SOUTH KING FIRE
December 7, 2023
Special Meeting
Station 68 and Virtual

Commissioner Gates called the Special Meeting to order at 1500 hours with Commissioners Berger, Vadino, and Thompson in attendance. Commissioner Fuller was excused. Board Secretary Lauri Perry recording.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Thompson.

To listen to the recording of the meeting, please visit our website.

EXECUTIVE SESSION
At 1502 hours the Board adjourned into Executive Session per RCW 42.30.10 (1) (i) to discuss with legal counsel representing the agency litigation or legal risks or a proposed action or current practice that the agency has identified when public disclosure of the litigation or legal risks is likely to result in an adverse legal or financial consequence to the agency. Executive Session is expected to last 15 minutes by may be extended by the Board.

Joining the Board in Executive Session will be Legal Counsel Eric Quinn. At this time, we will recess for two (2) minutes to get everyone transferred into Executive Session. At the end of Executive Session we will take a two (2) minute recess to get everyone transferred back into the Special Meeting.

STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR Re: CLARIFICATION AND DECISION ON MOTION APPOINTING THE FIRE CHIEF
Commissioner Gates read the following statement:

Thank you for joining us today for this special meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners of South King Fire. My name is Bill Gates, and as the Chairperson of this Board, it is my responsibility to ensure that our proceedings are conducted in a transparent and lawful manner, in accordance with the statutes governing public meetings and the specific mandates of our agency.

I wish to make clear that concerns were raised as to the propriety of the Board's action to direct Human Resources to present an Employment Agreement for the Fire Chief position to Dave Van Valkenburg.

We take these concerns seriously and are committed to adhering to both the letter and the spirit of the law. Transparency, accountability, and public participation are not just legal requirements; they are the cornerstones of public trust and effective governance in our community.

To ensure that we fully comply with the relevant laws and uphold the principles of transparency and public engagement, we have convened this special meeting. Our goal today is to openly discuss and rectify any issues surrounding the appointment process of our new Fire Chief.

To this end, we invite members of the public to share their thoughts and insights. Public comment will be limited to ten (10) minutes, with two minutes per commenter. We value your input, and it is crucial for us to hear and consider the perspectives of our community and/or district members.

Following public comments, each commissioner will have the opportunity to express their views on the appointment process and discuss the qualities and qualifications we believe are essential for the role of Fire Chief.

Please note that while we are here to listen, deliberate, and discuss, the Board may take action ratifying the decision to direct HR to present an employment agreement to Dave Van Valkenburg. But our intention is to gather information and viewpoints that will guide us in making a well-informed and transparent decision at this meeting.

We thank you for your participation and for holding us accountable to the standards expected of a public governing body. Your involvement is invaluable to our decision-making process and to the integrity of our fire district.

Let us now begin with the public comment period. We are here to listen and engage constructively with our community. Again, public comment will be limited to ten (10) minutes with two minutes per commenter.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public comments were made by the following individuals:

- Lt. Brooks Werner
- Fire Marshal Sean Nichols
- Deputy Chief Lisa Defenbaugh

COMMISSIONER DECISION RELATING TO CLARIFICATION AND DECISION ON MOTION APPOINTING FIRE CHIEF

Commissioner Thompson noted that during the Fire Chief selection process, there were specifically things that the Board was looking for such as bringing people together; be able to articulate that vision and bring people together as a team. All the Candidates were present at the Meet and Greet on Friday, December 1st. It was interesting to listen to the different members ask the Candidates different questions. The questions were very well thought out and some had consequences. Commissioner Thompson added that he also talked to some of our firefighters that were present, and the strong consensus was that they like Chief Van Valkenburg as our next Fire Chief. So that is something that was weighing on my mind when we were deliberating. Dave Van Valkenburg was very relaxed, very prepared, the other candidates were somewhat prepared.

Commissioner Berger reported, first, let's take a step back and talk about the process we went through. Commissioner Berger added that he is very proud of this Board and the District for having given the opportunity for anybody who felt that they had the qualifications could apply. There were both external and internal candidates. We had a very, very thorough professionally led and supported process both by our search firm Mercer and Associates and Mike Letcher. We had tremendous talent that was attracted to our organization. As Commissioner Thompson described it was a very thorough process, tons of questions, good questions and tough questions. Commissioner Berger is very pleased to be able to have concluded that no one that he saw during the interview process did better than Chief Van

Valkenburg. In spite of the fact, he only has a relatively short amount of time as Chief of the Department. However, he has lots and lots of experience and management with two other organizations. There were Chiefs that he was competing against, particularly as a finalist last Saturday, that had years of experience, good instincts, good experience. No one did better than Dave Van Valkenburg and he has the additional advantage of course being here and understanding our issues intimately that someone else would have to learn. So that does nothing, other than validate the fact that through an extensive search, he was the best of the best.

Commissioner Vadino reported that she also thought it was a great process. We got to see a lot of really great candidates. We got to allow the community and firefighters the opportunity to meet them as well at our open house on Friday. We got a lot of talent, and it was a hard choice, but I think we went through a great process and made the right decision.

Commissioner Gates added that he also thinks the process went very well. Early on you know a couple of months ago during the planning and working on the timeline you really don't know what it is going to look like and stay on track. The Open House on Friday night was nice. It was a great idea; I wish more people would have shown up. A few things that we were looking for in a Chief was somebody that is a good communicator, relationship building in the community, continues the Strategic Bridge Plan, and knows what the funding issues are. We knew what we were looking for.

POTENTIAL ACTION BY YHE BOARD TO RATIFY APPOINTMENT OF FIRE CHIEF

Commissioner Thompson made a Motion that the Board appoint Dave Van Valkenburg to the position of Fire Chief of South King Fire, contingent upon the successful negotiation of a professional services contract. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Vadino.

Commissioner Thompson added that we completed a nationwide search, it was tough competition, but he strongly supports Dave Van Valkenburg as our next Chief.

Commissioner Gates added that he also strongly supports Dave Van Valkenburg as the next Chief adding that he was the only candidate that provided the Board with a Year 1 plan, of all the things that he thinks needs to be accomplished in the first year, including a timeline. None of the other candidates provided this kind of detail. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 1540 hours.

COMMISSIONER (CHAIR)

COMMISSIONER (VICE CHAIR)

COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER

Lauri W Perry

BOARD SECRETARY

SOUTH KING FIRE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER