

NORTH TAHOE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Board of Directors

Regular Meeting

NTPFD Station 51 Public Safety Center
222 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City, California

Tuesday

May 26, 2020 – 4:30 p.m.

MINUTES

NOTE: This meeting was held virtually via GoToMeeting as permitted by the Governor’s Executive Order regarding COVID-19.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:40 p.m. by President Baffone.

Roll Call

Attending:

Board Present (via GoToMeeting)

Directors Baffone, Correa, Doyle, Loverde, and Ragan. A quorum was established.

Staff Present (via GoToMeeting)

Fire Chief Schwartz (Station 51)

Legal Counsel Steve Gross (out at 5:43 pm; back 5:51 pm)

Division Chief Steve Leighton (Station 51)

Division Chief Steve McNamara (Station 51)

Director of Finance and Administration Kim Eason (Station 51) (out at 5:39 due to family emergency)

Battalion Chief Alan Whisler (Station 51)

Battalion Chief Scott Sedgwick (Remote)

Battalion Chief Sarah Lagano (Station 51)

Captain John Farrell (Station 51)

Mechanic II/III Joe Parle (Station 54)

Facilities Coordinator Tim Schrader (Station 54)

PIO Erin Holland (Station 51)

Forest Fuels Coordinator Eric Horntvedt (Station 51)

Administrative Assistant I/Clerk of the Board Kelly McElravey (Station 51)

Public (via GoToMeeting)

Hillary Erickson (out 5 pm – after presentation)

Scott Bryant (out 5 pm – after presentation)

Fabienne Gueissaz

Ellie Beals

Squaw Valley General Manager, Mike Geary

2. Additions to Agenda/Approval of Agenda

There were no changes, and the agenda was approved as presented. No public comment.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Public Comment

President Baffone asked and paused for public comment since there were 19 people on the virtual meeting. There was no public comment.

5. Correspondence

- Compliments to Erin Holland from Nevada Department of Public Safety
- Thank you note and drawing from Sage Gaffney

There was a Q&A session between Board and staff. President Baffone asked and paused for public comment since there were 19 people on the virtual meeting. There was no public comment.

6. Presentation by Hillary Erickson, ISU Insurance Services-Atwood Agency, regarding alternative companies for liability insurance

Chief Schwartz gave the background for this item. NTFPD was with Atwood prior to him becoming Fire Chief. In 2012, NT Fire was faced with a significant premium increase from VFIS, so we switched to SDRMA. Currently, the insurance pool as a whole has experienced an increase, so we wanted to research alternative insurance companies and asked Hillary to help with that. Hillary’s bio was included in the Board packet.

Just as the COVID-19 pandemic began, the District received notification mid-March that the liability insurance premium was increasing 40% in fiscal year 2020/2021 with SDRMA. Hillary Erickson, CPCU, Vice President, ISU Insurance Services - Atwood Agency, was contacted to help secure quotes from other providers. She will report on her findings to the Board tonight, along with Paul Fuller (CEO of Provident/FirePlus) and Scott Bryant (Regional Director from Provident and retired fire Captain).

There was a Q&A session between Board, Ms. Erickson, and staff. President Baffone asked and paused for public comment since there were 20 people on the virtual meeting. There was no public comment.

Upon motion by Director Ragan, seconded by Director Loverde, the Board gave direction to staff to choose an alternative company for liability insurance after it has had a chance to review all proposals. The Board also authorized the Fire Chief to enter into an agreement with the chosen insurance company for the 2020/2021 fiscal year and to send a letter to SDRMA stating our termination with them. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was five in favor:

*Ayes: Director Baffone, Director Correa, Director Doyle, Director Loverde,
Director Ragan*

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

7. Ambulance service changes along the 89 and 267 corridors (Squaw Valley and Northstar service areas)

Chief Schwartz explained that when he joined the District in 2012, Truckee Fire handled the routine calls and NTF handled the emergency calls. There was not great collaboration. In 2013, the Chiefs met to improve services with the three fire districts that provide EMS transport (Incline Village, Truckee, and North Tahoe Fire) and the two Fire Departments that provide Paramedic Engine Company (Squaw Valley Fire and Northstar Fire).

Regulation, insurance, and cost has decreased profits. Northstar and Squaw both want to get into the ambulance business. This independent service upsets the balance of the established EMS districts.

Squaw Valley Fire and Northstar Fire are contemplating adding ambulance service to their districts. On May 1, Chief Schwartz provided Chief Riley (Squaw Valley) with a memorandum regarding the associated revenue and expenses related to that response area and his thoughts and concerns on the matter. A similar memorandum was sent to Chief Bailey (Northstar Fire) on May 11, 2020. On May 22, Chief Schwartz, Board President Baffone, along with Chief Seline and Board President Herrick (from Truckee Fire) sent a joint letter to the Squaw Valley Fire and Northstar Fire General Managers and their respective Boards of Directors.

There was a Q&A session between Board and staff. President Baffone asked and paused for public comment since there were 16 people on the virtual meeting. Squaw Valley General Manager, Mike Geary commented. He thanked the Chief for providing public comment that morning at the Squaw Valley Public Service District Board meeting and wanted to assure the Board and Chief that they would collaborate and have engagement with both Truckee Fire and North Tahoe Fire regarding the study and should they wish to move forward with an ambulance service.

8. Consider Resolution 05–2020 requesting tax collection services.

Chief Schwartz explained that this is an annual request to Placer County to handle our tax collection services.

District staff presents to the board annually a resolution authorizing direct charges to be placed on the tax roll. The intent of the resolution is to specify each party's responsibility regarding the collection of special taxes, fees and assessments as required by Proposition 218.

The Board of Directors is required to adopt Resolution 05–2020 in order for Placer County to collect our Special Tax and Fire Suppression Assessment. Normal fees are charged for these services.

There was a Q&A session between Board and staff. President Baffone asked and paused for public comment since there were 16 people on the virtual meeting. There was no public comment.

Upon motion by Director Loverde, seconded by Director Correa, the Board approved Resolution 05-2020 authorizing Placer County to conduct tax collection services for NTFPD. The vote was five in favor:

Ayes: Director Baffone, Director Correa, Director Doyle, Director Loverde, Director Ragan.

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

9. Consider Resolution 06-2020 regarding Battalion Chief coverage by Division Chiefs

Chief Schwartz explained that the rank of Battalion Chief (BC) is outside of the bargaining unit and part of the command staff. Division Chiefs are also outside of the bargaining unit and are salaried positions; they comprise the rank directly above BCs, and Captains are the rank directly below. We currently do not have any Captains qualified for the “Working Out of Classification” (WOC) rank for the BC position, so there is currently no one other than the three BCs to cover if a BC is sick or goes on vacation. There is a gap between current BCs and the next group of potentially future BCs. Current BCs go out of their way not to disturb the DCs. However, we are now in a better place because our DCs were recently BCs and are comfortable filling those roles. This brings up the question as to how to pay a DC who is covering for a BC. If the DC is working extra hours outside of their normal job classification, this Resolution allows them to be paid at their regular hourly rate for those particular extra hours out of classification. The BCs would retain their first right of refusal to fill the vacant position, but we do not want to turn down vacation requests and would be able to offer covering the BC role to a DC.

For some time, the District and the Labor Unit have maintained a long-standing cooperative effort to ensure adequate shift coverage in every rank.

In the past, the District has experienced an unmet need of covering the Battalion Chief rank when leave requests are granted or when Battalion Chiefs are deployed out of District.

One Battalion Chief is scheduled every day; each assigned to one of the three shifts. Currently, Battalion Chiefs have been able to manage their own leave requests, but with only three qualified personnel to cover three positions, which results in a 3:1 ratio for Battalion Chief coverage. By most relief-factor measures, you would need 3.6 FTEs to cover this position. At the Captain rank, there are 12 Captains and 6 WOC Captains resulting in an 18:4 ratio for daily Captain coverage. This disparity is especially heightened when District staff and equipment are deployed on out-of-county assignments. The effects of having too few qualified personnel for a given position include a lack of leave time, overwork fatigue, and increased required overtime. This Resolution will not completely rectify this situation, but it is one step towards improving these coverage challenges.

In the past, Chief Officers above the rank of Battalion Chief have worked at the Battalion Chief level without compensation to cover this unmet need. All ranks above Battalion Chief are salary positions designed around a 40-hour work week. Therefore, when working these shifts (often in a 24-hour duration), the Chief Officers are not paid for those hours.

Some of the advantages to consider in this recommended Board action include:

- Ability to address the unmet need of filling Battalion Chief leave requests.
- Compensating Chief Officers for hours worked beyond their salaried position schedule.
- Allowing Division Chiefs and above to maintain operational readiness and familiarity with District operations and personnel by filling the Battalion Chief position.
- Division Chiefs working Battalion Chief overtime are fiscally neutral or in some cases less in comparison to shift Battalion Chiefs at the time and a half overtime rate.

Staff is requesting the Board consider the adoption of the attached Resolution 06-2020, to allow any Chief Officer above the rank of Battalion Chief to work at the Battalion Chief level if all Battalion Chiefs have refused the overtime.

There was a Q&A session between Board and staff. President Baffone asked and paused for public comment since there were 15 people on the virtual meeting. There was no public comment.

Upon motion by Director Correa, seconded by Director Ragan, the Board approved Resolution 06-2020 which will allow any Chief Officer above the rank of Battalion Chief to work at the Battalion Chief level if all Battalion Chiefs have refused the overtime. The vote was five in favor:

Ayes: Director Baffone, Director Correa, Director Doyle, Director Loverde, Director Ragan
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None

10. Consider Resolution 07–2020 requesting Placer County to conduct election services in November 2020

Chief Schwartz explained that this is the best way to handle elections.

NTFPD annually requests Placer County to conduct election services on behalf of the North Tahoe Fire Protection District. District seats #1 (Baffone), #3 (Correa) and #5 (Loverde) are scheduled for election in November 2020. This is the normal four-year cycle. No other items are scheduled on behalf of the District for the election.

Adopting this resolution is a legal requirement. Fees will be budgeted for this expense. You may visit <https://www.placerelections.com/running-for-office.aspx> for additional information.

There was no Board comment. President Baffone asked and paused for public comment since there were 15 people on the virtual meeting. There was no public comment.

Upon motion by Director Correa, seconded by Director Loverde, the Board approved Resolution 07-2020 which authorizes Placer County to conduct election services in November 2020. The vote was five in favor:

Ayes: Director Baffone, Director Correa, Director Doyle, Director Loverde, Director Ragan
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None

11. Discussion and possible action regarding Fire Chief successorship and report from Personnel Committee on recruitment services that are available to the District and the engagement of a recruiter

At the January 28, 2020 Board meeting, Fire Chief Mike Schwartz announced his anticipated retirement tentatively in the last quarter of 2020. On April 29, 2020, the Personnel Committee heard presentations from two companies to determine which one they would like to hire for services to assist the District in hiring a successor Fire Chief upon Chief Schwartz's retirement.

The Personnel Committee (Director Loverde, Chair, and Director Baffone) discussed their interviews with the two entities for recruiting services of a successor Fire Chief. Hiring an agency is very expensive. They will explore a few more possibilities.

The Fire Chief recommended using the Western Fire Chiefs Association (WFCA) for recruiting purposes if the Board makes its choice between the two entities. He also presented the following plans:

Plan A – Recruit candidates from both inside and outside the organization. WFCA requests 15% but not until fire chief is on the job awhile and works out. Estimated cost: \$211,250.

Plan B – Hire an assistant chief and then have the assistant chief act as the fire chief for a few months to show all involved to see if it was a good fit and if that person would carry forth our mission. At that point, enter negotiations for the fire chief position. Chief Schwartz will be out on vacation for the last four months of his contract, but he is available for guidance. He wants to make sure everyone is satisfied with new chiefs. He stated that we have good candidates within our organization. Estimated cost: \$29,000.

President Baffone noted that it is important to include the Meeks Bay Fire Board since they will be affected by this as well.

Fire Chief Schwartz is amenable to a one-year extension of his contract. He also pointed out that if the assistant chief is hired in-house, our Labor Unit will already be familiar with him/her and that person would be more familiar with District logistics.

There was a Q&A session between Board and staff. President Baffone asked and paused for public comment since there were 15 people on the virtual meeting. There was no public comment.

Upon motion by Director Doyle, seconded by Director Ragan, the Board authorized District staff to hire the Personnel Committee's recommendation for Plan B hiring a successor fire chief upon Chief Schwartz's retirement and to enter into an agreement on behalf of the District. The vote was five in favor:

Ayes: Director Baffone, Director Correa, Director Doyle, Director Loverde, Director Ragan

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

12. Finance Report

- 12.1 Purchases Journal
- 12.2 Breakdown of CalCard purchases
- 12.3 Gross payroll totals
- 12.4 Account Detail Report

Administrative Report

Chief Schwartz let us know that Kim had to leave the meeting for a family emergency and he would answer any questions the Board may have regarding her reports. He noted that our revenue is on target and costs are down due to the Chief's directives to save capital to be used towards COVID-19 expenses.

Kim's report noted that April was much like March and not a normal month for the Administrative Division. Everyone is still doing a great job adapting and working with the challenges that they have faced while still keeping up on the day to day business of the District. The stations are still closed to the public and as a District we were forced to implement many new procedures to help deal with this hurdle. For example, we are now able to invoice & accept payments electronically. This is something that we were moving toward as a District but Chief McNamara and Blanca worked together to get this implemented immediately. We also rolled out a new and improved Expenditure Tracking Form for staff to use to submit expenditures. It is much more user friendly and we also added information that will be beneficial during accounts payable processing.

There was a Q&A session between Board and staff. President Baffone asked and paused for public comment since there were 13 people on the virtual meeting. There was no public comment.

Upon motion by Director Loverde, seconded by Director Correa, the Board approved the finance report dated May 26, 2020, account detail, purchases journal, breakdown of CalCard purchases, and the payroll report for April 2020 as presented. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was five in favor:

*Ayes: Director Baffone, Director Correa, Director Doyle, Director Loverde,
Director Ragan*

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

13. Staff Reports

- 13.1 Fire Chief
- 13.2 Operations Chief
- 13.3 Fire & Life Safety / Forest Fuels / PIO
- 13.4 Emergency Medical Services
- 13.5 Safety & Logistics / Facilities
- 13.6 Training & Technical Rescue

Staff reports were reviewed and no action was taken.

There was no public comment. There was a Q&A session between Board and staff.

14. Approval of Minutes from the regular Board meeting held April 28, 2020.

No changes or corrections were requested from the Board or the public.

Upon motion by Director Correa, seconded by Director Ragan, the Board approved the Minutes from the Regular Board meeting held April 28, 2020. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was five in favor:

*Ayes: Director Baffone, Director Correa, Director Doyle, Director Loverde,
Director Ragan*

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

15. Next Board Meeting and Other Important Dates.

- *June 23, 2020 – regular Board meeting*
- *July 13, 2020 – Candidate filing begins (Trustee Areas 1, 3, and 5 (Directors Baffone, Correa, and Loverde, respectively)*
- *August 7, 2020 – Close of regular candidate filing period*

16. Board Comments/Information Items.

Items to add to the June 23, 2020 agenda: monthly updates as to the Fire Chief recruitment.

17. Adjournment. *The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.*