

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
ROARING FORK FIRE RESCUE AUTHORITY
VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING**

August 18, 2020

Authority Board President Ed Van Walraven called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. Board members present were Ed Van Walraven, Leroy Duroux, John Young, Bill Boineau, Irene Greiser and Dave Heivly. Others present were Chief Scott Thompson, Deputy Chiefs Pete Bradshaw, and John Mele, Division Chief Richard Cornelius, Finance Director Jennifer Thompson, Human Resources Director Renee Thomas, Attorney Bob Cole and Administrative Assistant Susan Herwick.

Minutes of July 23, 2020 Meeting:

Director Greiser made a motion to accept the minutes as read, the motion was seconded by Director Duroux. All were in favor and the motion carried 6 – 0.

Public Comments:

None

Attorney's Report:

Attorney Bob Cole stated that under the Firefighter Safety Act we are required to meet and confer. If they get adequate signatures, we need to go to election in order to determine whether we will meet and confer. Resolution 6-2020 establishes the guiding process to meet and confer. DC Bradshaw asked if it pertained to all employees of the District. Attorney Bob Cole stated no, just line personnel to formally discuss the issue. Director Greiser asked if we knew what the grievance was. Chief Thompson stated no, they want to address policy. They want to open dialogue to better communication. Chief Thompson asked whether he could have who he wanted to have in the meeting with him. Attorney Cole stated yes. The Union has asked to have 4 – 5 people in the meeting. Director Boineau asked whether the Board needed to get involved. Attorney Cole stated no. Chief Thompson will report the outcome back to the Board. The Union will need more than one-half of all the firefighters to sign a petition asking to meet and confer. They have fourteen signatures for this session. The meeting cannot last longer than four hours in two combined sessions. Attorney Bob Cole stated that we have no obligation to discuss any items that are not in the request. They can only ask to meet and confer twice per calendar year. Chief Thompson stated that he would start the discussion by laying out some ground rules. He is not going to let them break the span of control with their supervisors. This isn't going to be a way of going around the Battalion Chiefs, Division Chiefs, and Deputy Chiefs. They cannot discuss wages or benefits. Director Van Walraven asked how many people were in the Union. Chief Thompson stated there are 24 full-time firefighters. The Union has sixteen out of twenty-four employees enrolled. The Battalion Chiefs have been asked to become members but he doesn't think that they have joined the Union. They have to have 50% or more of the members who want to discuss the issue. Attorney Cole stated that this meet and

confer applies to all Full-Time firefighters regardless of whether they are in the union or not. It only excludes any Chief Officers who are considered supervisors. Director Boineau made a motion to approve Resolution 6-2020 to meet and confer, the motion was seconded by Director Irene Greiser. All were in favor and the motion carried 6 – 0.

Chief's Report:

Chief Scott Thompson stated that we have one engine on assignment at the Pine Gulch fire. It should be back this weekend. Two structure engines have been sent to Glenwood Springs for structure protection two different times for the Grizzly Creek Fire. This fire is expected to move eastward toward the Cottonwood Pass area. There are currently eighty structures in its path to the east. There are seventeen aircraft fighting the fire. We won't be sending any further resources out on assignment as we need them here at home. We are in the 97% of historic low fuels moisture. There is no weather relief in sight.

Chief Scott Thompson stated that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is still working on allocating us additional acreage for Station 46. They are currently working on wildfires around Colorado so we are on hold at this moment. Without a 35-acre parcel of land on which we can put a well this project will not move forward.

Deputy Chief of Administration Report:

None

Deputy Chief of Operations Report:

Deputy Chief Pete Bradshaw stated that he and DC Issel are still transitioning into their new roles. Wildfire is our number one concern right now.

The new ladder truck is in Denver and should be delivered in the next couple of weeks.

We are working on new signs for all of our stations. We continue to work on the rebranding of our remaining apparatus.

We have met with some of our part-time personnel who were under achievers. They have chosen to leave the department.

We are working on a significant budget request for new SCBA in either 2021 or 2022.

The executive staff met a couple of weeks ago and decided that Tuesday night meetings can be opened back up for the volunteers for fire and EMS training. They can also start signing up for more shifts in the fire stations with the duty crews.

Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal Report:

Deputy Chief John Mele stated that the Town of Basalt passed the wildfire hardening codes for new construction on the first reading.

Division Chief of EMS:

Division Chief Richard Cornelius stated that Public Health agencies are working on messages to the public that if we can't get our social distancing, mask wearing and small group gathering under control, children will not be able to go back to school this fall. Test result turnaround time is around four days. Eagle and Pitkin Counties are now in the cautious level which means moderate risk of exposure to COVID-19. We need to maintain a social distance of no less than six feet, wear masks, and keep group gatherings small. There are now four levels throughout the State. There is a steady decrease in COVID cases throughout the State through July. The Federal Government's goal is to have 300 million doses of effective vaccine in January 2021. Herd immunity is no longer an option. The vaccine is our best option. These vaccines will be prioritized to people who are essential workers and residents of long-term care facilities. Some people may need two doses of the vaccine given over two to four weeks. There is lower coverage with ethnic minorities. The CDC has stated that fall and winter of 2020 – 2021 will be one of the most difficult times we have ever seen in public health.

Division Chief of Training:

None

HR Report:

Human Resources Director Renee Thomas stated that we are working on Salary surveys. The Fire Inspector I and Fleet Supervisor/Mechanic positions have been advertised. We are trying to schedule interviews next week for the fleet mechanic. She has met with the Deputy and Division Chiefs regarding a fall volunteer and part-time recruitment.

Director Boineau asked whether we needed to increase staffing levels in the District in the coming year. Chief Thompson stated that we are adjusting staffing levels as needed. We want to add one person to be assigned where ever as needed. We want to be very careful and make sure the funding is available when we bring a new person on. We never want to lay anyone off once they've been hired. We will need part-time help next year during paramedic school. We have volunteers to supplement our career staff.

Finance Report:

Finance Director Jennifer Thompson stated that she will see property revenue numbers by the end of August. She is building budgets that run both high and low numbers. We are going to go with Public Health Sector insurance out of Denver. This group was modeled after the Western Slope Health Care Group and has been together for ten years. The Public Health Sector insurance group was explained to the Board. They are providing five different health care options for employees to choose from. We will present our preferred option to the Board at the September meeting. Once WSHCG is disbanded any residual claims will be paid out of the reserves and any money left over from that fund will be split equally between the Districts that had been members of WSHCG. Bids from private sector health insurance have also been requested for comparison. We will receive a 5% decrease in premium if we go with the Public Health

Sector Insurance group. Director Van Walraven asked whether coverages were about the same. Jennifer stated that they are very similar to what we have now.

Jennifer is working on wildfire billing which is now all automated.

The staff will be meeting next week to start discussing budget needs. The preliminary budgets will be presented at the September 15, 2020 meeting. We are currently running at 50 – 51% of our operating budget. This includes the two positions that were budgeted for but have not been filled this year. Div. Chief Cornelius applied for a \$100,000 grant to help cover expenses created by COVID-19.

Director Van Walraven asked about the Medicare line item in the budget. Medicare is a mandatory deduction for all employees. The employees contribute 1.45% and the employer contributes 1.45% for a total of 2.9%.

Information Technology:

None

Board Comments:

The Board was asked their preference for Board meeting times. Discussion. RFFRA will start at 8:30 a.m. and other Board meetings will follow.

Director Heivly stated that our crews responded to an incident last week that went on all night long. The crew that responded went above and beyond the call of duty with helping the Police Department out with the person who was in crisis. Deputy Chief Bradshaw stated that the crew involved had been given letters of commendation.

Director Leroy Duroux asked when we might be able to hold live meetings again. Chief Thompson stated that we will listen to Division Chief Cornelius for his advice. The training rooms are certainly large enough for social distancing and wearing masks. The meeting in September will be at Station 42 at 8:30 a.m.

Staff Comments:

Deputy Chief Bradshaw stated that we are down 6 – 7% in call volume from May 1 – August 15, 2020. The east side of the District has had above 40% of false calls and on the west side we are at about 20% of false calls. A false call is when an alarm system activates for no apparent reason.

Unfinished Business:

None

New Business:

Chief Thompson stated that we just received our reassessment letter from ISO and we are going to remain an ISO Level 3 District. This is based upon staffing, training, and data received from Fire Prevention.

Volunteer Meeting:

We will have a virtual meeting on September 1, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. We have requested that questions be submitted ahead of time. Director Dave Heivly stated that he would attend this meeting.

Adjournment:

Director Bill Boineau made a motion to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded by Director Duroux. All were in favor and the motion passed 6 – 0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.