



Clark County Fire & Rescue Board of Fire Commissioners Workshop Minutes

July 15, 2015 Department Planning Workshop

Workshop called to order Board Chair Jerry Kolke at 10:00 AM.

Flag Salute led by Kolke.

Also Present: Chief Dennis Mason, Commissioner Jon Babcock, Larry Bartel, Dave Town, Bob Johnson, Jerry Kolke, Jesse Martin. Recording Secretary Maureen Groat.

Commissioner Kolke opened the workshop to discuss the status and planning of the Department with the loss of the Battle Ground City contract.

Chief Mason stated that there is no agenda, as this is an informal workshop. He began with an overview of his Staff Report, outlining the overall impacts the Department will sustain with the loss of the Battle Ground contract. Per the report, the Department will have a 1.9 million dollar loss of revenues in 2016. The report outlines dollar amounts which could be saved with union and non-union administrative personnel reducing salaries by 5% and 10%. The last two pages of the report are patterned after the spreadsheet received from ESCi, detailing cost breakdowns per jurisdiction and station areas. The purpose of the spreadsheets is to give a general idea of the cost to staff a station and cost to service an area; percentage-wise. In addition to the Staff Report, Chief Mason reviewed a breakdown of the CCF&R valuation/rate forecasts for the next 6 years.

Chief Mason stated he would like to discuss what our response is going to look like for the east side of the district without a Station 27. He stated adjustments can be made to the county-wide response guide.

Chief Mason informed the Board that he will be requesting an Executive Session at the July 22nd Board of Commissioner's Meeting to discuss those personnel who will be adversely affected before it goes public. He plans to work with Chief Yager to discuss staffing. Chief Yager added that with the current union contract, we are not able to fully staff five stations. He added that a labor management meeting was held to discuss what changes can be made. If changes can be agreed upon, they will be presented. Until then, recommendations and budgets are based on the current contract language. Jesse Martin addressed the Board stating that he would like to see what the administration's plan is. He stated not necessarily per the current contract. The union's executive board is open to look at all articles. They are willing to look at everything. Chief Mason stated we are locked into the current contract at this time – we can look at what we can do if/when we open up articles; but the starting point is the current contract.

Chief Mason stated that it may make sense to open up and staff Station 22. He acknowledged it may not be what the Board thinks or something the budget will support. Capt. Martin stated which station is staffed should be dependent upon call volumes and how we are dispatched should be a consideration. Station 151 should be considered as well. Discussion regarding mutual aid with District 3 and District 6. Chief Yager assured the group that our mutual aid relationship with District 6 is at a good comfort level. He stated he reviews aid given/received on a regular basis. There was some concern with what the comfort level will be with District 3 and mutual aid given/received in the Battle Ground city limits and surrounding areas after this year.

Commissioner Bartel addressed the Board stating that he spoke with a business owner in our jurisdiction who expressed his opinion that we have lost touch with the community. Bartel added that he feels strongly that we have gone in the wrong direction. He believes it is time to make a change; our leadership needs to change. He is saddened that he hears members stating that they are just coming to work. He added the Board needs to set parameters and have the administration present a plan. He feels that the Board is not doing their job. He feels strongly that the board needs to set priorities; what are the most important programs. He feels frustrated that there is so much potential and it is not being utilized. There needs to be strong leadership starting from the top with long term plans. He believes there is a need to be thinking differently. Setting goals and objectives is high priority. There should be more community involvement. Those involved in community service feel good about the service.

The general consensus was we have never had bad interaction with public. Everyone wants to do a good job. Board and members expressed pride, but many do not feel secure and feel they may need to look elsewhere to find security with the loss of Battle Ground. Commissioner Town reiterated that CCF&R are not losers – we bid the RFP fairly and need to look and move forward. Seasoned members; those not in jeopardy, are looking at other departments. Members question why other departments are growing and we are laying off. Those members state the feeling is daunting, to look elsewhere and start to climb the ladder all over again. They are feeling that it may be the right thing to do to save those with less seniority. It was stated that there has been so much time and money spent getting us to where we are, we don't want to lose ground. Want to regain excitement about the job. There is much growth coming; Cowlitz Casino, growth in the Discovery Corridor.

Commissioner Babcock stated he does not want to see the department go back to the days of limited staffing with volunteers, shutting down stations and apparatus due to no personnel, etc. He stated we have come a long way and sees positive growth in Ridgefield and Woodland once we get through the loss of Battle Ground.

Commissioner Kolke stated that we are in a rough spot. He remains very proud of our organization. He believes there is a wave going through Battle Ground; the Department did not do anything wrong. Battle Ground is looking for a change.

The comment was made that it was hopeful that there would be some directional plan given today. Commissioner Babcock stated that we need to do things right; not fast. We need to take time to get to where we need to be.

The question was asked about brainstorming ideas of priorities. Babcock responded the Board is open to all ideas and the ideas don't have to stop coming at the end of the workshop. They are open at all times. It was asked that the Board look to our neighboring departments for ways of running things. How do District 3 or District 6 run things? Get ideas.

Chief Ford suggested that 80% of our calls are EMS. He suggested that getting into the transport business could be an option for generating revenues. Emergency services are changing due to the Affordable Care Act. Move forward and be ahead of the game. There are struggles with Vancouver and EMS District 2. He urged the Board to look at transport.

There was discussion of how to get information to the Chief and going through the chain of command. Where is the voice of the Union and how does it get where it needs to go. There are individuals who give opinions, but it was stated that the executive board is the voice of the union not individual firefighters.

There was discussion regarding the possibility of a merger with District 3. It was stated that the Local executive board has presented a letter to Dist 3's union and that there will most likely be a merge of the two unions. Camas will most likely be included in the merger. There is also a letter requesting that the Board of Commissioners from both departments meet and open up dialog. Boards meeting versus individuals meeting is the preference of the Board. It was suggested that we should open dialog with District 6 as well; see if their commissioners are willing to meet.

It was stated that Chief Yager has spoken with Chief Sorenson, but has not been successful getting any information until they have completed working through their contract. The comment was made that we are in catastrophic mode and that we cannot wait to see what District 3 is going to do.

Chief Mason addressed the reference by Commissioner Bartel of previous "failures of the department" such as the Training Consortium, RFA vote and the Battle Ground contract. He disagreed that those should be considered failures. He stated the RFA is still active and the Training Consortium was still the right thing to do even if the other agencies were not willing to move forward. As for the Battle Ground contract, there were several issues outside of the department's control and service to the City was never the issue. He reiterated that the loss of the Battle Ground contract is not a reflection on the department or the people in it. He stated that we have way too many positives over the past few years than any defeats or failures.

There was discussion on why the RFA issue will not be on the ballot right away. Chief Mason stated that the timing is not right at this time. We will run it again, but need time to compile data.

Chief Mason stated that unless he hears differently, he will put together the 2016 budget with the reduction in force for next week. He stated the priority has to be service to our community.

It was mentioned that the firefighters are willing to take on projects where needed with whatever restructuring occurs. Chief Yager agreed that during the labor management meeting the union stated they are willing to take on tasks where needed.

Workshop closed at 11:55 a.m.

District Secretary