

WEST METRO FIRE-RESCUE DISTRICT
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
February 10, 2021
Approved April 14, 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 February 10, 2021 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
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 Adam Wodtke
District Counsel Joel Jamnik
Recording Secretary Amy Juntunen

C. Minutes

1. Approve the December 9, 2020 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
2. Approve the December 9, 2020 Executive Session Minutes

Motion by Elder, second by Berris to approve the minutes as presented. **Motion carried.**

D. Open Forum

E. Consent Agenda

1. Approve November expenditures totaling \$160,677.16
2. Approve December expenditures totaling \$253,312.20
3. Approve 2020 Pension Contribution of \$191,192.60
4. Approve LMCIT Insurance Premiums
5. Approve Resolution 2021-1 engaging MMKR to complete the 2020 Audit

Motion by Elder, second by Berris to approve the consent agenda as presented. **Motion carried.**

F. Chief's Report

From January 1-December 31, 2020 there were 1828 calls for service, 781 in Crystal, 983 in New Hope and 64 Mutual Aid calls, with an estimated fire loss of \$1.31 million. Calls for service are down slightly compared to 2019, while estimated fire loss is nearly \$1 million less in 2020 than in 2019. In January 2021, there have been 85 calls for service.

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. Chief Larson attended city council work sessions in both cities to present the Board's recommendation from the major apparatus report and to provide a quarterly District update.

Duty crew staffing continues through the pandemic with split day/night shifts with two firefighters on day shift and four on night shift. Beginning March 1, 2021, the duty crews will be reduced to two overnight and on weekends and none on weekday daytime shift. The transition to normal response will be effective April 1. Staff expects the transition to be bumpy since paid on-call have not been fully responding. Forty-two firefighters, or about 70% of the department, have voluntarily received the COVID-19 vaccination.

In 2020, expenses were about 2.28% over budget, approximately \$46,000. However, the District also received over \$200,000 in unbudgeted revenue, which Staff estimates will end up overall at about 5% under budget.

Firefighters volunteered for Salvation Army bell-ringing on two dates in December and the *Santa to a Senior* program was very successful. The District has also participated in 237 birthday brigades. Blood drives are scheduled for February 22 in both New Hope and Crystal. The food drive will be held March 20. The District has committed to be present at member city outdoor events this summer.

Firefighter Ben Stauffer has taken a one-year leave of absence to take a full-time job with the Austin, TX Fire Department and is not likely to return. Firefighter Dwight Gorder has retired after twenty years of service.

Preparations are underway for the Honor Guard training clinic at Camp Ripley March 26-28 for Firefighters and EMTs across Minnesota. Sixty students and six instructors are expected.

In December, training was completed on bloodborne pathogens, employee right-to-know, OSHA, and spirometry. On February 2 regularly scheduled department trainings were restarted. Each session allowed for 8 students and 2 instructors. Firefighter training participation requirements will be reinstated in April. A live fire training is scheduled in Crystal on April 10.

The West Suburban Fire Academy began its 15th year on January 25, 2021 with 16 students. West Metro Fire will serve as lead instructors for 13 fire academy classes. Graduation is scheduled for June 10, 2021.

Assistant Chief Wodtke worked with county public health and emergency management to get 1,000 people vaccinated at Wayzata High School. One public assistance grant has been paid in full and a second is expected soon. The other two grants for payroll are in process. Two additional grants are expected to be applied for.

It is taking longer to receive ordered parts for trucks and equipment, up to 4-6 weeks. Duty crews have been replacing damaged ceiling tiles after the lighting project. Engine 21 blew a main chassis fuse during the snow storm in December and needed to be towed to the station. The issue was identified and repaired at the station. Utility 11 was posted at auction for \$20,600. The District paid \$26,000 for Utility 11 brand new.

In 2020, 675 inspections, plan reviews and meetings were conducted. Since January 1, 2021, 67 inspections and 28 re-inspections have been completed. The focus for the first quarter of 2021 will be areas along the Highway 169 service road, Hillsboro Avenue N, 50th Avenue N, 51st Avenue N, and Winnetka Avenue. Apartment inspections and the inspection training program are still on hold due to COVID-19. Home safety surveys will begin again in April with a goal of completing 30 in 2021. All in-person fire prevention training remains on hold, but online fire safety programs have been created for K-2nd grade. Programs are planned for 3rd grade in the spring, but it's unknown whether they'll be virtual or in-person.

The preliminary fourth quarter financial report was included in the meeting packet.

G. Old Business

1. Review Feedback from City Councils/Approve Plan for Major Apparatus Replacement. Both the New Hope and Crystal City Councils agreed to the leasing option for replacing the engines. Staff reviewed leasing options including ordering all four at once with a staggered delivery of two in 2022 and two in 2023. Payment options were also reviewed, with the least expensive option only allowing a 4-month stagger with engines delivered in November 2022 and January 2023 to maintain the same contract rate with no increase.

Motion by Elder, second by Banks authorizing staff to prepare plans and specifications for further review prior to choosing any financing options. **Motion carried.**

2. Revision of Chief's Performance Evaluation Discussion. Kolb would like to table this item until governance and succession planning are discussed. Motion by Kolb, second by Elder to table this item until a future date. **Motion carried.**

H. New Business

1. Accept Public Assistance Grant. Motion by McDonald, second by Elder to accept the FEMA Public Assistance Grant. **Motion carried.**

2. Approve 2021 Chief's Goals. The City Managers worked with Chief Larson to update the 2020 goals for 2021 and added two new goals: Coordinate with the City of New Hope to develop a long term capital improvement plan for Station 3 for items that are the City's responsibility, and Review the City of Crystal long term capital improvement plan for Stations 1 and 2 for items that are the

City's responsibility, and develop new engine specifications for engine replacement. Ongoing goals were reviewed and updated with the 2021 timeline. Many 2020 goals were not met due to the pandemic and shifted to 2021. Motion by McDonald, second by Norris to approve the Chief's goals for 2021. **Motion carried.**

3. Approve Updates to the Employee Handbook. The last update did not include the new respiratory program to comply with the new SCBA equipment put into service in 2020. Motion by Elder, second by Banks to approve the update to the employee handbook. **Motion carried.**

4. Approve Capital Purchase – Firewall. The District's firewall is about one year out-of-date and no longer works properly. Staff recommends replacing with two firewalls, one primary and one secondary. This equipment will be purchased under state contract. Motion by Elder, second by Banks to approve the capital purchase as presented. **Motion carried.**

I. Other Matters and Announcements

The **next regular** meeting of the West Metro Board of Directors will be held April 14, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Chief Larson requested Board members to complete conflict of interest forms for the auditor.

J. Adjournment

There being no further business, motion by McDonald, second by Berris to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Juntunen
Recording Secretary