



North Mason Regional Fire Authority (NMRFA)

Meeting Minutes

490 NE Old Belfair Hwy, Belfair WA

Telephone/Videoconference Option

9/13/2022

Present: Commissioners Severson, Miller, Kewish, Quigley and McIntosh; Executive Assistant Wassenaar; Assistant Chief Cooper; Chief Bakken

Absent: None

Guests: Herb Gerhardt

Meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The meeting minutes from August 9 and 16, 2022, were presented for approval. Commissioner Severson requested that locking wheel sensors be changed to indicators in the August 9, 2022, meeting minutes.

Commissioner McIntosh moved to approve the meeting minutes with the single correction. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIALS

Financial vouchers were presented for review.

A motion was made by Commissioner McIntosh to approve the payroll and expense vouchers under BIAS 220901001 to 220901097 in the amount of \$412,296.22 and expense vouchers under BIAS 220902001 to 220902004 in the amount of \$146,884.25. Commissioner Kewish seconded the motion. Motion carried.

ADMINISTRATION

COVID Relief Grant: Chief Bakken stated that the Fire Authority received \$672,000 in federal COVID relief monies to be used for capital projects.

Emergency Room Wait Times: Chief Bakken addressed the recent Kitsap Sun article concerning St. Michael's Hospital ER wait times. He explained that he spoke with the CEO, who indicated there are several internal issues impacting wait times. The CEO was also surprised by the article, as he had previously maintained an open dialogue with the Kitsap Fire Chiefs. As a result of the article, Fire Authority responders have been receiving questions during transport regarding potential wait times. To mitigate the lengthy wait times, Fire Authority crews are reaching out to the hospital prior to transport, to determine if a different hospital would be more appropriate. Chief Bakken clarified that any life-

threatening emergencies continue to be sent directly to St. Michael's. He further explained that there will be a new facility opening in Bremerton in June, that will likely be the primary transport location for less life-threatening situations. Commissioner Miller asked if the lengthy wait times were because of a manpower issue. Chief Bakken explained that there is, but there are additional issues internally making the problems worse.

Mason County Chaplain Academy: Chief Bakken explained that the Fire Authority is hosting an Information Night to discuss the Chaplain Program and upcoming academy. He stated that the academy will be starting on September 26th. We have received four applications so far from individuals located all around Mason County. Commissioner McIntosh stated that she is glad to hear applications are not limited to the North Mason area, because multiple districts have had no Commissioner participation in the countywide Commissioner meetings.

Potential Urgent Care Transports: Chief Bakken stated that he has a meeting scheduled for Thursday to discuss the potential to transport patients to the Belfair Harrison Urgent Care. He has already spoken with Rhonda at the hospital, as well as additional senior leaders with CHI regarding the matter. He explained that if the Fire Authority were to transport to the urgent care, there will be protocol in place to triage the patient prior to departure to confirm the urgent care is appropriate.

Herb Gerhardt stated that he feels the urgent care is understaffed, with a single nurse practitioner seeing 30 to 35 patients per day. He encouraged Chief Bakken to keep that in mind during the upcoming discussion and urge the CHI executives to hire additional staff.

Annual Department Dinner: Chief Bakken indicated that the annual dinner will be held on November 5. He is strongly encouraging all staff to attend, since it will be the first organization-wide dinner in nearly four years.

Headquarters Fire Station Construction Scrap Book: Chief Bakken shared the scrap book made by the neighbor Lois [Gibbons], which includes all articles, campaign materials and photographs of the new fire station. Chief Bakken gave Lois a thank you letter and challenge coin.

OLD BUSINESS

Surplus Update: Assistant Chief Cooper explained that the express bus used for QRT was sold outright for \$6500. Additionally, the water tender was purchased by a logging company in Pendleton, OR through the sealed bid process for \$11,200. Chief Bakken stated that each of the rigs were purchased for \$1. Assistant Chief Cooper indicated that crew have been preparing the surplus engine to sell, but they may have an alternative use.

NEW BUSINESS

Job Description- Physician Assistant, Pers-50: The purpose of this policy is to define the Authority's work expectation and description for the classification of Physician Assistant (PA). Commissioner Quigley asked if EMS Officer and Medical Services Officer are the same. Chief Bakken stated that the appropriate term is EMS Officer, and the CARES policy will be corrected. Commissioner Quigley also asked if the PA will report to the county's Medical Director Dr. Hoffman. Chief Bakken explained that the PA will report to the

EMS Officer and practice under the license of Dr. Hoffman. He also clarified that there will be no RAP Program involvement, but the PA will work with the RAP Coordinator.

Community Assistance Referral and Education (CARES), Ops-34: The objective of the CARES program is to pair patients in need of medical care with the most appropriate level of medical care and to improve public health through community outreach and health education. Chief Bakken explained that this policy is required by WA State Legislature for the PA program.

Motion made by Commissioner McIntosh to approve the new policies Pers-50 Job Description-Physician Assistant as presented and Ops-34 Community Assistance Referral and Education (CARES) with a single correction. Commissioner Quigley seconded the motion. Motion carried.

EMS Rates: Chief Bakken stated that the Fire Authority has not changed its EMS rates in roughly five years. He has reviewed current EMS expenses with Paramedic Kyle Severance and Captain Carl Ehresman. He explained that the Fire Authority charges by category (paramedics bill ALS base rate, paramedics administering two or more medications bill ALSII and standard EMT transports bill BLS). In addition to the base rate, there are five supplemental items that can be charged for including pulse oximeter, oxygen and mileage. Chief Bakken reviewed the comparison chart with the Board, which included billing rates of other local EMS agencies. He also explained that Medicare reimbursement rates have not changed in nearly 15 years; however, Medicare patients will not be impacted by any adjustment to the rate. He clarified that the adjustment will allow a nominal increase in GEMT and for those using private insurance or private pay.

Commissioner McIntosh asked about individuals who are billed as private pay and are unable to pay. Chief Bakken explained there is a charity process through the billing agency, and the bill can be written off by the Fire Authority. He clarified that only those who do not respond when billed will be sent to collections; there have been approximately three in the last six months. Chief Bakken stated that he has encouraged the billing agency to increase charity and outreach efforts, to reduce the number of collections. Commissioner Severson indicated the requested increase is acceptable, considering the current cost for services.

Motion made by Commissioner McIntosh to approve the proposed EMS rates as presented. Commissioner Severson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Citizen's Advisory Committee: To be discussed at the September 20th Board meeting.

Public Comment: Community member Herb Gerhardt expressed gratitude for Fire Authority crews for the rapid response to the wildland fire at a local shooting area on August 25. He indicated that he has not been made aware of the official cause of the fire, however, he located tenorite packaging at the site. Chief Bakken stated that the fire was initially called in as 2x2 feet in size, which was inaccurate.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Commissioner Severson asked if any of the Commissioners are available to attend the WFCA conference in Spokane. Commissioner Kewish volunteered to attend but stated that he will need to use an Authority vehicle to drive to Spokane. Executive Assistant Wassenaar stated that she will register Commissioner Kewish for the conference.

Commissioner Severson stated that he would like the Commissioners to come to Station 21 in the coming weeks/months to serve dinner to the crews. He expressed that he wants to maintain positive rapport with staff.

Commissioner Severson advised that there is still a backlog of voucher reviews that need to be performed by the Board.

Commissioner Severson asked about photographs from being shared from the Headquarters Station 21 grand opening. Chief Bakken confirmed that photographs were shared on Fire Authority social media accounts. Executive Assistant Wassenaar indicated that she will send a link to the photographs to the Board.

Commissioner Severson asked for a shift schedule card and current organizational chart. Executive Assistant Wassenaar stated that she will put a card and chart in each of the Commissioners' mailboxes.

Commissioner Quigley asked if anyone else was stuck in traffic yesterday following the traffic accident in Gorst accident. She stated that she was there for four hours waiting for traffic to clear.

Commissioner Severson moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Authority Secretary Beau Bakken

Commissioner Paul Severson

Commissioner Bob Miller

Commissioner Kelley McIntosh

Commissioner Brooke Quigley

Commissioner Dan Kewish