

# WEST METRO FIRE-RESCUE DISTRICT

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2022

Approved July 13, 2022

### A. Call to order

President Gary Laurant called the regular meeting of the West Metro Fire-Rescue District Board of Directors to order at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 13, 2022 at Station 3, 4251 Xylon Avenue N., New Hope, MN.

### B. Roll Call – The following Directors were present:

Gary Laurant	President
Anne Norris	City Manager, City of Crystal, Secretary-Treasurer
Kirk McDonald	City Manager, City of New Hope, Vice President
John Elder	Council, City of New Hope
Nancy LaRoche	Council, City of Crystal
Jeff Kolb	Citizen Representative, City of Crystal
Marc Berris	Citizen Representative, City of New Hope

The following staff members were present:

Fire Chief Sarah Larson  
Assistant Fire Chief Joel Nelson  
Assistant Fire Chief Josh Kunde  
Assistant Fire Chief Adam Wodtke  
Auditor Bill Lauer, MMRK  
Recording Secretary Amy Juntunen

### C. 2021 Audit Presentation

Lauer noted that the audit was complete, the records provided were well prepared and there were no issues to report. The financials are very clean with no deficiencies to report. The audited financial statements and changes in fund balance year-over-year were reviewed. Motion by McDonald, second by Elder to accept the 2021 audit as presented. **Motion carried.**

### D. Minutes

1. Approve the February 9, 2022 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes. Motion by Norris, second by Elder to approve the minutes as presented. **Motion carried.**

### E. Open Forum None.

### F. Consent Agenda

1. Approve January Expenditures totaling \$256,608.19
2. Approve February Expenditures totaling \$395,102.45
3. Approve LMCIT Property/Casualty Premium

4. Approve Resolution 2022-5 Accepting Donations
5. Accept Minnesota State Fire Department Association (MSFDA) Grant
6. Ratify 2021 POC Firefighter Exceptional Performance Pay
7. Approve Resolution 2022-6 Transferring and Assigning Funds

Kolb requested item 7 be pulled for additional discussion.

Motion by Berris, second by McDonald to approve items 1 through 6 on the Consent Agenda as presented. **Motion carried.**

It is a fund balance policy that any funds in excess of 10% of the General Fund budget balance will be transferred to the Capital Fund. The Compensated Absences Fund was created three years ago to fund accrued vacation and sick time. It is tracked as an unfunded liability in the General Fund, but staff wanted to ensure the funds were available. Kolb noted that if the item needs to be funded it should be included in the budget and member assessments, rather than as simple transfers.

Motion by Elder, second by Berris to approve item 7 on the consent agenda. **Motion carried.**

#### **G. Chief's Report**

1. The report can be found in the meeting packet. Staff reported higher than normal attrition among POC firefighters with five retirements, three leaves of absence with two not expected to return, and another five anticipated retirements or resignations by September. The District may need to recruit another cohort later this year to keep staffing numbers up. Employees have not stated any issue with the District, causes for leaving are attributed to moving out of the District due to recent civil unrest and fluctuations in full-time work schedules and/or work promotions. It was noted that both member cities have HR staff that could be tapped for exit interviews.

2. 2021 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Financial Report.

#### **H. Old Business**

#### **I. New Business**

1. Reorganization of Department. The District has seven full-time staff members with the Chief, four Assistant Chiefs, the Deputy Fire Marshall and an Inspector. Assistant Chief Wodtke has accepted a position with the University of Minnesota Emergency Department and will be leaving the District. Staff recommends reorganizing to replace the current Assistant Chief of Operations with the addition of two Administrative Captains. This additional FTE would help retain current levels of service with more latitude in scheduling and curb burnout of current staff. The current Assistant Chief's main responsibilities are IT and Emergency Management. Reorganization would move IT responsibilities to the Assistant Chief of Logistics and Emergency Management to the Assistant Chief of Training. Each of these Assistant Chiefs would then have a Captain assigned to them to assist with those and other administrative responsibilities. This proposed FTE would be in addition to any FTEs hired under the SAFER Grant, if awarded. The difference in salaries and benefits from one Assistant Chief to two captains over the last six months of 2022 will be \$13,451. In 2023 the cost difference is \$94,720.00. In 2022 \$15,000 could be used from the \$100,000 assigned in the general operating

budget for additional FTE to meet current year budget and in 2023 \$50,000 could be assigned to offset the cities' contributions. This would result in an increase to the cities' contributions of \$44,720 in 2023. The member cities will need to cover the full \$94,720 beginning in 2024. Staff recommends approval of this reorganization.

Most FTE have maxed out accrual of vacation due to the expectation that it's impossible to use vacation time. The Board noted concern should be given to this area and are hopeful the additional FTE may allow current employees to take earned vacation. Administrative Captains are non-exempt (hourly) positions.

Motion by Berris, second by Norris to approve the reorganization as presented. **Motion carried.**

2. Preliminary 2023 Budget Presentation. City staff reviewed the proposed budget with Chief Larson and made revisions prior to this presentation. There are few major changes though the cities' contribution will be increasing due to the new engine leases which will require increases annually for the next four years. Besides the leases, the driving force for increases is addition of two FTE's, salary increases, PERA, workers compensation, medical insurance, financial services, and communications. Decreases are occurring in several areas as well.

The proposed budget contributions from the cities is \$3,031,190, with \$1,479,373 from Crystal and \$1,551,817 from New Hope. This is an increase of \$115,496 or 8.5% for Crystal and \$133,594 or 9.4% for New Hope. This includes a \$103,600 lease payment for the tower and a \$70,000 lease payment for the new fire engines.

Chief Larson will meet with both City Councils in their May work sessions to present the budget. The District's budget must be approved by the Board at the July regular meeting.

**J. Recognition of Kirk McDonald for his service to the Board and WMFRD.**

McDonald was recognized with an Award of Distinction for his service to the Board from 2007-2022. The respect and dignity shown to staff and Board members will be remembered.

**K. Recognition of Adam Wodtke for his service to WMFRD.**

Wodtke was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation for his service with the District from 1991-2022. As an integral part of the District's leadership and innovation he will be missed.

**Other Matters and Announcements**

1. A **work session** of the West Metro Board of Directors is scheduled for May 11, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. Directors felt the work session would be unnecessary and canceled the work session. A special meeting may be scheduled for June if necessary.
2. McDonald commended the District staff for their response to recent significant fires in both member cities. Staff should reach out to all Firefighters involved in the fatal fire regarding counseling opportunities or other support available.

**L. Adjournment**

There being no further business, motion by Elder, second by LaRoche to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Juntunen  
Recording Secretary