

Whatcom County Fire District #5

Point Roberts Fire Department

**2030 Benson Road, Suite A
Point Roberts, Washington, 98281**

Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners Work Session for the 2017 Budget

November 4th , 2016

MINUTES

In Attendance: Commissioner William Meursing
Commissioner Stanley Riffle
Commissioner Shannon Tomsen
Chief Christopher Carleton
Financial Manager Patty Markel
Recording Secretary Linda Hughes

Guests: Assistant Chief John Shields
Meg Olson
Kristy Steinberger

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Commissioner Meursing, who advised that we would be reviewing a draft budget prepared by Chief Carleton and Financial Manager Patty Markel, and that questions and comments are welcome.

B. WORK SESSION FOR 2017 BUDGET

Chief Carleton began presenting a draft 2017 budget by illuminating an overhead projection of the worksheets he and Financial Manager Markel had prepared, including columns of line items from last year's budget, proposed line item amounts for the 2017 budget, and notations where the budget differs from the 2016 budget.

Chief Carleton began by describing the proposed budget, with net increases or decreases noted in the far right column.

Chief Carleton continued by introducing his hope to hire an administrative Captain. He said that he is looking to make an internal promotion of a high-activity volunteer within the organization. This volunteer usually earns stipends that equate to approximately \$14,000.00 or \$15,000.00 annually. With the threshold of \$16,000.00 being the commonly considered point where a volunteer crosses over to being considered a paid employee, this volunteer is already being held back from his/her willingness to devote to this community.

Several questions were asked by the Commissioners regarding the residential status of the candidate, how many hours the volunteer was currently devoting to the District, the expected duties of the new position, and the expected responsibility level of the new position.

Chief Carleton clarified that the candidate is Point Roberts based, works the maximum amount of hours allowed by a volunteer, is a qualified Firefighter 1 and Firefighter 2, Advanced EMT, and is nearing completion of ICS, incident command training. He described his plan, if the candidate is hired, to implement a six-month internal command training protocol to provide the candidate with hands-on experience in a command role before expecting the new Captain to assume full command responsibilities.

Commissioners then asked questions regarding the financial impact of a new hire, including health insurance, and the net increase in costs to the District for a new Captain position.

Chief Carleton indicated the line item in the proposed budget where the proposed salary of the new Captain position is \$18,000.00. He explained the net increase in salary costs of approximately \$4,000.00 as the current stipends of this volunteer will be deducted from the Volunteer Firefighter Suppression line item in the amount of \$7,000.00, and also deducted from the EMS line item in the amount of an additional \$7,000.00. When the entirety of the changes is incorporated, including FUTA and FICA, the anticipated total net increase to payroll is expected to be approximately \$5,500.00.

Chief Carleton advised there is no financial impact for health insurance as there would be none offered to the new Captain position, noting that neither the Chief nor the Assistant Chief contracts include any provision for health care premiums.

Further questions were posed as to duties, hours, responsibilities and expected date of hire.

Chief Carleton indicated that he is currently in discussions with the District's legal counsel, Brian Snure, about the drafting of a proper employment contract identifying vacation time, hours and duties of the new Captain. Duties will include a number of tasks to be transferred from Assistant Chief Shields, and additional responsibilities including administrative time in the office, expected to amount to 60 hours per month. Chief hours are currently 100 hours and Assistant Chief hours are 80 hours per month. He also anticipates the new Captain will grow into the role of incident commander during those times when Chief Carleton and Assistant Chief Shields are unavailable, which are rare but do happen on occasion. Chief Carleton projected that he did not think the new Captain role would alleviate any hours currently devoted to the District by he and Assistant Chief Shields, but would be very helpful in sharing the load.

He concluded this part of his presentation on the potential new Captain role by saying he hopes to have the position filled by January 1, 2017, although the intended candidate may still decline. Before any further conversation is had with the candidate, he wants to wait until the District legal counsel has provided an appropriate contract for consideration. Depending on a number of circumstances, the position may not be created at this time, but is included in the budget for Commissioner consideration to allow the process to go forward if approved.

Chief Carleton then continued with his line-by-line description of the proposed changes in the draft budget.

Of particular concern to the Chief is the condition of the very old apparatus, one being a 1991 vehicle and another 1994. Engine 5802 was recently in for annual maintenance when a crack in the tank was discovered that is leaking approximately 500 gallons of water per week. He will check to see if insurance will cover the cost of the repair or replacement of the cracked tank, as this will likely be an expensive maintenance item. Chief Carleton only recently discovered the problem and as yet has no estimations of the cost of repair or replacement. 5802 also needs

two new front tires, another costly expenditure. Chief Carleton hopes to have cost estimations of these items by the November 9th regular, and budget approval, meeting.

Discussion then ensued between the Chief and Commissioners regarding the age of the apparatus, and scenarios that might be implemented to obtain a newer engine. They reviewed the grant applications for newer apparatus currently in process, and speculation on purchasing a vehicle with District funds. Chief Carleton described how he would not retire 5802 even if a new apparatus could be obtained for the District, because it still has value with many usable working parts.

He discussed his goal to purchase a 6-wheel ATV for wildland firefighting, indicating that it would be a more logical purchase for the District at this time, with an objective of continued maintenance of 5802 for some time. He described a number of instances where an ATV firefighting vehicle would be useful in Point Roberts, in particular the example of burning log that was found in the middle of the forest this past summer by hikers. The firefighting team could only get to the incident on foot.

At the end of the line-by-line review of the budget, Chief Carleton presented a chart of projections regarding levy income, beginning with projections of a 0% levy increase, incrementally increasing the projections to nearly 1%, 2% and 2.52227% percent. Approximately 1.5% remains of banked levy in addition to the nearly 1% that is available each year.

A discussion involving almost everyone in attendance commenced regarding speculative income, capital reserves, and uncollected taxes.

Financial Manager Markel confirmed that current total of all funds held at the County amount to approximately \$840,000.00, of which \$216,000.00 is held in Capital Reserve, \$260,900.00 is held in Operational Reserve, and \$349,600.00 remains in the Expense account, essentially where the day to day operations of the District are paid from. She also advised that as of October 31, 2016 there was \$64,700.00 in uncollected taxes owing to the District.

Financial Manager Markel indicated that she would revise the levy income projection sheet to shuffle the speculative income to a later column so that a more reliable budget projection would be available for consideration by the Commissioners at the November 9th regular and budget approval meeting.

Commissioner Riffle wanted to reiterate his long-held position that the facilities must be maintained in good condition, noting that half of the roof needs replacing and the parking lot will need maintenance before too long. He questioned where in this budget can we see how those projected costs will be addressed.

Commissioner Tomsen also wanted to reiterate her serious concern over the condition of the aged emergency response vehicles, wanting some assurance that the budget was designed to address these necessary capital expenditures.

Chief Carleton indicated that he and Financial Manager Markel would work on a separate budget presentation of 'capital projections' for next year's budget.

Commissioner Tomsen would like the community to be more aware of how this budget process works; essentially how their tax dollars are being considered, saved and spent on emergency response equipment and services. She feels that the All Point Bulletin has been disingenuous

in many of their articles about the District, causing confusion and animosity among residents who don't understand the depth of the services and assets they have invested in.


Commissioner Riffle agreed that the community needs clarification of the budget, saying that the 2010 levy was a promise made to this community for a greater level of service and standards, which promise is being fulfilled but is not known or understood by a number of residents and taxpayers.

Chief Carleton concluded his budget presentation by pointing out the draft Resolutions that were provided to them by Financial Manager Markel for their consideration between now and the next meeting.


The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on November 9th, 4:00 pm where the final budget will be approved.

C. ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further business, Commissioner Riffle moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:43 p.m. Commissioner Tomsen seconded the motion. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**



Commissioner William Meursing



Commissioner Stanley Riffle



Commissioner Shannon Tomsen

Dated November 9, 2016

Attest: 

Recording Secretary Linda Hughes