Chelan County Fire Protection District No. 5

Special Meeting of Commissioners
250 Manson Blvd. Manson, WA 98831
Friday, September 19, 2025 @ 1:00 pm

Commissioners Present: Chris Willoughby, Fred Weiss, Dan Baker, and Ronan Walsh.

Call to Order: Chairman Willoughby called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

Others Present: Chief Arnold Baker, District Secretary Reggie Trusel, Deputy Chief Mike Williams, Firefighter/EMT Doug Pinski, Training Officer Raynor Baker, Senior Firefighter Kermit McClellan.

Discussion Topics:

- **Deputy Fire Chief:**

  Certification Review: Justin Venezia from GMP Consultants reviewed DC Williams' certifications from the Alameda Fire Department and Commissioner Walsh advised the Board that most can be transferred to Washington State.

  - Non-Transferable Certifications: For the certifications that are not transferable, Commissioner Walsh suggested working on getting Washington State equivalency.
  - Additional Certifications (Preferred, Not Required)
  - Chief Baker questioned a few certifications DC Williams lacked and asked if he would complete Fire Officer 2 (DC Williams replied "absolutely").
  - Chief Baker also asked if he would complete an EMS Training Instructor/Evaluator certification.
  - Commissioner Walsh clarified that the certifications Chief Baker is questioning “were not required for employment, but were preferred” in the recruitment profile, and they "cannot add, change or demand that of DC Williams at this time."

  Action Plan for Certifications:

  - Chief Baker offered to help with the "easy process" of writing inquiry letters.
  - The Board Consensus was to allow time for DC Williams to collect his qualified certifications.
  - Chief Baker will work on receiving the certifications from DC Williams via Alameda Fire Department and proceed through State equivalency process.
  - OSHA Training: DC Williams noted that his experience with OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Administration) suggests they look more at actual training records than certifications and provide safety compliance training courses.

- **Command Vehicle Purchase:**

  Chief Baker displayed vehicle options from cars.com. Suggested adding an "extended warranty" for any used vehicle. Commissioner Willoughby noted the 2nd Command vehicle would be used by the Deputy Chief but could also be rotated inside the department. Commissioner Walsh explained prioritizing expenses when shopping for a used vehicle and the Board could look at reimbursing DC Williams until they find something.

- **Training Officer Position:**

Chief Baker initiated the discussion by urging the Board to split training responsibilities with the new Deputy Chief (DC) and convert the current Training Office (TO Baker), from a part-time role to a full-time Assistant Chief Training Officer.

Key Justifications for the Change:

- Workload: TO Baker "is stretched" trying to balance his 20-hour MFD Training Officer role with his full-time EMS job at LCH, which involves overtime and transfers.
- Levy Promise: Chief Baker claimed the MFD went to voters during the last Levy stipulating the hiring of two full-time positions.
- Training Continuity: The MFD needs to maintain monthly EMS OTEP training for current EMTs, a critical function managed by TO Baker. The Chief added we need more than one person with Instructor-1/Evaluator.
- Financial: Chief Baker presented a budget example showing a new full-time position would cost approximately $120,000 salary plus benefits and requested a Boards decision by October 1st.
- Future Vision: The Chief advised the Board, DC Williams could focus on developing future leaders over the next ten years, while the Assistant Chief Training Officer (TO Baker) focuses on immediate training needs and record oversight.

Board's Reaction and Financial Scrutiny:

The Board acknowledged the value of keeping TO Baker on staff and expressed concern over his workload, even asking if he needed to cut back on days. However, their primary concern was the financial feasibility of immediately adding a fourth full-time position.

- Budget Review: Commissioner Walsh noted the consensus of the Board is to look at the proposed 2026 budget to forecast spending and see how the new position fits with other existing projects.

- Levy Documentation: Commissioner Walsh added he could not find documentation supporting the Department's claim stipulating the hiring of *two* full-time positions.

Staff Concerns Regarding Deputy Chief Hiring

FF/EMT Doug Pinski voiced concerns regarding the Board's recent hiring process for the Deputy Chief (DC).

- Certification Issue: Pinski expressed fear that the Board made a "mistake" by approving the employment process for a Deputy Chief without WA state certifications.
- Support for TO Baker: He advocated for TO Baker's continued leadership in BLS/OTEP training and directly asked the Commissioners if TO Baker still had a job.

Board and Chief Baker's Rebuttals

- Hiring Process: Commissioner Walsh stressed that "no mistake" was made, the process was correct, and any certification issues could be addressed.
- TO Baker's Status: The Commissioners confirmed that TO Baker still holds his current position.
- Chief's Conclusion: Chief Baker stated the department needs an Assistant Chief to provide necessary support and oversight into the training function.

Personnel and Training

- DC Williams advised the Board, he will be on vacation at the end of September and will be starting work on October 6th.

New Full-Time Training Officer Position and Officer Position Clarity:

- The Board needs to define the Title, Salary & Benefits, and Job Description for converting a position from part-time to full-time.
- The Chief suggested a temporary assignment for TO Baker while the Board defines the new full-time position.
- The position is expected to be 80% administrative and 20% operations.
- The Board must determine if the position will be Exempt or Non-Exempt.
- The Board will be looking at the title from the community's perspective.
- Administration Duties & Responsibility Assignments: Chief Baker suggested updating the current duty list breakdown for Chief Baker, DC Williams, TO Baker, and Administrative Assistant Trusel.
- Organizational Clarity: DC Williams asked for clarification on the chain of command, roles and responsibilities, and job descriptions for all officers.

- Internal Communication: The Chief advised informing the firefighters before information goes on social media to maintain their support.

- **Financial and Budget Matters**

  - Current Budget Status (Jan-Aug): Chief Baker displayed the financial model-expense and revenue YTD for 2025 with the updated potential Training Officer full-time position.
  - Future Financials Displayed: Next 6 years, reflecting a total of four full-time positions, which includes a full-time Assistant Chief-Training Officer of $120,000 salary and benefits. The Chiefs spreadsheet showed the amount remaining at the end of our six-year loan term would be $1,500,000.00.
  - Training Center Funding: The reality is the organization must either go back to the WA Legislature to ask for funding to build the Training Center or ask the voters for help (a Levy either in 2029 or 2030).
  - Training Facility: Soil Mitigation Funding-Mary Monahan from the Dept. of Ecology has $150,000 to help offset soil mitigation costs.
  - Budget Approval Deadline: The due date for sending the approved budget to the County is by the end of November.
  - New Resolution 2025-08: Commissioner Walsh noted a new Resolution is now in place to help correct Board procedures along with administration compliance in transferring of funds without Board consent.

Financial History and Version Control:

  - Commissioner Walsh suggested saving the financial model history each month after each meeting.
  - Saving the version history is legally important, and the Board "is not allowed to change forecast numbers."
  - According to the WAC (Washington Administrative Code), the organization needs to keep a record of each change made to the budget and archive it with a date/time record.
  - The Board needs to be looking at more than just the bottom line.

- **Commissioner Fifth Seat**

Commissioner Willoughby suggested going out to the public to see if there are any other public interests. Commissioner Weiss added it would be nice to see additional letters of interest to compare and to be more active in the recruitment process.
DC Williams suggest interviewing during an open session meeting.

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Executive Session: RCW 42.30.110 (1) (g) to review the performance of a public employee. Commissioner Willoughby, Motioned to start the Executive Session at 3:30 pm, Commissioner Baker seconded. Board asked for one hour. The Regular Commissioner Meeting reconvened at 4:24 pm.

Adjournment: Commissioner Willoughby closed the meeting with no additional business before the Commissioners; the meeting adjourned at 4:25 pm.

Chelan County Fire District 5 Board of Commissioners:

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Commissioner Chairman Chris Willoughby

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Commissioner Fred Weiss

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Commissioner Dan Baker

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Commissioner Ronan Walsh

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Attest: Regenia Trusel
District Secretary