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**North Mason Regional Fire Authority (NMRFA)**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Via Telephone/Videoconference**

**3/16/2021**

**Present:** Commissioners Kelley McIntosh, Brooke Quigley, Paul Severson, Dan Kewish, Bob Miller; Executive Assistant Wassenaar; Chief Bakken; Assistant Chief Cooper

Meeting held via telephone/videoconference in accordance with Governor Jay Inslee's proclamation 20-28.15

**Absent:** None

**Guests:** Celeste Carey; Ken VanBuskirk; Lieutenant Laura Chester; Lieutenant Ryan Cloud; Captain Ryan Cleveland; Captain Jordan Reese; Captain Carl Ehresman; S.Hunt

Meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**FINANCIALS**

Chief Bakken presented and reviewed the March Budget Summary. He stated that revenue has been received through January and February, and taxes should be coming in through March and the beginning of April. Additionally, DNR/Timber Revenue has already exceeded the budgeted goal of \$40,000; GEMT is steady at \$41,000 received; Ambulance Revenue is on-target. Chief Bakken stated that Contingencies are scheduled to change, as there are multiple expenditures initially paid from the Capital fund that will be reimbursed from the Headquarters Project Fund (via Resolution tonight). He also clarified that Total Operating Funds are currently negative (anticipated), and will be covered as tax payments are received.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Resolution 21.01 – General Fund Reimbursement:** Resolution was previously approved at the Board Meeting held on February 16, 2021. A correction was made to the total transfer amount (\$909,420.11). Authorization to reimburse the Authority's General Expense Fund, from the Capital Construction Fund for expenditures made from the General Expense Fund in 2020/2021, in support of the new Headquarters Fire Station project totaling \$909,420.11.

**Motion made by Commissioner Severson to approve revised Resolution 21.01 as presented. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

**Administrative Employee Contracts:** Commissioner McIntosh advised there are multiple pressing items to discuss at tonight's Board meeting and recommended discussing further at the next meeting. Commissioner Quigley suggested approving a process for review which would include two Board members

researching the matter and providing a recommendation to the Board. Commissioners McIntosh and Severson agreed with recommendation.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Lieutenant Laura Chester Resignation:** Commissioner McIntosh advised that a letter of resignation was received from NMRFA Lieutenant Laura Chester. Because the letter was sent to Administration, as well as the Board and the Union, she feels there are matters to be discussed publicly as well as in executive session. Commissioner Severson stated that he has spoken with Union President Captain Cleveland and an emergency Union meeting was held last night. He feels the Board needs to provide a short/concise response, acknowledging receipt of Lt. Chester's resignation and thanking her for her service with the Authority. He also explained that many of the concerns brought forth in the letter were outdated and have been addressed by the Retention Committee. Commissioner Severson also stated that he has asked Captain Cleveland to request an open discussion with the Union for himself and Commissioner Miller. Commissioner Quigley asked why not have that discussion during a Retention Committee meeting; Commissioner Severson explained that many Union members do not attend the Retention Committee meetings. Commissioner McIntosh agreed with Commissioner Severson's recommendation for a response. She explained that ultimately this is a letter of resignation and Lt. Chester is no longer an Authority employee. Regarding an ethical responsibility, Commissioner McIntosh feels the Authority assisted Lt. Chester throughout the entire process/transition. She also confirmed with Chief Bakken that the appropriate steps were taken throughout, including legal counsel. Commissioners Miller and Kewish agreed with the suggested course of action including accepting resignation and clarifying/identifying facts with the Union.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION RCW 42.30.110(f) personnel matter; started at 5:27 p.m. – 20 minutes**

Following Executive Session, Commissioner McIntosh stated that a response to the letter of resignation will be drafted. Commissioner Severson requested that letter be issued sooner than later. Commissioner Quigley asked if the Board will need to meet again prior to a response; Commissioner Severson advised that once the course of action is identified and approved by the Board, no further meetings will be necessary.

**Motion made by Commissioner Severson to accept Lieutenant Laura Chester's resignation and issue a formal response. Commissioner McIntosh seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Commissioner Severson wanted to note that the Board has full confidence in NMRFA Leadership and supports all members including command staff. Commissioner McIntosh reiterated the support for and confidence in NMRFA Leadership and advised that the success of the most recent labor negotiations is evidence of the strong Leadership team. Commissioner Quigley voiced her support as well and explained that the input received through the strategic planning process confirms the confidence NMRFA members have in the Leadership team. Commissioner Miller specifically expressed his confidence in Chief Bakken.

## **Public Comment:**

Laura Chester advised that she is available for any questions and can be reached via telephone number or email: [llchester25@gmail.com](mailto:llchester25@gmail.com)

Ken VanBuskirk stated that is important for the NMRFA Board to investigate the concerns that were brought forward by Lieutenant Chester.

**Commissioner Quigley moved to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.**

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Authority Secretary Renee Wassenaar

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Commissioner Kelley McIntosh

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Commissioner Paul Severson

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Commissioner Brooke Quigley

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Commissioner Daniel Kewish

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Commissioner Bob Miller