

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

Minutes for January 24, 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 January 24, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Station No. 1, 9324 N Starr Rd., Newman Lake, Washington.

**ROLL CALL**

Board: Chair Eileen Weyrauch, Commissioner Teresa Phelps, Commissioner Ben Kaiser  
Others Present: Chief Daron Bement, Captain Josh Ambach, Secretary Robin Harbin, Captain Bob Kolva, Carleen and Dave Vanderostyne, Jen and Michael Garrison Stuber, Toni Halloran, Randy Pownell, Jeanette Radmer, Gayle Furness, Pat Brown, Lynn Haugh, Charles T Duran, Jerel and Karen Row, Ted and Jean Demars, Deb Davis, Toby Cadwell, Alan J Kelly, Aurora Diaz-Kelly, and several other community members.

**TOWN HALL MEETING OPENING & INTRODUCTIONS:**

Chair Weyrauch opened the meeting with the pledge of allegiance. Secretary Harbin invited attending community members to introduce themselves and share what part of Newman Lake they live in and how long they've lived here. Introductions proceeded around the room, culminating with introductions by the Board of Fire Commissioners, Chief Bement, Captain Josh Ambach and Secretary Robin Harbin.

**REVIEW OF DECEMBER 6, 2023 MEETING**

Chief Bement reviewed answers to questions asked at the December 6, 2023 Town Hall meeting. Questions and answers were also available in print for all those in attendance. Chief Bement demonstrated how to access detailed property tax information using Spokane County SCOUT online. He stated there are 2,018 registered voters in our district and 1,225 taxpayer properties. The range of property values within the district with the majority of homes falling within a range of \$300,000 to \$600,000 in assessed values. We are unable to write a levy lid lift proposition that would increase by a stated monetary amount from year to year; increases must specify a rate – either a percentage increase or a Consumer Price Index increase. Call numbers have increased from 74 in 2013 to 180 in 2023. However, many operating costs exist whether there are few or many calls.

Chief Bement also covered the current and projected General and EMS tax levies through 2028: 1) Without a levy lid lift but with an EMS renewal in 2026; 2) What would have been collected at \$1.30/\$1000 AV and EMS renewal; 3) Estimated collection at \$1.10/\$1000 with a fixed 3% increase and EMS renewal. The General Levy goes toward all department costs, including fire and EMS; whereas the EMS levy, due to be renewed for 2026, only goes toward costs connected to providing emergency medical services. The majority of our calls are medical as noted by Captain Josh Ambach who stated that 120 of the 180 total calls in 2023, or 67%, were EMS calls. The EMS levy resets to \$0.50/\$1000 AV at renewal. It can never be more than that, but the rate can decrease if property values increase, (i.e., it has decreased to the current rate of \$0.32/\$1000).

The total amount spent on operating expenses in 2023 was \$749,000. This represents a conservative amount since it only includes five months of full-time Chief wages and reflects cutbacks put into place to have adequate funds for the first five months of 2024. Chief Bement projected annual operating expenses based upon the \$749,000 conservative amount, at a 5% inflation rate. According to these projections, the district will have an approximate \$41,000 shortfall without a levy lid lift for 2025. Renewing the EMS levy for 2026 will help but will still result in a \$27,500 deficit in 2028. Passing a four-year levy lid lift of \$1.10/\$1000 AV with a fixed 3% increase on the ballot this year for 2025 through 2028 will sufficiently meet projected operating and capital expenses only if the EMS levy is renewed. Without an EMS levy renewal, the district will be \$92K short of meeting operating expenses in 2026; \$128K short in 2027; and \$166K short in 2028.

#### **OPEN FORUM DISCUSSION:**

Community members asked why the EMS levy is less than a third of our budget when the majority of our calls are EMS. Secretary Harbin explained that the General Fire levy goes toward all expenses involved for both Fire and EMS. The EMS levy is needed in addition and goes only toward expenses involved in EMS.

Chief Bement reviewed a list of cost projections for future needs above and beyond daily operating costs as shown on attached. He pointed out that \$5500.00 for firefighter protective gear is head to toe less SCBA equipment. Station 2 future costs are based on the fact that the building is gradually sinking. Captain Kolva explained that it was built in the 1990's on a peat bog. Chair Weyrauch stated the structure is not going to suddenly implode as it has been sinking for years. Dave VanDerostyne said Station 2 has been monitored since 2017/2018 and currently has about a 16-inch lean. Having a station on the north end of the lake is important to ensure quick response times. Volunteers who live on the north end of the lake are currently able to respond out of Station 2.

Chief Bement emphasized the importance of rebuilding capital funds for future expenses such as these. He communicated that passing a levy lid lift of \$1.10/\$1000 AV and renewing the EMS levy, should enable the department to keep our three current employees and possibly hire a training officer. Passing both will also allow us to begin rebuilding capital funds for future needs. Secretary Harbin reported the current balance of the Apparatus Capital Fund is \$175,841.06; the balance in the Construction Capital Fund is \$314,612.17. A portion of the Construction Fund is money received from the insurance company, earmarked for HVAC repairs not yet completed. Payments for the \$300,000.00 County construction loan also comes out of the Construction Fund

Commissioner Kaiser announced that the department can write a draft of our own ballot measure. The draft will be sent to our attorney who will revise as necessary and submit to the county elections department. The first draft can be presented for community input at our next meeting. Attendees wanted to know how Spokane County Fire District 5 compares with our district as they are proposing a \$1.50/\$1000 AV levy lid lift. Chair Weyrauch noted that District 5 has fewer people, fewer calls, and do not have a manned station.

#### **DISCUSSION SUMMARY:**

Community members want the department to consider the demographics of our district, illustrate the financial impact of a levy lid lift for property owners, effectively communicate the specific benefits and services property owners will receive by passing a levy lid lift as well as

an EMS levy renewal, and get registered voters to vote. Commissioner Phelps encouraged citizens to talk to their neighbors and other community members. Fire Auxiliary member Deb Davis suggested forming a citizens committee to promote the levy lid lift.

**ADJOURNMENT**

As there was no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Eileen Weyrauch  
Eileen Weyrauch, Chairperson

2-15-24  
Date

Robin Harbin  
Robin Harbin, District Secretary

2-15-24  
Date

