SOUTH KING FIRE
July 29, 2025
Station 68 and Virtual

Commissioner Baruso called the regular meeting to order at 1700 hours with Commissioners Vadino, Burrus, Gates and Fuller in attendance. Board Secretary Lauri Perry recording.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by District Chief Winter.

To listen to the full meeting, please visit our website.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Baruso asked for a Motion and second to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes from June 24th. Commissioner Vadino moved approval of the minutes from the Regular Meeting of June 24th. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gates. Motion carried.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Fuller stated that the newsletter is getting bigger and bigger and very informative. The one thing that stands out to Commissioner Fuller is our communication within the District and within Zone 3.

Commissioner Burrus seconded what Commissioner Fuller reported, and he finally figured out how to turn his printer to black and white only, it's saving him a lot of money.

Commissioner Vadino had no comments.

Commissioner Gates had no comments.

Commissioner Baruso echoed Commissioner Fullers' comments and thanked the membership and staff for the hard work they have been doing this year. He added that there are a lot of things going on out there and the state has a lot of wildfires going on right now. Commissioner Baruso thanked South King Fire for participating in the wildland firefighting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

COMMISSIONER COMMITTEE REPORTS

Commissioner Vadino reported that the Finance, Budget and Audit committee met, and the notes are in your packet.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING - JATC

Executive Director Ganem reported that the MOU that is in your packets is a result of many months of discussions with labor as this started well over a year ago. Executive Director Ganem added that the Board was briefed during the 2 on 2 meetings. The Union also gave a presentation during a Board meeting that was held earlier this year. Commissioner Burrus made a Motion to approve the MOU. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Vadino. Motion carried

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM REPORT

Executive Director Ganem reported that the District was contacted by Amazon and they would like to give us a $50,000 grant to purchase some equipment. We are currently working on what our needs are and what would be eligible for this. Amazon will likely want to come in and take pictures of our personnel with the equipment in support of the services that we provide our communities. This is a great opportunity for us.

Executive Director Ganem noted that there have been several significant losses in the fire service lately, in June Puget Sound Fire lost Captain Brandon Minneman. Puget Sound Fire reached out to us to see if we could provide some coverage so their crews could attend the service, which we did. We received a letter from Chief Carson last week thanking us for our support. The letter of thanks was read into record. Also, VRFA Deputy Chief Bill Mack passed away, he was a 30-year veteran. They also reached out to us to see if we could provide some coverage so their crews can attend his memorial service, which we will do, we are happy to support our neighboring districts during this tough time. We were also notified today that Tom Smith, a former Federal Way native who was a resident at Station 87 in Redondo, passed away in May. Tom's service is on August 9th.

We had several retirements last month, Chief Crossen, Driver Engineer Rickert and Deputy Fire Marshal Strub, so lots of changes are taking place. With these recent retirements you probably saw the new organizational chart which came out last week. We will be conducting interviews to fill the new Assistant Chief positions next week; we are really excited about the opportunities that these two new positions create. Executive Director Ganem asked HR to reach out to President Bastin to see if he was interested and available to serve on the hiring panel for the new Assistant Chief positions. This is not customary, however under the circumstances, we felt like it was the right thing to do. Congratulations to Chief Winter for his promotion to Deputy Chief, Fire Mashal Nichols was promoted to Deputy Chief level, Finance Supervisor Barrett was promoted to Finance Manager and HR Generalist Nikki Ball all four (4) of them have taken on more responsibilities and new roles in the new org chart.

Finance Manager Barrett and Executive Director Ganem have spent a lot of time preparing for the presentation to SNP for our credit rating. We are doing everything that we can to hold onto our AA+ credit rating.

CHAPLAINS

Deputy Chief Winter noted that at the last meeting Commissioner Fuller requested that we have the Chaplains attend a meeting to talk about what they do for us and our communities. All the Chaplains spoke please listen to the recording via our website. We are very grateful to have 3 great chaplains that are quick to respond if needed.

JULY BUDGET

Executive Director Ganem noted that our approvals are a little bit higher than normal this month due to increased medical claims and we also had three (3) people retire and they were eligible for cash outs.

This time of year we should be at 58.33% of our budget expensed and we are currently at 53.16%; so, we are currently 5.17% under budget. We continue to have a number of unfilled positions.

Finance Manager Barrett read into the record the list of expenditures for the month of July.

Mid-Month Utility Warrants (#120717-120746) totaling	$167,937.39
Accounts Payable Warrants (#120747-120824) totaling	$1,676,464.99
Payroll Direct Deposit Document for 215 indiv. DD007260-007675 totaling	$1,709,884.86
Payroll Electronic Federal Tax Payment totaling	$385,032.05
Medical Claims as of July 22, 2025	$473,339.23
TOTAL approval	$4,412,658.52

Commissioner Burrus reported that he had a question for Executive Director Ganem. He has some concerns about the changes that were made to the Organizational Chart. He understands that we are operating in a gray area without a Fire Chief. However, this is a major reorganization of the Operations side of the department. This seems a little premature because at some point we will have a new Fire Chief. Commissioner Burrus asked if this is this a decision for you to make or the next leader of our department? Executive Director Ganem replied that he has been under the impression from conversations with the Board that this is within his ability to make these changes and that we have been talking an organizational restructure since the beginning of the year; it has been very well advertised and discussed. Executive Director Ganem added that the Assistant Chief position has been budgeted for and has been unfilled for some time now; probably going back to 2023. This allows us to move our current staff around and provides succession planning and growth in the future. Commissioner Burrus asked if he was the only one that sees it this way? And if so, he will drop it right here...no other Commissioners had any comments. Executive Director Ganem added that these changes were discussed in the 2 on 2 meetings with the Commissioners previously. He also had the authority to negotiate the Battalion Chief Contract which has two (2) new day shift BC positions and provides greater opportunities for succession planning. Executive Director Ganem added that with Chief Crossen and Chief Smith retiring we needed to move ahead with the restructure, aligning responsibility where they should be; plus, a new Fire Chief that comes in is going to take up to 18 months to get up to speed. We have a lot of moving parts and projects underway and waiting for new leadership to get acclimated to the skills of a team will set us back further. Tomorrow we are going to present to the S&P (Standard and Poor's) to get our credit rating for the bond funding in September. We are also out to bid for the renovations of the Olympic Building. Station 62 is 10 years past being seismically retrofitted, so we need to begin planning for that. Commissioner Baruso asked Commissioner Burrus - what he was looking for specifically? In short, Commissioner Burrus replied that he wants an operations guy making operations decisions and that is not Director Ganem's skillset. Also, there is nothing in writing that allows Executive Director Ganem to make these decisions. Commissioner Baruso added that is correct, there is nothing in writing, but we did talk to Executive Director Ganem about restructuring the department a few months ago, and that is a fact. Executive Director Ganem added that these are big decisions that he is not taking lightly. He has the best interest of the department at hand. He has put a lot of thought and consideration into these decisions. Earlier this year, the Board granted him certain authority to include firing and disciplining staff; Executive Director Ganem added that he has also hired many people over his 25-year career here.

APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS

Commissioner Baruso requested a Motion and a second to approve tonight's vouchers. Commissioner Vadino moved approval of the vouchers. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gates. Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 1800 Commissioner Baruso reported that the Board will convene into Executive Session per RCW 42.30.110 (1) (g) to review the performance of a public employee, However subject to RCW 42.30.140 (4), discussion by a governing body of salaries, wages and other conditions of employment to be generally applied within the agency shall occur in a meeting open to the public, and when a governing body elects to take final action hiring, setting the salary of an individual employee or class of employees or discharging or disciplining an employee that actin shall be taken in a meeting open to the public. Action may or may not be taken after Executive Session.

Joining the Board in Executive Session will be Executive Director Ganem and Executive Secretary Perry and legal counsel. Executive Session will last until 1815 hours unless it is extended.

At 1815 hours Executive Session was extended until 1825 hours.

At 1825 hours Commissioner Baruso reported that we are out of Executive Session and have resumed the Regular Meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 1825 hours Commissioner Baruso reported that the Board will convene into Executive Session per RCW 42.30.110 (1) (i) to discuss with legal counsel representing the agency matters relating to agency enforcement actions or discuss with legal counsel representing the agency litigation or potential litigation to which the agency. The governing body or member acting in an official capacity is or is likely to have a party with public knowledge regarding discussions likely result in an adverse legal or financial consequence.

Joining the Board in Executive Session will be Executive Secretary Perry and legal counsel. Executive Session will end at 1855 hours unless extended.

At 1855 hours Executive Session was extended until 1910 hours.

At 1910 hours Commissioner Baruso reported that we are out of Executive Session and have resumed the Regular Meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1910 hours.

COMMISSIONER (CHAIR)

COMMISSIONER (VICE CHAIR)

COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER



BOARD SECRETARY

SOUTH KING FIRE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER