

WEST METRO FIRE-RESCUE DISTRICT
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2020
Approved February 10, 2021

A. Call to order

President Gary Laurant called the regular meeting of the West Metro Fire-Rescue District Board of Directors to order at 6:30 p.m. on December 9, 2020, via WebEx.

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
John Elder	Council, City of New Hope
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
Assistant Fire Chief Joel Nelson
Assistant Fire Chief Adam Wodtke
Deputy Fire Marshal Shelby Wolf
District Counsel Joel Jamnik
Recording Secretary Amy Juntunen

C. Minutes

October 14, 2020 Board of Directors meeting minutes. Strike “Annual” from the title. Motion by Elder, second by Berris to approve the October 14, 2020 minutes with the change noted above.

Motion carried.

D. Open Forum

E. Consent Agenda

1. Approve September expenditures totaling \$218,735.77
2. Approve October expenditures totaling \$178,543.85
3. Approve Resolution 2020-5 Accepting Donations
4. Approve Resolution 2020-6 Credit Card Purchases
5. Approve Resolution 2020-7 Fire Chief ads 2021 Purchasing Agent
6. Approve LMCIT Liability Coverage-Waiver Form

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

F. Chief's Report

From January 1-November 30, 2020 there have been 1697 calls for service, 729 in Crystal, 912 in New Hope and 56 Mutual Aid calls, with an estimated fire loss of \$1.28 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. Full-time staff members have been split up to limit exposure, with Nelson and Wodtke working from home. New Councilmember orientation was held last night for Crystal. Another will be planned for New Hope.

Duty crew staffing continues through the pandemic with split night shifts. The daytime duty crew is responding out of Station 2.

In a correction to last month's report, the State Aid for the pension fund received is \$263,162.15, an increase of over \$18,000 from 2019. The total pension expenditure for 2020 is \$458,641.12, previously reported at \$385,058.46. This makes the WMFRD portion of the expenditure \$195,478.97, not \$121,896.31. The 2020 budget contribution to the special pension fund is \$180,000, leaving an anticipated fund balance of approximately \$149,208.75.

The Chief reviewed the budget to actual information, detailing the areas over budget due to COVID, as well as areas under budget.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, 11 firefighters have tested positive and 8 others have quarantined due to symptoms or potential exposure. At one point, 16 firefighters were quarantined simultaneously. Three firefighters had significant illness with COVID while the rest of the cases were mild symptoms or asymptomatic. No firefighters have been hospitalized due to COVID

With the recent surge in positive cases and the Governor resuming shutdowns, training and drills have been canceled. Firefighters are currently excused from training and drills but expected to attend 40% of "all-calls".

Most public events have been suspended due to COVID, excepting Birthday Brigades and the *Be a Santa to a Senior* program, which collects gifts for local senior citizens. Collections will continue through December 11, with deliveries made the following week after packages have been quarantined for several days. There have been 256 Birthday Brigades from April-November 2020. The December blood drive has been canceled.

Online training through Target Solutions is now available to firefighters on several topics. Each unit has videos, slides and an exam. Required training will be pushed via this platform while in-person training is suspended. In total, 2,513 hours of training were completed by firefighters during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 West Suburban Fire Academy will begin January 25, 2021. Some of the curriculum has been rearranged to allow flexibility to move to online classes as needed and delays the hand-on training required in Firefighter I/II until mid-March.

All apprentice firefighters passed the Fire Apparatus Operator training in October, successfully completing the program to be promoted from apprentice to firefighter. The promotions occurred on November 28, 2020. A promotion banquet will be scheduled at a future date to recognize the new firefighters.

Staff has been meeting with neighboring fire departments to plan mutual aid response in the event that any department is unable to respond to its own calls. All of the District's neighbors have committed to providing services in the event WMFRD cannot respond to calls. Likewise, WMFRD has committed to supporting our neighbors as necessary. The state Fire Marshal has a mapping system to track whether help is needed from other agencies.

Staff have applied for two FEMA public assistance grants. None have been paid out yet and it's likely the payout deadline currently set at January 21, 2021 will be extended.

Staff continues to coordinate purchases of PPE for member cities. The District is well stocked.

The LED lighting installation project is 99% complete in all three stations and is very noticeable.

The mobile radios are in use now that the correct encryption has been provided.

Engine 21 required a new turbo, which cost \$6,000.

There have been 639 fire inspections/plan reviews/meetings completed since January 1, 2020, along with 200 re-inspections. Existing commercial inspections were put on temporary hold effective November 16 due to increased cases of COVID-19. New construction inspections continue, as is updating the information in the FDM database. A number of fire investigations are in process.

All in-person fire prevention education is on hold. Staff has developed a virtual program and six schools are scheduled to start this program in January and go through mid-February. This program includes virtual demonstrations and interactive children's activities.

Twelve new adopt-a-hydrant requests from residents have been received.

Overall call volume is down in 2020, likely because the District is no longer responding to non-priority medical calls.

The third quarter financial report was included in the meeting packet.

G. Old Business

1. Chief's Evaluation. The Board met in executive session prior to this meeting. Motion by Berris, second by Norris to approve an increase in salary for COLA and merit. **Motion carried.**

2. Continued Discussion of Major Apparatus Report. Chief Larson reviewed costs to purchase and lease for years 2024-2025, or to replace the four engines at 13 and 14 years old, and the pros and cons of lease vs. purchase. It is up to the Board, not the City Councils, to make the final decision on when to

purchase or lease. After review and discussion, the consensus of the Board is to lease the engines in 2022 and 2023 and to ensure that all are sister-trucks for efficiency and to ask both city managers to review the recommendation with each council.

H. New Business

1. Approve 2021 Meeting Schedule. Meetings are scheduled for February 10, April 14, May 12, July 14, August 11, October 13, and December 8. Motion by McDonald, second by Norris to approve the meeting schedule as presented. **Motion carried.**

2. Accept Additional Funding from the Cities of Crystal and New Hope. WMFRD requested additional funding from the member cities as part of the CARES Act funds the cities received to cover 25% of costs exceeding normal operations due to the pandemic. Total received is \$95,879 from Crystal and \$97,466 from New Hope. Motion by Banks, second by Elder to accept the reimbursements to cover duty crew and officer costs. **Motion carried.**

3. Approve Revision to Capital Fund policy. The District's financial advisor has revised the capital fund policy to add that proceeds from the sale of major apparatus will be reserved to purchase/lease new major apparatus or to pay down an existing lease. Motion by McDonald, second by Elder to approve the change to the fund policy statement. **Motion carried.**

4. Approve Resolution 2020-8 Board's Representatives on the West Metro Fire Relief Association Board. Motion by Norris, second by Kolb to approve resolution 2020-8 as presented. **Motion carried.**

5. Approve Resolution 2020-9 Carryover and Commitment of Capital Funds. Motion by Norris, second by Berris to approve resolution 2020-9 as presented, carrying over a total of \$422,000. **Motion carried.**

6. Approve 2021 Health Insurance rates. Insurance rates for 2021 are a 6.7% increase over the 2020 rate. The 2021 operating budget covers this increase. Motion by McDonald, second by Norris to approve the 2021 health insurance rates as presented. **Motion carried.**

7. Approve 2021 COLA. Staff proposed a 3% COLA increase based on the New Hope COLA increase. Motion by Elder, second by Norris to approve the COLA at 3%. **Motion carried.**

8. Approve 2021 Paid, On-call Pension. Staff recommends a 3% increase to paid, on-call pensions in 2021. The pension is a major tool for recruiting and retaining firefighters. Motion by McDonald, second by Norris to approve the increase in the paid, on-call pension as presented. **Motion carried.**

9. Approve Employee Handbook revisions. The current WMFRD handbook was approved in June 2011 and includes annual revisions that have occurred since then. This year's update includes new definitions and minor changes. Motion by Berris, second Elder to approve the revisions to the employee handbook as presented. **Motion carried.**

I. Other Matters and Announcements

The **next regular** meeting of the West Metro Board of Directors will be held February 10, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. A subcommittee may be formed to review the Chief's evaluation process.

J. Adjournment

There being no further business, motion by Elder, second by Banks to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Juntunen
Recording Secretary