

Clackamas Fire District #1



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS' WORK SESSION
June 15, 2021**

(This meeting was recorded.)

**I. CALL TO ORDER PER ORS 192.610 TO 192.690
ORS 192.650 – The meeting has been recorded.**

President Cross called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm. He noted the meeting was being held via teleconference.

Present: Board of Directors Jay Cross, Thomas Joseph, Jim Syring, Don Trotter, Marilyn Wall; Fire Chief Nick Browne; Assistant Chief Brian Stewart; Division Chief Dan Mulick; Battalion Chief Steve Deters; CFO Mark Whitaker; Clackamas District 1 Local 1159 Shop Steward Andrew Gordian; Incoming Board Director Chris Hawes; and Executive Assistant Rachel Trotman.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

III. BARGAINING UPDATE: "D" SHIFT CONCEPT

Chief Browne explained they will be going over the D-Shift Concept. Another focus will be to give an update on the bargaining between the Local 1159 and Clackamas Fire District #1 (CFD). This will also be discussed further in the upcoming Executive Session.

AC Stewart shared that their intent is to provide great service to the public and make sure they take care of their members as well. He's been associated with safety and health for the last eight years at the state level. He explained that their approach in bargaining this year was focusing on how they can take care of their members even better than they do today.

He shared a slide showing a brief history of how CFD has cared for the community and the firefighters. He explained the services offered as well as the steps taken to care for personnel.

Director Joseph asked what bailout gear was.

AC Stewart answered that bailout gear is a belt and rope system that is on the firefighter's pants. They can connect a hook to windowsill and can lower themselves safely out the window if other exits or ladders are inaccessible. Every career firefighter has bail out gear issued to them. All volunteers have one for each seated position.

AC Stewart explained that he will be going over health and well-being challenges, outline the four-platoon model, and show how they will implement and evaluate that model.

He shared a slide that went over the current situation. The Wellness Department disseminates a lot of current information to the members such as cancer risks. They also give quarterly talks at the stations. The Wellness Department and the firefighters in the district are gaining a greater sense of awareness of the long-term physical and mental health impacts of the career and the schedule. For example, hypervigilance (the ongoing, near constant state of alertness) impacts the cardiovascular system. He explained that there has been increasing research on firefighters and the impacts of sleep deprivation, including the 24/48 schedule.

He shared that alternative schedules have been initiated. The 48/96 schedule (2 days on, 4 days off schedule) has been used on the west coast for the last decade. There are more agencies that are gravitating toward the four-platoon model.

AC Stewart presented a slide on “What Kills Firefighters?”. He explained that a number of organizations track information on firefighter deaths, including the NFPA. However, they do not track firefighter suicides or cancer related deaths. There are efforts to change that, but currently there are other organizations capturing that information. He went over statistics for 2019 for firefighter deaths that were related to heart attacks, suicide, or cancer. These are all factors they consider when looking at how to improve the quality of the firefighters’ lives during their careers and during their retirement.

He then presented a slide going over the Hypervigilance Biological Rollercoaster. While at work, firefighter’s bodies are primed to be in response mode. The expectation to respond or be ready to respond, is always there and can be stressful.

The next slide covered the impacts of sleep disruption and disorders. He gave several examples of how interrupted sleep can impact their health. For example, not getting restorative sleep can cause a decrease in cancer-fighting immune cells and affect mental health. There are also increasing studies related to the impacts of estrogen and testosterone levels from sleep disruption.

AC Stewart said that sleep disruption is even more of a factor now since studies show that night calls have increased. Since 2010, CFD saw a 57% increase of total call volume. Night calls specifically increased 90%. Therefore, firefighters are likely dealing with hypervigilance during the stay and interrupted sleep cycles at night. The longer firefighters are in these sustained states, the more a longer recovery period is needed to avoid negative health impacts.

Director Wall asked what times are considered a “night” call?

Shop Steward Gordian shared that its calls from about 2000-0600.

CFD has implemented other tools to mitigate this risk, but the district also wants to look at moving to a four-platoon model – A, B, C, and D. Currently, CFD has three platoons – A, B, and C. In 2017, the Local 1159 expressed some interest in the four-platoon model but it did not move forward. The district is reexamining the model this year.

The model would trade kelly days off-work for dynamic days on-work. At the end of the year, they will have worked the same number of shifts.

The district has done thorough research into this model and how it could affect the crews as well as the different departments within the district. The district spoke with five fire agencies currently using the four platoon models, all in Washington. There are no agencies in Oregon, that they know of, that use this model.

There are some minor costs with transitioning to this model (or any model). Coding changes will be needed for Telestaff and it affects a number of rules within that system. Staff time will be needed for planning and implementation. There is some cost savings with this model as there will be no kelly days, therefore there will be no more floaters. Removing the floater stipend will save about \$40,000. This model will also add 16 more technical staffing positions (water rescue, hazmat, etc.) which means 16 additional people will be trained in those specialties. The district is looking at implementing this model in January of 2023.

Director Syring asked about the floater positions. Don't they fill in for vacation, sick, longer medical leaves, etc. in addition to kelly days?

Chief Browne explained that based on the number of kelly days in the system, 21 floaters are required. The floaters only fill for kelly days, but they are capable of filling in for sick, vacation, etc., if they aren't already working a kelly day. All operations replacement for sick or vacation time is budgeted separately. Floaters would become regularly scheduled individuals at a station.

Discussion followed about floaters, sick, and vacation leave.

AC Stewart showed a slide on the number of shifts with the current three-platoon model with Kelly Days and the four-platoon model with dynamic days.

Three-Platoons with Kelly days

121 shifts per platoon per year – minus 15 Kelly Day per year = **106 shifts per year worked by employee**

Four-Platoons with Dynamic Days

91 shifts per platoon each year + plus 15 dynamic days per year = **106 shifts worked by employee**

He gave the example of an individual working 91 shifts on their B shift. They would also pick up 15 extra days that will be assigned like covering a vacancy on C or D shift.

The four-platoon model would provide three consecutive days off which would increase that restoration period. It requires the same number of firefighters per apparatus, per day, and per year. There would be no additional staffing needed.

Director Syring requested that he further explain what a dynamic day is and how it is scheduled.

AC Stewart explained that if 365 days is split into four parts, each shift could only work 91 days. To work the full year, they need 106 shifts, so they need to have other “payback” days. For example, someone assigned to A shift will work 91 shifts on A shift. They still owe the department 15 days, so they take those days on another shift. Right now, every shift has every seat filled with a firefighter on their permanent shift. If they move to a four-platoon model, they will have some vacant crews on D shift because they don’t have enough firefighters to fill them all. These vacancies are filled with dynamic (payback) days.

Discussion followed regarding the two models, how the days worked, and how time off would be determined.

AC Stewart presented a slide going over potential beneficial outcomes for the members (crews), management, and the community.

He then went over a slide that outlined the potential timeline for implementing the four-platoon model starting with forming a committee in August of 2021 and concluding with it being implemented and live in January 2023.

AC Stewart explained how the four-platoon model would be evaluated. It’s important that both sides – Labor and management – have an opportunity to evaluate this new schedule and see what works and doesn’t work for them. They could also compare historical data of sick time, worker’s compensation, etc., with the new model and the current three platoon model.

He concluded his presentation by sharing that the Administration feels that a rested and recovered firefighter is a better firefighter. The four-platoon model is another tool to provide service, protect employees, and reduce costs.

Director Wall asked how long the Washington departments have had this program implemented.

Chief Browne said that Snohomish County implemented the model in 2011, Seattle in 2007/2008, and Everett was the first agency to implement in the early 2000s.

Director Wall asked why this model has not caught on.

Chief Browne said it has caught on, mostly in Washington. Washington has always had a higher number of kelly days offered to their employees. This model won’t do anything to mitigate overtime costs. One department did see a rapid decrease in sick time.

Director Wall agrees with goal and wants better mental health for the employees. Wouldn’t it be better to cut the hours they work? For example, working 12-hour shifts instead of 24-hour shifts?

AC Stewart was not aware of any studies that have looked at 12 hour shifts for firefighters. There is a study from around 2018 that looked at a common schedule on the east coast which is 14-hour day shifts and 10-hour night shifts. The hypervigilance and sleep disruption issues would still exist with less recovery time.

Discussion followed regarding the 14/10 shift. Chief Browne noted that CFD doesn't have the personnel to do the 14/10 model or a 12/12 model.

Director Joseph commented that he read a recent article that showed that employees valued job satisfaction more than salary and position, which is much different than in the past. Its important to take care of the employees as well as be fiduciary responsible. A "D" shift could bring a quality of life for the staff.

President Cross said he likes the idea. He was wondering if the four-platoon departments have seen a higher likelihood of people taking a sick day to get seven days off in a row. Or are they more likely to use less sick leave?

Chief Browne said they only have quantifiable data from Snohomish County. When they let crews schedule the dynamic days, they noticed a small spike in sick leave. However, once they took that back and administration scheduled out the dynamic days and kept crews together, they saw a decrease in sick days. How it is implemented certainly makes a difference.

Director Syring brought up that once agencies reach the 15 kelly days, it makes sense that this four-platoon model would work. Before they reach that number of days, its not as feasible. He also mentioned that he was reading the labor contract. Does management have the right to just move to the four-platoon model? Does this need to be negotiated? He also cautioned against the change as they have had floaters since 1987. There is no one to help mitigate overtime or cover for other leave.

AC Stewart said the contract does say a 24/48 work schedule, but more importantly it lists the 27-day cycle. A four-platoon schedule would require an adjustment to this (as 27 is not evenly divisible by 4). It will also have increased FSA costs.

Chris Hawes was concerned that this would require a contract change and that they don't know the full financial impact. As CFD just passed its first deficit budget ever, it was certainly a big change to make.

Chief Browne responded that the contract would just say 24/72 instead of 24/48. Article four would still be in the contract pertaining to management's rights. This also has an 18-month lead time to research this option and determine if its right for both the members and the organization.

DC Mulick joined the Work Session at 5:16 pm.

Chris Hawes commented that AC Stewart mentioned interrupted sleep. He'd imagine that some stations get more night calls than others. It could be 1, 2 or 3 night calls a week? Chief Browne said it could also be zero.

Chris Hawes also referred back to what Director Joseph said about employee satisfaction. Does CFD has an unsatisfied work force? Is there a high turnover because of working conditions?

AC Stewart said that CFD doesn't have an unsatisfied work force; it's a very stable work force. As a general premise for making considerations for sleep deprivation, Dr. Sarah Jahnke (prominent researcher on firefighter health) recommends looking at the highest call volume stations at night for how to mitigate concerns across all organization. People cycle through the stations over the years. Probationary members and experienced captains/lieutenants are placed at the busy stations. Some members opt to stay at the busy stations.

Shop Steward Gordian said that the employees of CFD are satisfied and happy to be part of the district. There isn't a lot of turnover in this career; people may work for one or possibly two departments. Another goal of this schedule change would be to attract better candidates and have CFD be even more desirable. A schedule change that doesn't have a ton of cost to it and can get CFD better candidates to serve the community, is a great option to consider.

Director Syring asked if the annual shift vacations change with the four-platoon model. If they are only working every fourth shift and have the same amount of vacation, there would be a lot more days to cover, right?

AC Stewart said that was a great question and suggested it's a good topic to cover at the Executive Session. They have information on this to present then.

Chief Browne explained that this is just a reconfiguration. Its not more days off than they currently have. They will dive deeper on this topic at the Executive Session.

Director Joseph commented that if this would help the crews, psychologically and physically, it will help the district.

Chief Browne said that there is a lot of science that backs up the four-platoon model and shows it be beneficial to the long-term health and wellness of the members. There is also potential long-term savings in a decrease in medical insurance claims.

President Cross shared that when he started in the fire service 35 years ago, a typical day was three or four calls a shift; seven calls was a crazy day. As there are more people and more calls, districts can build more stations, have more engines, etc. They have reached a point where they can't build fire stations and spend millions of dollars. They need to find new and innovative ways to have people run less calls. He has been an advocate of an EMS prevention division that would prevent people from going on calls in first place. Now, 15 calls a day is normal and occasionally there are even 20 calls. He really likes the four-platoon model because its new and innovative and it's the kind of thinking they need to keep doing to move forward.

DC Mulick said that the fire service is changing from where it is been. Ten years ago, when Fred Charlton became the Fire Chief, he had commented, "Why aren't we in the business of running less calls versus more calls?" He understands that there are some system problems like the ambulance contract that was written over 20 years ago. There are a number of things that are driving up call volume like the houseless population, mental health/behavioral issues, and the current health care issues. He believed that they better CFD can care for its members, the better they can serve the community.

DC Mulick shared that having a four-call night at Engine 301 takes a while to recover from. Then they have to come back and do it again and its compounded. When the firefighters are young, they can bounce back easier. After doing it for years, they see things like cancer, mental health, suicide, etc. They have to ask themselves, "Are they doing everything they can to protect their employees?" He thinks that the four-platoon model is a great step towards doing that. There is science that backs up the sleep pattern information. This decision will affect people for the rest of their lives.

BC Deters agreed with DC Mulick. Unfortunately, they have had people that have struggled and even taken their own lives. However, the district has taken steps to improve along the way. This seems like a natural progression toward better well-being of the work force. He is glad to be a part of the team that is working to make this benefit and the working conditions as good as they can be. From a business standpoint, they don't get an 18-month head start on any program. He understands that there is still a lot of work to do in those 18 months. It does give them an opportunity to run this for a full year before they have to decide if they want to continue with it.

They are not hiring another full other workforce. It's not cost neutral, but he thinks the benefits will outweigh the cost. He knows that there is risk, but he knows that everyone he works with is committed to taking that 18 months to make sure this is something that's sustainable in the long run. He felt the Fire Chief should have ability to restructure the work schedule to meet the needs of the community and the work force. The work force has been asking for a schedule change of some sort for many years.

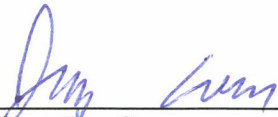
Shop Steward Gordian said he appreciated everyone's input. When they decided to bring this forward, they took their time to look at it from all angles to make sure it was doable. He thinks it is the right direction to go.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:37 pm.

Rachel Trotman
Executive Assistant



President Jay Cross



Secretary Marilyn Wall

