memorial procession and the Open House and they help with the tours during the week.

Fire Secretary Ballinger reported we had record breaking numbers as far as people contacted with our efforts during Fire Prevention Week activities. We visited every child in the Kelso School District, which is about 3,500 students during the week prior. There were approximately 500 kids through Station 21 during the week for a tour. She estimates 1,700 to 2,000 people were at the Open House. This brings the total to 6,000 people, which is huge for us. Without the team effort, we really wouldn’t be as successful as we are.

Reporting rough numbers for the Fire Prevention program in general, the number of contacts through October have exceeded last year's number by 5,000. We've been very busy and active this year. We'll also reach approximately 3,000 people during the Halloween activities at the mall. Thank you to Brandi and all involved from the Board.

Public Comment:

None

Risk Management:

At the Open House on Saturday, October 14, 2006, we had two injuries to the public. One was a minor burn from a very full cup of hot chocolate given to a child by her Grandma. The other was a slip and fall on a hot dog on the floor. We haven't heard any more on the burn injury. The other individual called a couple times last week. Chief LaFave called her and she did go to the doctor who said she's fine. She has strained muscles in her back but there is no need for further follow-up.

Station 25 (Lexington) had graffiti sprayed on the back wall a couple weeks ago. We reported this to the Sheriff's office and the volunteers since have painted over it.

Verbal Reports:

Annexation Issues: - Chief LaFave reported he hasn't heard anything new from Longview City Manager Bob Gregory. We received a letter from Mr. Gregory related to our request for consideration to discontinue payments by Cowlitz 2 for transports in the City. He indicated he would focus on that first then draft support for the annexation issue and would also like us to work with Longview Fire to resolve any issues related to the transport agreement. Chief LaFave will call Mr. Gregory next week to see where we're at with annexation issues.

Chairperson Cameron noted the annexation is going to the Longview City Council tomorrow night. Staff will recommend probably 100% expansion in the area to clean up some boundaries. The school district also wants to be brought in. The City Council may choose to go further than staff recommendations.

Access Policy Draft #3: – Asst. Chief Headley distributed a new draft with highlighted changes from the Cowlitz County Building & Planning Department and reviewed those changes with the Board. He also had discussion with Dave Flemings (County's Building Official) about implementation at the County level. He suggested they adopt an ordinance that recognizes the County Chiefs regulations. Discussion of various concerns including bridge width and turning radius. Also, there is a concern with the County putting responsibility on the District as to whether they should issue permits. Chief LaFave indicated we will never tell the County whether they should issue permits or not as that is their liability. We may also provide a copy of the property owner notification to the County but it would still be the county's responsibility to determine when to issue permits. Discussion of culvert size and how large should be regulated. Additional revisions were noted; Asst. Chief Headley will also take this item to the County Chiefs meeting on November 1st for discussion. Another draft will be brought back to the Board.

Written Reports:

Draft Budget for 2007: – A draft budget was again provided to the Board in their packets with minor revisions primarily related to medical insurance estimates, along with including EMS fees to the City of Longview and a revised estimate for the breathing air compressor. Staff changed replacement pumper to new water tender. Fire Secretary Ballinger also discussed the public increase request and new programs she is planning, hopefully with grant funding. She will need funding from the regular budget for the routine supplies and programs.

Chief LaFave indicated there will be decisions needed to be made by the Board regarding whether to transfer funds to the Reserve Fund or pay down debt earlier, etc. Staff is also working on totally revising the volunteer program which will add costs.

Chief LaFave discussed the proposed increase for the EMS Administrator and comparisons to other districts, that typically don't even transport. There are many variations between the areas up north and closer to us so there isn't a good comparison for this position. Chief's recommendation is for a 20.6% increase which will make this position comparable to the Section Chief salary for next year. EMS Administrator Ribelin also maintains her RN licensure, PALS, TNCC, ACLS (also instructor), BLS (also instructor), and train the trainer certifications.

Deputy Fire Marshal Graham is in a similar situation; when we compare the workload and tasks assigned in light of relationship with the county, it is difficult to find a comparison. Most entities have a city; if they're a fire district, they do limited plan review and code enforcement. The relationship we have with the County puts DFM Graham in a position to provide plan review and code enforcement county-wide for the entire County area. It is fairly common to use a Lieutenant level salary, in fact, the history for our organization was at a Lieutenant position. Commissioner Hallanger asked if we had talked with the County to increase their level of payment. Chief LaFave explained how we're factoring in what the county pays; we already have a requirement to provide services for the City of Kelso where at least half of the work is performed. Commissioner Hallanger expressed a concern about wage acceleration and budget issues. Chief LaFave feels comfortable that we don't focus on comparisons that aren't realistic for the community supporting the salaries and benefits. We're trying to work hard to compensate folks based on what we're doing here locally.

Chief LaFave discussed administrative salaries; he indicated he's not recommending any additional salary adjustments at this time. He feels this should be developed in a workshop setting to develop a philosophy and a plan. Commissioner Bergquist commented he feels a plan is preferable to keep the increases to single-digit rather than large increases at one time. Commissioner Merritt also favors a systematic approach over time. He also prefers to avoid anything difficult to defend to taxpayers still in recovery here.

Staff will present a finalized budget along with appropriate Resolutions at the next meeting.

Revenue & Expense Report – September, 2006: – Revenue and expense information was provided to the Board in their packets. There were no questions from the Board.

Calls Report – September, 2006: – Calls report information was provided to the Board in their packets. Questions from the Board were answered by Staff.

Action Items:

Medical Insurance Options: – As discussed at the October 11, 2006, meeting, the Washington Fire Commissioners Association eliminated the regular PPO program (no deductible, no co-pay) effective with the 2006 calendar year. Due to requests from participants throughout the state, they will again offer a similar option, called a Plus PPO, at an increased premium. In the past, we have offered all of the available insurance options from WFCA, including new programs, to employees as generally any new options were at reduced rates. This year, the additional option will incur additional costs for the District so Staff is requesting approval from the Board prior to offering this option.

Chief LaFave indicated the main question was how many employees this might benefit and what that increase would be. It appears there would be approximately 12 to 14 employees that would switch to the new plan for a total of a \$20,000 increase per year.

Commissioner Hallanger still feels it is bad general public policy to have free health care. Chairperson Cameron agrees with Commissioner Hallanger regarding requirement for co-pays, premiums, etc. He doesn't support offering this Plus PPO.

Commissioner Merritt made a motion to reinstate the Plus PPO plan to employees. Commissioner Olson seconded the motion. Further discussion. Motion carried with Commissioner Hallanger and Chairperson Cameron voting against it.

New POG #1027 – Petty Cash: – Staff has developed a new policy and guidelines to better outline petty cash procedures and include the new petty cash change fund. Revisions from the Board at the last meeting have been incorporated into this draft.

Commissioner Olson made a motion to approve POG #1027 – Petty Cash. Commissioner Merritt seconded the motion. Further discussion. Motion carried.

Tabled for Future Meetings:

- Email Issues
- Private Fire Protection Contract – Eyer (Chairperson Cameron has provided verbiage to include in this contract.)
- New POG: #4008 – Emergency Vehicle Driving

Chief's Report:

- Chief reported there are good things happening in the Department of Emergency Management and the Comm Center with the change in management.

Payroll:

A motion was made by Commissioner Olson to approve the payroll of October 20, 2006, totaling \$64,699.48 for warrant numbers 22591 through 22609. Commissioner Bergquist seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried.

Vouchers:

A motion was made by Commissioner Olson to approve the vouchers totaling \$72,933.79 for warrant numbers 22610 through 22652 dated October 27, 2006. Commissioner Merritt seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried.

Drill Points:

A motion was made by Commissioner Merritt to approve the quarterly drill points payments totaling \$ for warrant numbers 22653 through 22733 dated October 31, 2006. Commissioner Olson seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried.

Announcements:

- Asst. Chief Headley will attend the County Fire Officials meeting in January for a three-county area to discuss bridge issues.
- Chief LaFave will be attending the Comp Plan review at the Longview City Council meeting tomorrow night.
- Commissioner Hallanger said the Council of Governments is looking at some type of mine; we shouldn't take any position at this time.
- Chairperson Cameron will be on vacation for the next meeting; Vice Chair Hallanger will be at that meeting.
- Volunteer All Call meeting on Monday night is cancelled.
- Commissioner Merritt dropped off information to District Secretary Bouchard from the Commissioners' conference and discussed presentations.

Executive Session:

None

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m. by Chairperson Cameron.

Vice Chairperson

District Secretary