

Columbia River Fire & Rescue
Regular Meeting of the Boards of Directors
106 W B St./Rainier City Hall
And Virtual via Teams Meeting
November 14, 2023, 6:00 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 Niles at 6:00 pm.

Present: Kelly Niles, Richard Fletcher, Ryan Welby (phone in), Austin Zimbrick

Absent: None

Others: DC Sanchez, DC Smythe, FM Pederson, K. Lehner, A. Blitz, Will Lore, Jeff Griffin, Jim Band

Via Teams Meeting/Phone In: (see attached sheet for attendees)

Flag Salute: President Niles led the flag salute.

Changes to agenda: Jim Band investigation report added to new business, and forensic accountant update to old business.

Public Comment: None

Local 3215 Report: None

Volunteer Report: None

Correspondence: Letter from Board Members, emails from Citizen and Duane Jordan

Closed Executive Session: Legal Counsel ORS 192.660(2)(h), Labor Negotiator Consultations ORS 192.660(2)(d)

CRFR Consent Agenda: Included in the consent agenda are the minutes from the Regular Board meeting on October 10, 2023, the check register for October checks, and the October bank statement. Secretary Fletcher made a motion to approve the consent agenda, and Director Zimbrick 2nd the motion, all in favor, approved 4-0. There was a discussion regarding checks to Comcast, Hawkins Delafield, Aiken Blitz, and janitorial services. Secretary Fletcher inquired about a P&L report and a balance sheet. Chief Sanchez explained that the accounts were being reconciled after years with no reconciliation. The reporting would not be correct if produced before the reconciliations were completed.

Chief Officers Report: Chief Smythe provided an update on re-vamping the reporting systems relating to call volumes. Current averages are around 6400, projected to increase to 7000 with the new housing development in St. Helens.

Old Business: Aiken Blitz provided an update on the forensic audit report conducted by Merina & Co. Mr. Moody could not attend, so a summary was provided to Mr. Blitz to brief the board.

New Business: Jim Band with Jim Band Investigations and Consulting provided an overview of the two investigations conducted in August, September, and October of this year. The first investigation was regarding complaints of a hostile work environment, and the second was related to the No Confidence vote against Deputy Chief Eric Smythe and Division Chief Jimmy Sanchez. Mr. Band provided the board with an executive summary report on each investigation. Regarding the 16 claims on the vote of no confidence, he found evidence to refute nine allegations: three claims were against Chief Medina, one claim was subject to a lawsuit, and the remaining there was no evidence to prove they were accurate in their entirety.

Jeff Griffin with WHA Insurance briefed the board on the possible non-renewal of the employment practices insurance policy by Special Districts. Mr. Griffin and his team found alternate coverage but also consulted with

Special Districts to negotiate to change their opinion. The new insurance company would drop the coverage amount and institute limitations. Mr. Griffin recommended the second insurance company would be back up and that it wasn't wise to switch insurance midstream. He discussed SDAO's concerns regarding future litigation, future claims, and future actions by the board members that would result in future claims. SDAO is going to offer the continuation of coverage if the board agrees to follow legal advice and SDAO legal counsel. He did indicate there would be a rate increase.

President Niles opened a discussion regarding the Interim Fire Chief options. Secretary Fletcher liked Chief Palmer and wanted to move forward with him. Secretary Fletcher mentioned further negotiations with Chief Palmer and discussed housing the chief at the Deer Island Station. President Niles recommended they use local resources, but that Scappoose was not in a position to support Columbia River Fire & Rescue. VP Welby and Director Zimbrick both agreed that Chief Palmer would be a possibility but with the budget constraints there was hesitation. President Niles further discussed the information gleaned from the investigation and budget constraints then made a motion to select Deputy Chief Smythe as the interim Fire Chief with no pay or benefit adjustments. VP Welby 2nd the motion, all in favor, 4-0. President Niles said that they would re-evaluate the position in 6 months. Deputy Chief Smythe accepted the interim Fire Chief position effective immediately.

President Niles made a motion to schedule the candidate interviews for the vacant board seat for November 29th at 1700, Administrative building 270 Columbia Blvd., St. Helens, OR., Director Zimbrick 2nd the motion, all in favor 4-0.

President Niles made a motion to schedule a special meeting to discuss the RFP for the Audit company on November 21st at 1pm. The meeting would be held virtually at the admin office located at 270 Columbia Blvd, St. Helens. Director Zimbrick 2nd the motion, all in favor, 4-0.

Jeff Griffin gave a presentation to the Board of Directors with a booklet on Board Duties and Responsibilities. Mr. Griffin gave examples of lawsuits, discussed ethics & morals, public records, closed executive sessions, and the numerous ORS that the board members should be familiar with.

Board Comments:

Secretary Fletcher: Good Meeting

Director Zimbrick: Thank you to Mr. Griffin

President Niles: Good Meeting, Thank you Mr. Griffin, President Niles wanted to make a public apology to Jeremy Lehner and Ray Malone for the inappropriate discussion and inaccurate comments regarding closing the shop and layoffs at the last meeting. President Niles went to the shop and spoke with Mr. Lehner and Mr. Malone in person and apologized. As the board chair he takes responsibility for that discussion happening but Jeremy and Ray have the full support of the board. President Niles thanked Chief Smythe for taking on the interim Fire Chief position and he has the full support of the board.

Adjourn: 10:07pm