

THURSTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT THREE

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

January 6, 2022

Commissioner Kirkbride
Commissioner Gamble
Commissioner Hetzler
Commissioner Kelling
Commissioner Roberts

The meeting was held in person with limited attendance and is open to the public via the Zoom meeting platform. The meeting is being recorded.

Commissioner Hetzler was excused.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Roberts called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM, followed with a salute to our Nation's Flag.

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: To approve the agenda as published.

MOTION: To approve the agenda as amended.

Motion: Commissioner Kelling
Second: Commissioner Kirkbride
Carried: Unanimous

III. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC /MEMBERS PRESENT

None.

IV. PROMOTIONAL PINNING CEREMONY

A. Lieutenant Paramedic Dan Nadeau

V. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION: To approve the consent agenda as published.

MOTION: To approve the consent agenda as amended.

Motion: Commissioner Kirkbride

Second: Commissioner Kelling

Carried: Unanimous

One of the commissioners submitted a question about Line Item 1525 on Page 104 related to Tactical Athlete Health and Performance. Tactical Athlete has changed their official name to Rebound. It is a firm first engaged with about two years ago that provides consulting services for members who are facing on-the-job or off-the-job injuries. They facilitate rapid access to diagnostic imaging, physician care, et cetera. There has been a dramatic turnaround in the time lag that we used to have with getting folks into definitive care.

A new process has been used for the creation of the meeting minutes. Chief Dickson was previously the recorder for the meetings, and other staff had stepped in. Chief Cerovski found a vendor willing to work from the recordings to produce the minutes for the meetings. To facilitate this process, it would be helpful if the person who makes or seconds a motion can state their name.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Thurston County Medic One -- Commissioner Kirkbride

- Chart shared of ALS/BLS responses for 2021. There was a dip in call volume because of COVID in 2020, but in 2021, BLS is back to the same trajectory of growth as prior to COVID. ALS has not grown in the same way (which is good).
- The director of Medic One has been temporarily assigned to be the interim director of Thurston County Public Health starting on 01/10 and has stepped away from the directorship of Medic One. One of the staff members in charge of ALS, Ben Miller-Todd, has been named temporary assistant director for Emergency Services and head of Medic One.
- The next EMS Council meeting is January 19th via Zoom.

B. Thurston 9-1-1 Communications (TCOMM) -- Commissioner Roberts

- TCOMM met on January 5.
- January 26 via Zoom will be the retirement function for the executive director.
- The financial report remains very good news: revenues up, expenditures down. The sales tax is 14% over year to date from a year ago. The audit was just completed, and there were no findings and no recommendations; a very clean audit.

- In the executive director's report, for the radio project, still expecting June 2023. All of the law enforcement radios have been ordered, and they began their training today.
- The leases have been completed with the City of Lacey. The microwave work has been put on hold because the towers are slippery now.
- There is a new federal standard for fire radios, which is more robust. Chief Brooks clarified that the new standard combines cellular capability into portable radios, so you have the land mobile radio and cellular capability in one device. The problem is that it also comes at significant added expense. The group is leaning away from a recommendation to go into that just because it is cost prohibitive at this point, in terms of both the initial device purchase and also the cellular connection to every radio.
- House Bill 1726 and House Bill 1735 add clarification to the police reform bills, so those are being watched. The other meaningful bill is Senate Bill 5555 mandates some minimum training across the board and certification across the board that will bring up the professional standard.
- There was a new phone system in TCOMM last spring, and it is not working well. There was another issue a few days ago that affected a different agency, and a letter is being drafted that is being sent from one of the other agencies that we will all be signers on, asking them to fix it now. We are hopeful that they will fix the issues.

C. City/District Liaison -- Chief Brooks

- At the city's request, the meeting in December was postponed. The calendar will be reset in January, with the meeting anticipating to take place on January 18th.

D. Thurston County Fire Commissioners Association

No report.

E. Thurston Regional Planning Council - Commissioner Kelling

No report – the next meeting is on January 14th via Zoom.

F. Community Outreach

Chief Brooks shared:

- Another shoutout to Chris DeBell for her work keeping us engaged in the community via the digital platforms. There was a lot of positive feedback during the inclement weather. The primary point of outreach is using the social media platforms. She is looking to schedule with the Senior Safe At Home program.

G. Capital Facilities and Equipment Activities

Chief Brooks shared:

- The next scheduled event is secondary presubmission on the VRF on January 12th. For the presubmission, we're going to be approaching the City to discuss the energy code and the requirements set forth. For the mechanical shop/garage, the energy requirements do not seem appropriate, so we are going to ask for a variance, which we believe is fairly common. Once we through the presubmission process, Rice Fergus is nearing the point where we can make application for the building permit and then move forward with the bidding process for the VRF. Background work continues on Station 33 design.
- Since the last meeting, we successfully placed the two new engines into service on the 20th and the 21st of December. There were some challenges during the snowy weather, but overall it has gone well.
- The new ladder truck has been in Tacoma for warranty work this week, coming back today.
- We now get to standardize the entire fleet to include two reserve engines, which will be rolling out in the next week or so. The deputy chiefs are working to coordinate having crew members and staff come together to get them ready. As recruit academy launches in February, those will be leveraged extensively to get through the academy, which is anticipated to include as many as 25 people.
- Two of the three stations are complete on the new vehicle exhaust system. With the inclement weather, they were installed, but we couldn't get power to them. The installation work at Station 31 has also begun.

Also of note, there will be batch notification of some requested signatures for three or four weeks of minutes being sent through DocuSign that had not been sent out for a digital signature.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. COVID Emergency Declaration Status: Staff Report

We have been hit hard over the past few weeks. There have been about 13 positive cases and multiple other exposures. We have adapted to the updated CDC guidelines, which shortens the time away from the workplace to 5 days, but we are requiring the N95 mask in the workplace for an additional 5 days. Because of the scarcity of testing, there are some recommendations for testing, but we are not requiring it. We will get tests for those who are exposed and start to develop symptoms, but we're not routinely testing those before they come back to the workplace; just observing the isolation time as recommended. That has worked reasonably well so far. It has generating some challenges with staffing, especially through the holidays. There was some mandatory overtime.

Related to the federal standards under review in the district courts and appellate courts particularly around testing and other accommodation requirements: the current belief is that per the federal standard, unless it is amended, as an employer of over 100 people, we will be subject to routine testing for unvaccinated members. They will be required to test every 7 days. The requirements for that have been pushed out to February 7th. We are actively working on a plan to be

able to start routine testing for our members working under accommodation by the week of February 7th. There will be some cost associated with that, although Medic One is working to try to make tests available. Chief Flowers has done research to find tests if we need to get those on our own as an agency. Director Hough reached out to our FEMA representatives and got confirmation that that is a reimbursable expense, at least through April. We will be talking with the labor group about the implications of this, because it does add a significant layer of complexity for the unvaccinated members. These would be rapid tests, of which we have a limited number of those tests available in-house at this time.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Nothing at this time

IX. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Chief Brooks reported:

- Chief Cerovski and Chris DeBell are going to be working over the next few weeks about looking at our draft annual report. Shoutout to Chief Cerovski and the IT team. There was some bad data posted from November into December that did not accurately reflect the call volumes. They got that corrected and it was just posted today. On the Dashboard, that information is available. There were 16,587 incident responses for last year. In 2020, there were 14,197, so that is a 17% increase. It was an unexpected dip in 2020 amidst the pandemic, but going back and comparing to 2019, there were 15,200 incident responses, so this year's numbers are still a 9% growth since that. We had been running 8-9% in the two preceding years.
- The busiest unit has been Engine 34, which ran almost 3700 calls last year. That was followed closely by Engine 31, at about 3% less at 3500 calls for the year.
- The trigger to start looking at additional staffing and resources used to be any time a unit reached 3000 calls. It becomes very difficult at or above the 3000 incident mark to keep up with training and other routine activities, so it really highlights what we've been talking about with the need for the additional aid unit at Station 34.
- Engine 33 was the last unit that reached over 3000, and once we instituted Aid 33, Engine 33 was down to under 2000 calls last year, and the Aid unit did 3150. Had we not added that unit, out of Station 33 alone, we would be at almost 5000 calls for that station. The aid units have really helped with planning for the ongoing growth. We are optimistic about getting Aid Unit 34 on the road. At Station 31 with those numbers, we need to be looking at that, but in the interim, we have to bring some better balance between the engine and the truck company. We have tried to shelter the truck company from being out on some of those because it's the only one we have, but the truck company did almost 2000 calls itself last year, so there is not a lot of ability to shift call volume around.

- In the medic unit ranks: Medic 6 is fairly rapidly catching up with Medic 3 and continues to be the most rapidly growing with almost 1900 calls last year, and Medic 3 was at almost 2000.
- The Yelm car of Medic 2 has stayed steady at about 1100 calls a year for the last few years.
- The 2021 financial information is available. Good news: 104% of revenue and only 93% of expense. Looking at just the general fund, that gave us and end-of-year cash balance of just over \$7 million. When you take the cumulative amount of our reserve, equipment repair, the other ones that are counted under our general fund, the board's policy is that we maintain a minimum of a 16% cash reserve on hand, and this year we had \$8.5 million or 33%, inclusive of those other funds. This was in a year with significant growth and expansion in several fronts.
- Another big investment is trying to build our capital funds. For equipment repair and replacement, the \$850,000 of transfer is our first investment in avoiding the need for bonding or other borrowing of money in the future for our large capital needs for equipment, at least.
- We still have in the capital fund about \$4.5 million remaining in the project fund that was issued by the bonds. We're nearing the level to where we don't have to worry about the expenditure rate on that with the 80%, but with the pandemic, we were told that those restrictions were lifted. We should be able to exhaust the majority of that fund if the building projects move forward this year, especially with the VRF.
- The crews did a great job navigating the inclement weather. The private ambulance companies have been really low on staffing levels and the hospital has been at record levels of census. We've had crews at the hospital for up to two hours trying to drop off patients. We've been working to up staff and have had the additional aid unit staffed trying to provide our own transport resources to try to supplement those.

From Chief Schmidt:

- Shoutout to Public Works for the City of Lacey. We had two apparatus that were stuck last Saturday for 6 hours off Scenic Drive near Meridian. We responded there for a medical emergency and then had two apparatus that ended up getting stuck. We tried Nisqually Towing and several other attempts to get them out, but they ended up coming in with some sand and were able to help us get out.
- We have had some flooding issues south of us. We worked with the leadership team today, and Chief Cox is heading up a strike team to head down there with a rescue rig with a raft on board as well as Boat 34 being pulled by our F-250. We have five personnel on standby right now throughout the night and likely an additional crew that can take over in the morning if needed. They have been in contact with West Thurston and are willing to house us if it makes sense for us to move up this evening.
- We received a letter sent to Mayor Selby in thanks from the Senate Democratic Caucus regarding our efforts downtown with the early December fire. They are continuing to work through the investigation

process. Our drone went down and did some mapping over the area and they have been using the footage in their investigation process.

X. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Gamble – no comments.

Commissioner Kelling – thanks to the chief for the update on drone usage. The last time the drones were mentioned, there was no policy for use. Is there one yet? Also, are the firefighter hires complete in preparation for the recruit academy? Are we in jeopardy of going back to virtual meetings anytime soon?

The chief clarified that there is a policy, but not a lot of operators. There is no policy specifically for use in emergency incidents. There is an operational directive about when it is and is not deployed. Any of the recordings that come with it are subject to all of the public records, so there is an archive of the film. Chief Cerovski will be working on bringing the policy group back together, which will include looking at drone use.

Of the new hires, a few are still pending. They all are initiated in the process. There are ten career and one transitioning military that is going to be onboarded as a volunteer working through the WorkX program. He will be able to be engaged as a volunteer; for the joint base, it will be an internship and transition, so he will actually go through the career academy, and if successful, when he transitions out in May, then he can transition his status from volunteer to career. He will be paid by the military to go through training. With him, plus one member already hired who is a paramedic who needs to go back through the academy, we anticipate having 11 of the 12 that we had hoped, so currently one short, but overall feeling pretty good about it. Work force and recruitment is a challenge right now. Three other agencies have asked to be engaged, so it will be somewhere plus or minus 25 in total with the academy.

So far, there has not been any indication of moving to virtual meetings. Some planned legislation may allow public meetings to continue meeting virtually.

Commissioner Kirkbride – good to be back in the country after a wonderful time in Hungary and Poland. Europe appears to be all open, aside from testing required to enter. Thank you to Dale for excellent fiscal management and very clear reports.

Commissioner Roberts – grateful for all of you and what you do to help keep people healthy during this time of this increased COVID variant, so thank you for that.

XI. CORRESPONDENCE

- None.

XII. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC / MEMBERS PRESENT

- None.

XIII. REQUEST FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. In accordance with RCW 42.30.110(1)(i) to discuss potential litigation with legal counsel. The initial Executive Session was initiated at 6:15 p.m. for 15 minutes and was extended twice for 10 minutes each. The Regular Meeting resumed at 6:50 p.m. with no action taken.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned as of 6:51 p.m.

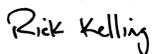
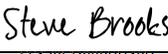
*Next Regular Meeting: January 20, 2022 – 5:30 p.m.
Available via remote meeting.*

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 Chair
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Vice Chair
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 ATTEST: District Secretary