

Vashon Island Fire & Rescue
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Penny Farcy Training Center
February 7, 2006

Commissioner Sommers called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM.

Welcoming Remarks

All who wished stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

District Secretary took roll call; Commissioners present were Jennings, Sommers, Nielsen, Hoffmann, and Turner.

Commissioner Sommers, Board Chair, gave the Oath of Office to the District Secretary, Maridee BonaDea.

Commissioner Sommers thanked Sharon Munger for the use of Barnworks for the retreat, and the firefighters for set-up and clean-up.

Minutes

Commissioner Turner moved to approve the minutes for January 17, 2006. Commissioner Hoffmann seconded the motion. Commissioners voting in favor were Sommers, Jennings, Nielsen, Hoffmann and Turner, no one opposed.

Commissioner Nielsen wanted to clarify that he was not in the January 3, 2006 meeting when it adjourned.

Commissioner Jennings moved to approve the minutes for January 21, 2006 as presented. Commissioner Nielsen seconded the motion. Commissioners voting in favor were Jennings, Nielsen, Sommers, Hoffmann, and Turner.

Additions to the Agenda

Commissioner Jennings added to the agenda under old business a non-voting member on the Board of Commissioners to represent the Firefighters Association. Commissioner Jennings asked to have Commissioner Comments on the added back to the agenda and placed before the good of the order.

Public Comments on Non-agenda Items

Hilary Emmer stated that a letter she wrote was not in the Commissioner Packet. She wanted to thank Mike Kirk and Jim Whitney for the beach pump demonstration.

Commissioner Nielsen commented that we do have a lot of exposure on getting the pumps down to many of the waterfront homes. The pump is heavy and he would like to see the pump mounted on the inflatable boat. This weekend the District had a fatality on the water and a fire boat would have helped. The District will discuss the possibility of getting a fire boat. This will go on the next meeting's agenda.

Rick Wallace from the Disaster Preparedness Coalition said his organization has looked into surplus equipment that maybe an option for purchasing a boat.

Mike Kirk thanked Commissioner Sommers for meeting with members of the District. He stated that there was a concern about her comments in her Beachcomber editorial.

Jason Everett stated that he and his partner Brodie Smith responded to two identical calls on January 20 and again on January 22, 2006. On the January 20, 2006 they responded to a chimney fire on Pohl road and on Jan 22, 2006 a chimney fire on 212th Street and Vashon Highway. He brought this up because he understands that the Burton Station topic was not being addressed by the committees. As a responding firefighter the response time was almost 20 minutes to the Pohl road fire. Brodie Smith and Jason Everett were the only ones who showed up. Jason Everett said that the District does have south-end volunteers that could have responded but they did not. On Sunday morning it took five minutes to get to 212th Street and Vashon Highway. This does not include Mike Kirk's response of 90 seconds. These two home owners on Vashon Island pay the same amount of taxes on their houses and get different service. And now Jason Everett talked as a south-end resident. The Board had a direction for the Burton Station that was not followed through. He believes it is essential to address the Burton Station through what ever public process needs to be created and do it quickly. We need to either fix the station or pursue other alternatives. This is not an issue that can wait several months.

Alice Larson commented on Jason Everett's statement. She is also a south-end resident and when she moved there it was with the understanding that she lived a distance from the main fire station. Many of the volunteers lived on the south-end. She has live there for 21 years, not much has changed over the years except we now have a lot more paid staff. I was at the Commissioner Retreat on January 21, 2006 and understand why the Board set up the committees. I don't see the same urgency that Jason Everett does because I see a logical plan. Alice Larson said that what we didn't talk about at the retreat was how to get islanders to volunteer and be active. At the Dockton meeting the community said they did not know that there were only two volunteers out there and they said that they were willing to recruit volunteers. It's those kinds of community efforts that we need to tie into. We need to look at less expensive options first.

Vouchers

Commissioner Hoffmann moved to approve the vouchers. Commissioner Turner seconded the motion. Commissioners voting in favor were Jennings, Sommers, Nielsen, Hoffmann and Turner.

Vouchers audited and certified by the auditing officer required by RCW 42.24.080 and those expenses reimbursement claims certified as required by RCW 42.24.090, have been recorded on the listing which has been made available to the Board. As of this date February 7, 2006 the Board does approve for payment those vouchers included in the above. Including payroll expenses of \$ 135,501.32.

Vouchers 100068 – 100084 for the amount of \$31,374.22
Vouchers 120162 – 120168 for the amount of \$13,941.75
Vouchers 100085 – 100098 for the amount of \$23,718.21
Vouchers 200001 – 200020 for the amount of \$26,459.11
Vouchers 120169 for the amount of \$663.06
Vouchers 120170 – 120172 for the amount of \$15,712.18
Vouchers 200021 – 200034 for the amount of \$13,422.14

Operations Report

Assistant Chief Marty Fowler reported that the District had a fatality boating accident where three people were rescued and three agencies participated, Des Moines Fire, the Coast Guard and VIFR.

Battalion Chief Whitney reported that the District had a house fire incident on February 1, 2006. He reported that 20 people responded. The fire was limited to the room of origin and contents within. The call came in at 8 AM Wednesday morning. Captain Bob Larsen was the first on scene and established incident command. He reported after investigation that flames were coming out of the windows. Battalion Chief Whitney stated that this was a text book suppression operation. The Fire Marshall discovered that the fire came from an outlet that arched and caught the window curtains on fire.

Commissioner Turner suggested sending a thank you note to the employers of the volunteers for letting their employees take time off to fight the fire.

Assistant Chief Fowler commented that these two calls remind us that in our day to day lives we need to be ready for the unexpected. He also reported that there were two brush fires in King County even with all the rain we have had here in the Northwest.

Old Business

Statistics

Chief Fowler and Alice Larson gave a Statistics Update. The charge here was to see why there has been an increase in calls. Alice Larson suggested looking at BLS calls that have no transport. Commissioner Jennings asked Alice Larson about her criteria of the calls she was looking at.

Battalion Chief Whitney suggested looking at calls previous to SunPro. We should look at other Fire Districts around the Country and see if they have looked at why calls are increasing. The increases are a National issue and are not driven by population increases.

Mike Kirk stated Chief Harmeling compiled annual reports that included statistics.

Commissioner Nielsen said we do need to do a statistical analysis. We also have had a cultural change. One of those changes has been the cell phone. Today two or three people will call in for a single incident.

Commissioner Jennings thanked Alice Larson for volunteering to do all this work and clarified that his questions were for his understanding of the project.

Battalion Chief Whitney said the Fire Service has been taking on a bigger role in emergency response. The public in turn expects more from the Fire Service.

Daron Buxton, a paid firefighter, stated when he joined the Fire District they were running 300 calls of which 75% were medical. The relationship has always been 25% fire and 75% medical. There has been a steady increase of calls. We have all the information we need to see where our call volume is going in the future.

Letter of Understanding with IEC

Commissioner Turner stated that the Letter of Understanding between IEC and the District has come back from IEC with comments. Matt Sullivan was waiting for comments from the District's Attorney. Jolene Lamb believes she and the District are getting closer to an agreement and stated that the progress has been good.

Committees

Commissioner Sommers started the discussion on Committees and asked other Commissioners for their comments.

Commissioner Turner agreed with Jason Everett that there is a problem with the south-end of the island and he would like to see a committee formed to deal with this issue and come back with recommendations to the Commissioners. He also suggested a committee on dispatch and volunteer recruitment/retention. He would like to see facts that support the recommendations that committees come up with.

Commissioner Jennings said that he sees the topics listed on Community Standards should be issues addressed by operations.

Commissioner Nielsen asked if we were going to get rid of the old committees.

Commissioner Jennings thought the dispatch decision was settled and now we are going to set up a committee to look at dispatch again. Commissioner Jennings said when we open up operations to the public it makes the firefighters mad because they are trained professionals and the public is not.

Commissioner Turner suggested that dispatch be looked at by using the Total Quality Management Objectives model and see if dispatch is meeting the set objectives.

Commissioner Sommers stated that the Standard Operation Guidelines were also under Community Standards and needed to be gone through.

Commissioner Nielsen asked if the Board should go through the SOGs or should the Board ask the Administration to do this and have them bring the problems before the Board for a decision.

Commissioner Jennings asked what the Risk Level Cost Benefit Analysis was.

Alice Larson remembered that the Risk Level Cost Benefit Analysis was brought up by a member of the public who said repeatedly that he could not afford more taxes. Alice Larson commented that the training topic would examine whether the District was going to be a regional training center or not. She wanted to set dispatch standards for evaluation.

David Straube said what he remembers on the Risk Level Cost Benefit Analysis was how to service the people who live where there is not a road.

Commissioner Jennings said that he was not sure that the District has become a regional training center. The District needs to be more specific on what issues the committees will cover. We seem to have

committees where what we really have are issues.

Assistant Chief Fowler stated that the District has training standards that cannot be thrown out.

The Commissioners discussed if the committees would be permanent or for a limited time.

Battalion Chief Whitney made the suggestion that the District go through the process to come up with a new Strategic Plan. We did a Strategic Plan six years ago and now would be the time to do another one. Hire a consultant and within months we will have a Strategic Plan. The process could include members of public, members of the District and be done in good time.

Commissioner Turner asked to have an update on what has been accomplished within the Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Nielsen stated that Chief can give an update on the Strategic Plan when he gets back.

Lea Wilson stated that she would love to get involved in the process for a new Strategic Plan but she is confused on what the Board sees as their role. Is the Board a policy or operations driven entity? We have paid professionals in place to provide you with information on the fire service. We are not the only Fire District that is facing these issues. Are we leaning on these professional people for information with a healthy balance of public involvement? I hope we blend all of these together to come up with a new Strategic Plan.

Jolene Lamb said that she was involved in the Strategic Plan and spent a whole week-end of her time. The public input was in the form of a questionnaire. She feels it was a waste of time. There was no public input after the plan was put together. Jolene Lamb believes that citizens have a great value in this process.

Hilary Emmer said that one of things she enjoyed about the process at the retreat was that all ideas were listed on the flip charts no matter if they were from a member of the public or a member of the District. She believes that if a professional would come in and take charge it may limit input.

Alice Larson recalled that Community Standards discussed at the retreat were to setup a committee that included members of the community and others. This committee would set guidelines on what all other committees would follow. She said an example was that the community would set the standard that no matter where you live on the island you could expect a five minute response time. Training would not be set by the Community Standards Committee.

Commissioner Jennings stated that the problem is that these topics are too general and should be stated in more detail on what the actual goal is. There was wisdom in learning from past efforts and including the public and our professional staff in the process. The paid staff and volunteers are unhappier than he has ever seen. He doesn't see why having a professional consultant would exclude anybody.

Jason Everett was not involved in the last Strategic Plan process. He has been involved in other Strategic Plan processes in his work in non-profits. He has seen that the success of a Strategic Plan was in how the process of coming up with the plan itself.

Commissioner Nielsen moved to table the discussion until the next meeting.

Commissioner Sommers suggested that this be on the next meeting agenda and hear suggestions from

Board members.

Commissioner Jennings asked Alice Larson to meet with him to come up with issues raised at this meeting.

Communications

Commissioner Nielsen said there had been communication issues that have come up recently that have disappointed him. He was upset with an editorial that was in the Beachcomber and that it was not in line with the Code of Conduct. He was upset with the closing of the January 3, 2006 meeting. The Board is permitted to come back early from an Executive Session; early by every attorney that he talked to. We, as Commissioners, have communicated poorly among ourselves and with the public. The open house at the Burton Station was not announced within 24 hours as a meeting. Walking into the fire station we need to follow the chain of command and not give orders. This is not the role of a Commissioner. This kind of communication is unacceptable.

Commissioner Hoffmann stated that he was unhappy on how the January 3, 2006 meeting was adjourned.

Commissioner Jennings stated that you if you come back from Executive Session early and just end the meeting that is not a violation. Only if you conduct business is against the Open Public Meetings Act.

Commissioner Sommers stated that from here on out, if the Board is done before the stated time a recess will be called until that time.

Jolene Lamb stated that she talked to Commissioner Nielsen and as a member of the public she had the right to be in the room even if nothing was decided at the Executive Session and the meeting adjourns. Jolene Lamb commented on the policies of the District and stated that somewhere along the line policies were changed to guidelines so that they didn't have to be followed. She believes that if you have guidelines then everyone has to abide by the guidelines.

Scheduled Meetings 2006

Commissioner Sommers went over the suggested meeting schedule for 2006 from the Commissioner Retreat.

The Commissioners agreed on the following;

February 7, 2006 - Mission Statement/Scope of Committees and Membership

March 7, 2006 - Dockton (meeting at Dockton station or nearby location)

March 21, 2006 - Reserve Fund Discussion

June 6, 2006 - Heights (meeting at Heights station or at the Grange Hall)

July 11, 2006 - Budget Information six month review.

September 5, 2006 - Tahlequah/ Begin Budget Discussion

October 03, 2006 – Public Hearing on 2007 Budget

November 7, 2006 - Budget Adoption

Strategic Planning/Financial Planning was covered under committees and was tabled.

Alice Larson stated that she has been coming to these meeting for 13 years. This is the only time she has

felt a part of the Fire District discussion and consideration. She values what she hears from paid staff, volunteers and members of public. In the past we have had Commissioners berating members of the public. The paid staff serves at the pleasure of the public. Alice Larson sees that things are going much better than she has seen in a long time.

Non-Voting Member of the Board

Commissioner Jennings shared his idea of having a non-voting volunteer member sit on the Board of Commissioners. He consulted the District's attorney who thought it would be problematic and further complicate things. Commissioner Jennings made a suggestion that at each meeting on the agenda there would be a time for a spokesperson from the volunteers and a spokesperson from the paid staff. If they don't have anything to talk about then we can move on. This would give them the opportunity and obligation in a focused manner to address their issues.

Commissioner Sommers asked that, given the way the meetings are structured now, where anyone has the opportunity to state their opinion and make comments. How would a non-voting member change this?

Commissioner Jennings stated that the difference would be that instead the comment being an individual opinion the comment would represent all the volunteers or the paid staff and comments can have some anonymity.

Commissioner Jennings moved that the Board of Commissioners regularly schedule on the agenda comments from the paid staff and the volunteer staff. Commissioner Nielsen seconded the motion.

David Straube stated that he sees the sentiment but doesn't see how this would help. Volunteers and paid staff have a representative now. I would like to see a motion that the Board respect the opinions of the firefighters.

Commissioner Jennings commented in response that it sends a message to volunteers and paid staff that their comments and input are important enough to regularly schedule them on the agenda. The complaints he has been hearing indicate that the staff and volunteers are saying that they are not being heard.

Commissioner Hoffmann was concerned that this would not give the minority to express their ideas.

Hilary Emmer stated that again we are dividing people up. If the volunteers and paid staff need a voice then community people need to have somebody to get public comments and report back at the meetings.

Daron Buxton stated that any organization's most valued asset is its members. I think you will find that the Union and Association have the same opinions. Hearing from the people actually doing the work would be valuable.

Commissioner Turner stated that staff and volunteers have a vested interest. He does value their input and suggested having them form a committee and report back. Anything we can do to make things better. We have to ask them their opinion.

Jason Everett agreed that this is symbolic. The Association is looking at getting a representative as a spokes person for these Commissioner meetings. The Union has an avenue of communication but not the volunteers. This may welcome input and make volunteers feel valued.

Commissioner Nielsen said that a trial run of this would not cost us anything. We can always change our mind. Commissioner Nielsen called for a vote on the motion. Commissioners voting in favor were Turner, Hoffmann, Nielsen, Jennings, and Sommers. No one opposed.

New Business

SOG 1030 – Civil Liberties

Commissioner Sommers gave some background on SOG 1030 that includes Civil Liberties. The language in this was suggested by a member of the Community Council. Commissioner Sommers clarified that the Citizen Corps is the Board of Commissioners of Vashon Island Fire & Rescue. This was the first reading of SOG 1030 and it will come back in three weeks for approval.

Commissioner Jennings asked if the District's other SOGs should apply to the Citizen Corps and stated that this is symbolic.

Rick Wallace, from the Disaster Preparedness Coalition, stated that a member of the coalition who was also a member of the Community Council proposed this language. This goes back to the idea that the Citizen Corps will be accepting Federal money and there is a legitimate concern in the community.

Community Contracts

Rick Wallace explained that the Disaster Preparedness Community Contracts were contracts with vendors to get prepared for a disaster. The contracts that we are proposing and asking the Commissioners to approve include but not limited buying supplies such as tarps, pharmacy supplies, fuel and renting a barge. FEMA suggested contracts in their fourth quarter meeting after problems around Hurricane Katrina. Rick Wallace handed sample contracts out that he has submitted to Chief Wilson and Matt Sullivan.

Commissioner Jennings asked if this meant that the Fire District would be responsible for paying this. Commissioner Jennings said that these contracts are informal and may not be binding. He wanted to have the attorney look them over before taking action.

Commissioner Turner wanted Matt Sullivan to run this by the State Auditor.

Commissioner Jennings believes this would be a great thing to have set up in advance of a disaster.

Matt Sullivan and Rick Wallace will work out the details and come back to the Board of Commissioners.

David Dodge wanted to see a list of what things were to be included.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Hoffmann said that Commissioner Sommers had been getting beat up for her article in the Beachcomber. He hears complaints about Dispatch from the public all the time. Often the Commissioners are told there is not a Dispatch problem but there is.

For the Good of the Order

Commissioner Jennings moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Nielsen seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:56 PM.

Maridee BonaDea
District Secretary