

May 9, 2023

The Honorable Frank Cardinale, Chair
San Juan County Fire District #3 Board of Commissioners
1011 Mullis Street
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

Dear Chair Cardinale:

It has been a privilege to serve as the Fire Chief and Chief Executive Officer for San Juan County Fire District #3 (SJIF&R) for the past five years. Working in partnership with the Board of Commissioners, we have achieved several accomplishments during this period that have and will benefit the taxpayers and visitors of the Fire District. As you are aware, my current contract with the Board of Commissioners does not expire until December 14, 2024. It is my intent, however, to complete my originally agreed upon five-year tenure when I accepted the position in 2018. Therefore, I will proudly conclude my service to you and the Board of Commissioners and retire with November 3, 2023, as my last working day.

During an unprecedented time in world history, the last five years at SJIF&R have been filled with enormous successes, intense challenges and opportunities that have and continue to shape the future of public service to our immediate community and beyond. Our accomplishments, in part, have included the following:

- Alignment of district boundaries to effectively serve our community. This includes annexing some of the outer islands and concluding an over decade long process of annexing the Town of Friday Harbor.
- Finalizing the new fire inspection program with the Town of Friday Harbor for crews to provided critical business, fire/life safety inspections to protect their businesses and the citizens or visitors who frequent them. This had been a goal of Fire Commissioner Olson for over 15-years and was only made possible following the annexation of the Town.
- Improved the Washington Survey and Ratings Bureau (WSRB) insurance rating for the District from a 7 in the District to a 6, while maintaining the 6 rating for the Town. This improvement impacts potential home and business insurance rates.
- Negotiated an agreement with the Port of Friday Harbor for land and services. Prior to my time the Port charged a lease fee for the HQ property and then paid a service fee. They also provided a slip at the Port in Friday Harbor. The agreement changed any exchanges of funds between the two agencies. Now the District has the property HQ resides on and the two acres adjacent to HQ for future development without cost while maintaining the provided slip without cost.
- Adjusted the deployment strategy within 24-hours of the emergency declaration of COVID-19 pandemic to respond with staffing 24/7 from the Station 31. That change reduced the reflex time from 5-6 mins to a standard of 90-secs. This staffing model protects the community since fire doubles in size every minute and brain death occurs within 4-6 min following a cardiac arrest.

- Lead a partnership with the other county fire chiefs to conduct annual training events and hosted a joint fire training academy including a live fire exercise on San Juan Island that saves the citizens thousands of dollars in training costs.
- Partnered with county fire chiefs for the largest Assistance to Firefighters Grant awarded for the purchase of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) to protect our firefighters when entering a dangerous environment. This change aligned all the agencies in the County with the same equipment, which saves maintenance costs and allows us to train and respond together effectively. This effectiveness was evident when crews seamlessly responded to help us protect downtown Friday Harbor during the arson fire.
- Increased the partnership with National Parks to include the relocation of Station 32 into American Camp and potentially relocation of Station 35 to English Camp. This is a long process that we started and already has approval from the regulating agencies at the federal level.
- Finalized the purchase and delivery of a special purpose fire boat with medical transport capabilities. This need for a boat to serve our community came with the support of SAFEBoat International that leased us a vessel, that I negotiated for 100% of the lease cost to be credited to the final purchase of the new boat. This lease which has lasted two years ensured there was no interruption in service to the community.
- Removed department liabilities and risks by acquiring a Basic Life Support aid license to allow firefighter/EMTs to legally use their skills on incidents to support the community.
- Achieved a perfect three-year audit with *zero* findings or suggestions from the State of Washington Auditor's Office, which evaluated accounting and best practices directly during the time of my leadership.
- Created a peer support program to support responder mental health including the use of a canine crisis response team.
- Aligned and improved the physical wellness of our responders by providing annual physicals in partnership with one of our local doctors and provided professional training and coaching on fitness and nutrition.

These are not all our accomplishments nor are they ones a Fire Chief/CEO makes alone. These are achievements that require a committed team of gifted, tenacious individuals who come together to work relentlessly for a common goal.

As many of you know, one of my passions is strengthening the frameworks for protecting our emergency responders from the mental stressors affecting us all. I am fiercely committed to finding a way to bring awareness, support, and fortitude to have a direct impact on reducing the effects of occupational stressors on responders and those who care for them. This impact is aimed at reducing long term PTSD, CCSI, and responder suicide. For this reason, I am shifting focus to completing my doctoral degree and sharing the results of this important work with the men and women of my industry. I want to see an impact from the programs started here providing a better and safer vocation or avocation for those coming next, like Holly's and my daughter who is following in my footsteps and is finishing her paramedic licensing and fire passion.

It has been my pleasure to lead the team at San Juan Island Fire and Rescue. I could not have asked for a more supportive board of commissioners, and I treasure the friendships I have cultivated with each one of you. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Fire Chief and CEO these last five years.

With gratitude and warm regards,

Norvin Collins