

MINUTES
SAN JUAN COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #4
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular Meeting
August 15, 2023

Commissioner Bordvick called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners for SJCFD #4 to order at 4:00 P.M. The meeting was held with all participants in-person at the Station 41 Fire Hall training room except for Steve Greenstein who participated by Zoom for a portion of the meeting.

Those present were Commissioners Duane Bordvick, Rebecca Smith and Cathy Doherty, Chief Adam Bigby, and Secretary Kim Herrenkohl.

Guests: Steve Greenstein, Hospital District Commissioner.

There were no changes to the agenda.

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

There was no **Public Input**.

There was no **Correspondence**.

There was one Partner Agency Report from Hospital District Board Member Steve Greenstein who stated that they are working on their levy lift for the General Election. The Hospital District will run out of money in about 1 to 1.5 years due to cost increases and the reduction in the levy over the years. The Hospital District needs the levy lift in order to be able to continue to provide medical services to Lopez Island. They are working on pro and con information and are working with a commission that helps Hospital Districts with their levy lid lifts. The commission is funded by a state-wide Hospital District organization which has been very helpful.

Commissioner Bordvick asked when the UW contract expires and Mr. Greenstein stated that it is a 3 year contract and the Hospital District re-evaluates it each year and has the option to cancel the contract each year. The Hospital District evaluates the annual shortfalls and Mr. Greenstein noted that the District currently pays 1.1 million to the University of Washington for the Clinic on Lopez Island.

Mr. Greenstein left the meeting after making his report.

Commissioner Smith making a **Motion** to approve the **Regular Meeting Minutes of July 18, 2023**, with Commissioner Doherty making the second. The **Motion Passed** unanimously.

Commissioner Smith making a **Motion** to approve the **July 25, 2023 Vouchers** for \$9,393,78, and **July 25, 2023 Investment Transfer** for \$150,000 which had previously been approved by the Auditing Officer and paid and processed, and Commissioner Bordvick making the second. The **Motion Passed** unanimously.

Commissioner Smith making a **Motion** to approve the **July Staff Payroll** for \$49,352.22, which had previously been approved by the Auditing Officer and paid, and Commissioner Doherty the second. The **Motion Passed** unanimously.

REPORTS

The Chief's Report, Overtime, Fire, & EMS Reports were reviewed. Some highlights were:

- Our call volume is about 40 behind last year. But some calls have been complex and pretty intense. Commissioner Smith noted that half of the calls were flown off.
- Covid counts are up even though the State system only says Lopez Island has 3 cases which is 17.3 per 100,000 population. There has only been a slight increase in vaccinations. There is a new variant which is causing the number of cases to rise quickly.
- RockIsland is putting up taller towers and we hope that this improves some of our weak signal spots. We don't expect anything new from CODAN until the Fall as they are currently working on San Juan Island's issues. The Chief stated that CODAN wants to use the island's new system as a showcase to other potential buyers, so they are motivated to make sure that it works well.
- The Chief will be at the Lopez Island Airport on Sunday for Airport Day.
- There is nothing new to report on the new fire engine as we are still waiting for the specs.
- The Chief has been communicating with the shop that is working on retro fitting the mounts for the new Rescue 41 truck.
- The new septic tanks are in and the project is complete. They were set higher in the ground since they will sink a bit and in case some work will need to be done in the future. Overall, the Station only lost water for about 10 minutes during the project.
- Forest Hooker from TCA will join the board meeting at 4:30 p.m.
- The Chief has talked to the new EMT class students and encouraged them to get their national registry test completed.
- There is a new individual that wants to take the Bellingham EMT course. The District does not know a lot about this course but would like to receive feedback.
- A county EMT class has been scheduled through San Juan EMS to begin in January 2024 which will be a hybrid class where students will go over to San Juan Island for some classes.
- While we don't yet have many details, a county-wide Fire Academy has been scheduled for January 2024. Some hands-on aspects will be done on Lopez Island.
- Catherine Washburn Association is still waiting on their contractor's availability so that they can improve the approach to the helicopter landing pad beside the Clinic.
- Our AFG Grant is still noted as active online. There is nothing new to report on the Safer grant.

- We recently received our final reimbursement check for the Ecology Spills grant so the grant is completed.
- The Safety Committee meet and they focused on apparatus backing procedures and the need for more training.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

FACILITIES - DISCUSSION

Forest Hooker from TCA Architects had sent a Facilities Study and Pre-Design (37 page) document dated August 14, 2023 from RC Cost Group prior to the meeting which had been disseminated to the Commissioners.

Mr. Hooker joined the meeting at 4:23 p.m. via Zoom and he provided the Commissioners and Chief with a brief history of what has been done to-date.

Mr. Hooker began the discussion with an overview of the assessment of the facility and its needs focusing on information from the structural and mechanical engineers. He then moved into conceptual pre-design information and ideas and shared some documents with the Commissioners via Zoom.

For Station 41, Mr. Hooker discussed some construction documents and facility's history including TCA's work product report and including some pages related to seismic event stability.

Mr. Hooker stated that their process had included interviews with District people, including Commissioners, which provided different people's perspectives and their future plans and needs as well as apparatus changes that were anticipated. They also discussed sizes for different spaces. For Station 42, TCA Architects created some space numbers for this small Fire Station.

Mr. Hooker showed a drawing of Station 41's property with the building laid out as part of the provided Facilities Study document. This project would require approval by San Juan County to designate it as "essential" in order to surpass the zoning size limits for such things as the building footprint and impervious surfaces. We discussed the use of the current Sheriff's Office rented space and how it is being displayed on the drawing.

We also discussed a similar drawing for Station 42 where Mr. Hooker stated the impervious surface amount would also likely need approval by San Juan County.

The Energy code has been pushed out but the final version is expected to be implemented soon. Propane and other heating and cooling sources make the need for larger electrical rooms.

There was an acknowledgment that there is currently no water on-site at Station 42 which will be a significant component to this project.

The final step is to discuss cost estimating. Mr. Hooker bought up the RC Cost Group report and mentioned several main components.

The primary component is the construction costs and he acknowledged that it would be a public project. The cost of all projects increase over-time so they build-in an estimated escalation rate based on the construction timeline. Also, the project needs to consider soft costs like Washington State sales taxes and contingencies. Contingencies are usually higher for remodels, should be included for the whole project (referred to as Management Reserves); and are also needed due to potential supply chain interruptions, market volatility and uncertainties of building on an island.

Mr. Hooker stated that Station 41 is a good candidate for a full replacement given its age and inefficiencies. It is a 50-year old building and is coming to the end of its useful life.

Mr. Hooker concluded his remarks about what TCA Architects and their sub-contractors have done to-date. He stated that they will meet with San Juan County officials to get answers to some questions and that they are here to support the District in future public outreach.

The Chief stated that he will continue to work with Mr. Hooker and go through the details in the cost report and look at eliminating or resize options for these projects. He will also consider and factor in the District's property on Hummel Lake Road.

The Chief stated that it is easy to get discouraged due to the high cost estimates and mentioned that this is a first step in the process. He also mentioned that he had looked at the District's bond capacity and based on his calculations, the District could bond for up to \$14 million.

Commissioner Doherty asked if local contractors would do this work and the Chief thinks that they are likely not qualified to build a fire station. Mr. Hooker agreed based on TCA's local conversations.

The Chief feels that the Station 41 and 42 projects are totally different and should be approached differently. We had always thought that the Station 41 project would get started and be close to completion before starting the Station 42 project.

We had heard that San Juan County was scheduled to have a meeting this week about water for their new Public Work's project at the south end of the island near Station 42.

Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Hooker about pages 13-16 which say "Graham Fire" and asked if the information on these pages was for the Lopez Fire & EMS projects. Mr. Hooker thinks that is a "header" issue error and confirmed that the detailed information is for Lopez Islands Station 41.

Mr. Hooker exited the Zoom meeting at 4:55 P.M.

The Chief highlighted the difference between the \$18 million remodel cost and tearing it down and building a new fire station for a cost estimate of \$19 million. But the Chief stated that he will be looking at the cost estimates to try to reduce some of the remodel costs.

The Chief mentioned that we don't want to build a building that doesn't work for the community and some Fire Departments find a building design that they prefer and then reuse the design for other stations with minor modifications.

We discussed the large contingency mentioned by Mr. Hooker to house off-island construction people and strategized potential savings by working fewer but longer days per week and using construction trailers for housing.

Station 42 is not as big of a project and we could consider buying a pre-fabricated facility from off-island so there would be reduced need for off-island construction workers. The Chief stated that we could also consider cost savings by eliminating a manager since it is a small project that he believes he could manage.

We are hoping to have information for an Open House in September so that we can start to have discussions with the community to gain their input, especially since we have not been able to engage with them over the past few years due to Covid. The Chief said he would reach out to the Commissioners to determine good Open House dates.

Commissioner Smith stated that she worked on a committee for another entity where there was a retired architect and other professionals on the committee that donated their time for the project which helped to save costs. This is something to keep in mind and we should explore this potential opportunity.

STATION 41 – SIGN DISCUSSION

The Chief informed the Commissioners that a Lopez Island Village group did not approve of the District's planned sign project at Station 41. The Chief is looking into options for a more mobile sign that we could use to put out near the street with information for up-to 30 days at a time. The Chief asked the Commissioners for their thoughts on how to proceed.

Commissioner Smith asked about putting a sign up on the front of Station 41 and it was acknowledged that people do not always look that far off the road so the visibility is not as good as a sign near the road's edge.

They discussed having sandwich boards like the Library which would have the District's Logo or name across the top and it was acknowledged that the signs need to be temporary type signs. The Chief will continue to explore options.

On another topic, the Chief shared that the volunteer associations are in discussion with the Lopez Island Museum to move the 1966 Fire Engine and some photos down to the museum.

The Chief also acknowledged the need to advertise the Firefighter and EMT volunteer opportunities on Lopez Rocks.

NEWSLETTER DISCUSSION

The Chief and EMT Megan Crandell have been working on the draft newsletter which was provided to the Commissioners. The Chief asked the Commissioners for their thoughts on the number of pages and it was agreed that the materials should be pared down to 4 pages. The Chief recently received a section from the Fire Association.

The Chief had provided two front cover examples (which would be page 1) and Commissioners Smith and Doherty both preferred the cover with the large picture of volunteers at the top.

Commissioner Smith recommended that we add a section for the upcoming EMT & Fire Academy classes with the date on the front page. Commissioner Bordvick suggested including some information about what it is like to be a volunteer for the District in order to help people understand and evaluate what it would be like if they joined.

2024 BUDGET CALENDAR - DISCUSSION

A first draft of the 2024 revenue and expenditures budget had been included in the Board packet. The Chief noted that as the 2023 projects get completed, the cash carryover amount will be better known.

Commissioner Smith asked if there were any new positions added to the 2024 budget and the Chief stated that per the Strategic Planning meeting, he had added a new Firefighter/EMT position with a starting wage budget at the 5th year experience level like the District did for Dave Rucker's position. This would allow the district to have a scheduled FF/EMT staff position every day of the week during the day hours.

The Chief will revise line items like hoses as additional information becomes available. As part of the 2023 expenditures, the Hummel Lake Road house is in desperate need of a new washer and dryer and gutters in the back of the house.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT POSITION – HIRING PROCESS

The Commissioners had been provided with the application that had been received in their board packet. We discussed that we have advertised the open position on our new website, LopezRocks, Bellingham's Craigslist, Skagit's Craigslist and the San Juan County Economic Development Council's website. We were reminded that the position was posted as "open until filled".

The Chief does not see a conflict with the current applicant due to her relationship with a current District volunteer.

The Chief asked the Commissioners for their preference on how to proceed and the Commissioners wanted to interview the candidate. The position was posted "open until filled" so we don't need to "re-post" the position due to the planned interview.

It was acknowledged that we would need to hold a Special Board meeting for any interviews where more than one Commissioner participated.

Commissioner Smith wondered if we would receive more applications after the Lopez Island School makes their final decisions on who to hire back for this school year.

The Chief asked the Commissioners for good dates for the interview which would most likely mean scheduling it after the Labor Day long weekend. The Commissioners stated that they were all available on Thursday, September 7th at 4:00 pm.

NEW BUSINESS

FORD CHASSIS AVAILABILITY - DISCUSSION

The Chief informed the Commissioners that after the saga of trying to find a chassis to replace the old Rescue 41 rig, he was recently notified by dealer Bud Clary that they had received a call from the WA State Department of Enterprise Services stating that Bud Clary could submit 170 chassis orders by the end of that day. So Bud Clary sent in any orders that people had previously submitted, including ours which had been for a heavy duty chassis noting that would be able to cancel the order. The Chief wanted to discuss this new development with the Commissioners.

The Chief shared his idea for how the District could use this chassis. The District could create a Brush Rig from it which would provide the District with a good second brush rig. Mallory stated that it could be used as a Brush rig, or since we plan to replace engines every 7 years, we could use it as a Type 5 engine which is a structural engine and brush rig. This is also referred to as a rapid response type engine and Commissioner Smith mentioned that prior Fire

Chief Ghiglione had discussed having this type of rig. Having a rapid response type engine would buy the District some time before needing to build another new full fire engine. Mallory thinks it would cost about \$175K to build and with the quoted \$75,146.13 chassis cost, the total cost would be around \$250,000 which is significantly less than what we are currently paying for the current fire engine that is in design and a rapid response engine would provide WSRB credits. In addition, an already built quick attack rig currently sells for \$400,000 to \$450,000. The Chief stated that firefighters can accomplish a lot with 500 gallons and foam and a fast response rig and can go off-roads which Commissioner Smith stated was a problem during a past July 4th fire where the apparatus available got stuck.

Commissioner Smith mentioned that a rapid response engine had been previously discussed, especially with the many small driveways on Lopez that large fire engines have a hard time driving down or are not able to drive down. Commissioner Bordvick asked for a rapid response engine's role and the Chief stated that it is a wildland brush truck, like a rescue, but with a bigger chassis and it would be housed at a station.

The Chief stated that he sees this as a good stop gap measure and is an opportunity that we were not expecting so it is up to the Commissioners to approve buying the chassis. The Chief has asked Mallory and they believe that they can make a body build for the chassis.

The Chief stated that our current cash carryover is good right now but purchasing this heavy-duty chassis would eat into it since the chassis would need to be purchased this year.

Commissioner Smith making a **Motion** to approve the purchase of the 2022 Ford F600 chassis, and with Commissioner Bordvick making the second. The **Motion Passed** unanimously.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS:

At 6:01 P.M., Chair Bordvick called for an Executive Session under RCW 42.30.110 (g) to discuss Personnel for approximately 20 minutes. The Chief provided the Commissioners with a draft new employment agreement and discussion points.

The open session was resumed at 6:11 P.M. and the Commissioners expressed their appreciation for the work that has been performed over the past almost 3 years by Chief Bigby and were supportive of the new five-year employment contract to begin on January 1, 2024.

Commissioner Smith making a **Motion** to approve the five-year employment contract with Chief Adam Bigby effective January 1, 2024, and with Commissioner Doherty making the second. The **Motion Passed** unanimously.

The Chief reminded the Commissioners that the Team Building Drill and BBQ on August 29th is scheduled to start at 6:30 p.m.

Chair Bordvick adjourned the Regular Meeting at 6:15 P.M.

NEXT MEETINGS:

- Special Meeting – September 7, 2023 at 4:00 P.M.
- Special Meeting – September 13, 2023 at 4:00 P.M.
- Regular Meeting – September 19, 2023 at 4:00 P.M.



Chair Duane Bordvick



Secretary Kim Herrenkohl