

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

July 10th, 2023

MINUTES

In Attendance:

Commissioner Virginia Lester
Commissioner Norm Katz
Commissioner Pat Harper
Chief Christopher Carleton
District Secretary Linda Hughes
Financial Manager Patty Markel

Guests:

All Point Bulletin
Brian Snure

A. CALL TO ORDER

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

B. DISCUSS POTENTIAL LEVY FOR DISTRICT

Chief Carleton began by reviewing the next steps that will need to be taken, and the required timeline for those steps, should the Commissioners vote to pursue the ballot measure for an increased levy at the next regular meeting of July 12th. He then asked legal counsel, Brian Snure, to review the documentation he had prepared for the Commissioners.

Mr. Snure described a Memorandum he had provided to Chief Carleton, summarizing the statutory rules and regulations of pursuing an initiative to be placed on the ballot for voter decision. He reported that absolutely no public resources may be used in support or opposition of a campaign. He assured each Commissioner that, as individuals, they retained their first amendment right to free speech, but that they could not use persuasive language in their capacity as a Commissioner. As an example, he noted that if Chief Carleton was in uniform and was asked about the levy, Chief could respond to the question with facts only, and must refrain from imparting his personal opinion. As a representative of the District, wearing the uniform provided by the District, he is prohibited from sharing his personal opinion on the matter at that time. However, if Chief Carleton were out in public dressed in civilian clothing, even though everyone knows he is the Chief, when

he is not officially representing the District he is entitled to share his opinion on the topic. The same goes for each Commissioner - they are known to be commissioners but in non-official settings are permitted to share their personal opinions.

Mr. Snure noted this rule isn't restricted to conversations, but includes any communications. For instance, a Commissioner could write a letter to someone expressing their personal opinion on the matter, but not using District resources - they couldn't write that letter on a District computer or letterhead, for instance.

He added that District resources may be used to encourage voters to "vote," but all communications from the District must be restricted to facts, and contain no persuasive language or images. Mr. Snure said that he would be happy to review any communications the Commissioners or District produces before publication.

Mr. Snure then displayed a draft Resolution for consideration by the Commissioners, which proposes a single-year, permanent tax levy in the amount of \$1.14, to be placed on the ballot this November. It identifies the current levy rate, the reasons the District is seeking an increase, and a description of the permanent nature of the measure (as opposed to seeking a temporary increase, which would result in a return to the former levy rate after the expiration of the temporary term).

Mr. Snure then displayed a draft Ballot Issue Explanatory Statement, noting that the filing deadline is August 1st, 2023 to get the measure on this November's ballot. The Explanatory Statement does not need a Commissioner vote, and they can simply give instructions to the Chief to file it as is, or file it with amendments they may deem necessary.

Mr. Snure then described the PRO / CON Committee assignments. He advised that the District should use reasonable efforts to invite members of the public to apply for appointment to a PRO committee (in favor of the ballot measure) and also to a CON committee (in opposition to the ballot measure). These two committees would then independently prepare a statement for publication in the Voter Pamphlet, outlining their positions on the proposed levy. After each committee has submitted their statements, the other side will receive a copy and have the opportunity to produce a rebuttal statement, all of which will be published in the Voter Pamphlet for voters to review before casting their votes.

Chief Carleton then reviewed some changes he intends to make to the Capital Facilities Plan that will be finalized for the next regular meeting on July 12th. Chief will forward his final version to Commissioners for consideration before that meeting, and then once it is approved he will have it posted to the District website.

Chief then displayed the chart shown at the last special meeting, outlining the cost impact on a variety of property value levels, with a \$0.45 levy increase. As it was noted in the last meeting that this chart was helpful in demonstrating perspective (an example was given of how many lattes that the monthly increase would equate to), he felt it would be a useful tool and likely would be part of the flyer he intended to produce on behalf of the District to help get the message out.

Chief then reviewed the results of the community survey to date. There have now been 247 respondents, and the results remain similar to those reported at the last special meeting: 75% in favor of a one-time increase of \$0.45, and 67% in favor of an annual incremental increase in the levy toward the target of \$0.45.

C. ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further business, Commissioner Harper moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:47 pm. Commissioner Katz seconded the motion. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**



Commissioner Virginia Lester

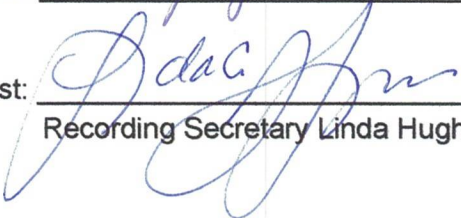


Commissioner Norm Katz



Commissioner Pat Harper

Dated July 12, 2023

Attest: 

Recording Secretary Linda Hughes