

# WEST METRO FIRE-RESCUE DISTRICT

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2021

Approved 10/13/2021

### 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 July 14, 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-Treasurer
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  
District Counsel Joel Jamnik  
Tom Whitmer, Pierce Financial Solutions  
Dan Corcoran, MacQueen Emergency  
Recording Secretary Amy Juntunen

### C. Minutes

1. Approve the April 14, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

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

### D. Open Forum

### E. Consent Agenda

1. Approve March expenditures totaling \$236,865.85
2. Approve April expenditures totaling \$267,489.99
3. Approve May expenditures totaling \$200,157.33
4. Approve Resolution 2021-4 Accepting Donations
5. Accept Resignation of New Hope Board Representative for the WMFRDFRA Board of Directors.

Motion by Elder, second by Kolb to approve the consent agenda with a change to item E.5. to edit the last sentence to read ...both mayors and the Board President interviewed candidates... **Motion carried.**

**F. Chief's Report**

From January 1-June 30, 2021 there were 936 calls for service, 369 in Crystal, 525 in New Hope and 42 Mutual Aid calls, with an estimated fire loss of \$584,621.

Chief Larson has continued to attend monthly meetings with the City Managers and Battalion Chiefs. Officer meetings are also held monthly. A team-building dinner for all officers attending the Minnesota Fire Chief's conference in October is being planned. The annual awards banquet is scheduled for September 10 on Chief Larson's rooftop. Awards for both 2020 and 2021 will be recognized.

Expenses through May 31, 2021 are at less than one percent under budget at 40.69% or \$20,780.41. Unbudgeted revenue received in 2021 from public assistance grants is \$374,337.49, which makes the total financial statement under budget by 18.64%, or \$395,251.88. Worker's Comp is over budget by 19.5% due to premiums higher than budgeted and Financial Services is over due to running payroll every two weeks. Most other items that are currently over budget should align by year-end.

Citizens seem to be enjoying the renewed participation in community/public events. The home safety surveys have 20 completed and five scheduled in the next month. Birthday brigades have tapered off, though a few requests still come in. The Explorer program also restarted in June 2021 and recruitment to bring in 8-10 kids for the program is underway. The blood drive in May was successful and another is being scheduled for August.

Firefighter recruitment didn't occur in 2020. Since the last recruitment in 2019, ten firefighters have retired/resigned. Recruitment began in June with a deadline of August 25, 2021 for new applications. To date, ten applications have been received. The new recruits will start December 1. The Fire Academy runs January through June. There are currently 51 firefighters on staff with a goal to have 60 on staff. Several firefighters have gone through MnFIRE training, which teaches them to be more conscious regarding firefighter trauma, heart attacks and cancer.

The District has recently contracted with Rachel Peterson for firefighter mental health services including debriefing and counseling. Peterson is a former police officer and professional counselor.

Three Lieutenant candidates are currently in the Lieutenant-in-Training program. They completed the fire ground training component on July 1. In the third quarter, firefighters will train on automatic fire suppression and large area search. The West Suburban Fire Academy was completed on June 11 with a total of 15 students.

Assistant Chief Wodtke continues to work with FDM support staff to update the software as part of the annual maintenance agreement. LOGIS has begun offering a managed service for wireless controllers that will allow the member cities to broadcast their wireless networks at the fire stations.

Six FEMA Public Assistance grants have been submitted related to COVID-19 response and PPE. Five grants have been paid for a total of \$454,503.23. The grant funds will replace the \$100,000+ spent over budget last year due to COVID.

Staff is working with other jurisdictions regarding non-scalable portable fencing to secure city buildings in the case of unrest. Not many resources are available for fencing. Minneapolis does have the resources now. The City of Brooklyn Park received a quote of nearly \$5 million to provide such products. The City of Minneapolis has agreed to work under mutual aid to assist with securing city property so no city will stand alone.

The overhead doors have been painted. Carpet in the office areas will be replaced with carpet tiles. The tiled floors may be replaced with a metallic epoxy coating.

Fire hose has been tested and two sections are being replaced under warranty. Ground ladder testing has also been completed with no deficiency or failures. The Tower has been scheduled for annual testing.

To date, 499 inspections and 171 re-inspections have been completed. The 2021 focus is on Winnetka and Boone Avenues. Food truck inspections began in June 2021 in New Hope, requiring an annual inspection of every food truck that enters the city. In-person fire prevention education programs resumed in July and planning is ongoing for the New Hope Safety Camp in August.

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

#### **G. Old Business**

**1. Accept Public Assistance Grants.** The District applied for FEMA Public Assistance Grants to offset PPE and unbudgeted labor expenses related to COVID-19. The total amount received to date is \$454,503.23. The current awards are for \$243,087.61.

Motion by McDonald, second by Elder to accept grants in the amount of \$243,087.61. **Motion carried.**

**2. Governance Discussion.** Earlier this year there was discussion to make the Fire Chief's relationship more similar to a City Department head with the Chief reporting to the City Managers and City Managers performing annual evaluations and succession planning. This would eliminate potential Board interference in day-to-day operations. After further discussion, there will be no change to the current Board makeup or governance at this time.

**3. 2022 Budget.** Both City Councils have reviewed the proposed 2022 budget with no issues raised. Motion by Banks, second by Elder to approve the 2022 budget as presented. **Motion carried.**

**4. Engine Replacement.** There were no questions or discussions regarding engine specifications. Four leasing options were presented:

a. The first option includes a guaranteed trade-in value of the current engines at \$85,000. The value received at sale may be more than that and any revenue generated above \$85,000, less the commission would be used to offset the city contribution to the lease payment. This option requires the District to purchase all four new engines at one time with the lease contract to occur before August 31, 2021. This option also avoids a materials surcharge. The cities' contribution to the lease payments would be stepped over five years.

b. The second option is to enter into the lease contract for all four engines at once after August 31, 2021. The price will increase by a 3.6% materials surcharge.

c. The third and fourth options only guarantee the \$85,000 trade-in value for the first two engines. The costs for the second two engines the following year will also increase by at least 3.6%.

Staff recommends option one which avoids all surcharges and includes guaranteed trade-in value. This allows for a staggered step payment plan to offset the cities' contributions for the first two years. This option will also allow for a staggered delivery of two months while maintaining the efficiency of sister trucks. The District will commit \$200,000 in public assistance grant funding received to the fire engines as well.

Motion by Kolb, second by Berris to authorize the execution of necessary documents and approve option one for leasing four new fire engines. **Motion carried.**

**5. Cancel August 11, 2021 Joint Council/Board Work Session.** During the city council work sessions in 2012 to discuss the future of the West Metro Fire-Rescue District (WMFRD), it was agreed the two city councils should meet with the WMFRD Board annually to keep the lines of communication open. Earlier this year both city councils were asked about the need for the August 2021 joint work session with the WMFRD Board and both city councils responding that there weren't any shared issues to discuss.

Motion by Elder, second by Banks to cancel the August joint Council/Board work session. **Motion carried.**

#### **H. New Business**

**1. Accept CenterPoint Energy Community Safety Grant.** The CenterPoint Energy Community Safety Grant is an annual program that awards matching grants up to \$2,500 for eligible safety and emergency response equipment. A joint application submitted by WMFRD and New Hope Park and Recreation for the Home Safety Survey program and safety equipment for the aquatic park. This grant has been awarded with \$1,500 going to WMFRD and \$1,000 going to the aquatic park. Matching funds will be paid from the special fund.

Motion by McDonald, second by Elder to accept the CenterPoint Energy Community Safety Grant. **Motion carried.**

**2. Election of Officers.** Motion by Kolb, second by Elder to elect the current officers of Laurant, President; McDonald, Vice President; and Norris, Secretary-Treasurer. **Motion carried.**

**3. Capital Purchases.**

**a. Dayroom Furniture.** Stations 1 and 2 furniture was last purchased in 2009 and has outlived the serviceable life. The capital plan includes \$10,000 for replacement of furniture in 2021 including a sofa, loveseat and two recliners at each station. Bids have been received for \$8,639.92.

Motion by McDonald, second by Berris to approve the capital purchase of furniture as presented. **Motion carried.**

**b. Turnout Gear.** The capital plan includes \$40,000 for the replacement of structural turnout gear in 2021. Several sets of turnout gear are replaced annually as the gear is no longer compliant with NFPA after 10 years. Staff recommends the purchase of 10 new sets of turnout gear at a cost of \$38,346.70.

Motion by Elder, second by Berris to approve the purchase of turnout gear as presented. **Motion carried.**

**c. Network Equipment.** The 2021 capital plan includes \$20,000 for technology purchases. The current wireless adapters and Station 3 switch are overdue to be replaced. The cost of replacement is \$10,084.95.

Motion by Elder, second by Kolb to approve the purchase of network equipment as presented. **Motion carried.**

**d. Computer Workstations.** Two workstations are due to be replaced in 2021, and another due to be replaced in 2022 is failing. These workstations are at Stations 1 and 3 and are used by firefighters to submit work orders, complete incident reports, and for scheduling. The quote to replace the three computers is \$2,754.93

Motion by Banks, second by Berris to approve the purchase of computer workstations as presented. **Motion carried.**

**4. Future Discussion about Staffing at a Work Session or Regular Meeting.** There is an ongoing opportunity to apply for a SAFER grant that provides money to fire departments to increase/maintain the number of trained firefighters in the community. The grant would pay for 100% of new positions for three years to ease the expense of additional staff. The grant application opens this fall. Staff would like to discuss increasing full-time staffing levels at the September work session or October regular meeting.

The Board agreed to to have a work session on September 8, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

**I. Other Matters and Announcements**

The **next regular** meeting of the West Metro Board of Directors will be held October 13, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

**J. Adjournment**

There being no further business, motion by Elder, second by Banks to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Juntunen  
Recording Secretary