

Wasatch County Fire Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, October 8, 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 - not present

Spencer Park

Kendall Crittenden

Luke Searle - joined via phone

Karl McMillan - not present

Chief Eric Hales

Assistant Chief/Fire Marshall Clint Neerings

Assistant Chief Clair Provost

Councilman Park called the Wasatch County Fire Protection Service District board meeting to order at 3:38 pm on Tuesday, October 8th, 2024.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Approval of minutes for the 9/10/2024 fireboard meeting is postponed to November due to Councilman Farrell being absent.

APPROVAL OF WARRANTS

Chief Hales discussed the breakdown of the warrants totaling \$2.8 million dollars. Two million is directly associated with the new fire station, \$1.3M being construction costs and \$670,000 going towards the first CIB loan payment. Moving forward, it will be an annual payment for the next 30 years.

Chief Hales also confirmed they are on track for a four-way inspection scheduled for the week of Oct 24th. Everything is moving along well, including laying asphalt, footings and foundation poured for the accessory buildings and due to favorable weather, landscaping can begin.

Councilman Crittendon requested a site plan to review and Chief Hales confirmed he would provide that for the next fireboard meeting. Chief briefly summarized the layout of the station which includes three long bays, living quarters for eight full-time personnel, admin offices and a 1500 sqft community room.

A motion was made by Councilman Nelson to approve warrants in the amount of \$2,820,074.23. The motion was seconded by Councilman Crittenden and it passed all in favor.

CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Hales highlighted September as being the third month in a row with over 400 responses, which is above average for this time of year, 2024 being our busiest year thus far.

There were two structure fires in September, one in Soldier Hollow Grill's kitchen, which was confined to the appliance and some storage space. And a house fire, which was confined to a bedroom. Both fires happened on the same day and the State Fire Marshal's Office was on site and able to assist our staff with the investigation.

Chief Hales gave a status update on the Yellow Lake Fire from the Emergency Manager, Jeremy Hales. As of Oct 8th, nearly 20,000 acres has burned with 550 personnel on scene, totaling \$7.7 million dollars with 10% contained.

Chief Hales then spoke about the mandatory evacuations that have been made on the North and West Fork of the Duchesne, along with putting the town of Hannah on alert. Resources out of Duchesne County are now being utilized, such as volunteer fire departments for structure protection as needed in those areas. Today they are transitioning the fire from the local northern Utah Incident Management team, which is a Type 3, and bringing in a larger Type 2 team from California. That team will be taking over command and moving the incident command post from the Francis Fairgrounds to the Duchesne Fairgrounds to accommodate more personnel.

Councilman Park inquired if they knew a cause for the fire and Chief Hales confirmed the cause is still being determined, but it was man-made.

Chief Hales then began discussing the need to upgrade the fire district's internet capabilities in order to keep up with the growth of the district. The current system is outdated and the Chief reviewed some of the benefits of contracting with the county. The primary reason being the fire district's interface and how much the district relies on dispatch. The county has the infrastructure, but it will come with a cost.

Chief Hales gave examples of other Special Service Districts that contract with the county and gave positive feedback about the service the county provides. Partnering with the county would give the support needed for the district to transition to a .gov website domain, provide added security to each station and interconnectivity for mobile devices, much like the system patrol cars have. The Chief has been partnering with Heber Lefgren, Assistant County Manager, as well as Don Wood, IT Director to talk through what the district needs moving forward.

An assessment of the gear in the district was completed, highlighting what is outdated and needs to be brought up to standard. Chief Hales asked the board to reference the document provided in order to view what has already been determined as necessary upgrades. No action by the board was needed, other than to decide if an official MOU should be drafted by the District and County Attorney, to incorporate the expenses in the 2025 budget.

Councilman Parks asked if our current vendor was Executech. The Chief confirmed and emphasized there is no comparison between Executech and what the county can provide because we currently don't have much IT support now.

Councilman Rowland asked what our monthly cost is for our current service and what that provides. Chief Hales confirmed the cost is roughly \$2000/month, but reiterated that what the district currently receives is between 9-12 hrs of support for that cost. The fire district requires 24-hour IT service at the same level as the sheriff's office in order to support the planned upgrades such as mobile data terminals, GPS locators on rigs and a new paging system that is primarily IP based.

Councilman Rowland agreed and stated he has had a lot of the same challenging experiences with this vendor.

Councilman Crittendon asked the Chief to clarify what is required to update the site to a .gov domain. Chief Hales highlighted the biggest benefits would be individual employee email addresses and access to an intranet like SharePoint. SharePoint would house all training materials, memos, documents, etc and give a central place for employees to access this information vs sending out an email.

Councilman Rowland asked how long of a notice we would need to give Executech and Chief Hales said it would be 30-60 days, possibly up to 90 days to get out of the contract.

Councilman Crittendon asked if the Chief had considered another third party vendor for IT support or would the county be able to pick up the load created by the Fire District? Chief Hales explained that we are already so interconnected with the same systems the county uses for business licenses and building permits, it makes more sense to contract with them vs training an outside firm on all our needs.

Councilman Searl asked Councilman Rowland if he thought it would be a good idea to still create a request for proposal?

Councilman Rowland emphasized that what Chief Hales has already done is exactly the right move in his opinion. He expressed that bringing it in house consolidates all the resources and helps us maintain control. We're able to understand the growth patterns and the internal staff has a vested interest in keeping things running. He also agreed with the Chief's point about needing a 24/7 tech service due to lives being on the line. Councilman Rowland also speculated that the county may need to expand the size of their team to accommodate the Fire District.

Councilman Searle asked Chief Hales if there had been discussions with Heber, and Don about increasing staff size? Chief Hales confirmed those conversations have been had. Due to the county already having several programs and projects in the works, January 1, 2025 is the target start date. However, they were able to send some staff over to inventory everything from switch gear to laptops and desktops, in order to get those on a replacement plan to support the Fire Districts growth phase.

Councilman Crittendon expressed support for Chief Hales' proposal to move ahead with an MOU to present at the November fire board meeting.

Chief Hales explained that due to the Yellow Lake Fire, the Advisory Meeting was canceled.

RESOLUTION 24-03 WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE CODE ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Assistant Chief Neerings reviewed the second reading of *Resolution 24-03: The Wildland Urban Interface Enforcement Policy*. The purpose of the resolution is to standardize the bond process from start to finish; which includes documentation of the bond, notice of compliance after 24 months, notice of violation and finally, forfeiture of the bond. The resolution also reviews how an individual can appeal the process.

Assistant Chief Neerings emphasized that nothing was changed from the prior month's reading except to reorganize the procedure into a more logical order from start to finish.

Councilman Crittendon asked if there was any public input from last month and Assistant Chief Neerings confirmed there was not.

A motion was made by Councilman Crittendon to approve Resolution 24-03. The motion was seconded by Councilman Rowland and it passed all in favor.

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