

Columbia River Fire & Rescue
Regular Meeting of the Boards of Directors
58611 McNulty Way, St. Helens OR 97051
And Virtual via GoTo Meeting
January 10, 2022, 7:00 pm

Regular Meeting: After due and legal notice the Regular Board meeting of the Columbia River Fire & Rescue Board of Directors was called to order by President Feige at 7:00 pm.

Present: Hans Feige, Mark Kreutzer, Gary Hudson, Kelly Niles

Absent: None

Others: FC Medina, DC Sanchez, DC Holsey, DC Mendola, DC Smythe, Kate Lehner, FM Pederson, BC Cole, J. Lehner, C. Booth, Autumn, Angie B., A. Schlumberger, S. Bowe, M. Chandler, R. Cordell, J. Lockhart, N. Bryant, A. Schrotzberger

Via Teams Meeting/Phone In: Lt. Hennigan, S. Raichel, J. Motherway, BC Gorsuch, Ray, S. Hulsopple, Rob, Anna Del Savio, A. Peterson, E. Wonderly, Garret Harrison, David, Angela, P. Kish, Introtopoorfiscalmanagement, C. Culligan, D. Marting, R. Ridinger, V. Haney, Guest, Kim, R. Conrath, R. Callahan, B. Davis, T. Goering, R. Malone, D. King, R. Denfeld, Lisa, Tina, TBFan, G. Loveall, Bob, C. Mackay, Q. Curio, D. Parshall, R. Melton, 503-438-5703, 360-708-4384, Kim McLane

Flag Salute: President Feige led the flag salute

Changes to the agenda: None

Public Comment: None

Correspondence: None

CRFR Consent Agenda: Included in the consent agenda are the minutes from the Regular Board meeting on December 13, 2022, and a Cash Flow Analysis. Secretary Hudson moved to approve. VP Niles 2nd the motion.

Chief Officers Report: Chief Medina started the discussion regarding the fairgrounds fire station lease and obtaining funding for upgrades. The fairgrounds fire station is a 99-year lease and approximately 50 years remain on the lease. Chief Medina discussed renewing the lease now for another 99 years in order to obtain funding for upgrades. Most lenders will not loan on a property that is not owned therefore a new longer-term lease is necessary in order to obtain alternative funding options. Director Kreutzer inquired about funding for the fairgrounds fire station and Chief Medina spoke of the 3-year strategic plan. VP Niles asked about the upgrade that just took place at the St. Helens station and Chief Medina discussed the absence of a female bathroom with a shower that needed to be addressed immediately. VP Niles asked if the Commissioners were interested in renewing the lease at the same rate and Chief Medina said yes. The Commissioners asked Chief Medina to attend the next board meeting to speak of the fairgrounds lease but he said that he needed to speak with CRFR board first to get direction. Chief Medina asked the board to make a motion allowing him to speak with the commissioners about drafting a lease renewal for the fairgrounds station. Secretary Hudson made a motion and Director Kreutzer 2nd the motion, all in favor, motion passed.

Chief Medina discussed the draft strategic plan that was included in the board packet. Year 1 and Year 5 goals have been established. 3-year goals were not included. It was submitted to the board at VP Niles's request.

Chief Medina went on to discuss the State of the District and stated that was something he planned to do every January. He began by giving an overview of his time at the District starting in December 2020 to current. Noting that when he first arrived he requested copies of the CBA, procedures manual, financials, contracts, and property resources the organization has. Within the first 4 hours of his time with CRFR he was faced with significant labor issues. Chief Medina brought in Kate Lehner to take meeting minutes at grievance hearings, weekly staff meetings, board meetings, and civil service meetings. Chief Medina asked Mrs. Lehner about one of the first meetings she attended with union members regarding a grievance and asked her to relay the conduct of the union members at the meeting. Mrs. Lehner noted that the union members were disrespectful

toward the Fire Chief. Chief Medina went on to discuss the roadblocks he faced with the previous finance person when he requested reporting and backup documentation. He noticed irregularities in the budget but never got accurate reporting from the finance director. Chief Medina went to Chief Smythe who was the interim Chief to get answers to his concerns relating to the budget and district finances. He found that Chief Smythe was also in the same position during his period as an interim Chief. Chief Medina spoke of the meeting between Chief Smythe, the finance director (FD), and himself where he was told the finances and department were managed by the finance director and Chief Medina's responsibilities were to play fireman. Chief Medina made it clear to the FD that the budget would never be hers but would be theirs and he would always have input. The budget was put through in July with no input by the Chief or staff. He further discussed the finance director's separation from the organization a few months later and the disorder the finances were in with very little to no information on the state of things including what bank accounts the district had and balances in accounts. When CRFR found someone to fill the seat of finance manager on a probationary basis it was revealed that the person was not experienced in municipal government but had a background in finance and budgeting. After a short period in the position reports and budget deadlines were not being met and the probationary person left the organization 4 days before the budget was due. Chief Medina explained the process by which 4 administrative staff members spent the next 72 hours compiling information to put together the 2022-23 budget. Within that process, it was discovered that there were numerous contracts that were expired and signed by individuals that were not authorized or that didn't work for the district. Contracts that were not accounted for in the budget in previous years as well. Chief Medina spoke of hiring Chief Sanchez who has experience in municipal government finance as well as a forensic accountant. He explained that the accountant would supervise Chief Sanchez and perform an extensive evaluation of the district finances to get a better understanding of the current status. It was reported by the accountant that the district finances had been grossly mismanaged and there was a chance that payroll would not be met. He further explained the mismanagement of the grants going back to 2018. Chief Medina asked Chief Sanchez to provide a report outlining the expenses relating to the grants and the reimbursements that have been received. Chief Sanchez reported that approximately \$1,049,000 has been spent, approximately \$906,000 should have been submitted for reimbursement, and approximately \$340,000 has been received. However, approximately \$340,000 may need to be paid back due to improper documentation and insufficient backup documentation. Chief Medina went on to further explain the possibility of 2 layoffs and pay cuts within the administrative staff to make up for the lack of unappropriated ending fund balance of between \$1.5-\$1.9 million dollars. He discussed reactivating TANS, securing a revolving line of credit, an unapproved \$500,000 line of credit opened by a previous employee that was not authorized, and a 5-year plan for a contingency fund. Chief Sanchez commented that there is a plan moving forward and the revolving line of credit has been secured. VP Niles questioned the line of credit for \$1 Million from years prior as an option and Chief Sanchez confirmed that didn't exist. Chief Smythe made a statement that he believes this organization will get through this and he believes there is still greatness in this organization. He went on to state that CRFR has some of the best firefighters and paramedics that he's ever worked with in his career. VP Niles asked if there would be a plan presented at the next board meeting. Chief Medina discussed the audit and completion date with reporting. He stated 2 positions would be eliminated and a review of salary cuts within the administration after the audit.

Old Business:

Civil Service Board discussion regarding meeting dates and plaques being presented to the retired members. Chief Medina spoke of the need for paramedics under recruitment and retention. He commented that one of the staff members who review testing processes for paramedics generally sees around 30 to sign off and he only saw 10 and 7 passed for the entire state of Oregon. He stated Chief Holsey is looking into the degree component of the paramedic certification.

New Business:

Chief Medina spoke of meeting with the volunteer service core and what the needs are to increase volunteers. President Feige discussed the fire chief's yearly performance evaluation and review at the next board meeting.

Board Comments:

Director Kreutzer: Thanks to the Chief for his candor as the Chief Officer Report was hard to hear but he appreciates Chief Medina's efforts as well as the efforts of the staff. Director Kreutzer updated on the meetings he will be attending over the weekend.

VP Niles: There is a lot to digest and he's sorry. He doesn't want to see cuts as it hurts the public we are there to serve. He welcomed comments on how we could do better, so we are not in this spot again. VP Niles requested the board packet a week before the board meeting.

Secretary Hudson: Appreciates everyone's efforts and is looking forward to looking forward.

President Feige: Impressed with the efforts and everyone is doing exactly what the board asked you to do which is to look under the hood. He wishes it was better but it's not. He believes that we can have a better organization and that's the plan moving forward.

Director McLane: Thank you and good job on putting the presentation together. Apologies for missing the meeting last month and looks forward to seeing everyone next month.

Adjourn: 8:38 pm