

MINUTES
SAN JUAN COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #4
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Special Meeting
May 3, 2021

Chair Phil Paige called the Special Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners for SJCFD #4 to order at 9:05 A.M. The meeting was held with most participants in-person at the Station 41 Fire Hall and a ZOOM* meeting was open for public participation.

Those present were Commissioners Phil Paige, Rebecca Smith, and Duane Bordvick, and Fire Chief Adam Bigby, Paramedics Caleb Pal and Nicole O'Bryant, EMT Lieutenant Terry Marshall, Logistics Monte Midkiff, Firefighter JK Honeywell and Secretary Kim Herrenkohl.

0900-0915: Go over agenda and objectives for the day and metrics for success

Chair Phil Paige explained that the special meeting was a Strategic Planning session and he provided information on his background as a Firefighter and what he thinks Commissioner's roles are. He acknowledged that representatives from EMS, Firefighters, Logistics, Administration and Commissioners were present at this Strategic Planning session. Chair Paige also summarized some recent changes, specifically the hiring of a new Fire Chief and two new Commissioners.

Chair Paige noted that the District will put a new EMS Levy proposition on the upcoming August 3rd ballot. The District is getting close to running out of reserve funds and has had to spend prior end-of-year reserves during the first few months of each year until the next year's property tax revenues would come in during April. The goals of the levy are to keep the District above water from an operational perspective, but probably won't be sufficient to pay for new engines.

Chair Paige stated that the goals of this Strategic Planning session are to help form and define the District's long-term goals with a focus on establishing priorities to determine how to better serve the community. All ideas and perspectives were welcomed. The conversation's focus was to better understand what the community would support going forward and if additional funding is needed for a new station or engines, would it come from Bonds? The EMS Levy process should give the District more information about what the community will support.

In addition, Chair Paige mentioned that the short-term and long-term goals established in this Strategic Planning help set goals for the new Fire Chief and that everyone is working to support the entire mission of the district, both Firefighting and EMS.

Commissioner Smith shared that she has been thru several Strategic Planning sessions which helped establish a set of 10-year goals under former Fire Chief Ghighione. In looking back, the District has been very successful in accomplishing the goals that were identified.

0915-0930: Improvements since last Plan

Chief Bigby had provided everyone on-site with a hardcopy of the agenda, power point, WSRB Grading Schedule and NFPA 1720 Standard and also displayed the power point on the overhead screen. The Chief expressed his goal to establish a collectively ranked priority list. The staffing and facilities sessions were set at the end with the expectation that the earlier discussion topics would inform and lead into the facilities topic. In planning for this Strategic Planning session, the Chief had looked at prior strategic planning notes and noticed that there were no priority rankings. The last Strategic Planning Session was 2019 due to Covid there was no meeting last year.

The Chief handed out a 2019 Strategic Plan Cost Worksheet and noted that some of the items were expected to be covered and budgeted for by a potential 2019 levy. The Chief had highlighted the items that have already been accomplished in yellow such as the replacement of E43, replacement of equipment such as SCBA, LifePak 15s and communications. The Chief mentioned the other listed items and noted which will be covered by current grants (vehicles and radios). On slide #2 of the power point, the Chief noted that training is important, and that administrative staffing has increased to 32 hours per week and there is a front room remodeling project currently in process.

Slide #3 highlights the focus of the day's Strategic Planning discussion items and how the District measures success. The discussion will try to look at big picture issues but may also need to get down into the weeds.

Next, the Chief asked the meeting participants to write down where they see the District in 5 years so that they can reflect on their notes during the meeting and to make sure that their questions are answered, or comments are made.

The Chief discussed Firefighter response time standards in slide#5, as set by NFPA.

The Washington Survey and Ratings Bureau (WSRB) process is very important for our Community. Slide 6 lists the areas that are rated such as apparatus, equipment, water systems (includes tenders), training, staffing, age, maintenance and documentation. The worst total rating is a 10 and our District has a rating of 7. The Chief stated that we can make improvements and Chair Paige noted that communications, dispatch and new radios should help the District's rating. We are currently scheduled to be reassessed on August 26, 2021. Slides #7 - 9 highlight other items which are reviewed by WSRB such as membership, number of Firefighters at each scene, training and a Chief on 24/7.

As noted in slide #10, the District monitors statistics to aid it in rating ourselves on medical & firefighter outcomes and also asks patients & witnesses for feedback and patient outcomes.

0930-1030: Apparatus

- **WSRB**
- **Replacement Schedule**

The Chief lead a discussion on the District's Fleet as listed on slide #11 and provided updated information on recent improvements or needed changes/repairs on some of apparatus:

- Engine 41 – Just got a new pump.
- Aid 41 - Doing pretty well.
- Tender 41 – Doing well but Medic Pal mentioned that there are some air leak issues.
- Engine 42 – While it still seems to be running well, JK Honeywell stated that a hose spits a bit of water and there are general age issues since it is past the normal service life.
- Tender 42 – Is a street sweeper that was turned into a tender < Potential replacement item
- Engine 43 – Is from 1966 and the District just approved the purchase of a replacement engine. After the replacement arrives, the engines may get shuffled around to different stations.
- MCI Trailer – The Chief has not looked at this recently but Logistics volunteer Midkiff thinks it is okay.
- Engine 44 – Is currently getting a new pump.
- Aid 44 – This apparatus needs to be discussed as the District recently put \$8,000 to \$9,000 into repairs and it is already exhausting fumes into patient area < Priority
- Medic Response – It was determined that Medic Michelle McDarmont's fairly recent purchase of a used truck has water damage in doors. Medic Nicole O'Bryant and Caleb Pal's rigs are doing well.
- Command Unit – Has electrical & will soon be replaced with the Ecology grant.
- 41 Rescue – Has mechanical issues and is getting past its service life.
- Brush 42 – Will be replaced with a 2021 F-350 from the Ecology Grant.

The Chief discussed slide #12 with the guidelines for different types of apparatus' replacement schedules. The Chief, and rating company like shorter replacement schedules for aid units and as rigs get older, you end up spending more money on maintenance.

Two outstanding items from the 2019 Strategic Planning session include a new aid vehicle to replace A-44 and a Fast Attack Rescue vehicle. Caleb confirmed that the plan was to replace A-44 with a new rig and to buy a used 3rd ambulance.

Commissioner Smith brought up whether we should get bigger engines or smaller engines? Medic Caleb Pal mentioned that they have talked about going down the "Wasp" path. They also discussed the differences in water capacity. Chair Paige thinks that the District still needs a few regular size structural engines for centralized areas but will also need some smaller units for some hard to access houses.

It was mentioned that Tender 42 is a monster and Medic Pal would like to have a newer tender. The Chief gave his perspectives on needs but acknowledged that he is new and is still learning about what the District's needs are. Chair Paige would like to see the District have consistency in their rigs which would help by establishing consistent equipment and placement on the rigs which would make training easier.

Commissioner Smith asked about the different cost s and the Chief said small tank units still require a lot of the same equipment and run about \$400,000 and bigger units run between \$450,000 and \$600,000.

Chair Paige provided some thoughts about an engine's life span where it would be the "first out" engine for 20 years and then be a "reserve" engine for ~~25~~ 15 years after that. (which falls into Survey & Ratings standards). He also noted that new trucks have a lot of computers and that the District could consider share resources with other islands.

Medic Pal mentioned having an apparatus committee to discuss needs and plans for repair and replacements. He mentioned selling Tender 41 and trying to develop standard apparatus.

Chair Paige commented that after we get thru the EMS Levy process, the District will know if the Levy would potentially fund any apparatus changes and would help inform a discussion about seeking out potential financing or bonding.

Commissioner Smith likes good priced used units and sometimes, the community has a difficult time seeing new engines, etc. If the engine is grant funded, the District needs to educate the community about how the engine was funded.

The topic of an apparatus replacement program was briefly mentioned.

Aid 44 (2007 Ford) exhausts into the patient area but it had to be used recently because the other unit was out for repair. Medic Pal stated that some entities have replaced these engines since this is a fairly consistent problem as they age. Chair Paige mentioned a new chassis and Medic Pal commented that there is limited space for accessing the patient inside the unit. Medic Pal recommends the Dodge 3500 and thinks that they can get their boxes in similar places as they currently have them.

The 2007 Fords are better suit for a straight transport but the District spends more time with patients than regular city departments. The District needs to be able to access patients from both sides. The Chief commented that new ambulances have significantly gone up in price over the years and are currently about \$200,000.

Commissioner Smith asked if we really need a 3rd ambulance? Medic Pal thinks we should have two ambulances in case one goes out of service. The Orcas Island Fire Department does not currently have the capacity for the Lopez District to be able to rely on them as a back-up. But there could be an opportunity to have an agreement with other islands to share one.

Chair Paige noted the need to educate the community to get homeowners to trim landscaping to reduce/eliminate damage to the District's aid vehicles and ability to get to the patient.

Medic Pal brought up the need to replace Medic McDarmont's rig (2011 Ford Expedition) and Medic O'Bryant agreed and mentioned that there are some safety issues with this rig.

The Chief broke out the participants into two groups and asked them to list their priority ranking for the District's apparatus listed on slide #11 (except for the 1966 engine.)

Group 1:

1. A44 replaced – with new

2. Medic Rig
3. Tender 42 replaced
4. Fast response fire vehicle
5. Shared reserve ambulance

Group 2:

1. M48 – replace (2011 Ford)
2. A44
3. R-41 _ with WASP or B42 convert
4. T-42
5. E42

1030-1100: Equipment

- **Major needs**
- **Repair and replacement schedule**

It was noted that the EMS Levy could be used to fund some of the equipment on Slide #15.

For EMS, the District has several Lifepak 15s that the vendor stated won't be supported in the future although when we order new ones, we will probably be able to get some trade-in value. The cost of new units is about \$30K each (for monitor + supplies). Medic Pal commented that we will only need an AED if we get a 3rd ambulance since the Medic would take their Lifepak 15 from their rig.

The Chief commented that the District's gurneys should be consistent and need to consider upgrade to protect against workplace injuries. A Stryker maintenance plan was mentioned.

Medic Pal mentioned the need to identify funding for an ultrasound machine and second IV pump to help care for patients due to longer transport times.

For Firefighters, the District needs to replace its Bunker Gear and helmets. Approximately 75% of the gear is already past due the recommended 10-year replacement schedule as most is 13 years old. Ultraviolet rays and heat are hard on gear and a lot of gear is kept in vehicles which gets hot because response time is based on Firefighters having their gear with them at all times. Firefighter JK Honeywell expressed that protection gear is critical and mentioned the need to issue all new firefighters with consistent items such as flashlights.

New bunker gear is about \$4,000 for a full set. The Chief obtained a quote for new equipment and it totaled about \$125,000 (maximum cost). The Chief has submitted a Firehouse Subs Grant proposal which will start awarding soon.

If the District gets funding for new bunker gear, the current gear could be used for back-up gear for when the new gear is being washed.

The Chief and Medic Pal mentioned the need for an extractor to properly clean the bunker gear after a fire due to the chemicals. This was mentioned as important since some Firefighters

keep their gear in a family car, however if it is kept in a box in the back of a truck, it is less of a concern.

Hose – we have some new hose that we need to put into use to get it roughed up- Chief bought some hose under a 50% off grant. Recent training had a hose burst.

The Chief asked the participants from the two groups to list their priority ranking for the District's equipment listed on slide #15 and other items discussed on the whiteboards. (In the end, everyone felt consistently so only one list was documented.)

Group's EMS Priority List – Equipment

- Lifepak 15
- Gurney's are okay for now – but will need more if we have a 3rd ambulance
- Transport ventilator (for longer transport times) in each ambulance
- If you have fewer people show up on a call, then there is a potential for more back injuries when picking up the gurney. However, according to Medic Pal, most lifting problems take place inside the house in confined spaces like bathrooms.

Group's Firefighter Priority List – Equipment

- Bunker gear (TOP) - PPE
- Extractor washer
- Extraction tools-We only have one good one and one gas one that is in rough shape (Medic Pal)
- Need newer/better saws for smaller engines.) – Potentially look at electric chain saws
- Better lighting at scenes - LED retrofits that do not require a generator which would save space on rig

1100-1130: Training

- **Recruit**
- **EMS**
 - **EMS connect/County standards**
- **Fire**
 - **Officer**
 - **Firefighter**
 - **WSRB**
- **Discussion**

Training –

Slide # 16 lists many Federal, State, local and professional organizations that have training requirements.

The Chief commented that the District was not able to get as much of the NFPA Training Requirements (slide #17) done due to COVID. Slide #18 lists the WSRB's training requirements for recruits, Firefighters (monthly) and Fire Officer (yearly). The District tries to balance

between NFPA, WSRB and WAC and has only been able to do in-person training for the past 2 months.

The Chief stated that slide #19 illustrates how much training it takes to get everyone up to the required levels for EMS volunteers.

For the Logistics group, most of the training is internal after the volunteer gets their Ham Radio license.

Logistics volunteer Monte Midkiff mentioned having a flagger safety class and it was commented that the class is very involved. Monte thinks that some amount of flagger training is needed.

Comments about training included: the need to set up a formal program and track attendance; that volunteers want training on island but it costs more to get someone to come here; and do volunteers know their limitations such as if there is a rescue, have they been properly trained.

Medic Pal brought up the topic of a regional fire training (live fire) facility and noted that other jurisdictions ran into environmental issues and the one in Anacortes is not a long-term option. There is a facility in North Whatcom but that would require a lot of travel. The State has a mobile trailer that they can bring for a \$3,000 set up fee for use for several days.

Medic O'Bryant has expressed interest in becoming certified as a Senior EMS trainer and this would make it easier to recruit and train EMTs on Lopez.

1130-1200: Staffing

- **Current model**
 - **EMS Response**
 - **Standards**
 - **Fire Response**
 - **Standards**

Staffing –

Slides # 21 & 22 provided the participants with a count of EMS, Fire/Rescue and Logistic paid staff and volunteers.

Discussion about EMTs:

Volunteer Lieutenant EMT Marshall highlighted the concern that the District is barely maintaining enough EMT volunteers. The District still maintains three teams but there are only a few people responding to calls and it is especially difficult to get people to respond during the day. The EMTs are getting burned out and there is heightened concern heading into summer where call volumes usually increase and it is anticipated that EMTs will want to get away for vacation now that they are able to travel, unlike last summer. The nighttime coverage is doing okay.

Chair Paige mentioned that with Tyler Brower's departure, that the District could redefine that position to be a FF/EMT position.

Commissioner Smith mentioned that they have tried other things in the past such as offering paid on-call EMTs but not enough EMTs signed up to make this work.

The District is sensitive to EMT's perspectives on the value that they receive from being a volunteer. It is unclear what the collective opinions of the EMTs are about how they would feel about having paid EMT positions (even if they did not want a paid position for themselves.)

Medic Pal mentioned that our typical volunteers are different now than in the past due to high cost of real estate and lack of jobs or good paying jobs which require people to work 2 jobs which reduces their time for volunteer work.

The District is planning an upcoming EMT class but they would not graduate anyone until 2022 and then the new EMTs would begin their on-the-job hands-on learning.

Chair Paige mentioned that in Newport, Oregon, they switched to hiring some seasonal paid EMT. The District could potentially bring someone over from another island but acknowledged that this would be a change of the culture of Lopez EMTs.

Chair Paige suggested surveying the current EMTs. Lieutenant Marshall said that she got limited responses when she just posed a few scenarios to the EMT group for this Strategic Planning meeting. Lieutenant Honeywell stated that if you had a defined job description and plan, then the EMTs would have a better understanding of what would be expected and be more likely to respond to it.

Commissioner Smith asked if there is anyone that left recently that is still certified that could come back with a minimal amount of training. No one offered the name of anyone.

Chair Paige suggested that the District would need to negotiate with union, develop a job description for paid EMT position(s) and then try to get people to post for it.

The Commissioners stated their preference to defer the EMT topic to Chief Bigby to address the short and long-term and part-time or full-time issues, and to obtain structured input from current EMTs.

Medic O'Bryant asked if there are EMTs that would like to get trained to do firefighting? Three EMTs are already trained as Firefighters: Rob Nou, Monico Mackinnon and Amy Studzienko

Discussion about Firefighters:

The District is planning to hold a recruit academy this summer for volunteer Firefighters.

Chief Bigby will follow up with current Firefighters that are behind on their training later in the summer by assessing if they have met the 75% training requirement.

The Chief mentioned that they have started the Student Intern program and have selected three Students for the EMT intern program. Lieutenant Honeywell said that student interns are great for the District's firefighting program as they often stay on island and join as Firefighters long-term.

Discussion about Logistics:

The Chief mentioned that the Commissioners recently approved a job description for a lieutenant logistics position. The Logistics group is working on a program to do some new tasks and are focused on getting training.

Response Discussion:

Medics O'Bryant and Pal explained the District's Fire and EMS response processes which were also documented on Slide #23.

Slide #24 lists the number of personnel required at basic BLS (3), ALS (3), CPR (9), car accident (10) and structure fires (16). The District is somewhat unique in that many calls are longer than at other mainland locations because we can't just transport the patient to a hospital which would end the service call. If the patient is critical, the call length is quicker since there is a quick determination that the patient needs to be flown off of the island. However, if the patient does not want to be flown or is less critical, the call takes more of the medic and volunteer's time. Fire calls take 16 people, even for a quick knock down.

1200-1300: Working Lunch

1300-1330: Staffing

- **Current organizational model**
- **Retention and recruitment**
- **Discussion**

Chief Bigby's power point presentation included a number of different organization charts including the District's current chart (slide #26) and other potential organization charts (slides 27 – 32.) The different charts showed different number and type of paid positions, number of volunteer positions and varying span of control. Slide #27 showed an evenly distributed number of volunteer positions under each Captain position.

Chair Paige stated the need to be conscientious about the number of volunteers and staffing (paid positions). Lieutenant Marshal added that volunteers don't want to feel like they are "gurney getters" and they want to keep their skills current by hands-on work at calls.

Medic O'Bryant added that a lot of jurisdictions are having a hard time recruiting volunteers and retaining volunteers.

Medic O'Bryant also mentioned that the District's Captains roles include administrative roles and wondered if an Assistant Chief position would take over some of those responsibilities. Chief Bigby mentioned the potential, if an Assistant Chief position were created, that it could offer a step-up position for a Medic interested in becoming a Fire Chief.

There was a discussion about the District's application for the SAFER grant that would pay for 3 years of salary and benefits for an Assistant Chief position. There was a question about whether the District could afford to pay for this position from its revenues, with and without the EMS Levy, after the grant ended. Medic Pal asked for thoughts about what the community thinks about having this position after the grant goes away.

Chair Paige mentioned that if the District builds a new fire station to consider whether or not to include a residence for seasonal workers, per diem medics, etc. Chief Bigby mentioned that it would be less expensive to build a separate structure for an office due to permitting rules for combined fire stations with office space.

Chair Paige suggested that the District should consider its one-time needs before considering staffing additions.

Recruitment – EMTs -

The District typically only recruits when they have a planned class coming up. Having a class on island is key. It is important to provide an opportunity for potential recruits to come to training so they can see what being an EMT actually entails and potentially to consider a "ride along" type activity.

The potential for an EMR Bridge exists but it takes a lot of hours. There was a discussion about the need to educate the public about what the Fire Department is, what EMS is (paid paramedics and volunteer EMTs) and what the Firefighting program entails.

Recruitment - Firefighters -

Some recruitment and retention challenges mentioned include: it can take a long time between when a new recruit joins the District and their first qualified fire event; there are very few fires on Lopez; and there are a lot of required training. Lieutenant Honeywell was not sure if call volumes have an impact on recruitment or retention.

The group discussed how to keep the Firefighter volunteers engaged and to remind them about what they are involved in and why they are here. Several ideas were mentioned:

- Perhaps the Chief could send out periodic newsletters or we could forward them the Chief's monthly and weekly updates that he submits to the Commissioners.
- Finding other things for the volunteers to do such as work on house number signs and doing driveway checks (for passage due to trees).

- Help keep the stations cleaned and sign up to drive the trucks around the island since some trucks have lower utilization and the diesel needs to be circulated.

It was noted that new radios are coming.

Perhaps establishing a rotation for fire response so that other Firefighters feels like they should respond to non-structure fire calls.

The topic of the District offering some type of health care insurance plan for eligible volunteers would be a major draw for the volunteers (EMT and Firefighters). The Chief calculated an initial estimate (based on current staff's medical plan) and determined that paying for ½ the cost of health insurance coverage for all current volunteers would be approximately \$250,000 per year. It was mentioned that there are very few available medical plans for Lopez residents if you don't have health insurance from your employer and rates are usually less if you are part of a larger health insurance group. Another suggestion included adding a set amount into a health savings account for each eligible volunteer for them to use. The Chief will look into this further.

1330-1430: Facilities

- **Go over each station and property owned by the Fire District**
- **Discuss future direction**

Chief Bigby presented information about each of the District's facilities shown in slides 34 to 44.

Station 41 (slides 34 & 35) on Fisherman Bay Road was built in 1975 and is the current primary station

Station 42 (slides 36 & 37) on MacKaye Harbor Road. There is no appraised value.

Station 43 (slides 38 & 40) on Port Stanley Road. – It was noted that our property is adjacent to San Juan County's gravel pit which seems like it is not getting used anymore. There was a question about what the County's plans are for the gravel pit and wondered about the potential for use as fire training. It was acknowledged that there are very strict permitting rules for fire training facilities.

Station 44 (slides 41 & 42) on Center Road . Chief Bigby stated that he thinks that this station should have 3 rigs due to its central location but there are currently only two bays.

Hummel Lake Road (slides 43 & 44) is 2.19 acres – There is a house & an out-building which could be retro to be a per diem living quarters.

General facilities discussion:

The ratings group asks about the flooring for your buildings, is there water, etc.

The District's door heights at all of the stations are only 10 ft.

The Chief wondered if our stations would need seismic retrofitting if the District wanted to make significant changes to the buildings.

Logistics Midkiff stated that the need to have a backup power supply (generators) at all stations has been discussed in the past and he thought it was an established goal.

Lieutenant Honeywell sees an opportunity to get some volunteers involved in helping to keep the stations clean and it would help the volunteers be connected with the District and feel good about contributing towards a well-maintained fire station.

Open discussion about each facility:

Station 41 – There would be benefits to replacing the current station in the same place as it has great visibility to the public which helps to advertise the services provided by the Fire District. It has good north and south access and it does not require apparatus to travel up and down a hill like the Hummel Lake Road property would.

Station 42 – It would be nice to have a bathroom with a shower for cleaning up after a fire. Lieutenant Honeywell mentioned that his ~~house~~ ^{parents house} is close-by and they have a Type A water system.

Station 43 – The drainage is not good and during harder rains, water comes into the building under the bay doors. There is no water at this site. The gutters need to be cleaned out.

Station 44 – There is a wetland on the property. If the District builds another vehicle bay, it should be built tall enough to allow for bigger rigs/engines.

1430-1500: Recap

- **Where we go from here**

Chair Paige felt that a lot of valuable input was received and he learned a lot about the District's facilities. He also expressed his appreciation for all of the work of the Captains and felt that we covered a lot of topics to help set performance goals for the new Chief. Chair Paige stated that he hoped that the Firefighter, EMT and Logistic representatives would take the information they had received and participated in back to their constituent groups.

Chair Paige recommended putting the District's web address on our vehicle logo and another participant recommended changing from "Lopezfire.com" to "Lopezfire.org" which would mean the District would need to purchase this domain name.

Commissioner Smith added that she believes that the Strategic Planning session will help to define the needs for the EMS Levy.

Commissioner Bordvick stated that no one knows for sure what the future holds, what the population on Lopez will be going forward, issues due to Covid, etc. and how we all will need to adjust and compensate.

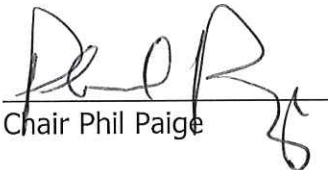
Medic Pal mentioned that both Orcas and San Juan Fire & EMS have gone thru periods of upward growth, to 500 annual calls and then to 1,000 annual calls, and they had to react and make changes. The District should consider reaching out to them to discuss the lessons that they learned.

Commissioner Smith mentioned the potential uncertainties related to the Lopez Island Medical Clinic under UW. Any significant changes at the clinic would have significant impacts on the District and the District should be alert for any news about potential changes. If clinic went away, the District would need to consider having a 4th community paramedic.

There was a joint appreciation expressed for the conversation and perspectives shared at today's Strategic Planning session.

Chair Paige adjourned the Regular Meeting at 2:47 P.M.

NEXT MEETING: May 18, 2021 at 4:00 P.M.


Chair Phil Paige


Secretary Kim Herrenkohl