



SUMMARY OF THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES SAN JUAN COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 3

Sunday, April 14, 2024 – Fire Department Training Room
Fire Station #31 at 1011 Mullis Street in Friday Harbor

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Colley called the Fire Commission meeting for SJC Fire District 3 to order at 2p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Dwight Colley (Chair), and Warren Appleton (Vice-Chair).

Staff: Chief Noel Monin, Executive Staff Robin Garcia.

AGENDA

No changes were requested to the Agenda

CITIZEN COMMENTS / CORRESPONDENCE

Commissioner Colley shared a letter from Commissioner Cardinale indicating his resignation. Commissioner Colley called for the public to consider fulfilling the position term by applying for appointment. The term will expire at the end of 2025 and will have to hold an election this year.

Commissioner Colley asked the audience for feedback and ideas regarding how the Fire District may address its budget challenges and more specifically what the community wants from its fire service.

Discussion ensued with audience members around community engagement and lack of knowledge that the Fire District is financially strained, how to reach out to the community, and setting up more meetings and presentations to inform the public.

STAFF REPORT(S)

Chief Monin reviewed various documents outlining the Fire District's financial status and trending expense overages for the last five years. Other documents share historical levy information and the long-term trend of compression due to not pursuing lid lifts or corrections over many decades.

Chief Monin noted that current funding will not support current services, despite recent austerity measures to balance this year's budget. Other revenue sources are being pursued but are not guaranteed. Maintaining services at current levels will require an additional \$680,000 per year which equates to about a \$0.10 levy lid lift. This does not provide funds for capital, however, will allow for modest reserve fund growth. Emphasis was noted on various short-term and long-term capital needs and an insufficient reserve fund coinciding with no plan. 15-year and 20-year capital plan options with millage amounts were shared.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Commissioner Appleton explained why the Outer Islands petitioned to annex into the Fire District. At the time the Fire District and EMS District were seeking to combine services, and the Outer Islands were not part of the Fire

41 District. By annexing into the Fire District, the jurisdiction mirrored the EMS District thereby simplifying the election
42 to combine services.

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44 Commissioner Appleton explained how the levy or millage is applied. That the amount of funds requested by the
45 Fire District are approved by the electorate. If approved those funds are fixed until changed by future elections.
46 Since 2001, Fire District tax revenues may grow by only 1% per year if the Fire Commissioners approve such. New
47 construction adds to additional tax revenues. Over time, the effects of inflation have surpassed the fixed tax
48 revenues that the Fire District collects. This results in a reduction in levy or millage.

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50 Commissioner Colley suggested looking into a temporary levy, reaching out to the media, and informing the public.
51 Commissioner Colley confirmed the ballot certification will be due August 6th, which requires some effort and work
52 prior to meeting the deadline.

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54 Commissioner Appleton mentioned the need for coming up with a number for revenue needs and putting together
55 an action committee.

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57 Chief Monin expressed concern about doing a temporary levy increase citing Fire Districts need stability and are
58 not the same service.

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60 Commissioners requested two sets of funding plans based on a 6-yr levy and a bond. Commissioners requested a
61 review of what will happen without a levy increase. Commissioners asked about setting up an action committee.
62 Commissioners asked for a set of talking points.

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64 CITIZEN COMMENTS


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66 Public discussion emphasized Fire Districts are an essential service, and concerns about how the reserve fund has
67 been utilized. There was emphasis that the presentation is thorough and well done, however, complex and that
68 certain key talking points need to be emphasized to engage the public and gain support. There was mention that
69 the Community Foundation may be a resource for some capital needs. Other discussions included keeping
70 meetings attainable and transparent as they have been more recently.

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72 ADJOURNMENT

73 **Moved by __Appleton__ seconded by __Colley__ to adjourn the meeting 3:30 p.m. Motion passed 2-0.**

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Dwight Colley, Chair
SJC Fire District 3 Commission


Respectfully submitted by:
Noel Monin, Fire Chief
Date Approved: 5/14, 2024