

WEST METRO FIRE-RESCUE DISTRICT

Board of Directors Special Meeting Minutes

September 20, 2023

Approved October 11, 2023

A. Call to order

President Gary Laurant called a special meeting of the West Metro Fire-Rescue District Board of Directors to order at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at Station 3, 4251 Xylon Avenue N., New Hope, MN.

B. Roll Call – The following Directors were present:

Gary Laurant	President
Adam Bell	City Manager, City of Crystal
Reece Bertholf	City Manager, City of New Hope
John Budziszewski	Council, City of Crystal
John Elder	Council, City of New Hope
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
Recording Secretary, Amy Juntunen

C. New Business

1. Consider Acceptance of a SAFER Grant. In 2021 the Board authorized the District to apply for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant to hire three full-time firefighters at a cost per firefighter of \$121,457. The purpose of the grant is to enhance local fire departments' abilities to comply with staffing, response and organizational standards established by the NFPA. The grant covers 100% of the salary and benefits for new full-time employees for a period of three years.

According to NFPA 1720, WMFRD protects an urban area with a population greater than 1,000 per square mile, which requires a minimum of 15 staff to respond to structure fires within nine minutes at least 90% of the time.

With the current paid, on-call (POC) model, many factors have made it impossible to respond adequately to daytime, weekday calls for service. These factors include increasing work and training requirements, longer commutes, changing demographics, rising property costs, etc. With fewer POC firefighters able to respond to calls between 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. within a reasonable timeframe, staffing analysis has shown that the District is consistently unable to amass 15 firefighters within nine minutes. After-action reports show that the lack of firefighters prevents crews from performing all critical functions required for safe and effective fire attacks. This leads to increased risk of injury to firefighters and civilians and increases the amount of property damage.

Staff were requested to provide data on past call response times and staffing. If approved, this information should continue to be tracked to show changes, if any.

The three full-time firefighters hired through this grant would be used to staff a daytime crew of four at Station 1, where the tower is housed. This will increase total staffing during daytime hours when call volume is highest, but POC staffing levels are lowest. These new positions will achieve four objectives:

1. Increase daytime staffing levels
2. Reduce response times caused by distance and the railroad crossing
3. Guarantee that the tower responds to structure fires
4. Allow full-time staff to remain focused on projects by splitting calls for service between Stations 1 and 3.

With a total of 11 full-time staff the District will be able to rebalance the shift schedule and bring minimum staffing from three to six, with regular staffing levels between seven and nine employees active. Currently all full-time staff are concentrated in Station 3. Being able to staff two Stations will provide better geographic coverage, reduce response times of the first-arriving units, and guarantee response for critical apparatus.

The three new positions would be hired as Lieutenants and, in addition to responding to calls for service, they will also assist with IT, logistics, training, community outreach and inspections.

The three new positions are not guaranteed to continue beyond the three-year grant period and all potential hires will be made aware of this fact. It is intended that hires will be made from the current pool of POC firefighters. Chief Sean Watson and Captain Wheeler will move to Station 1 with two of the new employees to supervise and work with them one development of training programs. There is funding in the capital plan to outfit Station 1 with the workstations and IT infrastructure needed for full-time staff.

Motion by Elder, second by Budziszewski to accept the SAFER grant and hire three full-time employees for the three-year grant period. Voting aye: Kolb, Budziszewski, Bertholf, Laurant, Bell, Elder, and Berris; voting nay: none. *Motion carried.*

J. Other Matters and Announcements

1. Regular Meeting of the West Metro Board of Directors October 11, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

K. Adjournment

There being no further business, motion by Elder, second by Berris to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Juntunen
Recording Secretary