



FELTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

131 Kirby Street, Felton CA 95018 831 335-4422

Special Board Meeting Minutes

Of The Board of Directors

April 18, 2024

Location: Felton Fire Station 131 Kirby St Felton CA

1. Convene Meeting:

1.1 Call to Order: Meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Anderson at 6:08 p.m.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

1.3 Roll Call: Directors Jim Anderson, Norm Crandell, Mark Giblin, Mark Rose, Mike Shults
Staff: Chief Walters

Absent: L. Dennis

Guests: Don Jarvis, Chief Stacie Brownlee BLFD, A/C Mike Ayers BLFD, D. Bingham BLFD, T. Kraft ZFPD, D. Underwood ZFPD, S. Moeller, D. Schwanbeck, A. Malmberg, D. Arndt, J. Bravin, S. Andersen, I. Jones, S. Meserth

1.4 Considerations of Additions to the Agenda- Director Crandell requested to add a closed session to discuss a wage issue.

2.0 Public Comment: None

Any person may address the Board at this time on any matter not on this agenda within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Felton Fire Protection District. The Board Chair may request that comments be limited to no more than three (3) minutes. Any matter that requires Board action will be referred to staff for a report and action at a subsequent meeting. The Brown Act prohibits the board from taking action on any item not listed on the agenda. If you would like to comment while using Zoom, use the chat function to express interest in making public comment

3.0 Unfinished Business:

3.1 Shared Services options with Ben Lomond Fire District- discussion/ vote.

Chief Walter stated to everyone that this meeting is being recorded to aid in meeting minutes, and requested people state their name when speaking for clarity.

Chief Walters detailed his history the past 5 months. At the board's request he did a deep dive into staffing and the condition of the district. He added the board originally asked him to stay on, but it was too expensive to keep his pay and benefits. He identified budget concerns mostly due to daytime staffing needs and the need to increase to 2.0 each day. He brought on 3 additional people. Nighttime lacked coverage and resulted in single responders. 60% of night shifts needed additional personnel. We decided to investigate shared service opportunities as a cost control measure which included Fire Chief, administrative, training and fire prevention. Volunteer staff needed increasing and the board decided to add 10 more people. This is how we arrived at today's situation, with

the last 5 months being an evolution. Director Anderson added that Dan's purpose was to give a "state of the union" and his first item identifies was staffing.

Chief Walters stated he invested in some programs including First Due to give him time to get organized. He's holding people accountable and identified we had too many people out of district, resulting in too few people to carry the load of increasing calls.

Director Anderson stated we had a special meeting and met with the Ben Lomond Fire people and they've gone back to their board and are now offering their help. We're here tonight to hear what they can do for us. We need the support for calls as part of the understanding. Director Anderson asked Stacie wanted to start.

Chief Walters stated he'd read the email out loud so everyone knew the context of the discussion, which is the same email he forwarded to everyone in the department. He stated we had conversations with Scotts Valley Fire, CalFire and now Ben Lomond Fire. We asked Ben Lomond Fire to consider providing assistance to us and this is the response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection Board has met and we are proposing the "All In" scenario, with the hopes of returning Felton Fire Protection District to viability in the future. Ben Lomond Fire Protection District will need to take steps to insure the correct legal pathway is followed. If Felton Fire Protection District has mutual interests please contact us immediately. Ben Lomond Fire Protection District Board members.

Director Anderson said we sent out a letter on behalf of the board and district to all other fire departments in Santa Cruz County stating our things and asking for their help. We didn't get a response from everybody; we got turned down by quite a few. Chief Walters said the big question he and the board have is what does All-in Service mean. Chief Brownlee explained that what had been proposed was 2 scenarios with one being just nighttime coverage. Their board met to discuss and decided on the all-in scenario. It would mean trying to run Felton Fire similarly to current Ben Lomond Fire and trying to get Felton back to a functioning volunteer department. She would provide Chief services; Laurie would stay on longer to help with administrative stuff and Ben Lomond would provide help with training. Chief Brownlee added wants to keep volunteers going, hold people accountable, work on heavy recruitment efforts. She spoke with Ben Lomond's attorneys regarding such an agreement. Both Felton and Ben Lomond districts use the same attorneys, so Felton would need to have a different attorney review it for them. Chief Walters asked Chief Brownlee if they would also be willing to work with the Felton board on extricating ourselves from PERS in the future, to which she responded absolutely.

Director Anderson stated for the benefit of the group that he, Dan and Laurie approached PERS with getting out and were told an ordinance must be passed to leave. The actuarial amount at that time was between 1.5 and 1.7 million, but their accounting people would determine the exact amount. The board has some concern regarding PERS doing an audit, as he's unsure if past administrations did as good a job as possible of tracking employee

hours and reporting, and an audit could determine more is owed. He stated we do agree leaving PERS will make us most viable.

Director Anderson asked if any other board members wanted to add anything, to which none responded. Don Jarvis asked Director Anderson to explain the significance of waiting 2 years. Director Anderson stated the desire is to keep the district whole and not dissolve. To do so we need to do a bond measure to increase the income we have. He has been discussing with LAFCO to figure what percentage of revenue Felton receives. Boulder Creek and Zayant districts have passed parcel measures, and the now defunct Branciforte was granted 2 parcel taxes. We'll need to hire a consulting company to do the PR and figure the tax rate we need. The process takes time to get on the ballot, then you don't really get the money for another year. This is where we came up with the 24-month plan. This is the plan we've worked with when talking to Scotts Valley and CalFire and now Ben Lomond. At the end of that time if we get the parcel tax, we'll have the revenue to continue as a viable department and have some paid staff, or if we're successful to develop a robust volunteer department and be back on track. Director Anderson asked if anyone wanted to add anything.

Director Crandell asked Stacie when she could start supplementing the night crew. Chief Brownlee replied there will need to be some motivation and rearranging to get Ben Lomond staff to cover. She stated the Felton cadets should be able to help with night shifts as they are advanced enough in their training. Director Crandell asked Chief Walters if he saw any issue, Walters replied it's a break from tradition but saw no reason we can't do it. We need bodies and they have all the core training and most are EMTs. They can work with the daytime Captains for onboarding training. He said he can't force them but we can see if they have time. Director Crandell asked Chief Walters to find out and report back.

Director Anderson asked Chief Brownlee how long it will take to come up with some numbers to plug in our budget for doing coverage. Some discussion followed regarding shift stipends. Don Jarvis said there are 2 pieces – the responder coverage and then the Shared Services part for Fire Chief and administrative stuff. Director Anderson stated he was referring to the total cost. Don Jarvis suggested that representatives of both boards get together and negotiate a price. Jarvis said they need to get this agreement signed before Walters walks out the door, so you have a Fire Chief of record and there's only a week. Chief Walters added getting the agreement nailed down and negotiate the finer points later. Director Anderson said he won't be available in a couple days, to which Jarvis replied that there are a few other board members and they can represent the district. Director Crandell suggested a two-phase operation, with a vote tonight to accept the Ben Lomond shared services agreement, pending the mutual agreements of pay scheduling. Director Anderson stated we need coverage at night right now, and agreed we can pay more than \$50 a night shift as we've had a couple trials and we've paid more.

Chief Walters said the squad stepped up and filled shifts this week and if they can do it for the next 2 or 3 weeks it will give us time to make a deal with Ben Lomond. He asked Becca, squad president, if she thought people can fill out the schedule as much as possible the new week or 2, then we can see where we have gaps. Becca replied she thought so. Director Anderson recognized Sam Moeller to speak.

Sam said they have discussed the importance of what's to come at the squad meetings and that it's had an impact. We've had mutual aid calls the past couple days and there's still been people here to cover calls. The squad realizes we're going to hold them accountable going forward. She asked if the different night rates being discussed now with shared services will be applicable to the current members working those spots. Director Anderson said absolutely. Sam stated it didn't seem very clear. Director Anderson responded a lot of things don't seem clear right now and our future is one of them.

Director Anderson asked for a motion. Director Crandall proposed that we accept Ben Lomond's offered shared services agreement as stated in this meeting, pending mutual agreement of wage rates for staffing. Director Shults seconded. Director Anderson asked for any public comments.

Director Giblin asked if the all-in service included a BC or Chief and you'd want that inclusive as well? Chief Brownlee replied yes, it would include herself, Assistant Chief, training and investigations. Chief Ayers currently represents Felton on 2 committees and the oversight administration piece is very easy to get going while the boards meet and determine the dollar figures associated. Chief Ayers added it would also include leadership response to calls. Director Anderson stated as Board Chair he's not worried about that it can be worked out, his only concern is covering evening shifts. Director Anderson called for a vote.

Ayes: Directors Anderson, Crandell, Giblin, Rose and Shults

Noes: none

Abstain: none

Absent: none

Director Crandell asked Chief Brownlee when she could be available for discussion about wages and whatever else. Some discussion followed about having the whole board or two board members each so it's easier to coordinate. Chief Brownlee will reach out to her board to see.

Director Anderson asked Chief Brownlee if there are current sleepover people at Ben Lomond to mirror for a pay rate, to which she replied no. Directors Crandell and Rose offered to be the two board members. Chief Walters will send an email to Chief Brownlee and Directors Crandell and Rose, and she can add her board members to come up with a date to meet.

Director Anderson thanked Ben Lomond for reaching out and working with us to make an attempt to save the district/Chief Brownlee said she wants to see it successful. Chief Ayers added that the volunteer model today is not the same, but it's up to us to decide what that new agency looks like, not an outside agency. The San Lorenzo Valley agencies should decide how they evolve. Director Anderson said he agree.

3.2 Alternative Shared Services options.

Director Crandell stated that this item under 3.2 isn't important any longer as we have had a positive vote under 3.1

Director Anderson thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting at 6:39

4.0 Closed Session: The board went into closed session at 6:40 to discuss a wage issue as requested by Director Crandell.

Director Anderson reopened the public meeting at 6:59.

Reportable action: Captain D. Arndt promoted to Battalion Chief of Operations with duties assigned as per district policy #501. He is to be the point of contact for the fire district until a new Shared Services Chief assumes the role. At which point he will continue under policy 501. There is no stipend or additional wages for this interim appointment as Acting Fire Chief.

Directors voted for D. Arndt promotion and duties as assigned.

Ayes: Directors Anderson, Crandell, Giblin, Rose and Shults

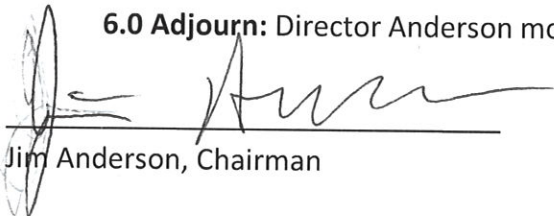
Noes: none

Abstain: none

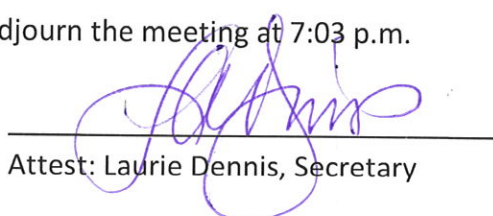
Absent: none

5.0 The date for the next regular meeting is: May 6, 2024 at 6:00 pm. Location in person at Felton Fire Station

6.0 Adjourn: Director Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 p.m.



Jim Anderson, Chairman



Attest: Laurie Dennis, Secretary