



SOUTH WHIDBEY FIRE / EMS

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BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING August 19, 2023 – 10:00 a.m. Minutes – *Approved*

In Attendance: Commissioner Noblet, Commissioner Erickson, Commissioner Towers, Chief Walsh, and Chief Dilley

Zoom Audience: Kathryn Nguyen

Call to Order.

Commissioner Noblet called the meeting to order at 10:17 a.m.

Approval of Agenda.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to approve the agenda; Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

New Business.

Strategic Plan

Strategic Initiative 1.1 – Improve Survivability for Victims of Fire, Hazardous Materials Release, Entrapment or other Crisis Incidents.

Objective 1.1.1 – Provide a minimum daily staffing level of at least five fire responders and one chief officer (six total) throughout the District.

Lead: DC Operations

Support: Records Manager, Fire Chief

Timeline: December 31, 2024

Status: In progress

Chief Walsh explained how there was a lack of participation with volunteers.

Commissioner Erickson asked what kind of issues the Department was facing.

Chief Walsh stated that Admin Assistant Hagen recognized a few shortfalls in the onboarding process and streamlined the process. The Department would begin to assign new volunteers with a contact member.

Commissioner Noblet said he had spoken to a volunteer who stressed his feeling of a lack of support from the Department—and suggested introducing an exit interview to find out why members leave.

Commissioner Towers said that he would like to see the volunteer program restructured.

Chief Walsh stated that it was attempted last year. Unfortunately, it was not adequate and would need a reboot.

Objective 1.1.2 – Contain structure fires to the room of origin 20% of the time or better.

Lead: DC Training

Support: Records Manager, Fire Chief

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020

Status: Need to review data.

Chief Walsh explained that due to the unpredictability of calls and staffing, the objective only provides a little value to the

Department with transporting EMS calls.

Commissioner Towers said that the objective needs to be tracked.

Commissioner Erickson asked if there was a metric more attainable.

Chief Walsh said the time to get on the scene would be a better matrix.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to strike the objective; Commissioner Towers seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Objective 1.1.3 – Zero civilian fire fatalities or significant injuries measured annually.

Lead: DC Training

Support: Records Manager, DC Operations

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020 ONGOING

Status: Achieving.

Chief Walsh explained how there was one fatality in mutual aid but none in the District.

The objective would remain.

Objective 1.1.4 – Arrive on the scene of structure fires within 14 minutes, 80% of the time.

Lead: DC Operations

Support: Records Manager, Fire Chief

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2021 ONGOING

Status: Achieving.

Chief Walsh stated that the standard for rural departments is fourteen minutes. From August 2022 to August 2023, the Department was at thirteen minutes.

Strategic Initiative 1.2 – Improve Survivability of Patients Experiencing Acute Medical Emergencies.

Objective 1.2.1 – Maintain a cardiac survival rate above 15% (ROSC).

Lead: DC Training

Support: Records Manager, DC Operations

Timeline:

Status: Unable to Measure

The objective cannot be measured due to unknown outcomes. The Department does not provide ALS or transport.

Commissioner Towers suggested removing or changing the response time to cardiac time.

Commissioner Noblet inquired how to reword the objective.

Commissioner Erickson suggested gathering response time data.

Commissioner Erickson motioned to strike the objective; Commissioner Noblet seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Objective 1.2.4 – Participate in activities that improve bystander “hands-only CPR” participation.

Lead: DC Training

Support: DC Operations, Records Manager

Timeline: March 2023

Renumber in 2025

Status: Achieving.

Chief Walsh stated that in 2023, CPR classes were reinstated. The Department would offer CPR classes at the open houses.

Commissioner Erickson suggested gathering the data on civilians providing CPR on a scene who took classes with the District.

Objective 1.2.5 – Explore the development of a BLS transport program.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: Records Manager, DC Operations

Timeline: ONGOING

Status: Achieving.

Opened and continuing research. The hospital has been more stable in 2023. The District could provide the service if needed down the road.

Chief Walsh suggested adding a non-medical ALS transport supplement and the associated cost. The number of medics would depend on how it would be designed. The District has explored ALS transport and has achieved the objective. The program would take several years to develop properly.

Objective 1.2.6 – Arrive on the scene of medical emergencies within 10 minutes, 80% of the time.

Lead: DC Operations

Support: Records Manager, Fire Chief

Timeline: ONGOING

Status: Needs improvement.

Chief Walsh explained that achieving the objective would require improvement of staffing levels. The District currently has a thirteen-minute response time. He will continue working towards achieving the objective by responding closer to the ten minutes.

Objective 1.2.7 – Provide a minimum staffing level of at least two EMS responders for all emergency medical responses.

Lead: DC Operations

Support: Records Manager, Fire Chief

Timeline: June 2023

Status: Improving.

The District must put a transport unit on duty to achieve the objective.

Commissioner Noblet requested to update the timeline to January 2024 for all items.

Commissioner Towers requested to come back and update all of the timelines.

Strategic Initiative 1.3 – Improve Firefighter/EMT Safety and Survival.

Objective 1.3.1 – Implement policies, strategies, and training that limit firefighter exposure to high-risk operations.

Lead: DC Training

Support: DC Operations, DC Resources

Timeline: ONGOING

Status: Achieving.

Chief Walsh explained how the District was sending firefighters to the state academy. Chief Dilley would continue to send members to the state academy. The District was participating in a new program from Teach the Teacher at no cost and received 100 simulations with free updates.

Objective 1.3.2 – Provide at least one qualified Safety Officer at all “working” incidents.

Lead: DC Training

Support: DC Operations, DC Resources

Timeline: COMPLETE

Status: Complete.

Commissioner Noblet requested to remove “working.”

Objective 1.3.3 – Develop a leadership training program for all field and command-level positions.

Lead: DC Training

Support: Fire Chief, DC Operations

Timeline: January 1, 2023

Status: Achieving.

Will change the timeline to ongoing.

Objective 1.3.4 – Improve radio communications.

Lead: DC Resources

Support: DC Operations, DC Training

Timeline: Ongoing

Status: Achieving.

Chief Walsh stated that 30 new portable radios were to be ordered.

Objective 1.3.5 – Explore expanding employee health and wellness programs to better protect employees over time.

Lead: DC Training

Support: Fire Chief, Finance Officer

Timeline: ONGOING

Status: Needs improvement. Enrolled in the pilot program.

Chief Walsh explained that the training division explored Health and Safety Program Manager and Peer Fitness Trainer courses.

Chief Dilley stated that the Department conducted an Incident Safety Officer course.

Commissioner Noblet requested to strike the sentence ‘needs improvement.’

Chief Walsh requested to remove ‘explore expanding employee health’ and add ‘provide employee health and wellness program.’

Strategic Initiative 1.4 – Improve Agency Resiliency During Crisis-Level Events.

Objective 1.4.1 – Improve coordination strategies with local, state, and federal partners.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: DC Training, DC Operations

Timeline: ONGOING

Status: Slow Progress.

Chief Walsh explained that Chief Dilley and Firefighter Husom worked to develop an incident action plan and a tabletop exercise with law enforcement and EMS.

Commissioner Noblet requested to capitalize ‘ems’ under the Status section.

Objective 1.4.4 – Develop an “emergency supply cache” program.

Lead: DC Resources

Support: Fire Chief, Finance Officer

Timeline: ONGOING

Status: No progress.

Chief Walsh stated that the District has water, medical supplies, and a generator. The goal for 2023 was to add food rations and other relevant supplies. He would develop a plan for the 2024 budget.

Commissioner Noblet requested to remove the quotations.

THEME #2: HOW DO WE MEET THE INCREASING DEMANDS OVER THE COMING YEARS?

Strategic Initiative 2.1 – Reduce Financial and Legal Risk/Liability to SWFE.

Objective 2.1.1 – Address fire station safety/seismic safety in current and future capital improvement plans.

Lead: DC Resources

Support: Fire Chief, Finance Officer

Timeline: December 31, 2024

Status: In progress.

Chief Walsh recommended consolidating stations 32 and 33 into one new station. Further issues arise with the aging maintenance facility requiring seismic upgrades. He advised the consolidation of the maintenance facility and station 34.

Commissioner Towers requested to keep the objective and explore the consolidation.

Commissioner Noblet suggested that funds should not be used in any maintenance and upgrades to stations 32, 33, 34, and the maintenance facility.

Objective 2.1.2 – Conduct a Standards of Cover study.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: DC Operations, Finance Officer

Timeline: December 31, 2023

Status: On track

Objective 2.1.3 – Enhance fire station accommodations to meet changing staffing patterns and programs.

Lead: DC Resources

Support: Fire Chief, Finance Officer

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2030

Status: Achieved and ongoing.

Objective 2.1.4 – Improve the health of the apparatus fleet to ensure reliability for response and on-scene capabilities.

Lead: FIRE CHIEF

Support: Fire Chief, Finance Officer

Timeline: June 2023

Status: In progress.

Commissioner Towers requested to update the timeline to December 2024.

Objective 2.1.6 – Continue the practice of reviewing all SWFE policies and procedures every two years for accuracy and provide training to all members as updates occur.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: All Staff

Timeline: December 2023 ONGOING

Status: Achieving.

Chief Walsh recommended updating the status to ongoing.

Commissioner Erickson stated that this was updated in current policies and asked if it is necessary to keep it as an objective.

He will keep it as an objective and strike every two years.

Strategic Initiative 2.2 – Improve Efficiency Within the Current Budget System.

Objective 2.2.1 – Maintain Workers' Compensation costs below 3% of annual budget.

Lead: DC Operations

Support: DC Training, Finance Officer

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2021

Status: Achieved.

Objective 2.2.2 – Pursue grant opportunities with a positive return on investment.

Lead: DC Resources

Support: Fire Chief, Finance Officer

Timeline: July 1, 2020 – ongoing.

Status: In progress.

Finance Officer Nguyen had reached out to Motorola for grant assistants in analyzing previous unsuccessful grants and continues to research new grant opportunities.

Objective 2.2.3 – Develop a succession plan for all levels in the organization.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: All Staff

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020

Status: Needs improvement.

Chief Walsh said the continuing operations policy needs updates. He would rewrite the policy and present it to the Board at upcoming meetings.

Commissioner Erickson suggested that the timeline be updated to December of 2023.

Objective 2.2.4 – Develop a community risk reduction plan to reduce/mitigate demand for service (fall prevention, fire prevention, etc.).

Lead: Fire Chief **Support:** DC Operations, DC Training

Timeline: July 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020

Status: Needs to be completed.

Chief Walsh stated that the project would begin after the standard of cover is finalized. He suggested to update the timeline to July 1, 2024.

Objective 2.2.5 – Develop a program that formalizes how new ideas from throughout the organization can be submitted for review and tracked.

Lead: DC Resources **Support:** Fire Chief, Records Officer

Timeline: March 1, 2020 – ongoing

Status: No update.

Chief Walsh recommended removing the objective. Specific authority was delegated throughout the agency, giving individuals the authority to purchase particular items within their Department.

Commissioner Noblet suggested striking the objective.

Commissioner Erickson suggested rewording the objective to include the ongoing efforts to delegate authority.

Commissioner Towers suggests the objective to be moved into a policy.

Objective 2.2.6 – Explore strategies to improve recruitment and retention of personnel/percentage of turnover.

Lead: DC Operations **Support:** Fire Chief, Records Manager

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – August 30, 2020

Status: Ongoing

Chief Walsh stated that the District developed a recruitment work group for recruitment and retention ideas.

Commissioner Towers suggested updating the timeline to ongoing and creating exit interviews for resigning members.

The objective will be rewritten to reflect updates and a correct timeline.

Objective 2.2.7 – Explore implementation of a cost recovery program to address nuisance calls, incidents caused by extreme negligence or intentional criminal acts.

Lead: Fire Chief **Support:** Finance Officer, Records Manager

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – September 30, 2020

Status: Recommend removal.

Commissioner Noblet recommends striking the objective.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to strike the objective; Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Objective 2.2.8 – Develop a method of providing/communicating rapid organizational updates to all members.

Lead: DC Resources **Support:** Fire Chief, Administrative Specialist

Timeline: February 1, 2020 – April 1, 2021

Status: Needs improvement.

Chief Walsh states that the objective also falls under objective 3.1.1.

Commissioner Towers requested an update to the timeline.

Commissioner Erickson suggested that the timeline be updated to December 2024.

Strategic Initiative 2.3 – Prepare the Agency for the Next Economic Downturn.

Objective 2.3.1 – Invest in station improvement projects that provide economic savings measured in lower ongoing maintenance or utility costs.

Lead: DC Resources

Support: Finance Officer, Fire Chief

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – ongoing.

Status: In progress.

Chief Walsh recommended exploring opportunities to reduce overhead while ensuring that our overhead is well maintained.

Commissioner Noblet suggests rewriting the sentence to remove 'overhead we have' and insert facilities.

Objective 2.3.2 – Invest in high-quality equipment/apparatus that can withstand deferred replacement when necessary.

Lead: DC Resources

Support: Finance Officer, Fire Chief

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – ongoing

Status: In progress

Chief Walsh suggested removing the objective.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to strike the objective; Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Objective 2.3.3 – Develop/identify cutback strategies that can be implemented for immediate cost savings during an economic crisis.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: All Staff

Timeline: March 1, 2020 – October 31, 2020

Status: Unclear.

Commissioner Towers motioned to strike the objective; Commissioner Noblet seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Strategic Initiative 3.1 – Promote a Positive Agency Reputation Within the Community.

Objective 3.1.1 – Provide rapid and accurate information on important SWFE services and activities.

Lead: Fire Chief

Chief Ney

Support: Commissioner Erickson

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – ongoing

Status: Needs improvement

Objective 3.1.2 – Improve community recognition of the differences in roles and responsibilities between SWFE and Whidbey Health.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: All Staff, Messaging Specialist

Timeline: March 1, 2020 – August 30, 2020

Status: Ongoing.

Commissioner Noblet suggested striking the objective.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to strike the objective; Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Objective 3.1.3 – Improve community recognition of the performance, successes, and challenges of SWFE.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: All Staff, Messaging Specialist

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – ongoing

Status: Ongoing

Objective 3.1.4 – Implement a citizen’s advisory committee.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: All Staff

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020

Status: Unchanged.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to strike the objective; Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Objective 3.1.5 – Develop an "After the Call" follow-up program to provide correspondence and feedback with victims.

Lead: DC Operations

Support: Administrative Specialist, DC Training

Timeline: March 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020

Status: Unchanged

Commissioner Noblet asked Chief Walsh if other similar districts have such a program.

Chief Walsh explained that many districts utilize the Red Cross and Champlin's but must familiarize themselves with districts using a similar program.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to strike the objective; Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Strategic Initiative 3.2 – Provide Downward Pressure on Fire Insurance Premium Costs Within the Community.

Objective 3.2.1 – Maintain a Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau (WSRB) - Class 6 Rating or better.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: DC Operations, Records Manager

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

Status: Current survey in progress

Chief Walsh stated that the Department added staffing, purchased a new engine, began pre-fire planning and safety inspections, and improved the training program and reporting activities.

Will update the timeline to ongoing.

Objective 3.2.2 – Prioritize salvage operations on emergency incidents to lower post-fire damage due to salvage and overhaul activities.

Lead: DC Operations

Support: DC Training, DC Resources

Timeline: March 1, 2020 – September 30, 2020

Status: Ongoing

Chief Walsh suggested that the timeline be updated to ongoing.

Objective 3.2.3 – Provide fire prevention education and its impact on insurance rates to target audiences within the community (homeowners, business owners).

Lead: DC Operations

Support: Administrative Specialist, Fire Chief

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020

Status: In progress.

Chief Walsh explained that the District increased community participation but needed help to provide education in the schools.

Commissioner Noblet requested the rewrite to say the Department would like a robust fire education program.

Strategic Initiative 3.3 – Provide Value Beyond the 911 Call.

Objective 3.3.1 – Explore partnerships to participate in a Mobile Integrated Health Care (MIHC) program.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: DC Training, DC Operations

Timeline: July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

Status: Remove?

Chief Walsh suggested removing the objective. The Department is not an ALS program.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to strike the objective; Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Objective 3.3.2 – Provide a workplace where people of all backgrounds and associations feel welcomed. Ensure a recruiting process that attracts a diverse candidate pool.

Lead: DC Operations

Support: Records Manager, Fire Chief

Timeline: Ongoing

Status: Unchanged.

Objective 3.3.3 – Continue to recruit members from the local community and off-island for better service to the community.

Lead: DC Operations

Support: Records Manager, Fire Chief

Timeline: January 1, 2020 – ongoing

Status: Ongoing.

Chief Walsh stated that the Department was working towards restructuring the volunteer program to increase participation. He encourages enhancing the relationships with volunteers. Chief Dilley has provided three to four training opportunities for volunteers each week, which is much higher than similar departments.

Commissioner Noblet suggested weeding out the volunteers who do not participate.

Chief Walsh agrees with Commissioner Noblet.

Objective 3.3.4 – Recruit community business leaders to the Board of commissioners.

Lead: Fire Chief

Support: All Staff

Timeline: September 1, 2020 – May 1, 2021

Status: Unchanged.

Chief Walsh looked for direction from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to strike the objective; Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Additions

Volunteer Program

Commissioner Towers suggested adding an objective that adds structure to the volunteer program and requires participation in the Department.

Commissioner Erickson stated that the objective should include the required participation and the desire to be involved and remain with the Department.

Chief Walsh explained how the new objective could also boost the staffing levels and the ability to respond to calls much

faster.

Commissioner Towers offered to write a draft of the objective.

Wildland Fires

Commissioner Noblet suggested adding an objective to address the increase in wildland fires.

Emergency Preparation

Commissioner Noblet suggested adding an objective to address emergency preparations and provide resources on the Department's website for the public.

Commissioner Erickson stated that the state offers ample resources on their website.

I. Conclude

The Board discussed possible dates for the second meeting. September 23, 2023, at 10:00 a.m., was scheduled for the second meeting.

Commissioner Noblet motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Kathryn Nguyen,
District Secretary