



North County Regional Fire Authority
COMMISSIONER'S SPECIAL STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING
City of Arlington Council Chambers and
via ZOOM
November 12 , 2021
1:00pm

CALL TO ORDER

The following attendees were present:

COMMISSIONERS

Greg Oakes, Chair
Jan Iverson
~~Judy Williams~~ Excused
Ric Cade
Larry Longley, Vice-Chair
Rob Johnson
Marilyn Oertle
Debra Nelson
Barb Tolbert

FIRE AUTHORITY STAFF

John Cermak, Fire Chief
Dave Kraski, Deputy Chief
Don Bartlett, Assistant Fire Chief
~~Mike Makela, Assistant Fire Chief~~
Chris Dickison, Assistant Fire Chief
Katie Casey, Board Secretary
Randy Krumm, Finance Director
~~Theresa Ramey, Executive Assistant~~
~~Kayley Mizell, Administrative Assistant~~
Doug ten Hoopen, Temp. Project Manager
Nich Sacha, Firefighter/Paramedic
Kirk Normand, Firefighter/EMT, Captain

Meeting called to order at 1:00pm by Chairman Oakes

INTRODUCTIONS & OPENING REMARKS

Steve Peiffle introduced himself as the City of Arlington attorney who was asked to moderate the meeting. Each attendee went around the room and noted their thoughts and goals for what they wanted to accomplish with this meeting.

The following organizational priorities were discussed:

Communication

There was discussion regarding whether or not Commission meeting were to continue via ZOOM and when they might return to being in person. Commissioners Nelson and Tolbert expressed concern regarding the ability to enforce any mask mandates. There was discussion regarding potentially moving to a different facility, possibly the City of Arlington City Council chambers. Chief Kraski will look into other facility options as well as the potential of purchasing an internet camera for Station 99 in order to continue with hybrid meetings. The goal would be to have some direction by January 1, 2022.

Other Communication (Internal)

Labor would like communication to be open, honest, 2-way communication in order to remove uncertainties. Commissioner Nelson noted that she would like to see an opportunity for Labor to have a voice at Commission meetings. Captain Normand noted that Labor would like to fix past contentious communication issues and will engage in communication going forward.

Chief Kraski asked the Board of Commissioners to please let him know if they would like to receive different information within the Quarterly Report. There were no suggested changes at this time. Captain Normand noted that he would follow up with Local President Greg Koontz regarding the receipt of the Board packet information. Captain Normand will also be sending Chief Kraski the names of those who should be receiving the Board packets.

Commissioner Cade stated that if the Union would like to have more Labor Management meetings, these can be scheduled as needed.

Facilities

Chief Cermak spoke about Station 90 and his previous conversations with Tribal Chairman Shawn Yanity and the potential of discussions soon with the new Tribal Chairman Eric White. Chief Cermak would like to see the new Station 90 to be an Administration Headquarters office. He also agreed with Chief Kraski's idea that the current Station 90 to be used as a potential apparatus maintenance facility, and clarified to Commissioner Longley that is a potential for a location or interim



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until a new Station 96 can be constructed – allowing the current Station 96 to be retrofit. Chief Cermak said that the timeline for a new Station 90 is dependent upon talks with the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians. Captain Normand was excited to hear about the potential for a new Station 90 because without windows in the bedrooms and the poor water quality at the current Station 90 he is concerned about the well-being of those who work out of that station.

There was discussion regarding the change in governance at the Stillaguamish Tribe and Commissioner Johnson inquired as to whether or not we should be considering hosting a social reception to get to know one another and express gratitude.

Chief Cermak stated that Theresa Ramey can begin work on a GIS study.

Chief Kraski suggested possibly having quarterly meetings with the Stillaguamish Tribe.

Commissioner Nelson asked what the timeline would be for building a new station if the Tribe agreed to what has been discussed. Chief Cermak noted that he anticipated a minimum of 1-year but it would be dependent upon whether or not NCRFA would be dealing directly with Snohomish County or if the buildout would be kept in Tribal trust.

Captain Normand asked if it would be beneficial for the Tribe to remain the owner of the new station versus NCRFA taking ownership (due to maintenance costs etc.).

Commissioner Johnson asked about whether or not a “Station 90 Working Group” had been put into place and suggested that is group provide reports to the Board for a communication link.

Steve Peiffle suggested that we discuss those details with our legal counsel.

Commissioner Oakes stated that if a committee is put together Firefighters should be on this committee and have input.

Staffing

We currently have 6 spots reserved in the Fire Academy that begins in January 2022. These positions will be Entry Level Firefighter/EMTs. Three more will be hired in 2023 and an additional 3 in 2024. Two will staff the Peak Activity Unit in 2023. Battalion Chief's will be put into place in 2022. A Fire Inspector and Public Education/PIO will be hired at a later date (no timeframe at this time).

Commissioner Iverson stated her concern regarding diversity and what we are doing to include females in the current recruitment process. Chief Cermak stated that we currently have three part time firefighters who are female, but noted that it is often times difficult to compete with higher paying organizations. He also noted that we support “Camp BLAZE” which empowers and supports the growth of women in this field. Katie Casey also noted that when we advertise for open positions we always include advertisements on websites specifically aimed at women in the Fire Service.

Chief Cermak discussed the changes to the Fire Prevention program in Stanwood which will increase revenue to support the Fire Inspector position he would like to hire.

Captain Normand stated that three things are very important to the Union:

- Maintaining Commitment to the Community
- Safety of Personnel
- Future Progress

He stated that since the merger on August 1st there has been a degradation of cross-staffing, citing Arlington's service level currently being at 80%. He would like to see cross-staffing at Station 46 and Station 99, although if staffing becomes as discussed above this should help this issue and help them get back to previous staffing levels and provide goal service levels.



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Captain Normand stated that in 2020 there were 161 calls per member, which is much larger than comparable agencies. He also expressed great concern over the number of mandatory overtime hours. In 2020 NCRFA had 575 hours of mandatory overtime. He is hopeful that the new positions discussed would alleviate the overtime amount. He also stated that those who have mandatory overtime often times then call in sick during their next rotation which creates additional overtime.

Captain Normand expressed concern over the staggering growth that is happening in the area. He hopes that we are planning to properly staff and replace apparatus as it will be utilized more as the area grows.

Chief Cermak noted that the 2024 Levy Lid Lift if approved is what will fund the 2024 staffing. The other positions are dependent upon the successful receipt of a SAFER grant. He also noted that Article 45.1 in the Collective Bargaining Agreement discusses staffing and was agreed upon by both parties. He also noted that he does not disagree with Station 46 being dedicated. Chief Cermak is working with Fire District 21 for new contract to acquire "true and fair" value for the contract formerly with Arlington

It was suggested that when doing the GIS study to include traffic statistics as well. Commissioner Oertle would like to see the numbers so it explains how we can get close to those goals.

Chief Kraski noted that the overtime in August/September 2021 were circumstantial due to injuries and unfilled positions so overtime was inflated due to that as well as the pandemic.

Chief Kraski noted that a brand-new engine is on order for Station 46.

Commissioner Cade would have liked to discuss accreditation and how this may help the organization.