



Pierce County Fire District 13

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Minutes Board of Fire Commissioners Regular Meeting May 10, 2016

Present: Commissioners Zuluaga, Ballantyne, and Noll, Chief McCollum, Captain Wassall

Members of the Public and Staff: 9

Commissioner Zuluaga called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Minutes:

Motion- A motion was made by Commissioner Noll to approve the minutes of April 12, 2016.

Seconded: Ballantyne

Passed

Minutes:

Motion- A motion was made by Commissioner Ballantyne to approve the minutes of May 4, 2016 with an exception regarding the open public meeting. He noted that Commissioner Zuluaga had explained during the May 4th special meeting that we were compliant with the open meetings act. Commissioner Ballantyne noted that Commissioner Zuluaga, while in Chief McCollum's office reviewing the agenda, had called him earlier in the day to have a discussion about changing the agenda of the meeting. Attending Attorney Joe Quinn indicated that discussion on what is on the agenda should not be considered a violation.

Seconded: Noll

Passed

Vouchers:

Motion- A motion was made by Commissioner Noll to approve vouchers #12916 through #12954 in the amount of \$30,676.66 for payables.

Seconded: Ballantyne

Passed

Correspondence/Public Testimony:

Former Commissioner Dick Collins spoke in favor of the lid lift levy. He shared his thoughts regarding how difficult 1% increases are with fuel costs, utilities, insurance, etc. increasing at a higher percentage. He doesn't feel we should depend on funding from outside fires to balance our budget. Hoses have a limited life and require constant replacements. Training is important in this department and we rely on trainees which causes more wear on gear. In the past we have

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relied on leftovers of gear from other departments to save money. The upside is the excellent service we get in the community. He doesn't know of a fire chief that is more frugal than Chief McCollum and requests the Commissioners approve the lid lift levy.

Commissioner Zuluaga read a thank you card from Nancy & Dick for a vacation house watch.

Special Reports and /or Standing Committees:

May 10, 2016 Chief's Report:

Calls: 9 calls, 1 fire, 6 aid, 1 service call

Staffing and Recruiting: Starting to get applications for the Fall academy testing. We will start just after Labor Day. Laterals are training on our equipment and the mini academy went well.

Financial Report: First half taxes have been received and the Pierce County Budget and Finance trial balance sheet is submitted for your review. It shows we have \$177,155.13 balance after this month's payables. We still have a training reimbursement receivable of \$4,800.

Training: Training focuses around the probationary folks as well as our monthly training schedule.

SS911: SS911 Operations Board meeting is this Friday.

Good of the Order: State Park staff was trained in CPR last Friday, and we trained a Boy Scout Troop in CPR and fire extinguisher use on Saturday. Captain Wassall and I attended the Portland Fire Expo last Thursday and got to see all the stuff we can never afford. We did get great information on upgrading our AED, which will be coming due as well as the new upgrades available for our thermal image cameras. Captain Wassall and I attended the West Pierce Graduation on Friday and watched two of our own get pinned...Nick Marciano and Ben McElfish.

Commissioner's Report:

Commissioner Zuluaga pointed out that because of compliance on bunker gear, we need to buy new and fortunately we have received a grant to help with these purchases.

Chief shared that East Pierce offered their surplus hose. We had some that failed the test. We are going out today to pick up 1,000 feet at an extremely reasonable price.

Commissioner Ballantyne asked about flow in those hoses at 300 feet. Chief responded with our hydrants here we get good flow. We test at 900 feet. We can support 4 hoses. We try to keep 1,000 feet of LDH on our engines, which gives us option of pulling a 2nd hydrant. Commissioner Ballantyne pointed out that Tacoma city water is pretty robust and that they came into our area about 30 years ago and replaced all of our pipes.

Commissioner Zuluaga suggested we move up the attorney's time on the agenda.

Attorney Joe Quinn, spoke about the lid lift. This lid lift is restoring what the voters had previously approved. He explained the following:

LR Levy Revenue = Total AV Assessed Value times Rate.

Property taxes are levied one year and collected the next year.

Our levy revenue cannot increase by more than 1%.

Example: 300 million (Total AV) x \$1.00 = \$300,000 collected in tax revenue.

Everything turned upside down with economic downturn.

Levy rates go down, down, down in an escalating AV environment. They would bottom out without a lid lift. That is what happened to EMS. The EMS levy passed approximately 15 years ago. 1% maximum increase applies to EMS also. We are really asking voters to re-authorize or restore the tax. It is a one time difference and then it will be controlled again. Mr. Quinn and the Chief prepared the resolution. Erosion of levy rate occurs with increased property valuations. If inflation in values is more than 1% per year, and our tax revenue is limited to a 1% increase, our purchasing power goes down. Putting a 6% increase was the old lift. It is an annual deal. Look at costs, what has our inflation been for fuel, salaries, etc. (typically 85-90% labor costs). If those things have been going up more than 1%, then we would not be wise to authorize only 1%. He suggested "up to 6%" increase per year, and then the Commissioners intelligently decide based on cost increases. The Commissioners set the maximum increase per year up to 6% (on the revenue side, not the rate). Resolution recommendation is "up to 6%" per year (cannot accumulate from prior year if 6% wasn't used in prior year). Somewhere between 2002 and 2005 we had asked the voters to raise to \$1.50 and it didn't pass. He has some districts that have received approval for \$3.30 per thousand (\$1.50 Fire, 0.50 EMS, and an M&O levy to get them up to \$3.30).

The Chief pointed out that if we go over \$1.00 per thousand, we impact junior districts due to the \$5.90 rule. They can buy us down so we don't impact them. Metro Parks was paying us a buy down even when we were at \$1.00 so that we didn't impact them. The recession took some pressure off of that so that we don't go over the \$5.90.

The Assessor had told the Chief that the \$1.00 figure was safe. Mr. Quinn said if we go over the \$1.00 it would become a pro-rationing issue. "Permanent" rates erode and are really not permanent. They go the opposite way in a recession, i.e. the rates go up. Mr. Quinn said that the valuations are basically done by computer at the Assessor's office. The Chief pointed out that the Commissioners have the controlling factor.

Mr. Quinn pointed out that the multi year lid lift didn't exist 10 years ago. Rather than have to put in a lid lift every year, which costs money, legislation was created to allow multi year lid lift.

He shared that the explanatory statement is controlled by law. It can only explain the vote for Yes or No. The PDC allows some limited campaigning. Have to do a "statement for" with a committee that explains it. PDC limits: one neutral...can't use scare tactics; oriented toward facts, not fiction; can't be too persuasive or inflammatory; can do one flyer or mailer. Committee can do more. They can spend money we can't. Do one factual flyer. Was voter approved 25 years ago or more. Throttle is in the hands of the commissioners. 1% doesn't cut it as inflation is more than that. 6 years that you can work with the increase. After that you use \$1.00 amount of last levy...i.e. up to \$404,000. Resets floor (highest lawful levy). Look at worksheet we have to fill out....that shows the highest lawful levy. 6% goes away after 6 years.

Big erosion has happened in the fire levy. He suggests staying with where our biggest erosion has occurred. Approach EMS down the road when erosion has hit that levy. There is a banking levy capacity...if you decide you want to bank capacity. Would have to state in the annual resolution that we want to “bank” the capacity. The highest lawful levy is the most we have had since 1985. Statue 84.55.092 states you can take lower number and bank the difference to max of 6%.

Chief had Attorney Eric Quinn confirm that only a simple majority is needed. Mr. Quinn stated that there is no validation requirement. It can run in August state primary election and if fails, can run again in November election.

Commissioner Ballantyne asked if we can withdraw the area of part of DP state park in Pierce County. Attorney recommended we contract with the State. Mr. Quinn said there are 2 options. RCW 52.30.020 states that state and local agencies such as state parks shall contract with fire districts for service. We are jointly responsible with DNR (they come out of Enumclaw). DNR will pay for us to do any mop up. Mutual Aid agreements exist with South King and Tacoma. Attorney said from a liability risk, it is a real problem for us. Urban area Fire Departments aren't typically trained for big wildland fires. There is a very large area of Dash Point state park that is undeveloped and has the potential for a large wildland fire. The Chief's concern is our potential liability, as is Commissioner Ballantyne's. Commissioner Ballantyne pointed out that Dash Point state park is the 2nd largest undeveloped land area (Pt. Defiance is 1st).

Old Business:

Lid Lift: Commissioner Zuluaga directed us back to the Lid Lift. Commissioner Noll brought up that the word “construction” in the resolution may be confused with station construction vs. construction repairs. Commissioner Ballantyne stated he was in favor of the Lid Lift, but he is concerned about the time. He didn't feel we have had enough conversation about the expenses on the Needs Analysis, like volunteer stipend increase and salaries. He spoke with Dave Malone, BPIC President and understood that when Mr. Malone presented it, there was concern from those in attendance about raising property taxes. Commissioner Ballantyne is opposed to putting it on the ballot in August. Chief suggested we can offer education between now and August. Commissioner Ballantyne doesn't feel the supporting document is complete enough to move forward.

Commissioner Noll shared that he included information into the Needs Analysis (actual title is 2016 Lid Left Levy Evaluation for Fire District #13) document to inform taxpayers about the structure, service and financial aspects of the fire district. He feels the information is comprehensive enough for taxpayers to form their own opinions. Commissioner Noll asked about the cost of running the election. Chief thought it would be about \$2,500 in August and more in November.

Commissioner Ballantyne noted that he doesn't think we should own a brush truck and if we pulled away from Dash Point State Park, he doesn't feel we would need one. Chief commented that there should be some trust in the Fire Department to make good decisions on their needs. If we miss the opportunity to run this now, it will cost us more to do this in November. His main concern is to keep us sustainable. We have 3 people that now work for DNR that we trained. That helped recruit more volunteers. The people elected the Commissioners to make the best

decisions, trusting the Chief to make wise decisions with the money received. We need to secure ourselves financially.

Commissioner Zuluaga expressed how the Fire Department product has been improved and improved. We needed long range planning, what is working, and what is making it work. A draft business model was created. We are looking at financial sustainability and it is up to the Commissioners to make the decision to provide the voters with an opportunity. He feels the need for money was well prepared with the best of intentions. He feels the Chief is extremely frugal. Resolution vote can be split into 1) the lid lift, 2) the date to put it on the ballot.

New Business:

Resolution 16-290:

Motion- A motion was made by Commissioner Zuluaga to approve a multi-year lid lift like the one proposed in Resolution 16-290, prepared by Attorney Joe Quinn, with the 1st caveat to change the word "construction" to "repair", and the 2nd caveat to leave the date open for either August or November.

Commissioner Ballantyne asked that rather than leave date open, the date is decided. He proposed to vote on this resolution using November date. He would vote in favor of that. If we vote on this, he will vote no.

Seconded: Noll

Those in favor: 2. Opposed 1.

Passed. Motion carries 2 to 1.

Next issue is when we put it on the ballot. Commissioner Ballantyne asked if there was any disadvantage to put it on the ballot in November. Mr. Quinn said many Fire Districts put the ballot on in August and if it fails, it gets tweaked and put back on the ballot in November.

Mr. Quinn suggested that the issue was whether there was enough time to intelligently present this to the voters.

Commissioner Ballantyne mentioned he would be out of the country 18 days next month. Chief said that the public meetings would be presented by a representative from the Fire District and the For Committee at each public meeting. He would like to agree on the education and how we plan to use the money. Chief needs money on how you would see that. Indicated that we need to start right away, and possibly be in the newspaper.

Mr. Quinn spoke to the 85 day election rule. Because of the rule, most fire districts move to put the vote in both ballots and then cancel (if it passes in August) due to the timing.

Chief mentioned that the Needs Analysis is a fluid document. We can change the document to meet the Commissioners' desires. He asked what it would take to get their support. Commissioner Ballantyne doesn't feel we can positively present this picture in the time allowed. Commissioner Zuluaga said we need to run with purpose, not fear. He believes this Fire District has stood up and made a name for itself. We need to support this Fire District financially. He thinks we can't run from this job because we are concerned about what the voters might say. He said today is the day we are going to decide whether we are going to run this Lid Lift Levy in August.

Motion- A motion was made by Commissioner Zuluaga to put the Lid Lift levy on the ballot in August.

Commissioner Noll noted the integrity of the staff. He has viewed the repairs needed, and the forecasting of expenses is reasonable. He is personally committed to helping accomplish this. The Needs Analysis can be edited as needed.

Commissioner Ballantyne voted negatively because of the date, realizing it puts a different spin on it. He doesn't think we have enough time to prepare. He supports the Lid Lift.

Chief McCollum suggested we set dates today to have open houses. We can find out days the meetings are being held at DPSIC & BPIC meetings. We have had individuals already commit to being on the For Committee.

Seconded: Noll

Favor: 2 Opposed: 1

Passed

Commissioner Noll commented that he thought Mr. Quinn's comments were spot on to have a second chance, and that there is time to disseminate public info and to attend public meetings.

Commissioner's Report Continued:

DPSIC Meeting: Fun Run June 4th, our Fire District confirmed they are participating.

Hazard Mitigation Grant: Deadline was missed so waiting until next cycle.

The balance of the agenda was tabled.

Announcements:

The next regular meeting will be June 14, 2016 at 9:00 AM.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 11:32 AM

Approved By:

Chairman Zuluaga

Commissioner Ballantyne

Commissioner Noll

Fire Chief/District Secretary