

Clackamas Fire District #1



BOARD OF DIRECTORS' WORK SESSION October 12, 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 Joseph called the teleconference meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Present: Board of Directors Thomas Joseph, Jay Cross, Jim Syring, Chris Hawes, and Marilyn Wall; Fire Chief Nick Browne; Assistant Chief Brian Stewart; Chief Financial Officer Mark Whitaker; Health and Safety Chief Heather Goodrich; Division Chief Josh Gehrke; Division Chief Dan Mulick; Division Chief Josh Santos; Division Chief Doug Whiteley; Battalion Chief Steve Deters; Battalion Chief Jason Ellison; Battalion Chief Brent Olson; Battalion Chief Brandon Paxton; Local 1159: President Mark Corless, Shop Steward Andrew Gordian, Bruce Neelands; Kevin Schurter; Steve McAdoo; Patrick Dunne; Program Specialist Tracey Grisham; and Executive Assistant Rachel Trotman.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

III. FUTURE RESPONSE CAPABILITIES

Fire Chief Browne added two items under the miscellaneous section:

1. Report format change for future board meeting submittals
2. Discussion regarding the Local 1159 contract with firefighters

Director Hawes brought up that the contract discussion should be during an executive session. Discussion followed. The Board decided by consensus to have this discussion at an executive session following the regular board meeting on October 18. Executive Assistant Trotman will update the agenda and the Clackamas Fire (CFD) website.

Fire Chief Browne explained that during the last 18-months the fire district has had to balance the pandemic, multiple natural disasters, and civil unrest. They've conducted action after reviews and learned a lot. They have looked at day-to-day operations to see how they can better serve the communities, as well as prepare them for the new potential normal in terms of response. At this meeting, they are focused on discussing the response reliability and disaster management preparedness.

Fire Chief Browne and team will be presenting and opening the discussion regarding the needs of the fire district and why they feel an operational levy is the way to go. They have identified several gaps in service delivery.

Assistant Chief (AC) Stewart presented on the risk and exposure in the fire district. Examining this requires them to look at the hazards, vulnerabilities, where those overlap, and what opportunities does the district have to mitigate those.

Today (Oct. 12, 2021), he will be discussing two broad categories of risk: hazards and vulnerabilities.

PowerPoint Slide: What we are facing?

Risks

- Natural disasters – earthquake, wildfire, winter storms, windstorms
- Priority responses – fire and EMS

Vulnerabilities

- Response performance – First-Due (Distribution – How long does it take that first unit to arrive with the right people and right equipment?) and Assembly (Concentration – How long does it take for enough people to get beyond that initial stage?).
- Capital Issues – Equipment, Apparatus. In equipment, Motorola is going to stop servicing radios as “inherently safe,” which means the district will no longer be able to deploy them in the field. The Zoll cardiac monitors are nearing their 10-year expiration. For apparatus, they are aging and will be an increased cost to operate and maintain. The district needs to replace a Type I Engine and a Type 6 Brush.

Positive Risk – not all risk is negative. AC Stewart explained that sometimes there are chances they take for potential gain.

He provided other examples of positive risk:

- Medic 316 – allowed for the right unit on the right call and freed up heavier assets
- Crew 30 – started just last year. It’s a potential resource to add capacity to the state.
- Colorado belts – they have saved lives

Battalion Chief (BC) Olson presented a slide specifically on the wildfire risk. He shared some historical fire data in nearby districts and within CFD. The data is trending toward larger fires with a larger area footprint upon initial attack. He explained the key to keeping wildfires at bay is quick, effective, initial attack.

He explained there is increased intra and interstate wildfire resource needs. He presented a graph that showed the increasing number of task forces deployed each year.

Division Chief (DC) Mulick presented a slide showing the current operational deployment and challenges. The district has:

- 61 Firefighters on duty
- 17 Staffed Fire Stations
- 2 Unstaffed Planning Zones (Stations 12,13)
- 5 Planning Zones/65 sq. miles without an NFPA pump (Stations 4,5,12,13,16)
- 2 Planning Zones/46 sq. miles without 24/7 Advanced Life Support (ALS) coverage (Stations 12,13)

He then shared what operational deployment could be with the levy:

- 69 Firefighters on duty
- 19 Staffed Fire Stations
- Results in only 2 Planning Zones/ 10.5 sq. miles without a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Pump (Stations 5,16)
- Results in every Planning Zone with 24/7 ALS coverage
- Adds a fuels mitigation crew that works within the district boundaries (Crew 31)
- Adds a seasonal helicopter contract from July 15 – September 15
- Adds all hazard contracts to seasonal risk

President Joseph asked for further explanation on the NFPA pumps. DC Mulick provided the information.

DC Mulick covered a slide going over the operational needs for the North Battalion which included data from the last year demonstrating the needs. He discussed two solutions:

- 1) Adding a three-person engine company to Lake Road (Station 4)
- 2) Adding a fourth crew member to a core company

Director Wall commented that she thought the busiest station was Station 3, not Station 4. She also noted that Stations 1, 2, 3, and 4 were within two miles of each other.

DC Mulick replied that the core area does include Stations 1, 2, 3, and 4. That station location is very centralized among that area. Another engine would build an effective response force that would benefit that whole planning zone. It would also have access to four, potentially five planning zones. Adding another engine company would drastically improve response. He, also, elaborated on the compliance of the NFPA standards.

Director Cross noted that he did not see any attempts at call reductions, such as not going on low acuity calls. Not going on lower acuity calls, frees up those heavy assets. The communities really have an immense need for responses to low acuity calls.

President Joseph asked if the increased demand was due to organic growth? When was the last time they reviewed call status?

DC Mulick said that the low acuity calls are becoming a massive system problem. Everyone uses the 911 system. Resources get tied up on low acuity calls. His data is built off of why the fire district exists (high acuity calls) and that's to save lives and preserve property.

DC Mulick discussed the needs of the rural areas around Station 12 and 13.

- Open Station 12 with a Type 3 Engine and seasonal helicopter
 - Adds two firefighters to the Effective Response Force
 - Immediate impact to the Logan community with a rated pump and ALS staffing

- Drastically cuts first unit arrival times, by eliminating responses out of Estacada Fire, and CFD Stations 8, 11, 14, and 19
- Puts another company across the Clackamas River
- Puts initial attack capabilities in a hard-to-reach area of the fire district
- Current first arriving unit time of 17:16 (90th%)
- Open Station 13 with a Type 3 Engine
 - Adds two firefighters to the Effective Response Force
 - Immediate impact to the furthest corner of our fire district with a rated pump and ALS staffing
 - Drastically cuts first unit arrival times by eliminating responses out of Colton, Molalla, and CFD's Station 10
 - Corrects the phrase "running away from your help"
 - Current first arriving unit time of 16:27 (90th %)

They have examined the hazards and looked at how to benefit the whole district. It currently has significant gaps.

Director Wall asked if there has been an analysis of the cost benefit? They are going to throw these resources for how many response calls and how many people? It's a density and equity issue. Assets out of Station 4 then sit out at Station 12, doing nothing.

DC Mulick shared that the number of total number of responses over that same 18-month period: Station 12 had 114 calls and Station 13 had 101 calls. The ratio of those were a little bit higher, which is normal for rural areas. He said she was right, the call volume is low, and the need for 911 resources isn't needed as often. However, when it is needed, without staff, that initial response for the first arriving company must come from a longer distance away. The district is looking to mitigate the larger fires by getting there sooner when the fires are smaller. He understands the population density is different, but the district is looking at an all-hazards approach to servicing the entire district. Those same apparatus would be available for other major incidents within the district.

Director Hawes asked about the seasonal helicopter at Station 12. Does that mean the district is asking for a helicopter sitting on the ground?

DC Mulick explained that aviation is a hot commodity during the peak fire season. The best way to secure the resource is to have a third-party, 90-day contract. One deployment option is to bring a helicopter, pilot, mechanic, and a fuel truck. For 90-days during peak fire season those resources would be committed to CFD. Helicopters have a huge advantage during the initial attack of a wildland fire. The alternative would be to stack a bunch of resources on the ground.

CFO Whitaker presented information that the district currently estimates a levy of \$0.31/\$1,000 in assessed value (AV) would be necessary to sufficiently fund all the services discussed during this board meeting. This amounts to nearly \$43 million in revenue over the course of a five-year levy.

CFO Whitaker shared that for expenditures and capital costs would make up a large share in the first year (apparatus, equipment, and radios). The district would, also, attempt to fit in one-time capital expenses in the first year of the levy, as well as phasing in some of the staffing being proposed. In the later years of the levy, the staffing for rural stations would take up most of the cost. The costs grow each year, based on inflation, cost of living allowance (COLA), etc.

CFO Whitaker shared there are still materials and capital expenditures. Although most of the cost is assigned during the first year, the district would need to set aside funds every year to ensure adequate funding is available for repairs and cost replacement, when necessary. These are only estimates, but the goal is to include all possible costs, so every service the district wishes to pursue is funded.

CFO Whitaker shared the difference between purchasing capital equipment with a levy vs. a bond. The intent is to identify risks the district has with equipment and apparatus.

Director Wall inquired why a five-year period was used. This is due in part, because the district is using capital expenditures or operating numbers, as property owners are still paying off the previous bond of \$0.10/\$1,000 in AV.

CFO Whitaker shared there is a five-year maximum to authorize a levy. The idea was to try and fund for the maximum period allowed under law. The \$43 million assigned to this levy is to include additional staffing, apparatus, equipment, asset replacement, and an aviation contract.

Fire Chief Browne shared that he sent out an email with the list of items the district would like to fund.

Director Hawes inquired about the personnel costs, noting the figures in the financial estimate seem high.

Fire Chief Browne shared that increased figures included additional floaters to help cover Kelly Days.

DC Mulick shared there are additional full-time equivalents (FTEs) for the wildland component, to include program management and oversight. Also, asking for shift strength to increase and make sure we cover all costs associated with staffing, to include wages, benefits, turnouts, fuel materials, etc.

Battalion Chief (BC) Deters shared the next steps regarding this levy. If the board wishes to move forward and have this go to the voters, the following approximate timeline will apply:

- November 15, 2021 – November Board of Director’s meeting
- Plan informational campaign and presentations
- Develop informational and ballot content
- Feb 25, 2022 – Measure filing deadline
- Share informational content with key stakeholders and members of the public
- May 17, 2022 – Election day

President Joseph inquired if they had done research on other financial items that plan to be on the ballot.

BC Deters shared they are keeping an eye on this topic and will see if other agencies will have financial items on the May 2022 ballot.

Fire Chief Browne asked that before we go into further discussion, he is looking for the Directors' individual feedback. He reiterated the interest to hear from each Director, what they think the community sentiment would be and concerns, the timing of this, and whether they feel there's community support for the levy. Would appreciate a consensus on moving forward with a future response capability plan and levies to support it.

Fire Chief Browne shared the "why":

- Level of fear that exists among communities regarding natural disasters. Felt this emotion at the recent fire district Community Town Hall events.
- Concerns with the increasing risk, and the needed steps to be better prepared for all hazards.
- Reached financial capacity for what the district can do.

Fire Chief Browne shared this levy is broken down into the following components:

1. Capital purchases
2. Staffing
3. Seasonal Heavy Equipment
4. Capital Replacement
5. All Hazard Mitigation

Multiple Directors voiced their appreciation for all the work completed in listening to the community, researching all the challenges, and the thoughtfulness associated with the challenges presented with the levy.

President Joseph commented that the fire district had listened to the community and it wasn't an impulsive decision.

Director Cross voiced a concern with putting personnel costs on a five-year levy. He also asked how the district can mitigate low acuity calls in regard to hiring and increasing staffing in the community paramedic calls, alternate deployment response, etc.

Director Syring appreciated the increased staffing in rural areas.

Director Hawes brought up what an oppositional campaign to a levy may look like, as it may be a political uphill battle.

President Joseph voiced two challenges he believed needs to be addressed by Fire Chief Browne and his team:

- Low acuity response program
- After the five-years are up, what happens to those staff

Director Wall shared feedback that we need to answer the basic question of key response reliability.

Fire Chief Browne shared information regarding Emergency Medical Services and low acuity calls. He shared there is a lot of items happening at the county level regarding EMS that Community Paramedic Cook and DC Santos are addressing.

Fire Chief Browne appreciated the concern brought forth by Director Hawes and a possible opposing campaign. He will also bring back some of these questions to his team and come back to the Board with answers.

President Joseph thanked the board for the intense conversation. He asked the Directors to get feedback from friends and community members, as they could be biased. The team did a great job presenting a well thought out plan.

Director Syring addressed the support question posed by Fire Chief Browne. He noted levies are very common with fire districts. He said they had talked about it before, but it had never been done. He said he was neutral and would support it if it was the right thing to do.

AC Deters reminded the group they will need direction as soon as possible, otherwise they will be out of time.

Director Cross shared he believed they would need to send this to the voters.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

AC Stewart shared that organizational leadership is trying to institute two key items as follows:

1. Empowerment of employees
2. Efficiency in what we do.

AC Stewart shared that in the September board packet there were 23 pages related to updates from staff (this did not include business items, other business, correspondence, or informational items). He said they want to move into a direction similar to what was done with the financial report, such as giving higher-level information, showing trends, etc.

AC Stewart shared that Fire Chief Browne does a great job in managing the fire district. We don't want staff to feel like they must account for their time, as an exuberant amount of time is spent on reports.

AC Stewart shared the mock document. The goal is to compress into a two-page document for the written items. Said document will include organizational accomplishments, highlights, photos, and organizational data. Staff will continue to verbally report on items during the board meetings.

Director Cross shared that he liked where they were going. However, he didn't want people to feel like we don't value them when they do strong work. He said he wants to know when stuff happens. He shared that he values everyone in their positions. If it is worth talking about in the office or the fire house, it is worth talking about in a meeting.

Director Hawes shared appreciation for where they were going. He wants to hear about the exceptional items.

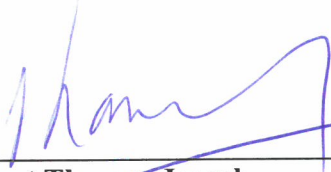
V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

October 18 – Regular Board Meeting – 5:00 pm by remote video conferencing.

Minutes recorded by Executive Assistant Rachel Trotman and prepared by Administrative Technician Deidre Toczyski



President Thomas Joseph

James E Syring

Secretary Jim Syring

Signature: 
James E Syring (Nov 30, 2021 16:00 PST)

Email: james.syring@clackamasfire.com

10-12-2021 Work Session Minutes_Signatures

Final Audit Report

2021-12-01

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