Chelan County Fire Protection District No. 5

Special Meeting of Commissioners
Hosted by Chelan Fire & Rescue
232 E. Wapato, Chelan WA
Wednesday December 9, 2024 @ 3:00 pm

Flag Salute

Commissioners Present: Fred Weiss, Dan Baker, and Chris Willoughby.
Chelan Fire & Rescue: Russ Jones, Mark Donnell, and Karyl Oules.

Others Present: Chief Arnold Baker, District Secretary Reggie Trusel, Lieutenant Aaron Richmond, Captain Nick Glenn, Lieutenant/Training Officer Raynor Baker.
Chelan Fire & Rescue: Chief Brandon Asher, Assistant Fire Chief Shawn Sherman, and District Secretary Misty Fifield.

Call to Order: Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 3:12 p.m.

Roll Call: Chaiman Jones asked the attendees seated at the boardroom table to introduce themselves.

New Business:

- **Shared Training Officer Position-Discussion**
    - Chief Asher: He asked the two Boards-what level do we want this position to be? He passed a sample of a "Job Description" that was reviewed by Attorney Eric Quinn. Chief Asher noted this position could be an "Exempt" position which would help with overtime costs.
    - Commissioner Weiss: Asked if Wenatchee Valley Fire Dept. has a Volunteer Training Coordinator and how is it structured?
    - Chief Asher: Advised he could reach out to them. He noted their current volunteer program is not getting any better and the Manson program seems to be working with Jr. Firefighters helping and the department is still recruiting.
    - Chief Baker: Explained, Michelle Mazzola will be happy to help work on the SAFER Grant.
    - Chief Asher: Displayed EMS & Fire call volume for each district and mentioned applying for the "SAFER Grant."
    - Commissioner Donnell: Asked if both agencies recognize and understand the need to move ahead with the SAFER Grant.
      Discussion was made about pursuing the Grant and when it would start/close next year.
    - Chief Asher agreed there is a need.
    - Commissioner Donnell- Do our demographics warrant this position? It's one thing to bring in volunteers but how can they retain them?
    - Commissioner Weiss: Are there other districts who have had success with the SAFER Grant? Doing this jointly makes sense.
    - Chief Asher: Chelan has done this before with; Entiat, Chelan, Orondo.

- Commissioner Oules: Asked if we would continue looking to fill a shared position without the help of the SAFER Grant?
- Chief Baker: Suggested focusing on working towards SAFER Grant first.
- Chief Asher: Advised he would like to utilize this position for Duty Officer coverage.
- Commissioner Oules: Asked how much can each department contribute towards this shared position?
- Commissioner Jones: Commented they cannot afford to hire two new career firefighters but thinks they could afford a shared position for Volunteer Training Coordinator.
- Commissioner Donnell: With his budget experience, agreed the position is affordable. Setting the salary range, hours required, and if it would be open for anyone to apply.
- Chier Baker: If we want to move forward with the position, recommended not jeopardizing the possibility of the SAFER Grant award. "Do it right not fast."
- Commissioner Donnell: Agreed to set parameters in place first if grant doesn't come through.
- Chief Asher: If we go through the testing process first, what qualifications will applicants need to have? The challenge will be finding someone with qualifications from outside of the area and what Officer title should they have.
- Commissioner Oules: Is their title important?
- Chief Asher and Baker agree applicants title status is important.
- Commissioner Donnell: Agreed title is important.
- Chief Baker: Suggested offering a valid process to have all recruits interested in applying and test for the position. This will ensure fairness and transparency and get respect and support from the whole department.
- Chief Asher: This opportunity offers local candidates who are qualified to apply and grow with the future of department.
- Commissioner Weiss: Will the main responsibility be to just recruit?
- Chief Asher: Training once recruited and working with them hands on.
- Commissioner Donnell: First year investment is approximately $10,000 per recruit. Recruiting and retaining is the challenge.
- Assistant Chief Sherman: Responded to Commissioner Weiss questions: Chelan agency had success with the SAFER Grant when they had Brandon Asher in the Training Coordinator position. He reiterated the full-time task is to "retain" recruits and having someone dedicated to interacting and constantly stay connected with the volunteers. Chelan does not have enough staff to oversee both volunteers and career firefighters and added when they put efforts into one area, others tend to suffer.
- Commissioner Weiss: Asked if Wenatchee Valley Chief Brian Brett is struggling with their recruit/retention program.
- Chief Baker: The Manson new Training Center will help bolster our current program and help get new recruits to stay engaged and better drill participation.

- Chief Asher: Advised he heard Wenatchee Valley Fire Department is going to be giving up their residency program due to high costs.
- Assistant Chief Sherman: Reiterated the first steps are to get us closer together by doing more combined drills in the future-benefiting both departments.
- Chief Baker: Commented, we are passed filling the need.
- Commissioner Donnell: Volunteer Recruit Academy starts Jan. 5th.
  Felt they were past the point of adding recruits to the academy and should possibly wait to see if the grant happens.
- Assistant Chief Sherman: Suggested stop putting new recruits in the middle of wildland fire season and change past practices.
- Commissioner Weiss: Asked if CFR does exit interviews when people leave the department.
- Assistant Chief Sherman: People will be more interested if they can be engaged.
- Chief Asher: In the past some turned in gear and found jobs outside of the area or did not have time to volunteer.
- Commissioner Weiss: Inquired if the State is requiring more from the volunteers.
  Assistant Chief Sherman: Explained standard-based polices conflict with standards set with other districts.
- Commissioner Willoughby: Agreed the requirement-training is time consuming.
- Commissioner Baker: The CFR has a comprehensive list of requirements; Manson does not have the same standards. Training for the volunteers takes a lot of time between drills/online.
- Assistant Chief Sherman: Compliance standards are mandatory.
- Chief Baker: MFD does not make volunteers do every certification but tries to have them commit to structural or wildland.
- Commissioner Donnell: With these requirements-smaller agencies are doing the best they can with limited resources.
- Commissioner Jones: Stressed the need to move forward on shared position now and not wait for grant funding. Commissioner Oules was in agreement.
- Commissioner Baker: Noted the changes ahead for Manson in the next two years.
- Chief Baker: Reported he has already budgeted for the shared position.
- Commissioner Oules: Suggested the two agencies put together some numbers and asked what this position is worth.
- Commissioner Weiss: Stressed the need to move ahead due to the annual wildfire threats.
- Commissioner Baker: Advised he would like to leisurely review sample, job description.
- Commissioner Donnell: Mentions the challenges in finding applicants who know the area and can work well with volunteers. Most likely they will already be qualified and expects it will take two months.
- Chief Asher: The role will require someone who will dedicate the time.
- Commissioner Jones: Suggested working out the details with salary.

- Chief Asher: Open job salary with title. Salary to be around $120,000.00 annually with benefits.
- Commissioner Willoughby: Asked what the Day-Rate is for their Captains?
- Chief Baker: Believes this position should be aligned with a Chiefs position and must meet the 80/20 rule to be considered exempt, regardless of rank. Clear career path for Captains.
- Chief Asher: Agreed to have position be exempt.
- Commissioner Willoughby: Reported the attorney stated (80% Administrative & 20% Operational). He sees this more as an office job. Exempt / Non-Exempt, job function/description is important.
- Chief Asher: Reiterated using First Due program-will help with a lot of tracking.
- Commissioner Weiss: Asked if both Chiefs are both in sink to move ahead. Both Chief Baker and Chief Asher confirmed they are ready to move forward.
- Commissioner Jones: To keep the process moving forward, he suggested working out the details before the next meeting.

- **Develop Long Range (2-3 Year) plan for both Districts**

  - Chief Asher: The shared Training Coordinator position would be a part of a long-term plan to combine agencies into one.
    He noted Manson has some big changes coming up with Chief Baker retiring in a couple of years and reiterated he sees the potential in bringing both agencies together. Merging the two departments into a Chelan Valley Department. He emphasized the possible challenges and benefits in merging the two departments.
  - Commissioner Weiss: Commented we are already seeing Interlocal Agreements with Mechanic and Insurance.
  - Chief Asher: Important to build trust and open more opportunities. We are seeing the many benefits already in working together on mutual aid incidents. Explained CFR department call increases, and the Manson volunteer recruit success will be beneficial when applying for DNR grants. He reiterated the need as Chelan is growing with the apartment complex next to Walmart coming soon, Fire/EMS call volume increasing and summer wildfire season.
  - Commissioner Donnell: As a Commissioner they have the responsibility to better provide emergency services for the area. It is important to be efficient with our time/money and have enough people to cover all the calls and be able to pay for them. What can we envision to what this looks like in the future?
  - Assistant Chief Sherman: Notes the National Fire Academy participants are all volunteer firefighters. He expressed his concern with Manson's future training residency facility. With the plan for twelve quarters that would face a lot of challenges with residency crew and volunteers working together.
  - Commissioner Jones: Asked the Board members what would be the next step.
  - Chief Asher: Suggested to open discussion as to what a two-three-year plan would look like when Chief Baker retires. He addressed the Manson Commissioners and

asked what they will do in two years when our current Chief retires and would the Manson community support the direction in merging with CFR. Noted the importance in getting community approval.

- Commissioner Oules: Recommended finalizing the shared position proposal.
- Assistant Chief Sherman: Asked what does Manson want the pay amount to be?
- Commissioner Baker: MFD will be having their own meeting to work through what they need.
- Chief Baker: Reiterated things need to be worked out with their own department.
- Commissioner Donnell: Asked who will the new shared position report to?
- Chief Asher: The position will work under Chelan 7 Chiefs.
- Commissioner Jones: Explained he will email a sample contract/job description to all Commissioners.
- Commissioner Donnell: Summarized the new position expense will be covered under Chelan 7 budget.

- **Fire Insurance-Ongoing Efforts**

  - Commissioner Jones: Expressed the need to get the newly elected Fire Commissioner on board with what the Fire Agencies are trying to do.
  - Commissioner Donnell: Suggested setting a firm date after the holidays and looks forward to opening up more discussion.

Adjournment: Board Commissioner Donnell Motioned to close the meeting with no additional business before the Commissioners, the meeting adjourned at 4:36 pm.

Chelan County Fire District 5 Board of Commissioners:

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Commissioner Chairman Fred Weiss

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Chris Willoughby

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Commissioner Dan Baker

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Attest: Regenia Trusel
District Secretary