

KITTITAS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #2
Ellensburg, Washington

Minutes of: Commissioners' Board Meeting
Meeting date: May 25, 2023
Meeting time: 1900
Meeting place: 2020 Vantage Highway, Station 21

The special meeting was publicized according to the requirements of Chapter 188, Laws of 2012. Each Board member was sent a written notice via e-mail; the Daily Record was notified via an e-mail, a notice was posted on KVFR's website, and the notice of special meeting was posted in the front window at 400 E. Mountain View.

Commissioners in Attendance: Pat Clerf, Neal Houser, Neil O'Neill, Jerry Pettit and Ross Ogan.

Others in Attendance: Chief John Sinclair, Deputy Chief Elliott, ASM McBride, and numerous firefighters. An online platform was provided.

1. Call to Order: Commissioner Clerf called the meeting to Order at 1900 hours and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda:

Commissioner Neal Houser a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner O'Neill seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

3. IAFF Local 1758 Grievance:

President Wallace presented to the board a grievance filed by the local. Two items were concerning the Union.

- The Union would like to establish a way that SOPs are changed. President Wallace shared that this policy was given while he was on duty and would like to have a set procedure for how to go about changing SOP's.
- The second item that was concerning to the Union about this policy is how it states it is acceptable to have low staffing for long periods of time. The Union understands that during 911 calls staffing may drop low but to write this is policy is unacceptable, we are 911 first.
- The Union feels that the most dangerous thing they do is driving at night, certain transfers at night can wait until the morning.
- They understand that some transfers that are classified as emergent may need to go during the night.
- Chief Sinclair was presented with a letter regarding transfers two years ago and failed to meet with the hospital like he agreed to. They have been asking to work on transfer for two years.
- The Union is watching out for the safety of their members and are fine with taking transfers when they need to occur, but do not want to take unnecessary transfers at night. This policy doesn't cover the officer's discretion and doesn't give any leeway for safety.

Commissioner Clerf asked President Wallace if it was the first time, he saw the policy. President Wallace said he was asked about the policy while on duty. He did approve of it but was confused by the staffing numbers written in the policy. After further review the Union felt it did not work.

Chief Sinclair responded by sharing:

- The administration met with the hospital on Monday, to find out what is possible. During the meeting and from the ESCI consultation study he learned that the hospital was aware of the two year old letter that was sent to him regarding transfers from the Union.
- There is a new physician group that is staffing up the ED. When asking about why transfers need to go in the middle of the night the hospital shared that if patients do not fill a bed the hospital will lose that bed to a different patient.
- The hospital is agreeing to hold behavior and mental health transfers until the morning.
- The overall hospital system is broken right now in Washington. Historically, 50% of the transfers were going down to Yakima, the issue is now hospitals are full and they cannot find beds at the typical hospitals we would transfer to.
- The hospital is open to a peer review of all transfers by the EMS providers. A full review of the necessity for transport would occur.

Chief Sinclair requested Deputy Chief Elliott to share statistical data on transfers. Deputy Chief Elliott presented the attached report and discussed the following:

- 2019 and 2022 were selected for transfer data to be reviewed. 2019 was pre-covid and 2022 is post covid. All transports are coded 320's in the report system, which leads Deputy Chief Elliott to believe that he has the vast majority if not all the transports. Based on the letter presented by the Union limiting transfers during the hours of 2200-0400, transfers were pulled and included in the data set. Patients were categorized by level of care not by BLS or ALS.
- In 2022, the total number of transfers were down. There was a significant increase in utilization of Airlift Northwest in 2022 during those timeframes. A color scale can be found on the data sets, white represents all of the transports that the Union would delay under their proposal in the letter.
- During the hospital meeting Upper County Medic One was present and stated they will provide all transport services for members of their community back to their residences.
- Deputy Chief Elliott reviewed the patient care reports to help accurately determine if it would meet the Union's criteria to be transported. While reviewing the data set, he noted that there was a clear trend for certain doctors to transport more patients than others.
- The new physician's group that is contracted by KVH now has experienced ED doctors that will be treating patients, which may help in a decrease in transfers.
- KVH is experiencing a 20% increase in ED visits, most of which are from people who do not live in this community. Word is getting out that KVH can process and treat patients quickly compared to other communities clogged ED's.
- This year we are averaging about 7-8 transfers a week so far.
- The hospital is hiring a hospitalist that is indicating they will be holding on to patients. There is no pediatric specialist, so children may still need to be transported, if it is medically necessary. All the stroke cases were included in the statistics.
- The Deputy Chief has been advocating for stroke patients to be held on to at the hospital because treatment received at KVH is the same as any other hospital they are transported to.

Chief Sinclair shared:

- Delaying transport until morning will create a backlog of transfers that would have to occur. It would extend our firefighters shift.

- The safety of the firefighters is paramount in our mind. Historically, we have always done transfers since Ellensburg Fire.
- The policy was changed after being asked by the officers and during an LMC.
- The Union wanted us to work with the hospitals and COVID delayed the meetings.
- Year after year we are seeing a decrease in transfers. 2019, 2022 and 2023 will be down somewhere over 40%.
- The hospital understands we are still a 911 service. If we tell the hospital, we are not going to be able to do transfers between those hours they will have to find a way to transport.
- Chief asked ASM McBride to work with the billing provider to include funding in this report.
- AMR is leaving Moses Lake and Lifeline is coming in. We are surrounded by ALS, Lifeline and Ballard private ambulances. If we were going to say we are not doing transport, we could potentially lose all the transports which will impact our revenue stream and level of care to the community. After talking with the hospital, they won't allow us to not transport during these set hours. They control the hospital district.

Commissioner Clerf asked President Wallace if the Union's criteria in the letter were set in stone. President Wallace said no, they would like to have Captain's discretion and would want to increase minimum staffing and for KVFR to be focused on 911 first. The threat of private ambulance coming in has been held over our heads for 15 years. KVFR is the only one of our comparables still doing transfers. Pullman, Walla Walla or Moses Lake don't take transfers. The Union is not saying they won't take transfers. When they are down to 3-5 people, the next call may be a CPR call which takes 6-7 people to run.

Commissioner Pettit stated that some of the transfers coming out of the ER and going back to their residences are because there is no other service available to help them to the level they need. He is wondering if a conversation occurs with the ER to try to identify what seems appropriate at the time for transferring the patient or not. He is not comfortable with what the Union proposed, restricting transfers to certain types. He is concerned about the firefighters in an ambulance driving over from the westside at night. There may be a way for both sides to come together to a resolution.

Commissioner Clerf asked if the Union would be amenable to the new policy being rescinded and reverting to the 2014 policy. President Wallace agreed that this would help solve the matter. He then asked if the Union had any other comments. President Wallace asked for recess at 1949. At 1950 President Wallace returned with no additional information to add.

4. Executive Session: At 1950 Commissioner Clerf announced that the Board would be going into Executive Session pursuant to RCW 42.30.140(4)(b)- "that portion of a meeting during which the governing body is planning or adopting the strategy or position to be taken by the governing body during the course of any collective bargaining, professional negotiations, or grievance or mediation proceedings, or reviewing the proposals made in the negotiations or proceedings while in progress." The Executive Session would be for 20 minutes until 2010 hours. Commissioner Clerf requested that Chief Sinclair, Deputy Chief Elliott, and ASM McBride remain for the entire executive session to executive session to meet with the Board members. At 2010 announced a 10 minute extension until 2020. The regular meeting resumed at 2020 hours.

5. Adjournment

Commissioner O'Neill made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Houser seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 2020 hours.

Pet O'Neil

Board Chair

Angela Meyer

District Secretary

