

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

April 24th, 2017

MINUTES

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Commissioner Meursing.

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

Guests: Josh Martin
 Andrew Bordeville
 Pat Harper
 Pat Grubb
 Rhiannon Allen
 Arthur Reber
 Jollena Tylor
 Pam Sarkissian
 Victor Riley

B. Correspondence received from Pat Grubb, Publisher, All Point Bulletin

B.1 Discussion and possible Action on general comments within email received from Pat Grubb dated April 19, 2017

A copy of the email from Pat Grubb, addressed to Chief Carleton and the District's legal counsel Brian Snure, cc'd to Meg Olson and Louise Mugar, dated April 19, 2017 was provided to the Board of Commissioners and is attached to these Minutes.

Commissioner Meursing invited his fellow Commissioners to open discussion on the matter.

Commissioner Tomsen reported that she was indeed present at the April 5th meeting of the Point Roberts Hospital District. She acknowledged that she had requested this Special Meeting of the WCFD5 Commissioners to respond to the email of Pat Grubb dated April 19th, suggesting that Commissioners Tomsen and Meursing had somehow violated open meeting laws at the April 5th Hospital District meeting.

Commissioner Meursing also indicated that he had attended the April 5th meeting of the Point Roberts Hospital District and had made it clear that he was in attendance as a private citizen and not as a Fire District Commissioner.

Commissioner Tomsen continued to report that Mr. Grubb's email contains ludicrous claims, threats to her personally, and to the Fire District. She also pointed out that Mr. Grubb never asked her personally for clarification of anything while at the Hospital District Meeting, but he did speak with Superintendent Elaine Komusi, and Secretary Renee Coe, of the Hospital District, after the public portion of the meeting was over.

Commissioner Tomsen stated that it is important to defend the Commissioners and the Fire District against the trend of fallacious attacks undertaken by Pat Grubb and the All Point Bulletin newspaper as part of the Commissioners' service to the community. She proposed the action of instructing the District's legal counsel to respond to Pat Grubb's email. Commissioner Tomsen also pointed out that Pat Grubb's email, by inclusion of the District's legal counsel, has cost the taxpayers of Point Roberts the expense of legal services, by including him as a recipient.

Commissioner Meursing said that this is why we have an Attorney, to handle matters of a legal nature. He also indicated that we should instruct our District's legal counsel to not only respond to the current email, but to make it clear to any individual that sends this type of communication that it should be from that individual's attorney, adding that he was not prepared to spend public funds on behalf of such individuals.

There was some discussion amongst the Commissioners about the email of April 19th, the inappropriate content; especially the references to "blue-footed booties" and "blue-footed boobies" included therein, protection of the District's reputation from erroneous and subjective reporting, and inclusion of the District's legal counsel as a recipient.

MOTION: Commissioner Tomsen moved to authorize the District's legal counsel, Brian Snure, to use his own discretion to respond to the email of April 19th, 2017 from Pat Grubb. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Riffle. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

Further discussion of the handling of any future correspondence containing allegations of impropriety against any member of this District was tabled for the next Regular Meeting.

It was discussed and decided to skip to item D on the Agenda at this time.

D. Advertisements

D.1 Discussion and possible Action regarding the publication of Advertisements in news outlets

Commissioner Tomsen displayed the Chief's Fireside Chat article, published on page 9 of the All Point Bulletin with important information about dialing 911 in this community. She also displayed other articles written by local groups, such as the Garden Club, which was published in the style of an independent article. She asked how much the publication of the Fireside Chat had cost the district, and asked why such an important and vital public service announcement had been treated like an advertisement.

The Chief recalled that the publication of the Fireside Chat had incurred an advertising expense of approximately \$300.00. Commissioner Meursing recalled from the warrants approved at the last regular meeting that the amount was closer to \$340.00.

Discussion was held about the importance of getting information out to the public and the potential methods of accomplishing that goal for maximum viewership while not wasting taxpayer funds. An example of how little impact the Fireside Chat advertisement in the local paper had accomplished was offered by Commissioner Tomsen, who relayed that while speaking with Chief Carleton over the weekend, he suddenly had to break off their conversation and attend to a fire call that had just been reported in person to the Fire Station. The important 911 dialing information contained in the ad had not reached that party and he had driven to the Fire Station to report a fire.

Chief Carleton reiterated how important it is that he have various avenues available to him for communicating with the public, and also thanked Louise Mugar of the All Point Bulletin for her work on making fire district ads look very nice.

Discussion continued around options for disseminating important Fire District news and information, including attendance at HOA meetings, placement of flyers in strategic locations, the use of Point-Interface email distribution, and mailers – somewhat like the political campaign cards, all of which would reach a wider audience and serve the community better than by spending taxpayer funds on advertising.

MOTION: Commissioner Tomsen moved to prohibit the expenditure of advertising with the All Point Bulletin, except for critical needs as defined by the Chief and within his budget, or otherwise approved by the Commissioners on a case by case basis. Commissioner Riffle seconded the motion. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

C. District Meeting Video Recordings

C.1 Discussion and possible Action regarding the publishing of video recordings of the Regular and Special meetings of the Board of Commissioners

An email from Pat Grubb, addressed to Chief Carleton, Meg Olson and Joel Lantz of the Taxpayers Association, questioned the timing of recent posting of video recordings of the Fire District meetings, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes.


Commissioner Tomsen shared her thoughts on the accusatory tone of Mr. Grubb's email and invited him to attend meetings, or send a surrogate reporter, in order to write his articles each month, rather than relying on the timing of the videos being published.

Discussion ensued amongst the Commissioners about the high level of transparency they have endeavored to provide to the community, and the process that is followed after each meeting, including the delivery of the video recording chip to a professional who converts it to a format acceptable to upload to YouTube, and the follow-up work with a webmaster who uploads the video and links it to the District website. This process can sometimes take several weeks as some of the work is done by volunteers, and timing is subject to availability of all persons involved in the process. All Commissioners agree that the video recordings are an important tool for communicating district business to members of the community who cannot otherwise attend meetings.

MOTION: Commissioner Tomsen moved that video recordings of district meetings, whenever possible, be posted to the district website at least by noon of the last Friday of each month to give the community ample time to review it in advance of the next month's regular meeting. Commissioner Riffle seconded the motion. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

Commissioner Tomsen then notified the Board of her intentions to complete the balance of her term as a Fire Commissioner, and her plans to file as a candidate for Hospital District Commissioner in the upcoming November election.


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



Commissioner William Meursing

absent

Commissioner Stanley Riffle



Commissioner Shannon Tomsen

Dated May 16, 2017

Attest: 

Recording Secretary Linda Hughes