

**NEWMAN LAKE FIRE & RESCUE**  
**Spokane County Fire District No. 13**

Minutes for May 21, 2024  
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING  
COMMUNITY MEETING

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Board of Fire Commissioners of Spokane County Fire Protection District No. 13 met on May 21, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Station No. 1, 9324 N Starr Rd., Newman Lake, Washington.

**ROLL CALL**

Board: Commissioners Eileen Weyrauch, Teresa Phelps, and Ben Kaiser  
Others Present: Chief Daron Bement, Secretary Robin Harbin, Dave and Kathy Pfeiffer, Jeanette Radmer, Scott Inch, Dennis Rewinker, Jerel Rowe, Tiffani and Daniel Walker, Toby Cadwell, Judi Garcia, Jill Osuna, Deb Davis, Toni Halloran, Kevin Malinak, Dennis Goetz, Sue Gleckler, Florence Townsend, Stacy Dobson, Annette Monroe, Devin Prewett, Dianne LaValley, Carleen VanDerostyne, Terrie Carver, Cynthia Bristad, Jim and Patty Ewing, Janice Neilson, Jerry Le Grand, and two other community members.

**TOWN HALL MEETING OPENING & INTRODUCTIONS:**

Chair Weyrauch opened the meeting with the pledge of allegiance, welcomed attendees, and introduced the meeting. Beginning with the board, all in attendance introduced themselves and stated where they live in Newman Lake.

**STRUCTURE FIRE REVIEW**

Chief Bement reviewed the N North Park Street fire of April 30, 2024. We had a good response from the station with 6 responders on scene within 6 minutes of the dispatch alarm. Five responders, (3 Staff and 2 Shift Volunteers), were at the station that day and were out the door in less than 2 minutes. Our department had 19 total responders to the fire: 3 Staff and 16 Volunteers. Mutual/Auto Aid came from Hauser with an engine and a tender, and from SVFD with one engine. Apparatus dispatched from our department include 3 tenders, 2 engines, 1 brush truck, 2 command vehicles, and 1 medical squad truck. Falling embers were igniting numerous spot fires in the surrounding area. Firefighting efforts effectively saved two neighboring houses and prevented the fire from spreading to the surrounding wildland area. The structure fire was fully involved when the 911 call came in. Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct a rescue. The cause of the fire is undetermined, but fire investigators have confirmed the fire started inside the home. Chief Bement confirmed it is always best to call 911 rather than the fire station to activate a response. Community members are encouraged to register their cell phones with the Spokane County, Newman Lake 911 area to avoid getting connected to Idaho emergency dispatch when they call 911.

### **INSURANCE COST IMPACT OF NOT PASSING A LEVY LID LIFT @\$1.10/\$1K AV:**

Secretary Harbin presented the Insurance Impact handout. According to Eric Cunningham of the Washington State Ratings Bureau, (WSRB), the cutbacks which will be necessary if we don't pass \$1.10/\$1K Assessed Property Value, (AV), will change a Protection Class, (PC), PC6 to a PC8. Estimates from Nicholson and Associates Insurance reveal that insurance on a \$700,000 PC6 home in our district would cost \$5,705 per year. That cost would increase by \$1,233 per year to \$6,937 per year if that same home went to a PC8. The increase of \$1,233 per year is far more than the \$217 increase in taxes in 2025 for a \$700,000 home going from \$0.79/\$1K AV to \$1.10/\$1K per year. The District is evaluated by WSRB every 5 years. We are due to be evaluated again at the beginning of 2026. In order to keep our current Protection Class ratings within the District, we will need to maintain daytime staffing with the Shift Volunteer Program and reinstate nighttime coverage at the station with the Resident/Sleeper Program. Our volunteer firefighters are trained to the same level as career firefighters. Many of our volunteers come to us from the Spokane Community College Fire Science program where they have also obtained their EMT certification. However, having EMT certification is not a requirement to volunteer with the department. As long as volunteers are trained and signed off on driving, they can roll from the station in apparatus, set up, and begin fighting a fire from the outside until the necessary 6 interior firefighters are present to enter the structure. We continue to develop and refine the expectations of the Resident/Sleeper program while waiting for adequate funding to support its reinstatement.

### **FINAL BALLOT MEASURE AND STATEMENTS FOR/AGAINST:**

Secretary Harbin read aloud the August 6, 2024 Ballot Measure and gave time for attending members to read the For and Against Committee Statements on their handouts. An attending community member stated they do not know why anyone would not vote yes for this levy lid lift. When you call 911 you expect a response; without passing this, the response may not be there.

### **OPEN FORUM DISCUSSION:**

Questions and comments included the following –

- **What is the difference in taxes between a volunteer and a career department?**

Career department budgets devote a major portion to personnel. Commissioner Kaiser, a firefighter with Coeur d'Alene Fire, stated that 90% of their budget goes to personnel. Chief Bement stated that SVFD has a \$13 million budget for personnel. We currently have just under a \$1 million budget in total for all expenses. Commissioner Kaiser estimated if we were a career department we would need \$2.5 million just for personnel alone.

- **Some people think the \$1.10/\$1K is in addition to the current \$0.79/\$1K levy rate.**

Commissioner Phelps stressed that the \$1.10/\$1K AV needed is not in addition to the current levy. It replaces the \$0.79/\$1K AV levy rate. The actual increase is only \$0.31 per thousand of assessed property value.

- **If the \$1.10/\$1K Levy Lid Lift does not pass, will it impact those on the north end of the lake who are at a PC8 or PC9?**

Secretary Harbin stated WSRB reported that depending on the cutbacks needed, PC8 could eventually go to a PC9. The concern is anyone going to a PC10 as most insurance companies are not renewing policies in PC10 areas. A community member commented that building permits are currently being limited in Latah Creek due to the inability to be insured.

- **What is the best rebuttal community members can give in response to the Against Committee Statement?**

Toni Halloran stated a burn building has always been planned and needed to provide the best training program possible. For years, we used SVFD as well as SFD training facilities at no charge; it is only fair that we show some reciprocity by allowing them use of our burn building without charge. In support of the current station, Chair Weyrauch commented it was designed with future needs in mind, including the capacity for a Resident Firefighter program. Reliably operating apparatus would not fit in the old station. We're not trying to look like SVFD; we are NLFR and strive to be trained, ready, and capable of meeting all our community's emergencies.

Secretary Harbin provided the following information about the three department debts:

- There is only one debt that gets paid out of the general fire levy. In 2015, the department secured two \$1.1 million bonds for the new station: One voted and the other nonvoted. The voted bond comes from taxpayers at a fixed \$0.12/\$1K AV and is not a part of the Operating Budget. The nonvoted bond does get paid out of the Operating Budget at approximately \$80,000 per year. Both bonds will be paid off in 2033.
- Money had been set aside in Capital Savings over the years for the planned construction projects completed in 2021-2022. No money came out of the Operating Budget for the projects. Although there was sufficient saved to pay for all the projects, the department secured a \$300,000 loan through the Spokane County Investment Pool at 1.75% interest to avoid draining the Capital Savings Account for Construction down to \$0.00. This provided security in case of an unexpected capital expense and allowed the department to complete the planned projects prior to increased inflation.

- **Has the department applied for any grants?**

Chief Bement affirmed that the department has and will continue to apply for numerous grants. Federal grants are difficult to secure. Most staffing grants require matching funds and the funding to continue to pay for positions after the grant.

- **Does the department accept donations or conduct fundraisers?**

Commissioner Kaiser replied that we have received some donations from community members and that our Fire Auxiliary has purchased items for the department from their fundraisers, such as a recent purchase of tech rescue rope bags and equipment. Donations big and small are appreciated but we cannot plan our budget based on donations.

**DISCUSSION SUMMARY:**

We need to get the facts out so voters can make an informed choice. Voter's need to realize what's at stake, such as the insurance impact.

**ADJOURNMENT**

As there was no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Eileen Weyrauch  
Eileen Weyrauch, Chairperson

6-20-24  
Date

Robin Harbin  
Robin Harbin, District Secretary

6-20-24  
Date