



**Board of Commissioners
Minutes of Work Session Meeting
March 12, 2024**

PRESENT

Chair Micah Rowland
Vice Chair Michael Fearnough
Commissioner Jim Kenny
Commissioner David Chan
Commissioner Mark Laurence
Commissioner Chris Teofilak
Commissioner Ed Widdis
Brier Liaison Paula Swisher
Mountlake Terrace Liaison Jesse Hoffman

STAFF

Fire Chief Thad Hovis
Assistant Chief Bob Eastman
Assistant Chief Shaughn Maxwell
Communications Director Leslie Hynes
Human Resources Director David Cullen
Chief Financial Officer Chris Bothwell
Executive Assistant Melissa Blankenship

7:00 PM

In person at Headquarters and Zoom Virtual Meeting ID 861 5293 4763

1. CALL TO ORDER (7:00 p.m.)

Chair Rowland called the work session to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (7:01 p.m.)

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (7:02 p.m.)

Motion

Micah Rowland

Motion to approve agenda as presented.

Second:

Michael Fearnough

Motion passed unanimously 7-0;

4. PUBLIC COMMENT Notice: All public comment and testimony are public records and may be subject to disclosure pursuant to the Public Records Act, RCW Chapter 42.56. (7:04 p.m.)

None.

5. UNION REPORT (7:13 p.m.)

None.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS (7:18 p.m.)

- a. Fourth Quarter Financial Report - For Discussion - Chief Financial Officer Chris Bothwell

CFO Bothwell presented the draft annual financial results from the end of calendar year 2023.

- b. Benefit Charge Update - For Discussion - Communications Director Leslie Hynes/Assistant Chief Robert Eastman

Communications Director Hynes and Assistant Chief Bob Eastman presented a benefit charge renewal update.

Director Hynes shared that the benefit charge was approved by South County Fire voters in 2020 to provide a more fair and balanced way to fund crucial emergency services. Unlike levies based on a property's assessed value, the benefit charge was based on a building's size, risks and hazards. Industrial and commercial properties with higher risk pay more than residential properties. With the benefit charge, the maximum fire levy is reduced. The benefit charge was set each year by the Board of Fire Commissioners. The benefit charge would not apply to the City of Edmonds, which received emergency services through a contract with South County Fire.

- c. Annexation(s) - For Discussion - Commissioner Ed Widdis

Commissioner Widdis opened discussions about annexations.

Board members shared mutual aid concerns and commented on our growth and that we were unlikely to diminish in size over time.

The Board directed the Intergovernmental Committee to further the discussion.

7. NEW BUSINESS (8:00 p.m.)

- a. Commissioners as Volunteer Firefighters - For Discussion - Chair Micah Rowland

Chair Rowland opened the floor for comments on the letter of disapproval sent by Local 1828 for Commissioners serving a dual role as Volunteer Firefighters.

Commissioner Teofilak shared that in August of 2022 he had reservations but wanted to vote in favor to give the dual role a chance. He believed that an organization of our size needed to have a separation between leaders and volunteers and we were not a small rural agency where everyone needed to have dual roles.

Commissioner Teofilak learned how important rank was in the fire service and how difficult it would be for a Commissioner to not be treated as if they were in control of volunteers.

Commissioner Teofilak shared that since the Volunteer numbers had increased significantly there was no longer a need for a Commissioner to serve a dual role.

Commissioner Laurence shared that it may no longer be a good idea because of current actions taken by the Union.

Commissioner Widdis shared that he never thought it would be a good idea as you would always be a Commissioner first.

Commissioner Chan stated that the Union had no problem with it when it was initially introduced and that we needed to take into account individual behaviors. Commissioner Chan was not in favor of a blanket rule but instead recommended the issue be resolved on an individual basis.

Commissioner Kenny stated that he didn't know what the facts were; what were the allegations and that the Board should be concerned with overseeing the organization. Anything detracting them from that mission was a distraction.

Commissioner Rowland shared that he made better decision as a Commissioner by being a volunteer.

Commissioner Fearnough shared that he regularly checked in with volunteer firefighter leadership and no one had shared they were being treated any differently. He felt confident he was leaving his Commissioner hat behind when he was serving as a volunteer.

Liaison Swisher shared that there would always be people who felt uncomfortable because they were Commissioners and wouldn't say anything. She urged the Commissioners to be realistic about that and that it could be easily seen as a conflict of interest.

When asked, Fire Chief Hovis shared that he did not approve of the dual role.

- b. Volunteer Firefighter Trustees - For Discussion - Chair Micah Rowland/Executive Assistant Melissa Blankenship

Chair Rowland stated that Per RCW 41.24.060 South County Fire was required to create a Board of Trustees to administer the provisions of RCW 41.24, Volunteer Firefighters and Reserve Officers' Relief and Pensions.

The Board discussed the selection of the additional Board member to serve and that the Volunteer Firefighters would need to select a member to serve.

The Board would continue discussion at the following meeting and review a Resolution for approval.

8. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS (8:45 p.m.)

Commissioner Chan shared that he had been escorting medical personnel around Snohomish County medial facilities for learning purposes.

Commissioner Teofilak provided an update from the Emergency Plan Ad Hoc Committee.

Chair Rowland asked the Board to check their calendars for available dates for a Spring workshop and that Ms. Blankenship would send out an email requesting agenda items.

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION (8:50 p.m.)

Chair Rowland called an executive session to Review the Performance of a Public Employee Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(g) and Collective Bargaining Pursuant to RCW 42.30.140(4)(a)(b) at 8:40 p.m. for 30 minutes with no action anticipated at the conclusion of the session.

The executive session was extended for 30 minutes.

The executive session was extended for 20 minutes.

The work session was called back to order at 10:00 p.m.

a. Review the Performance of a Public Employee Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)

b. Collective Bargaining Pursuant to RCW 42.30.140(4)(a)(b)

10. ADJOURNMENT (10:00 p.m.)

11. AGENDA DISCLAIMER - Members of the public are advised that times listed on the agenda are approximate and that items on the agenda may be addressed sooner or later than the time specified.

Without objection the work session was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Approved by:



Micah Rowland (Mar 25, 2024 17:07 PDT)

Micah Rowland
Board Chair

Presented by:

Melissa Blankenship

Melissa Blankenship
Executive Assistant to the Board of
Commissioners

South County Fire strives to provide accessible opportunities for all members of the public. Please notify the Board Executive Assistant at 425-551-1251 or mblankenship@southsnofire.org at least 48 hours prior to any South County Fire meeting if any accommodations are needed.