

WEST BENTON REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY
TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 21st, 2021
WBRFA HEADQUARTERS STATION 310

CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE

Chairman Clizbe called to order the September 21st, 2021, for the West Benton Regional Fire Authority regular meeting at 6:11 pm and he then led the participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Commissioners Richard Clizbe, David Moon and Dewey Holliday. Commissioner Shane Williams and Lisa Galbraith attended virtually via Zoom.

Others in attendance: Fire Chief Seth Johnson, Fire Captain Scott Friend, Administrator Gayle Carrasco and Resident Fire Fighters Jake Coleman and Hugo Guzman were also present.

Public Audience: Signed in to speak that evening were West Benton Volunteer Fire Fighters/EMT's: Sydney Ayala, Jim Willard, Frank Vermulm, Julie Urrutia, John Hultberg, Cliff Brett and Abigail Kuhlman. **It should be noted:** There were numerous people in attendance that remained outside due to the Washington State mask mandate within a public facility and chose to not wear a mask.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Mr. Jim Willard, Frank Vermulm, Julie Urrutia, John Hultberg, Cliff Brett, Abigail Kuhlman, and Sydney Ayala all spoke to express their opinions of the Fire District#3 mandate Covid-19 Vaccination. The Chairman reminded the public the length of each person public comment and those speaking will be kept to 3 minutes.

AMENDA AGENDA Commissioner Holliday mad a motion to approve to amend the September 21st, 2021, agenda. Commissioner Moon seconded the motion. The motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner L Galbraith made a motion to approve the consent agenda for September 21st, 2021. Commissioner S. Williams seconded the motion. The motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

1.) EQUIPMENT PURCHASES

Local Program:

- Fire Chief Johnson reports to the board the dates to do the on-site inspections for the new fire trucks at Rosbauer's in South Dakota and those are yet to be determined. Also, that the SCBA's arrived the day of the meeting. It will be approximately a week before MES can put these together an in-service them. Chief Johnson informs the board to anticipate reimbursement forms from the Local Program on some of the smaller items that have already been received, for example the positive pressure fans.

Reserve Apparatus:

- The Chief provided to the board a draft document between the WBRFA and the City of Grandview and the City of Sunnyside to enter into the reserve apparatus agreement. Chief Johnson briefly explains the structure and need for the reserve apparatus agreement to the board when purchasing Type 1 apparatus. The Chief reminds the board the discussion regarding purchasing new Type 1 Apparatus, and that all (3) Type 1 Apparatus has timed out in the view of WSRB. The initial purchase would be close to 2 million dollars for those (3) Type 1 Apparatus. With some discussion with survey and ratings it was determined if we double the reserve fleet then the age of apparatus does not count therefore being able to save from purchasing (3) Type 1 Apparatus down to (2). This is the reserve apparatus agreement provided to the board in their packet which will be required to be put in place to stand that program up.

The Chief has forwarded this agreement to both the City of Grandview and the City of Sunnyside. It is a template document based on similar agreements currently being used in the Tri-Cities with sharing medic units across municipal boundaries. The attorneys have refreshed the agreement and the Chief has sent it out to the municipality for review. The Chief has heard back from the City of Grandview to add additional liability language in which the Chief has forwarded this request back to the attorney. The Chief informed the board that nuts and bolts of the agreement and how the reserve fleet will operate and managed will not be changing, the Fire Chiefs are all in agreeance with that. Chairman Clizbe posed a question to the Chief about the liability language, the Chief responded that he does not see this change as being a huge issue. Basically the (3) agency will come together and manage the reserve fleet. The Chairman asked Chief Johnson if the motion will be postponed for now. The Chief stated this item needed to be table for the next meeting as he was waiting to hear from the City of Grandview's attorneys. The Chief then asked the board if they had any questions on the agreement or the inner workings specifically the document is in the packet more for information purposes at this point. R. Clizbe informed the board this item will be tabled to the next board meeting.

Equipment Acquisition:

- Nothing Reported.

2.) EMS

2022 EMS Plan: Commissioner Williams reported to the board there is a meeting scheduled tentatively for the 5th of October and hopefully shortly after that they will have framework to present to the board.

3.) COVID-19 VACCINE MANDATE

Draft Policy: A draft copy of a board COVID-19 policy was generated by Fire Chief Johnson as directed to bring in front of the board. The Chief gives a summary of the policy that gives the Volunteer Firefighters who do not want to get vaccinated or seek any type of exemption give them the ability to remain on at the fire department as a Volunteer Firefighter only. The relative job description will be forwarded to the board for approval. It would boil down to a non-EMS type position within our department. The Chairmen stated that was how he interpreted the policy. D. Moon stated he foresees a problem if you give someone an exemption plus reasonable accommodation then that person should be able to do their job as EMS. The Chairman clarifies that the policy has been written per the state mandate and it is different for paid staff. D. Moon states the policy will need to be worded differently. R. Clizbe states as of current there has not been an employee who has submitted an exemption. D. Moon states that the scenario regarding approved exemptions with job accommodations should be written in the policy. The Chief clarifies with the board that he has received (2) exemptions from Volunteer Firefighters, and before the Chief was to move forward on the exemptions, he is waiting for the board to have a policy in place before he begins having discussion/meetings with his staff about the exemptions. Commissioner Williams states the information that Commissioner Moon is seeking is in the second paragraph of the policy provided and there is an option to seek a medical or religious exemption for the vaccination. Commissioner Holliday states his understanding to what D. Moon has stated if you receive a medical or religious exemption than the staff should not be regulated to solely a firefighter. If they are an EMS Volunteer and they have a religious or medical exemption they should be allowed to continue as an EMS provider. D. Moon added with proper accommodations. D. Holliday states this is a conversation that was held at the previous meeting during the executive session. D. Holliday apologies to D. Moon as he had not dug deeper into that matter. D. Moon states the way the policy reads currently is that no matter what the staff is a fire fighter only if not vaccinated. The Chief states his understanding from the direction he was given by the board, and this was to be offered to the employees who choose not to get vaccinate and not turn in an exemption or those who want to seek an exemption this would be the reasonable accommodation for that request. Commissioner Moon disagrees. He states no need to turn in an exemption if one chooses to only be a firefighter. D. Moon states the policy should read if given an exemption what are the reasonable

accommodations so they can do their job. D. Holliday asks D. Moon if changing paragraph 2 by striking “or seek religious or medical exemption” be sufficient. D. Moon agrees to remove that phrase because the exemption is given in paragraph 3. D. Holliday states and those who seek medical or religious exemptions fall to the sub committee and that committee will determine what is reasonable accommodations. Commissioner Moon agrees. The current policy has no options for an employee to continue doing their job. R. Clizbe states with the covid testing, and D. Holliday states this will fall under the reasonable accommodations. D. Moon states the policy only needs to be reworded a little bit. If there is an exemption than that is a discussion to be had. The Chairman requests comment from Commission Galbraith. L. Galbraith stated at this point she is confused as she was under the impression the language presented in the policy is what had been discussed. As she understood the final request was if a person was an EMT and not vaccinated they were not to provide patient care. L. Galbraith brought up the instance of the being a Volunteer Firefighter and have a smoke inhalation patient and not being able to provide medical aid. L. Galbraith requests for more clarification on the policy and its meaning. Fire Chief Johnson agrees with Commissioner Galbraith on the understanding of how the policy was to read and its meaning. Chief Johnson stressed that he created the Covid policy based on notes taken from the prior meeting and the outcome of that conversation. R. Clizbe also agrees with Fire Chief Johnson and Commissioner Galbraith and that is where he was at also. D. Moon explains that he has not changed his stance on the policy. S. Williams suggest to Chairman Clizbe and the board the change of language in the 2nd paragraph as the following. “Refuses not to become fully vaccinated against Covid-19 or choose not to seek a religious or medical exemption? S. Williams asks if this language change will satisfy Commissioner Moon and clarify the Covid-19 policy better. The Chairman requests comments of the board. D. Moon states that he agrees, and this is what he has been explaining. Commissioner Moon expresses that it is necessary to give the staff the opportunity to have the sit down with the sub-committee to obtain an exemption to be able to do their job. Chairman Clizbe says that he had a conversation with Commissioner Galbraith, and both agree it was important not to lose any Volunteer staff and the result of that conversation was to eliminate any exemptions and not have to do any of that by becoming fire fighters only. Commissioner Moon stated the choice still must be offered. Chairman Clizbe expresses his intentions is to retain the volunteers and the Covid Policy presented to the board does that. D. Moon stated the staff that desires to do EMS still want to be a part of the department, and the discussion the board had with Wesley he said exactly what Commissioner Moon laid out. Reasonable accommodations. Both Commissioner Moon and Chairman Clizbe state the accommodations have been discussed yet. D. Moon reminds the board that 2 exemptions have already been submitted by volunteers and the policy must reflect that and still have a choice and points out that the way the current policy reads the board is not giving the staff member a choice. R. Clizbe states that he understands what D. Moon is explaining. D. Holliday mentions this had been debated at the previous meeting and he will read what is from the Governors website. “Volunteer firefighters whose positions are restricted to emergency calls and do not perform medical services as a function of their position description are not covered by the proclamation” D. Moon states it is his understanding that the volunteers will become firefighters only and the ones who want to still do their job will apply for the exemption and then there will be a meeting in regards to reasonable accommodations so they can still do their job, and then he states he has not changed anything. Chairman Clizbe states that until the board determine what those accommodations are the policy can be written in a way that the department does not lose volunteers. Chairman Clizbe states the policy should be written to match the wording of the Governor’s mandate on vaccinations for the time being, and a secondary policy will be discussed on how the accommodations and exemptions will be finalized. Chief Johnson asks Chairman Clizbe for the specific wording on the policy. D. Moon states the wording, if they chose not to get vaccinated, and if they choose not to submit a medical or religious exemption then that determines the person as a firefighter only. Commissioner Galbraith requests to offer a suggestion on the wording for the policy. L. Galbraith states the portion of the Governor’s proclamation regarding rendering aid then the staff would fall under the mandate to become vaccinated. Fire Chief Johnson informs the board the policy is written for volunteers who

chose not to be vaccinated or to seek an exemption. The policy is for volunteers who want to only be a firefighter for the department. D. Moon is objecting to the way the policy currently reads. The wording on the policy is decided an agreed upon all the board members and when Fire Chief Johnson presents the adding of the word “not” and to read as follow as both Fire Chief and D. Holliday restate: “All Volunteer WBRFA personnel who either chose not to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or not to seek a religious or medical exemption from becoming fully vaccinated against COVID-19 shall be offered a Volunteer Firefighter Only position for WBRFA.” R. Clizbe states there are job descriptions as provided by Fire Chief Johnson for the board to review. The process for accommodation will follow later. The policy will be provided by Chief Johnson at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

1.) CORRESPONDENCES

Governing Boards:

- Nothing to report by the board.

Staff Reports:

- G. Carrasco state nothing to report to board. Chief Johnson informs the boards he has been working with his staff on the cost for capital items for next year on the increases and decreases to the 2022 budget. The Chief projects a 4% increase to the revenue budget and the Chief state he should have numbers prepared for the next board meeting. Chief states we have not received the preliminary projections from the county and the numbers will not include revenues for any new constructions. The new SCBA’s are in and those will take approximately 2-3 weeks before they are deployed on trucks. The supplier should be in by the end of the current week or the following week to put them all together and inspect them, and then start training on them. The Chief informs the board he has been working with Administrator Carrasco with the clean up on Bias/Springbrook the financial management software, and as he informed the board earlier, he will be forwarding approval documents to the board on the local program reimbursements funds most likely at the next board meeting. Chief Johnson and Captain Damron review the balance left in the local program and working through the lose equipment list for the new Type 1 apparatus. It is well known new vehicles are difficult to obtain, with the computer chip supply and demand problems, the chassis’ have been ordered and they are still not in. Nonetheless the Chief state he is still projecting to have the 2 new wild land apparatus in service the start of next wild land season. Pierce recently partnered with Boise Mobile Equipment, and the Chief does not know what that partnership yet details as he has not had a good opportunity to research how deep that partnership goes. Chief Johnson informs the board that Pierce expanded their global in wildland and last year they bought Skeeter Brush trucks and now they are bringing in Boise Mobile. What that looks like for the future is yet to be seen. The department has a signed agreement with Boise Mobile so the cost will not go up, and we are locked in on those.

2.) SHIFT CAPTAIN HIRING

Fire Chief Johnson:

- Chief Johnson informs the board that the document to hire shift captains has been delivered in their drop box for the 2 positions he has requested to fill. One document is the agreed job description for the title of shift captains from previous meetings. Chief Johnson explains that he created a summary which included a timeline he projects on the hiring process to discuss. The Chairman asks for questions from the board on the job description. No questions made by the board. The Chief explains that the announcement for open positions it that he will begin with on Daily Dispatch for the cost at roughly \$600, this advertisement goes out statewide. The Chief summarizes the tentative announcement with stating bullet points of the 2021 salary range, benefits included, the minimum qualifications list, and the qualifications are the same as the previous preferred qualifications with advanced EMT, command officer training, strike team leader, that match Tri County Duty Chief task book and then the necessary documents required to apply for the position: West Benton Fire Authority employment application, background investigation consent form, resume, and all the supporting documentation. If the board

approves filling the positions and the corresponding documents the announcement will be posted tomorrow on September 22nd, 2021, and the Chief would like to leave the receipt of application process open until October 15th, 2021. Next process is 10 days for the applications review with November 8th being the date to hold the initial interview panel. Initial interview panel could consist of a peer interview panel, including stakeholders inside the department, an also external agency stakeholders, it could also include some type of a skills assessment center with scenarios of incident management, human resources, shift leadership. The Chief is aware of 3-5 known skill centers to conduct the assessments. After the assessment will then be background check, the Chief's interview, and the job offer which will occur sometime the 1st of December with a start date of January 1st, 2022. A discussion for the need to use an assessment center followed. The Chief informed the board they can hire personnel anyway the agency sees fit. It is not a civil service department. Historically the department has always made sure the process was 100% open and above board. Depending on the number of applicants an assessment center may be needed. If the applicant pool is not as deep as anticipated but all the applicants are qualified the need for an assessment center may not be necessary. R. Clizbe would like to steer away from the testing but would like to see focus on some type of testing. D. Moon agrees with the Chairman. Chief Johnson suggests the use of a burn plan scenario i.e.: the home that sat behind Harvest Foods, in the hiring as he used for the last training captain, and this can be completed outside where the applicant has time as a luxury and the applicant can bring that document into the interview process to show they fully grasp their knowledge. Chief says he is still kicking around good skill assessment centers. Prior he has used outside entities come in as well as he has conducted with it being all internally. D. Holliday states the board is fully aware of his opinion in hiring of the captain position and he believes it is very important. S. Williams believes that a skills process for the position is also necessary. L. Galbraith also agrees. The Chief suggests changing the interview panel that was scheduled to occur on November 8th to the skills assessment. The board agrees. D. Holliday states that these positions were originally to occur in June of this year, and thus hiring an outside skill assessment would be a savings to the department as there would be funds available. R. Clizbe states the cost is approximately \$5,000 and up as much as \$25,000 such as the company ESCI. S. Williams has used outside agency before, he states that conducting the skills assessment internally is more beneficial as the department knows what they are looking for and we could do a more efficient job than spending money on an outside agency and use the funds in our department to conduct the process and L. Galbraith agrees with Commissioner S. Williams and to determine what the size of the pool of candidate is before an outside agency is hired. D. Moon prefers outside look as it is unbiased. R. Clizbe suggests the use of outside departments to conduct the skills assessment and the scoring of the applicant. D. Moon agrees with that way to conduct the skill assessment. Chairman Clizbe explains the benefits of using local departments, chiefs, and training captains. The Chief states that a large misconception about hiring an outside firm to come in and conduct an assessment is that once you hire the company you are hands off and they will take care of every facet of hiring the personnel. You are paying \$5,000 for the one person who comes in and all they do is manage it. They still have the department reach out their peers schedule it up. Every time the Chief has seen a consultant come in and conduct the test, he has been disappointed on what the return on the investment was. The department is very capable of adding the numbers up at the bottom of each column. Most of the work falls on the department personnel already. Assessment center scenarios are nothing that we don't have plenty of or reach out and obtain. Chief Johnson states that the Pasco Fire Department has their regional command lab set up at their administration building which would require only a field trip. There are a lot of things we can do and fold into this test and manage it ourselves and save the consultant dollars, because the product as far as the testing procedure would be the same. R. Clizbe reports his concern about the timeline and having the assessment center being done faster. The Chief and Commissioner both state their belief is that the outside agency would slow down the process. It would be quicker to do the assessment in house. The Chief states this would give him 6 weeks from today to set up a skills assessment. The Chairman request to have something in place and have an outside review of the applicants, with other people looking in with trying to help score the applicants. The Chief states based

on hiring solely from the interview phase he still used outside personnel to be in on the interview panel. He has always had an outside influence in the testing process no matter if an interview was just or involved with the skills assessment. R. Clizbe request to have this done that relates to the position.

3.) EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS

Evaluation Form and Process:

- The board requested last from the board to review the form and process for the evaluations. D. Moon states that the 3 bubbles were not enough. R. Clizbe would also like to see a wider range. Chief Johnson states he can go up to 10 on his software program, and states he believes that 10 is too many. The Chief asks if the board would like to undergo the evaluations electronically consistent to the way it has been done in the past. R. Clizbe says they always have a meeting and sit down and do it regardless. R. Clizbe states he prefers to do them on paper as he can make notes on the document. D. Holliday states he prefers a printed copy, and he could fill it out and bring it to a meeting or during the executive session. R. Clizbe asks for Commissioner Williams comments as he has been involved in several evaluations. Commissioner Williams also states how he prefers the paper evaluation printed out and follow that with a group discussion. Chief Johnson states the form is created from the Microsoft Office 365 forms program and they started doing it that way so multiple people do an evaluation, and it would automatically add and average everything out and combines everyone's comments. Chief Johnson asks if the board so chooses to do only 1 hard copy do, they want to move away from the forms template? Is it vital to be able to collaborate back and forth? R. Clizbe believes the board is doing the work that the program is doing, and the board usually comes together with the same final evaluation scores after they collaborate or close. The Chairman states it is the comment section the board has difficulty with and if the Chief could work on how that could work better. The Chairman will gather more information and discuss it further with Chief Johnson. The Chief states to what he then will prepare for board as they concluded their requirements on the evaluations. The evaluations shall have 5 bubbles, switch to a hard copy version, and use the same content as what is in the current evaluation. The board agrees. The Chief asks when the board would like to see the changes back before them. R. Clizbe jokingly says in March. R. Clizbe then states by the next board meeting October 5th, 2021, and Chief Johnson confirms this date as workable. Commissioner Williams informed the board that the agenda item for hiring of Shift Captains has been skipped. The meet then moves forward to address the hiring of Shift Captains.

4.) 2019 Vouches Voided

Resolution 2021-10:

- Commissioner Moon made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-10 A RESOLUTION CANCELLING UNCLAIMED WARRANTS ISSUED BY WEST BENTON REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY BOARD. Commissioner Holliday seconded the motion. Passed unanimous. Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- R. Clizbe stated to break into Executive Session per 42.30.140. The board agreed to break from the regular meeting at 7:20 p.m. to hold an executive session for 60 minutes. The board reconvened early from the executive session, and they had resumed the regular board meeting at 7:45 p.m. D. Holliday made the motion to approve the MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING REGARDING MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINATION ORDER WITH WEST BENTON REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY amendment memorandum with understand regarding Covid-19 vaccination

GOOD OF THE ORDER

- Chairman Clizbe reminded the board who were not present to email their approvals on the payment of vouchers and the next regular board meeting will be October 5th, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Chairman Richard Clizbe adjourned the meeting at 7:47 p.m.

RICHARD CLIZBE, CHAIRMAN

The West Benton Regional Fire Authority's minutes are intended to be a reasonable summary of the RFA's governing board deliberations and actions. The Minutes are not a verbatim record of everything said at the meeting. The minutes include all actions taken by the West Benton Regional Fire Authority Board.

GAYLE CARRASCO, ADMINISTRATOR