

# WEST METRO FIRE-RESCUE DISTRICT

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

October 14, 2020

Approved December 9, 2020

### A. Call to order

President Gary Laurant called the regular meeting of the West Metro Fire-Rescue District Board of Directors to order at 6:32 p.m. on October 14, 2020, at Station 3, 4251 Xylon Avenue N, New Hope, MN.

### B. Roll Call – The following Directors were present:

Gary Laurant	President
Anne Norris	City Manager, City of Crystal, Secretary
Kirk McDonald	City Manager, City of New Hope, Vice President
Brendan Banks	Council, City of Crystal
Jeff Kolb	Citizen Representative, City of Crystal
Marc Berris	Citizen Representative, City of New Hope

The following staff members were present:

Fire Chief Sarah Larson  
Assistant Fire Chief Josh Kunde  
District Counsel Roger Knutson  
Recording Secretary Amy Juntunen

### C. Wecome to the New Hope Citizen Representative

Berris was welcomed to the Board. He introduced himself and shared some of his background with Board members and staff.

### D. Minutes

1. July 8, 2020 Board of Directors meeting minutes

Motion by Kolb, second by Norris to approve the minutes as presented. **Motion carried.**

### E. Consent Agenda

1. Approve June expenditures totaling \$344,490.68
2. Approve July expenditures totaling \$359,940.64
3. Approve August expenditures totaling \$159,438.53

Motion by Kolb, second by Norris to approve the consent agenda as presented. **Motion carried.**

### F. Open Forum

**G. Chief's Report**

From January 1-September 30, 2020 there have been 1387 calls for service, 598 in Crystal, 748 in New Hope and 41 Mutual Aid calls, with an estimated fire loss of \$1.24 million.

Chief Larson has continued to attend monthly meetings with the City Managers and Battalion Chiefs, as well as attending senior staff meetings at both cities. In addition to daily duties, the full-time staff have managed the duty crews, procured PPE for the District and member cities, applied for a second FEMA grant, and coordinated the honor guard for the Mike Spencer funeral and the fallen firefighters memorial, and developed a major apparatus report and presentation for this Board meeting. A new board member orientation was conducted for Berris on September 22. Duty crews are still staffed with four firefighters overnight and two to supplement daytime response.

The cities of New Hope and Crystal received CARES Act funding, which is required to be used to cover necessary expenditures due to COVID that are over the general budget from March 1-December 30, 2020. The District requests that the member cities use their CARES Act funding to reimburse the District for 25% to 100% of the cost of duty crew staffing. If the FEMA Public Assistance grant is awarded, it will fund 75% of the duty crew staffing cost. The current total cost from March 16-November 15 is \$180,757 for Crystal and \$183,748 for New Hope. If the FEMA grant is awarded in full to cover 75% of the cost, the remaining portion to be funded by the cities is \$45,189 for Crystal and \$45,937 for New Hope. In addition, three chief officer's duties substantially changed and resulted in an additional cost of \$50,690 to Crystal and \$51,529 to New Hope. This is a total request based on 100% and 25%, respectively to Crystal for \$231,447 or \$95,879 and to New Hope for \$235,277 or \$97,466.

This year the District received state aid toward the paid, on-call firefighter pension fund of \$263,162.15, an increase of \$18,381.83 over the 2019 state aid contribution. The total estimated pension expenditure for 2020 is \$385,058.46, with the WMFRD portion at \$121,896.31. The balance in the special pension fund will be approximately \$222,791.41.

The District has entered into Auto Aid agreements with the cities of Brooklyn Center and Robbinsdale to be dispatched in the first alarm to structure fires in the geographical area of those cities designated to the District. It is unlikely that this will greatly increase the number of calls responded to since the District already provides mutual aid to both cities.

Chief Larson reviewed the budget through August 31. Expenditures at that time were 67.08% of the annual budget.

Chief Nelson is responsible for scheduling duty crew shifts and has resumed scheduling training as well. Minimum participation requirements have been reinstated: attendance at 40% of all calls and a minimum of four trainings in the fourth quarter. The District participated in 243 Birthday Brigades and the August blood drive has been the most successful to date. All other public events have been suspended due to COVID.

Assistant Chief Watson has increased training opportunities with Tuesday drills returning in June and the new SCBA training executed in July as required training for all firefighters.

The West Suburban Fire Academy successfully completed class over the summer concluding with a live burn on August 1 and a virtual graduation ceremony with 150 attendees held August 3. The 2021 Academy will have 20 students starting on January 25.

Fire apparatus operator training began August 13 and the certification exam will occur on October 17. This is the last training required for apprentices to be promoted to the rank of firefighter.

Assistant Chief Wodtke is working with the city of Plymouth to input the current fire code into the RMS system, which will make completing reports easier. Wodtke virtually attended the quarterly IT Manager meeting hosted by LOGIS. The Joint EOC status has changed its status from virtual to standby and staff continues to attend briefings provided by MN DPS, Hennepin County Emergency Management and the state Fire Marshal. The CERT team trainings have been suspended indefinitely. Emergency Management training will be scheduled for December but may be postponed.

The District is working to procure PPE for itself and member cities. The cost for PPE ordered for member cities is billed back to the city. The current supplier is limiting medical gloves to nine boxes per month, so staff are looking for another supplier.

Four hundred feet of hose that failed testing was replaced under warranty. Staff are still working with Motorola and Hennepin County on radios due to errors with the encryption. The annual in-service training for the new SCBA equipment has been completed and firefighters have provided good feedback on the new equipment. The old SCBAs will be sold.

Annual testing for the Tower revealed a leak in the waterway under the ladder that was repaired at a cost of \$3,000-\$4,000. The new truck, Utility 11, has been outfitted and is in service. This vehicle can also serve as backup for the duty officer.

Extrication training was put to use in New Hope after a car entered a house.

Since January, 405 inspections and 125 re-inspections have been completed. Most inspections have resumed. Home inspections and educational programs continue to be on hold due to COVID. The District may develop online or virtual programs for use by teachers. A number of investigations are in process.

The second quarter financial report was included in the Board packet.

## **H. Old Business**

### **I. New Business**

1. Fire Chief's Annual Evaluation. Evaluation forms will be distributed electronically by Norris tomorrow, to be returned to Laurant by November 13 for action at the December Board meeting. A special meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m., just prior to the regular meeting, to review the evaluation.

Kolb suggested a small work group or subcommittee to create a better review process to measure improvement and evaluate skills for the future. The City Managers and Chief Larson will meet to create a new process or form for future evaluations.

2. Capital Purchases.

a. Lighting Project. In 2020 an Xcel Energy Efficiency Specialist reviewed retrofitting the stations. Potential savings and rebates are better than in past years. Staff recommends spending \$39,162 from the uncommitted capital fund balance. A grant of \$7,174 from MN BEEGP is reimbursed after completion of the project. The of New Hope will contribute \$7,830, the City of Crystal will contribute \$8,200, and the District will contribute \$16,032 to this project. Kolb inquired if only one Station could be retrofitted to validate the projected energy savings. Unfortunately, the grants expire in December.

Motion by McDonald, second by Berris to approve the purchase as presented. **Motion carried, Kolb opposed.**

b. Computer Workstation. One workstation due to be replaced in 2021 is failing. This request is for the purchase of a laptop and docking station to replace existing equipment through the state contract. Motion by Kolb, second by Banks to approve the purchase as presented. **Motion carried.**

3. Major Apparatus Report. The Board had directed staff to evaluate and recommend options for the replacement of the four engines used by the. Staff used APWA vehicle replacement guidelines to determine the timing of significant depreciation vs incurring major repair costs. This is based on several factors including age, mileage, hours idling, type of service, reliability, maintenance and repair, and overall condition. Points range from under 18 as excellent, 18-22 as good, 23-27 as consider for replacement, and 28+ as immediate replacement. Engine 11 scored 22, Engine 21 scored 23.5, Engine 31 scored 23.5, and Engine 32 scored 24. Engine 32 is used mainly for duty crews and training. The annual maintenance costs increase quite a bit in vehicles over 11 years old. Maintenance and refurbishment options were reviewed.

Having engines of the same make, model and year creates efficiencies in training and safety, and allows a backup engine to move between stations without issue. Challenges included concurrent maintenance costs in specific years.

Staff recommends replacing all four engines within a 12-month period, two one budget year and two the following budget year, to maintain standardization. No clear-cut age of vehicle could be determined but staff recommend replacement at 11 and 12 years to garner most resale value with least likely maintenance. For the current engines, this would require a new lease or purchase of two engines each in 2022 and 2023. The estimated cost per engine in 2022 is \$675,00-\$725,000 and in 2023 is \$709,000-\$761,000. The estimated lease cost per engine is \$70,00-\$73,500 per year. If current engines are replaced on this timeline, it will save cost of critical maintenance and repairs saving up to \$210,000 across all four engines.

At 11-12 years old, the approximate resale value for each engine is \$125,000-\$175,000.

Other options and costs for replacing the engines out to 20-21 years old in 2031 and 2032 were reviewed.

McDonald and Norris agreed with the best option of replacing the engines in 2022 and 2023 and inquired about paying down the lease or otherwise offsetting the annual cost. The Board preferred leasing to purchasing and avoiding large costs in the future by including the lease cost in the annual budget. The Board requested a 13/14 year option. The city managers and Board representatives will present these findings to their respective City Councils for feedback after further discussion by the Board at their December meeting.

**J. Other Matters and Announcements**

1. Roger Knutson is retiring. This is his last meeting as the District's counsel. Board members offered congratulations.
2. The **next regular** meeting of the West Metro Board of Directors will be held December 9, 2020 at 6:30 p.m., preceded by a special meeting at 6:00 p.m.

**K. Adjournment**

There being no further business, motion by McDonald, second by Banks to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Juntunen  
Recording Secretary