

Wasatch County Fire Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday September 10, 2024

Meeting held at the Wasatch County Administration Building located at 25 N Main, Heber City

Those in Attendance:

Mark Nelson

Erik Rowland

Steve Farrell

Spencer Park - not present

Kendall Crittenden - not present

Luke Searle

Karl McMillan

Chief Eric Hales

Fire Marshall Clint Neerings

Fire Warden Troy Morgan

Dustin Grabau - Wasatch County Manager

Assistant Chief Clair Provost

Assistant Chief Jason Provost

Councilman McMillan

called the Wasatch County Fire Protection Service District board meeting to order at 3:31 pm on Tuesday September 10th, 2024.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilman McMillan to approve the minutes from 8/13/24. The motion made by Councilman Farrell and was seconded by Councilman Rowland and it passed all in favor.

APPROVAL OF WARRANTS

Chief Hales reviewed updates for the new Heber City Fire Station and the current status of construction. The Chief met with Big D Construction to discuss a delay that will set the timeline back by 45 days and is costing an additional \$220,000. This is due to the city not informing Big D about permits that were needed from the FAA to do crane work. If they would have known about these permits, all the issues could have been resolved and the delays would have been avoided.

Councilman Farrell asked the Chief how many permits were needed. The Chief responded that two additional permits were needed, one to have the station in the flight path of the airport and the second permit was to use the crane. All other building permits were issued, but these two missing permits were additional. The airport was willing to work with Big D, but the FAA received a formal complaint from a local pilot and they deemed the station location as a “critical path” and that is why all work was shut down by Heber City until the proper permitting was issued.

Councilman Nelson asked if the FAA was very responsive, and the Chief pointed out that they took 45 days to respond.

Councilman Searle asked if there had been any change orders and the Chief then talked about meeting with the architect and the steel vendor to make some changes that cost around \$7750. But with these changes, it will save the overall budget \$60-70,000. They have been looking for similar ways to save costs, but to date, the project is running over projected budget by approximately \$300k.

Chief Hales also noted that the new paging system has been installed. October 1st is the launch date for switching over to the new system.

A motion was made by Councilman Rowland to approve warrants in the amount of \$1,923,103.09. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nelson and it passed all in favor.

CHIEF'S REPORT

Most of the Chief's report was covered under the warrants section. In addition, Chief Hales pointed out the increase in call volume for August. Although it was lower than July, it is still higher than previous years. The Chief also mentioned the significant amount of training the fire district has been doing for the upcoming opening of MWR (Grand Hyatt). Due to it being the first structure of its kind in the county.

Councilman Farrell asked the Chief about the appearance of Station 56. Chief Hales emphasized the new trailer is more function over form and has been fully staffed since August 1st. It is a temporary station, as the Chief is working to solidify the permanent site in Hideout with UDOT.

Councilman Nelson then asked a question about Swiss Days. He emphasized the good job the fire district does in keeping everything safe during the event, but he has concerns about the vendors that are

outside the perimeter and all around the square. He wondered if they were being checked for proper safety and permits. Chief Hales then commented that the Wasatch Fire District doesn't have Fire Marshal duties in Midway City, however, there are plans to formally meet with the Swiss Days committee to see how resources can be utilized more efficiently to make sure everyone inside and outside of the square is compliant.

BURN PERMITS PROCEDURE

Fire Warden Troy Morgan then addressed the board regarding House Bill 567 that went into effect on July 1st, statewide. The bill changes the open burn regulations to be from November 1st thru March 31st and those are enforced by the DEQ (Dept of Environmental Quality). Closed burn season runs from June 1st to Oct 31. The bill also lowers the smoke clearing index from 500 ft to 250 ft, which will allow more individuals access to burn in the winter months.

Chief Morgan explained the majority of complaints from citizens come in when individuals leave their burn pile going all night. To address those concerns, the fire district has modified their burn policy to include the following: limit burn piles to 10x10x5, all burns must be suppressed by dark, a min of 50ft separation between the burn pile and any hazards, individuals must stay with the fire and have water or some type of tool to manage the fire, they need to contact the Sheriff's dept ahead of time with the address of the burn. In addition, materials such as wet grass, hay, construction materials and dirt piles are not allowed to be burned.

Councilman Rowland asked if someone wants to burn a leaf pile, do they still need a permit. Chief Morgan confirmed they would need to notify the fire district. For recreational fires in a fire pit, those are not regulated. The open burn permit is geared towards brush cleanup and debris. Chief Morgan also clarified that agricultural burns, such as burning a fence line or ditch falls under a different set of regulations and those landowners are fully in their rights to burn, but it is still recommended they alert the fire district.

Councilman Farrell asked if the fire district issues a lot of citations due to individuals not following this regulation. Chief Morgan stated there are mostly verbal warnings issued and most of those go to the same offenders. The burn policy is mostly about educating the public vs issuing citations. This policy doesn't need to be voted on by the fireboard, Chief Morgan wanted to bring it to the board's attention and let them know he will be communicating the policy to each city and giving them an update on House Bill 567.

ADVISORY COMMISSION REPORT

Councilman McMillan asked Chief Hales if there were any updates regarding the Advisory Commission Report. Chief Hales replied that they did have a meeting on Thursday, September 5th, but only three members were present.

The commission was able to review the documents from the Capital Facilities plan that was shared during the August 13th Fireboard meeting. They also discussed the need for an external survey created

by the committee, to let the communities know the vision and get feedback. There will also be an internal survey with the staff to make sure their needs are being met as well.

RESOLUTION 24-03 WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE CODE ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Councilman McMillan then moved to the next agenda item, regarding the Wildland Urban Interface Code. Fire Marshall Neerings summarized the WUI (Wildland Urban Interface) code to the board members, emphasizing the fire district is the enforcement authority for the defensible space portion of the code. Chief Neerings then reviewed the bonding process and the new sections that have been added to formalize each step in the process. For those applying for a bond, the fire district would file a notice of partial compliance due to their landscaping being incomplete. They would have 24 months to complete the landscaping and contact the fire district for bond reimbursement. If they do not come into compliance within that time frame, a notice of violation will be attached to the property through the Wasatch County Clerk's office and the bond will be forfeited.

Councilman McMillan then asked if the bond amount was scaleable and Chief Neerings confirmed it would be based on the costs or bids of the landscaping per structure. This is to create an incentive to the homeowner/builder to complete their landscaping and not forfeit their bond.

County Manager Dustin Grabau then asked if there was a potential for a homeowner to double bond for their landscaping, once with the Planning Dept and then again for the WUI code. Chief Neerings explained the goals of the Planning Dept and the Fire District are different and would not create issues with double bonding because the Planning Dept's goal is to plant trees in specific areas and the Fire District's goal is to remove trees in specific areas.

County Manager Grabau asked additional follow up questions regarding timing of the bond reimbursement. To which Chief Neerings said the bond release happens after the final landscape inspection has been completed. Once the final has been completed, this is basically the C of O (Certificate of Occupancy).

Chief Morgan added further comments regarding the purpose of issuing a partial approval when a homeowner/builder bonds. The county will not issue a C of O until landscaping has been completed. However, landscaping is not feasible outside of the growing season or winter months. This is why the bonding process was created, so certificates of occupancy could be granted between Nov and March.

Councilman Rowland asked a follow up question about homes who have a zero-scape or natural landscape. Chief Neerings confirmed that if their natural-scape matched their approved landscaping plans, there would be no need to bond, such as homes in the Timberlakes area.

Councilman Farrell asked if this resolution had been presented to MIDA. Chief Neerings then answered that they wanted to get the Fire Boards approval on the resolution first, before presenting it to MIDA. Chief Neerings has discussed the resolution with Heather from MIDA, but has not shown them the exact document.

Councilman Farrell asked what happens if MIDA chooses not to adopt the resolution. Chief Neerings replied that if Mida does not approve the bonding process, then the Fire District would not be able to complete inspections until the landscaping matches the approved plans. There really are only two options for MIDA, either bond or wait until weather permits. Chief Neerings also confirmed that once the board signs off on the resolution, they will present it to each city and get the Governing Board's approval. Each city will have the ability to adjust the enforcement to meet their needs. This is just the first step and first reading. During the October 8th Fire Board meeting it will be finalized for a vote.

A motion was made by Councilman Rowland to accept the resolution in its first reading and note the second reading will happen on October 8th. It was seconded by Councilman Nelson and it passed all in favor.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Rowland. It was seconded by Councilman Nelson and passed all in favor.