

**Excelsior Fire District Board
EFD Governing Board Meeting
Wednesday, July 27, 2005**

**24100 Smithtown Road
Conference Room
7:00 P.M.**

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bauman called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Present: Excelsior Fire District (EFD) Boardmembers: Chair Bauman; Boardmembers Love, Saunders, Skrede, and Viesturs; EFD Chief DuCharme; Firefighter/Trustee Hoo

Also present: EFD Deputy Fire Chief George and EFD Captains Berglund

Absent: None

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

Love moved, Saunders seconded, approving the EFD Board Meeting Agenda as presented. Motion passed 5/0.

3. MINUTES

- **May25, 2005**
- **June 22, 2005**

Love moved, Saunders seconded, Approving the May 25, 2005, EFD Governing Board Meeting Minutes as presented. Motion passed 5/0.

Skrede moved, Viesturs seconded, Approving the June 22, 2005, EFD Governing Board Meeting Minutes as presented. Motion passed 4/0/1, with Saunders abstaining due to absence at that meeting.

4. REPORT AGENDA

A. Monthly District Review of June, 2005

Chief DuCharme stated there had been 125 fire calls for the month of June and a total of 389 calls for the year thus far. He also noted the breakdown of calls per city as part of the District Review for the month. He reviewed the response time averages for the Board as well, noting the average time for the first truck on the scene was 3.56 minutes. Chief DuCharme commended the firefighters for the fine efforts demonstrated in the statistical data regarding fighting fires. He also stated the firefighters demonstrated extraordinary dedication in that all firefighters within the District performed beyond call percentage expectations.

Boardmember Skrede stated he had also been tracking the data regarding average response times in Deephaven, and the average response time found in the data collected through the end of May was 8.56 minutes. He congratulated the firefighters on this achievement and noted the response times in Deephaven had improved dramatically over the past five months. He stated he appreciated the efforts by all firefighters to improve response times throughout the District.

B. Report of Operating Committee Meeting of July 13, 2005

In the absence of the City Administrators, Chief DuCharme reported on the Operating Committee meeting of July 13, 2005 (as detailed in the minutes of that meeting).

Viesturs moved, Saunders seconded, Approving the Report Agenda as presented. Motion passed 5/0.

5. MATTERS FROM THE FLOOR

There were no matters from the floor presented this evening.

6. FIRE CHIEF REPORT

A. General Report

Chief DuCharme explained the general reporting procedures for the evening.

B. Operating Report by the Deputy Chief

Deputy Chief George reported Station 1 and 2 reports would be covered as part of the next item on the Agenda.

C. East, West, Navarre

Deputy Chief George reported Station 1 currently housed 29 firefighters, noting since June of this year, one firefighter resigned, another transferred to Station 2 and a third retired. He reported Station 2 housed 16 firefighters with nine members currently holding probationary status. He noted the probationary period would soon be expiring and he further anticipated average response times to continue to decrease as more expertise was gained. Deputy Chief George also stated all apparatus was currently functional at Station 3.

In general, Deputy Chief George stated, the County Road 19 Intersection project continued to proceed and he appreciated the cooperation of the contractors working on the project with regard to keeping traffic areas clear for the firefighters. Also, a live burn had been staged in Orono recently. He stated this type of training proved extremely beneficial and was of great significance to the firefighters.

Deputy Chief George requested the Board consider the purchase of a four wheel drive, all terrain vehicle (ATV) for the District. He stated over the past several winters, lake access in an emergency had been problematic for certain rescue missions with the instability of the freeze cycle for the lake. He stated he believed the vehicle would be utilized in all four seasons for instances such as grass fires, off road injuries, and search efforts to name a few. He stated the ATV would most likely be used to transport personnel and shuttling equipment in rescue situations as well as for numerous community events involving the Fire District. He noted the ATV could potentially function for snow removal efforts in the future if needed. Deputy Chief George then distributed information regarding the specifics of the ATV, noting its speed, seating capacity, and cost comparisons to other similar makes and models, as well as a copy of a photo of the proposed vehicle for purchase.

Chief DuCharme stated funds had been raised toward the purchase of such a vehicle and he requested the Board strongly consider approving the purchase of this vehicle for District use. He

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noted the District currently utilized a snowmobile for several of its winter emergency situations; however, its use was limited, as well as its market value. To that end, he suggested the snowmobile be retained by the District and deployed from the East Side station given its close proximity to several trails in the South Lake Minnetonka area.

Discussion ensued by the Board regarding towing, trailers, speed, and access to the lakes and trails in the areas.

Boardmember Love stated he appreciated the request and thought it a great idea to continue to retain ownership of the snowmobile and deploy it from the East Side Station. He stated he supported the idea of the purchase of the ATV and would eventually like to see an ATV housed at each of the District's stations. Chair Bauman agreed, noting he was a bit concerned about the need for additional speed from the proposed model.

Deputy Chief George explained the configuration for use with the proposed vehicle outweighed the need for speed. He further stated he believed the speed of this vehicle more safely lent itself to transportation of personnel and equipment as a utility vehicle. In response to Boardmember Viesturs question, he anticipated the useful life of such a vehicle to be fifteen to twenty years, given that daily use would not be taking place.

Discussion ensued by the Board regarding the firefighters' support and expenditures of the Oronomies for purchase of this vehicle. Boardmember Viesturs stated firefighter support and a better idea of specifications regarding modifications needed for the trailer could be gathered by the next meeting of the Governing Board. All parties present indicated consideration could be given at the next Board meeting once all information had been gathered on the purchase of the ATV.

Captain Berglund reported on Station 3 activities in Navarre, noting fourteen firefighters currently reported to that Station. He stated the Station was still waiting for equipment from the Long Lake Department. Chief DuCharme stated Deputy Chief George and he would continue working with the Long Lake Fire Department Staff to finalize a transition plan for that Department over the next 18 months.

Chief DuCharme then reported on several grants, including two grants submitted to the Department of Homeland Security and the annual Excelsior Firefighter's Relief Association Dance. He thanked the EFRA and all firefighters for the tremendous amount of time and effort associated with the successful planning and implementation of the dance.

Boardmember Saunders stated he thought the event was a great activity and the firefighters had done a fabulous job of organizing the event. He specifically appreciated the shuttle service and thanked all firefighters for a wonderful night for the community.

Boardmember Love agreed, noting he was quite impressed by the fine ceremony for the retirement and dedication of the facility for Skip Sweeney. He suggested the EFRA consider raising the ticket prices a bit to increase profitability for the event as it seemed there were many people that believed the pricing provided a value for families. He, too, thanked all firefighters for making the event such a great success.

D. Fire Prevention

Chief DuCharme reported on fire prevention activities for the months of May and June of this year. He reviewed the monthly reports for public education, volunteer hours, inspections, investigations, and burn permits issued as well a brief overview of the inspection process for businesses.

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E. Trustee Report

Trustee Hoo stated, while he was not present for the approval of the minutes at this meeting, he requested two areas be corrected on the June 22, Governing Board meeting minutes. The first on Page 3, Item 5D, he requested all "Fire Marshal or Fire Marshals" written in that Item be changed to "Fire Inspector or Fire Inspectors" to more accurately reflect that duties of that position. He noted this same change should also be made on Page 6, throughout Item 5G.

With regard to the Orono contract monies, he noted the firefighters had also requested an audit of these funds be presented at an EFD Governing Board meeting so that disbursement could take place. Chief DuCharme stated he anticipated the audit to be complete within the next two weeks and presentation of the auditor's conclusions could be heard at the next EFD Governing Board meeting.

Chair Bauman stated it would be helpful to have the audit available for review at the member Council meetings prior to the next EFD Governing Board meeting.

Trustee Hoo thanked Boardmember Love, Excelsior Councilmember Bob Bolles, and Chief DuCharme for volunteering their talents to be part of the dunk tank at the EFRA dance, noting the firefighters greatly appreciated the support of the community demonstrated at the dance. He noted the EFRA continually tried to improve the event as it examined the returns on investment. He also noted the current facility seemed to lend itself quite well for staging the dance event.

F. Response Update

Chief DuCharme and Deputy Chief George presented information regarding a map depicting the response times for fire calls and associated areas throughout the District. He reviewed the process utilized in creating the map, noting Deputy Chief George had been given the task of identifying driving distances, firefighter housing, and drive times in preparation for this presentation. He then explained that the areas shown in yellow demonstrated an area in which it took longer than eight minutes to arrive at a destination. He also noted blue areas depicted by a dotted line in which it took approximately three and one-half minutes before trucks would be in service from each station. Similar areas were depicted in orange noting the lake demography and roadways.

Chief DuCharme explained there were currently 14 firefighters located within the blue circle from the West Side Station, and 6 within the similar circle for the East Station. He stated he believed it realistic to expect that firefighters living within this blue circle would be able to report to the station and meet the "8 in 8" standard (eight firefighters on the scene of a fire or emergency in eight minutes). He then went on to explain that "8 in 8" areas had been identified and segmented into four quadrants on the map. He also reported Staff had conducted some "drive time" testing, and found that approximate times from the Station to Boulder Bridge area of Shorewood was 5.5 minutes. Similarly, to the Howard's Point area was 7 minutes of drive time, and to the Tonka Bay/Caribbean restaurant area was between 5 and 5.5 minutes. With regard to Station 2 and related drive time areas, he reported the Sweetwater area in eastern Shorewood held a drive time of 10 minutes, the Shavers Lake area was 4.5 minutes, and the Northhome area was the same at 4.5 minutes for drive time.

Chief DuCharme stated there were clearly areas of the member cities where the 8 in 8 standard was quite tough, and would most likely never be realized simply because of the topography and roadways around the lake. He noted response times had improved throughout the District as a result of firefighters being removed from probationary status, thereby, allowing them to get a

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truck in motion without having to wait for a senior firefighter. Additionally, he stated the areas for improvement would continue to be the places depicted in yellow on the map outside the targeted "8 in 8" areas.

Chief DuCharme stated the question was how best to proceed given the information presented this evening. He stated it was clear that if the District was to operate as a paid on call volunteer department that the standard should be 8 firefighters on the scene within 8.5 minutes, with a not to exceed minimum. He stated lower response times can be reviewed however; there would be a high cost to the District to attain these standards. He stated the best plan might be to have contingency plan in place whereas if the response time standards were not met for two to three months consecutively, the District might consider accessing some contingency funding quickly to remedy the situation. He noted the District would continue to heavily recruit firefighters from the target market areas shown in yellow in an attempt to bring resolution to the dilemma.

Boardmember Love questioned whether there were other ways to decrease response times such as mutual aid from Station 3. Deputy Chief George stated the response times from the Navarre station were the same as neighboring stations were not any closer to these areas; however, there were not a lot of options for outside District assistance that would help to reduce response times.

Deputy Chief George explained, in response to Boardmember Love's question that even with people in the station, there were areas of the District that personnel could not reach in the 8 minute standard, even with lights and full emergency status being granted to the firefighting vehicles. He went on to explain realistically in 85% of all emergencies, firefighters for the District were indeed meeting the "8 in 8.5" response time standard currently. Further, he stated it was a difficult expectation for a volunteer fire department to realistically meet the 8.5 minute response time standard. He went on to explain some of the problems associated with maintaining staffing levels that would consistently support the standard. Deputy Chief George stated he believed the response time standard should be something to strive for, but setting up a contingency plan would be important as well since he did not believe the weight of this response standard should be borne by the firefighters as they all were putting forth best efforts consistently. He thought a target goal a good idea; however, he also thought contingency plans also needed to be made for improvement.

In response to Boardmember Viestur's question, Deputy Chief George stated Minnesota statutes prohibited the use of lights atop cars to enable firefighters to arrive at the Station.

Boardmember Skrede stated he appreciated the efforts put forth by the District to examine the response time issue and improve upon current times. He also stated the Deephaven Council appreciated the progress being made in this matter as well as the numerous creative ways demonstrated in training efforts for new recruits. He stated the distances could not be shortened, but at least the District was now aware of what needed to be done to improve response times.

Boardmember Saunders cautioned all parties that the District needed to be careful with averaging statistics as there were numerous ways to extrapolate data. He stated he thought there needed to be a minimum response time goal set forth as a way to examine the exceptions to that goal. For example, he explained, that if a blizzard occurred that made the response time goal unattainable that would be different than if the need for additional equipment provided the reason for missing the goal. He stated a ceiling should be set for response times and then exceptions monitored.

Boardmember Skrede stated he believed the firefighters were embracing the challenge set forth in the "8 in 8" goal despite the realization that the standard was inherently unattainable in several areas. He did not think the real world revolved upon response times, however, without a goal,

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money and resources might not be managed efficiently as there was nothing to compare the information to in this regard.

Discussion ensued by the Board regarding what other stakeholders should be reviewing this information for communication and improvement efforts.

Chair Bauman summarized the issues being discussed as being twofold. The first issue at hand was a standard response time and what it should be. The second issue was how to improve response times.

Discussion further ensued by the Board regarding the appropriate wording of the response time data (standard vs. goal), and what that goal should be.

Chief DuCharme stated a goal of 8 firefighters on the scene in 8.5 minutes, not to exceed 12 minutes overall seemed reasonable based on discussions with firefighters and data presented.

Skrede moved, Love seconded, Adopting a goal to be reflected in the EFD Mission Statement, of 8 firefighters on the scene in 8.5 minutes elapsed time for the truck to be on the scene, and the District should continue working with resources at hand to improve upon current data to achieve that goal.

Without objection from the seconder of the motion, the maker of the motion amended the motion to include the goal that if the response time exceeded 12 minutes then the call information would be reviewed.

Discussion ensued by various Boardmembers noting the goal was not meant to be punitive in any way as the Board fully realized that all firefighters were consistently demonstrating their commitment to provide quality services to all District residents in attempt to meet that goal.

John Mariani, Deephaven resident, questioned the proposed ATV vehicle with regard to safety in the event of a rollover accident, as well as alternative vehicles and liability coverage for such a vehicle. With regard to response time issues, he questioned whether the 8.5 minute response time allowed for saving structures or people. He also cited cases in other cities in Minnesota where the response times were lower since funding had been obtained from the state legislature to obtain housing for firefighters near the station to help with response time issues, and reimbursement from FEMA for equipment.

On behalf of the Board, Chair Bauman thanked Mr. Mariani for his comments.

Motion passed 5/0.

Chair Bauman recessed the meeting at 8:52 P.M. and reconvened at 8:58 P.M.

G. FY 2006 Budget

Chief DuCharme presented the Board with a revised draft Operating budget for Fiscal Year 2006. He reviewed the changes made since the last review of the proposed budget by the Board. He noted the goal each year was to better handle line item figures for clarity and accuracy.

Boardmember Skrede stated it seemed prudent to increase the motor fuel funding for the year given the current market trends for motor fuels. The Board indicated support for this idea.

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In response to a question by Boardmember Skrede, Chief DuCharme stated he would supply the Board with final costs associated with the general conditions issues remaining from construction at the August meeting of the Governing Board.

Skrede moved, Viesturs seconded, Recommending the Proposed Fiscal Year 2006 Operating Budget to the member cities as written, subject to an increase in the line item associated with motor fuels from \$8000 to \$10,000.

Boardmember Viesturs stated the Excelsior Council requested a five year projection for the budget including equipment purchases. Chair Bauman requested, on behalf of the Board, that this information be distributed to all member cities.

Motion passed 5/0.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Special Unit of Government Discussion by Paul Skrede and Woody Love

Without objection from the Board, Chair Bauman stated Items 7A and 7C would be discussed prior to Item 7B on this evening's Agenda.

B. Ongoing Business

1. Mission Statement

Boardmember Saunders read the proposed mission statement into the record as followed:

THE EXCELSIOR FIRE DISTRICT IS COMMITTED TO PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THOSE WHO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY.

THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY:

- FIRE SUPPRESSION
- EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
- FIRE PREVENTION
- COMMUNITY AWARENESS
- HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MITIGATION
- DISASTER RESPONSE

THE EXCELSIOR FIRE DISTRICT WILL ACT IN WAYS THAT WILL BENEFIT THE OVERALL COMMUNITY.

UNIQUE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUAL CITIES WILL BE GIVEN CONSIDERATION TO ENSURE THAT PUBLIC SAFETY STANDARDS ARE CONSISTENT THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT.

Saunders moved, Love seconded, Accepting the Mission Statement as proposed with the amendment including response time goals as defined in Item 6F.

Motion passed 5/0.

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C. Role of Governing Board and Operating Committee

This item was moved to the August Governing Board meeting Agenda.

Love moved, Saunders seconded, continuing Items 7A and 7C to the September and August EFD Governing Board meeting Agendas respectively. Motion passed 5/0.

D. New Business

Chair Bauman questioned the recognition process for the District when a firefighter retired.

Discussion ensued on this topic.

Boardmember Saunders stated he believed there were two areas where firefighters should be recognized including years of service and exceptional areas of service. To that end, he suggested creating a Skip Sweeney Award for extraordinary service within the District that would allow the District to honor Skip personally and extraordinary service by firefighters.

Chair Bauman, Boardmember Saunders and Chief DuCharme agreed to work as a committee to pursue this idea and a recommendation would be brought forth at the September EFD Governing Board meeting for additional consideration.

9. NEXT MEETING

A. Board Meeting August 24, 2005; 7:00 P.M. WEST SIDE STATION

Chair Bauman noted the time and location of the Board meeting in August.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Love moved, Saunders seconded, Adjourning the EFD Governing Board Meeting of July 27, 2005, at 9:47 P.M. Motion passed 5/0.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Sally Keefe,

Recording Secretary