

**WENATCHEE VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT,  
CHELAN COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 1 & DOUGLAS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2  
MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 13, 2024**

Commissioners: Commissioner de Mestre, Commissioner Dormaier, Commissioner Fennell, Commissioner Johnson, Commissioner Zimmerman

Absent: Commissioner Evenhus

Personnel: Fire Chief Brian Brett, Deputy Chief Brandon Kunz, Deputy Chief Kurt Blanchard, Captain Dustin Armitage, Captain Gavin Burnett, Firefighter Kevin Weed, Firefighter Lyle Stewart, Firefighter JJ Jahr, Firefighter Donn Etherington, Firefighter Elijah Bovenzi, Firefighter Garrett Grant, Firefighter Kyle Clemens, Firefighter Alex Rios, and Cindy Blaufuss

Guests: Kay McKellar, Ettore Castellente

I. Called to Order: 1:00 pm.

II. Additions and Deletions to Agenda: None.

III. Public Comments: None.

IV. Public Hearing: A public hearing was opened to allow comment before the Board considers the 2025 Fire Benefit Charge, Levy, and Operating Budgets.

V. Consent Agenda: Commissioner de Mestre made a motion to approve the consent agenda items. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. The consent agenda items were approved.

VI. Correspondence: Wildfire Liaison, Hillary Heard, was acknowledged for her efforts on fuel reduction, Kids in the Forest, and the SAWW class in the Cascadia quarterly newsletter.

Senator Cantwell, Senator Murray, and Congresswoman Schrier are writing letters of support for the department's SAFER grant application to fund additional firefighters. The Commissioners encouraged Chief Brett to request letters of support for future grant applications.

Douglas County notified the department they intend to pursue a TIF district near Fire Station 4.

VII. Staff Reports:

1. Administration:

Chief Brett: Chief Brett introduced three of the firefighters hired this year, Firefighters Elijah Bovenzi, Kyle Clemens, and Garrett Grant. All three firefighters received awards at the State Fire Academy and positive feedback from their instructors.

An agreement to fund three firefighters is in the hands of the Microsoft Business Segment for funding. The department has reserved space for three firefighters at the January Fire Academy.

To maintain the WSRB rating of 4 for residents in Malaga, the department needs to staff Station 17 by September 1, 2025. Otherwise, residents will see substantial increases to their insurance premiums or possible cancellation. Chief Brett will present more information on staffing options at a future meeting.

Deputy Chief Blanchard: Chief Blanchard provided a Fire Prevention update:

- Reseeding projects are planned for the Balsam Root and Methow burn scars.
- Working on fuel reduction projects in the Sand Canyon and Briarwood HOAs.
- Continued involvement with the Broadview and Forest Ridge Firewise communities.
- Progress continues on the Chelan and Douglas County CWPPs.
- Knox Box re-keying is planned in 2025.
- More grant-funded grab bars will be requested when the current supply is exhausted.
- A focus on smoke detectors is planned for the spring.

- Hydrant testing is complete for the year. Stortz fittings have been installed in Douglas County and are being expanded into Chelan County.
- Commercial Occupancy Inspections are being finished for the year. Chief Blanchard will inspect the high-hazard occupancies.
- He is working with the Douglas County Fire Marshal on a system for Operating Permits. When complete it will be presented to the Chelan County Fire Marshal and the City of Wenatchee's Fire Official for consideration.
- Public Education will focus on third graders in both school districts and a forensics class at Wenatchee High School.
- More life vests will be requested for the drown prevention program in the spring.

2. IAFF: No report.

3. Volunteers: The Volunteer Association is hosting a Christmas Party on December 7, everyone is welcome. Approximately 500 people turned out on Veterans Day for the barbecue at Pybus. The Volunteer Association will host the Chelan-Douglas Firefighter Association dinner on December 2 at the American Legion.

#### VIII. Committee Reports:

1. RiverCom – The RiverCom Board approved a draft Resolution today to add fire and law enforcement representatives to their Board.

#### IX. Unfinished Business

1. Facilities: Chief Kunz distributed a Facilities Report, updates include:
  - The department is transitioning to First Due software for Incident Reporting and Equipment records at the beginning of the year.
  - The contract to install the grant-funded generators at Fire Station 11 and 13 is in place.
  - Eleven category managers have been identified to begin the accreditation process next year. The department will have three years to complete a strategic plan, standards of coverage, and a series of self-assessment questionnaires.
  - A workgroup completed a needs assessment as part of the hangar pre-design work. This will help determine the square footage needs and cost estimates. A similar process will be used for Fire Station 2 and 12.
  - Mike Compton's photo has been added to the Memorial at Fire Station 13.
  - Both BRIC and AFG grants are being submitted for Fire Station 17; a roof, generator, and exhaust removal system are being considered for the applications.
  - Working with Chelan County regarding the department's encroachment on their property at Station 17. An easement or purchase and sale agreement are options.
2. Apparatus: The waterway on Ladder 10 has been repaired. The mechanics are working to put the new Rescues into service. Aerial and ground ladder testing is scheduled for next month.
3. Aviation: The department invoiced DNR \$422,000 for the use of 1MR this fire season. The revenue exceeded this season's operating expenses.
4. Personnel: Three additional firefighters are included in the 2025 budget. A total of nine firefighters are needed to staff Station 17; the staffing deadline is September 1, 2025. Chief Brett will present staffing options to the Commissioners at a future meeting.

A draft job description was presented for the Deputy Chief – Fire Marshal. Commissioner de Mestre made a motion to approve the job description. There was a second from Commissioner Zimmerman. The position description was approved.

5. Policy Review:

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to approve the proposed policy revisions. There was a second from Commissioner Zimmerman. The motion was approved.

6. 2025 Budget & Revenue Sources: Chief Brett presented the draft budget and revenue sources. He initially anticipated \$15.3 million in levy revenue and \$7.9 million in Fire Benefit Charges. However, the estimated levy collection is \$500,000 higher than projected. He recommends decreasing the Fire Benefit Charge collection by \$500,000 to offset the increased levy. The Commissioners agreed that reducing the Fire Benefit Charge was appropriate.

Currently, the Fire Benefit Charge data and factors would generate \$8.7 million. These factors will be adjusted downward to reduce the Fire Benefit Charge collection for 2025.

Public Hearing Comments on the 2025 Fire Benefit Charge, Levy, and Operating Budgets:

Ettore Castellente thanked Chief Brett for his hard work. He supports the levy rate staying at \$1.00 and adjusting the Fire Benefit Charge as needed. He had no other questions.

There were no additional comments from the public. The Public Hearing was closed.

Commissioner de Mestre made a motion to approve the 2025 Fire Benefit Charge, Levy, and Budget as presented. There was a second from Commissioner Johnson. The 2025 budget and revenue sources were approved.

X. New Business

1. Port TIF District Discussion: The Port's proposed TIF District will cost the department \$25 million in tax revenue. The department has no recourse regarding the TIF District. Chief Brett is concerned the financial impact will cause junior taxing districts to ask for levy increases.

Commissioner de Mestre stated the proposed TIF includes reimbursements for three large projects that are already complete. The intent of a TIF is to invest in development that otherwise would not occur. He stated he is personally opposed to the Port's TIF District as it is currently proposed.

2. Resolution 2024-003 Regular Property Tax Levy for Collection in 2025: Commissioner Zimmerman made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-003. There was a second from Commissioner de Mestre. The Resolution was approved.
3. Resolution 2024-004 Establish a Fire Benefit Charge for Collection in 2025: Commissioner de Mestre made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-004. There was a second from Commissioner Johnson. The Resolution was approved.

Closed Session: At 3:41 pm the Board adjourned to a closed session for an estimated 30 minutes pursuant to RCW 42.30.140; discussion included contract negotiations and strategies. The closed session was extended by five minutes. The public meeting reconvened at 4:16 pm.

4. IAFF Memorandum of Agreement – 2024 CBA Amendment: Commissioner de Mestre made a motion to approve the agreement. There was a second from Commissioner Zimmerman. The agreement was approved.
5. IAFF Memorandum of Agreement, Facilities Technician: This item was tabled until the December meeting.
6. Amend Fire Chief Agreement: The proposed amendment would allow the Fire Chief to accumulate up to 480 hours of vacation leave.

There was a motion from Commissioner de Mestre to approve the amendment. Commissioner Zimmerman seconded the motion. The amendment was approved.

7. Board Elections: The Commissioners agreed to nominate and elect Board Officers at the December meeting.

XI. Good of the Order: None.

XII. Adjourn – 4:40 pm

Respectfully submitted, Cindy Blaufuss