

**WEST BENTON REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY
TUESDAY DECEMBER 7th, 2021
WBRFA HEADQUARTERS STATION 310**

ORIGINAL

CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE

Chairman Clizbe called to order the December 7th, 2021, regular meeting for the West Benton Regional Fire Authority at 6:00pm and he then led the participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chairman Richard Clizbe and Commissioners Shane Williams, Dewey Holliday, and David Moon. Commissioner Lisa Galbraith was initially not present due to a work emergency, and she later arrived via Zoom.

Others in attendance: Fire Chief Seth Johnson. Also present was Administrator Gayle Carrasco, and Captain Charles Damron. Resident Firefighters in the audience were Jake Coleman and Hugo Guzman Jr.

Public Audience: Randy Cobble

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments from the public.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Williams requested clarification on the delayed invoice for contracted services with S. Bradley. This was explained to the board by G. Carrasco and with no further questions Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve the consent agenda for December 7th, 2021. Commissioner D. Holliday seconded the motion. Passed unanimously. The motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

EQUIPMENT PURCHASES:

• **The Local Program Purchases**

Fire Chief Johnson reports that there has been change order after the on-site inspection. Primarily hose bed covers which were very heavy due to the way they were hinged. Also adding electric actuators to the hose bed covers, as well as moving items within the cab. The changes added up to \$9,000. This amount had been previously planned for by Chief Johnson as he explained that by paying for the chassis early the department had received a prepayment discount which was just over \$10,000 per each unit. This offsets the expense with remaining funding in the equipment purchase budget. Chairman Clizbe asks if the covers have a safety lock. Chief Johnson explains the working of the hose beds to the board, and it is his understanding that there is not a safety lock on the non-electric actuator end, the electric actuator end will work well and easier in lifting. Chief Johnson informs the board that he received pictures of the Type 5's that show the trucks have tanks and boxes mounted. The Type 5's are now ahead of schedule.

2022 EMS PLAN:

• **Commissioner Williams Report**

Commissioner Williams reports to the board that he had attended a meeting that was held on December 13th, 2021 and was accompanied with Chief Johnson and Interim Chief Damron. They had met with all three of the hospital board members that are participating in negotiations. Commissioner Williams states that good discussions were made with the board members, and that they are aware there will need to announce publicly that they will be not providing ambulance services in the future. There will be a follow up meeting in the first part of January 2022. Commissioner Williams expects to have more information to bring back to WBRFA board after that meeting, which will be either proceed forward or to cease

negotiations. Chief Johnson then informs the board that he had left the meeting with action items to be completed. Chief Johnson had provided the hospital board members with the requested information action items today. Chairman Clizbe posed the question to Chief Johnson will PMH support WBRFA will an EMS levy? PMH has stated their belief of the ambulance services should be administered by the fire department and he further explains that a fire-based EMS has been proved to be a model that is beneficial to the taxpayers, the agency involved for many years. Lastly, Chief Johnson stated that PMH has stated they would support an EMS Levy as much as they can being a public entity. Chief Johnson supplied PMH with sample of strategic draft messaging that speaks to that, as he tried to narrow down to what exactly will the hospital state on reasoning to no longer provide the EMS services. IE: for lack of ambulances (1-medic overnight), financial strains, with reduced services that has led to longer wait times for patients. These were structured ideas for describing to the public to assist the hospital to officially announce the discontinuing the ambulance services to the community. All items the hospital may be willing to announce but not specifically providing ending date. Commissioner Holliday states his concern with PHM not being staffed overnight, and a violation of charter. Chief Johnson weighed in with his thoughts and this being a yes/no situation due to the loss of personnel and the hospital not rehiring. It is difficult for our department command officers when there is no knowledge of the hospital medic status. Commissioner Williams explains his personal struggle with waiting for ambulance services. Chairman Clizbe asks if there are known ILAs with other agencies and the hospital for ambulance services. Chief Johnson informs the board that he is aware of Klickitat County. Commissioner Holliday and Moon clarify the service areas as Bickleton/Alderdale/Roosevelt Dump/Hwy 14 and 82. Chief further explains he is not aware if there is a fee that is associated with the service and points out that Benton County Region 3 is huge other than the ILA mention, Chief Johnson does not believe the hospital has any other agreements with outside entities. Chairman Clizbe was curious about Benton City District 2. Chief states they arrive if PMH and or our department are busy and BCFC #2 has assisted to help. If there was any increase in the demand for this service, it would not be free, and the department would need to pay for this assistance of the additional services provided. Commissioner Williams wants it to be noted that there are some advantages with going with an ILA before the department initiates the EMS levy as this will assist with the initial start up costs. The hospital has indicated they are willing to enter an ILA to help with those costs. A question was asked by R. Cobble to which Commissioner Moon reminded his position within the hospital and that he would not be able to respond. Mr. Cobble states he understands Commissioner Moon's stance. Commissioner Moon expresses how he would want to weigh in, but he can not. Mr. Cobble moves forward with his question and if there is a MD supervisor that covers the calls and supervises? Chief Johnson explains that the Shift Lead is on the Medic Unit. They are not a stand-alone self-response command officer; they are the person in charge of the shift who is also a medic. Mr. Cobble ask if there are protocols that will cover them in place if there is not a paramedic available? Chief Johnson stated that he can not speak that, although he is aware some shifts are better at communicating their availability of medic units and what their coverage is. It started of very well 18 months ago and the Chief says he received a daily update on their status and this information was passed on to the fire departments duty officer. The communication and daily updates are no longer provided to the fire department. Currently the fire department is aware of the medic status at the time of the incident.

SHIFT CAPTAIN HIRING:

- **Fire Chief Johnson Report**

Chief Johnson reports that he has made a conditional offer to the number one candidate for the Shift Captain position. The candidate has accepted Chief Johnson's offer. This candidate will now need to complete the other pre-employment requirements items and notify his employer. Chairman Clizbe asks about the number of positions that were filled. Chief Johnson responded that one position has been filled at this time. Commissioner Holliday asked Chief Johnson how deep the candidate roster for the positions was. There were 11 that applied. 8 were forwarded to the assessment center. The result were 3 top candidates with all 3 placing first in at least one of the assessment tests. Those 3 were forwarded on to

Chief's interviews, and the interviews were completed by Chief Johnson and Captain Damron. The candidates were then ranked after the Chief's interview and a conditional offer was made to the top-ranking candidate. Lastly Chief Johnson stated he was impressed with the quality of final candidates, and they were fantastic interviews. The interviewees were closer in ranking after the Chief's interviews.

LIGHT DUTY POLICY

- There has been no movement on this agenda item, and this may be removed from the official agenda with a motion at the next meeting. Background on the agenda item was provided by Chief Johnson and the department intended to draft a policy and then forward it to the union to set forth the extended review and comment process and allow the union to have collaboration on the policy.

NEW BUSINESS

CORRESPONDENCES:

- **Governing Board**
No Comment

- **Staff Reports:**

Administrator Carrasco explained to the board that the Cash Flow report provided is the most current and the report will reflect the budget items that show in a negative balance, and these will be adjusted in the final 2021 amended budget. The Chief reminded the board today's date being December 7th and the final reports are not provided to the department until December 11th, those reports are final figures for the end of month being November 2021. Commissioner Holliday pointed out the expenditures reflected under the month of December. Administrator Carrasco explains the expenditures are from the posting date entered for the current account payable vouchers for the current December 7th consent agenda. There will not be revenues or reconciliations that will show up on this report for November or December. As Commissioner Moon agrees with Chief Johnson and Ms. Carrasco the financial position reports provided to the board will be a month behind at their most recent. End of report.

- **Staff Reports:**

Fire Chief Johnson reports the last couple weeks' time has been dedicated in closely working with Captain Damron and getting him up to speed with the duties as Interim Fire Chief and they focused on main tasks such as including Captain Damron in on the Fire Chief meetings i.e.: with the Prosser Hospital and other interactions the Fire Chief has such as the City of Prosser and Benton County and Fire Chief Johnson is sure it will be a smooth transition. End of report.

SURPLUS RESOLUTION 2021-14:

Chief Johnson describes the surplus items, the removal of the lockers and why the department has no use for the wooden lockers. The location will now be utilized as a study area and placing a couple desks. This area is non-intrusive to those studying. Staff will oversee all the labor. Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve 2021-14 to surplus the items as list in appendix A. Seconded by Commissioner Holliday. Passed unanimously. Motion carried. Other items mentioned by Chief Johnson that the department will be placing on the surplus website is a hose reel, old SCBA's parts and pieces. Captain Friend is in charge and will be monitoring the surplus on the website.

MOU INTERIM FIRE CHIEF:

Chief Johnson begins by describing the format and template he used in developing the MOU for the Interim Fire Chief and that he used the MOU that the board approved when he became Fire Chief. The one change addresses the provisional pay. After last board meeting the board made it clear to include this item within the agreement. A copy has been forwarded to the local union and the union came back with

the same template that was used last time. The union does not anticipate having issues with getting it through their process and they how waiting for the board approval. Commissioner Moon questioned if the 25% provisional incentive was a bit excessive and asked how this figure was calculated. The Chief explains the separation in pay scale with one being the 15% difference in ranks and this would be in line and supported by the comparable. There is currently a Captain who receives a 10% paramedic incentive above the pay from Captain Damron. Combining these two percentages is the calculation used by Chief Johnson. This will bring Captain Damron in range of what Chief Johnson's wages were in 2021. Chairman Clizbe suggests his projection was in the range of 15% and the paramedic stipend does not have to be a factor in the pay scale to stay ahead of the other person. Commissioner Williams provides his position on the Interim Fire Chief wage scale as being more that fair, and this is since the board is asking Captain Damron to continue in his position as the departments Operations Captain as well as become the Interim Fire Chief. This is a dual role status as stated by Commissioner Williams. Commissioner Williams believes the board has receives great service for a bargain wage to which they have paid in wages for their command officers within this department. As per the wage comparable. Commissioner Williams stresses to the board that he is aware of the consensus of the board to their thoughts on increasing the wages per the comparable that he had provided and that the board does not agree with him. Commissioner Williams asks the board to agree to the MOU, with reminding the board that Captain Damron could back out and then what would the board do at that time. Commissioner Williams breaks down the MOU as paying Captain Damron less than they board paid the current Fire Chief in salary last year with the 25% pay incentive and have Captain Damron continue to conduct his duties Operations Captain. Commission Williams states that he does not believe this will make a negative impact to the budget, which is less than \$30,000 increase to his wages, and thus the board will be showing their support in Captain Damron and acknowledging that he is taking on all the extra responsibility. Commissioner Williams also states the cost would be more expensive to search and locate a candidate that would be willing to become an Interim Fire Chief. And then do the same campaign for a permanent Fire Chief. A worker is worthy of his hire and Charles is worthy of his hire and has shown and continued to be so. Commissioner Williams states he has had the opportunity to speak with Captain Damron about the position and Williams states he believes that Captain Damron has excellent ideas for the future of the department. Commissioner Williams states this is unlike the paramedic position with the pay incentive. This is one man doing two jobs, not an additional credential and asks the board to pay Captain Damron for agreeing to provide this for the department. Commissioner Holliday asks what Captain Damron's pay is based on and Chief Johnson informs the board that he is EMT based. Commissioner Holliday does not agree in where the additional 10% is derived from and states he approves along the line of 15-17% total wage increase. Fire Chief Johnson requests the chair to speak and further lists the amount experience thus far that Captain Damron possesses to justify the pay scale as presented to the board. Captain Damron has 8 years as Fire Chief for the City of Grandview, and a 28-year Veteran of the Fire Service and 8 of those years he served here as Operations Captain. Chief Johnson further explains that Captain Damron fully understands moving forward he will have dual roles, and he is looking forward to that extra responsibility and knows what comes with the extra responsibility. Chief Johnson endorses Captain Damron by stating he will do a fantastic job on the interim basis to give the board time to set up the process will be to hire a new Fire Chief. This board has struggled with wage compression. The board will have to realize that where this department stands in the comparable, this is a fair agreement for both sides, knowing the board will be reaping the benefits that is more than 25% provisional pay will allow. Commissioner Williams comments about the comparable that Chief Johnson states, and then refers to the excel sheet he has previously provided. Deputy Chief and Assistant Chief is \$95,000-\$110,000 in the 90 percentiles. The compared Chief's positions are in the range of \$120,000. Currently Captain Damron earns in the upper \$70,000. Commissioner Williams confirms the asking wage for Captain Damron being just under \$110,000 a year, and then reiterates that this would filling 2-positions with an experienced professional is justified and appropriate for the board to approve, and for the board to approve less than would be an insult to Captain Damron in Commissioner Williams opinion, as he further states if it were

him in the situation he would not take the Interim Fire Chief position for less than \$110,000 as this would ask Captain Damron to sacrifice more of his time, his family time, his off time, as he would not be hourly and he would be working an increased amount of hours. Captain Damron would be putting in more time, an effort and casting vision for the department. Does the board really want to slap a current employee within our department in the face who is willing to stand up and do the job asks Commissioner Williams, and further states this is an honest and reasonable pay scale, and it is not a question that the department does not have the revenue in the budget to accommodate the pay being presented. Commissioner Holliday asks if the MOU would eliminate Captain Damron's overtime. Chief Johnson, Commissioner Moon and Williams in unison reply that it will not eliminate overtime. Commissioner Moon clarifies that the MOU will pay the over time rate as Captain as well as the 25% provisional pay increase and therefore Commissioner Moon stated that he would move forward to approve the 15% and states he could also generate a comparison, but it would be less than Commissioner Williams calculation. A disagreement on comparable wages ensued on the matter of creating matrix excel spreadsheets with accurate wage comparisons amongst the board members. Commissioner Williams provided the board the agency being "Washington Fire Commissioner's Association" from 2020 combined with the comparable that Washington State uses to where he collected his data to create the excel wage comparison worksheet. The PDF submitted by Commissioner Williams was converted into an excel spreadsheet and then an analysis was ran by Commissioner Holliday to debate the comparisons presented by Commissioner Williams. Chief Johnson informs the board that Commissioner Galbraith has just joined the board meeting via Zoom. Commissioner Williams states he is interested in the opinion of newly elected Mr. R. Cobble. Commissioner Moon states that it would be in the interest of the board to bring Commissioner Galbraith up to speed in their debate. Commissioner Galbraith apologizes to the board for entering the meeting late as she is managing an emergency at the hospital where she works. Chairman Clizbe acknowledges Commissioner Galbraith entry into the meeting and catches her up on the current conversation and debate on the MOU provisional pay increase percentage was established for Captain Damron with the 10% increase for current employees as a stipend for having paramedic credentials, and Chairmen Clizbe explains the debate amongst the board is that some of the board members do not see the 10% increase as pertinent. As the chair further explains that Captain Damron receives a stipend for his EMT credentials. Chairman Clizbe states he believes 25% is higher than he anticipated. He then informs Commissioner Galbraith that he is not been given exactly the direction of where the board is at with the decision on the pay scale, they will offer Captain Damron, and he asks for Commissioner Galbraith's input on their discussion. Chairmen Clizbe adds that Captain Damron would also be earning overtime pay. Commissioner Williams provides Commissioner Galbraith with the bottom-line amount of \$109,000 and informs her this is less than what Chief Johnson earned in 2021. Commissioner Galbraith clarifies that the board is asking Captain Damron will be performing the duties that are equivalent to (2) FTE's full-time employee's and that Captain Damron is asking for a quarter increase to perform both FTE positions, and she can calculate those figures herself with comparison to her pay increases for also performing two roles for the hospital at 25% wage increase compensation. Commissioner Galbraith states she is in full support to pay Captain Damron the 25% provisional pay. Commissioner Holliday requests to bring the fact that the MOU for Captain Damron will not be exempt from overtime, and the Chief's pay was salary and exempt from overtime and states it would be more than 25% as presented. He currently does not know how much more as he has not been given those numbers, but stresses there is more than the 25%. Commissioner Moon states this is his reasoning for not wishing to go more than 15%, and he was initially less. How is the overtime quantified is asked by Commissioner Galbraith and is this amount flexible? Commission Moon responds that yes, it is flexible, and overtime would not be a set amount as it would be based on accidents, call volume, etc. and typically during the current months that on the captain's side the work slows down unless there is snow. Chairperson refers to the 2021 budget salary for Captains being at 85% so the expense for their salaries will be close as they were budgeted. Commissioner Galbraith states in considering the overtime she views this as a cost of doing business and explains the pros for placing Captain Damron in this role and provides the cons if the board

does not do so, and further explains that there are benefits to placing Captain Damron as Interim Fire Chief that the board cannot associated with dollar amounts. Commissioner Galbraith brings the question to cap the overtime, and Commissioner Moon states not with union. This can be done with salary but not with hourly. Chairman Clizbe asks for a board compromise. Commissioner Williams reiterates his position and states he is firm at 25%. Chief Johnson explains he has been the Interim Fire Chief and this position increases the stress level as knowing all of the duties and responsibilities which still are including in servicing 4 new apparatus, finishing the purchasing, getting them shipped, continuing to do all the normal items Captain Damron was tasked to do, though the department is currently not buying a lot next year, a lot of the purchases will be received next year, along with hiring staff, making sure they are trained, prepare a plan for next summer, and it is this time of year to plan for next year. Chief Johnson states he and Captain Damron just recently attended a meeting regarding fireworks in 2022. This is the time of the year when operations slows and administratively it is busy says Chief Johnson. redirected the board to conduct the meeting. Commissioner Moon offers his regrets to Chief Johnson for not offering the Chief a stipend when Chief Johnson has been the Interim Fire Chief and he explains that the board is correcting that now, but Commissioner Moon does not adhere to the 25%. Chief Johnson explains to do the position correctly one can does not limit overtime, he does not feel 25% is not out of the ball park, and what it is overall is allowing the agency to step back, and have time to line things out, and Captain Damron is more able to step in with the previous skills, knowledge of the position and his abilities. Chief Johnson states if to go back, he would not take on the position again without proper compensation. He would not place himself or his family through stress, time and sacrifices again, and he does not think 25% is enough and the board and the city citizens are getting a bargain. The Chair requests further input on the matter. Without any comment, Chairmen Clizbe states to put the MOU with the 25% up for a motion, and then recommends the motion to be 20%. The difference of percentage began debate into controversy and Chairman Clizbe stresses it is not to be as a bargain in sense his reasoning is because he does not believe in the higher percentage pay due to the current staff has rate increases based on their individual skill set. Commissioner Galbraith asks for reasonings as to why or why not as she has yet to hear these. Commissioner Holliday offers his rationale and that he does not agree with Commissioner Williams comps as presented. He states that he has prepared comps himself and his do not come in as high as Commissioner Williams do. Commissioner Holliday further explains that he does not want to sell the department short or Captain Damron short, in turn he does not want the department to set such high expectation amounts in salaries that when the board goes to fill the position full time they are not backed into a corner and the board may offer the position to Captain Damron therefore the board will have the ability and flexibility to do so with a pay increase if that is the direction the board chooses at that time. Commissioner Williams began to give his concerns, and Commissioner Holliday redirects the discussion to the reasons not per what Commissioner Galbraith had asked from the board members. Chairman Clizbe interjects between Commissioner Williams and Holliday heated discussion and moves the discussion forward towards a middle number the board can agree with respectfully amongst themselves and proposes 20% and pencil this in to as completed. Commissioner Galbraith states that she is in agreeance to meet in the middle between 15% and 25% with making a motion for 20% with knowing the board will have the room for a pay increase later down the road. The Chair requests for a motion to be made from his members. Commissioner Galbraith makes the motion to approve MOU with the compensation to the Interim Fire Chief modification to 20% for provisional pay. Commissioner Holliday seconded the motion. Passed unanimously. Motion carried. Commission Holliday thanked Commissioner Galbraith for bringing the motion to the floor along with Chairman Clizbe. Chief Johnson explains that he will change the terms on the MOU then forward them on to the Local Union 1052 and await their response. No signatures on the MOU will be needed. At the next meeting Chief Johnson will bring the union approved MOU for the board signatures.

MOU ADMINISTRATOR:

The board was requested to sign the MOU for Administrator Carrasco's cola.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

R. Clizbe asked if there will be a need for the board to break into an Executive Session. Chief Johnson states yes, for 10 minutes. R. Clizbe recessed the regular board meeting at 6:52pm for 10 minutes for an executive session per RCW 42.30.110(g). The Chair notified the board secretary they would extend the executive session for an additional 10 minutes until 7:12pm. The board reconvened and resumed the regular board meeting at 7:12p.m. No Action Taken.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Chairman Clizbe reminded the commissioners who attended the board meeting to email the approvals for the payment of vouchers and then asked if Commissioner Galbraith would be able to sign the voucher approvals, surplus resolution 2021-14 and the MOU for Administrator G. Carrasco. Commissioner Galbraith stated she believed she may be able to do so. The Chair then reminded the board of the next regular board meeting will be December 21st, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Chairman Richard Clizbe adjourned the meeting at 7:14p.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