



**Thurston County Fire Protection District 8  
Special Board of Fire Commissioners' Meeting  
Staffing Workshop  
February 23, 2017**

MINUTES of the Special Staffing Workshop held February 23, 2017. Board members present were Commissioners Harper, Berman, Small, Engle and Gleckler. Also present were Chief VanCamp, facilitator Steven Byers, career staff, volunteer staff and citizens. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm at Station 8-1.

Steven Byers welcomed the participants and told them the purpose of this meeting is to begin to converge on a recommended staffing plan to send to the Board. The primary objective: "To arrive at the minimum acceptable staffing level per shift (days and night/weekend) at two stations (FTE), and what it will take (People) to achieve this." Participants were invited to talk about a realistic appraisal of the staffing situation and options to achieve the desired objective. Also, having a frank discussion about the facts of life that constrain us, and how do we work within those boundaries to create a solution to the staffing challenge? Constraints are not necessarily bad things; and can stimulate creativity and innovation. He gave out handouts: *Workshop Outcome* notes from February 13 and a current volunteer roster that listed members and their positions. A group discussion ensued.

**Group Discussion:**

A summary of the comments include:

- There was a feeling that the process of evaluating volunteer issues was being "accelerated", and not given due diligence;
- There was a feeling that the process should be focused on a model staffing plan that can be modified as needed through group interaction;
- A question was raised on why volunteers are leaving the organization, citing "churn" rates;
- Issues have been discussed what could happen in the future? Address recruitment first then retention.
- Discussion about IR&R staff not being volunteer or career, but all part of a team of responders.
- Re-emphasis on the use of the original "scenario discussion starters" that were various options for shifts: there was no attempt to push or sell one or more of the option with the workshop, "no hidden agendas."
- Concern was raised about the implications of the five staffing models developed on February 13<sup>th</sup> with a heavy dependence on the numbers (18) Company Officers and cross-qualified (FF-EMT) staff, when these are the positions that have been hard to get and keep.
- It was noted that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results.
- The current new recruit corps of 20 is large (*although not a record number*) and can be the start of significant change and improvement in volunteer staffing.
- Difficulties in generating Company Officers was discussed.
- It was suggested that there is no such thing as a "combination fire service", only a fire service that is "primarily career supported by volunteer" or "primarily volunteer supported by career": which are we? Which do we want to be?
- Discussion about other Thurston County fire departments' history of relationships between volunteers and careers: believed to be career overwhelms the volunteer leadership and population.
- Some volunteer members disagreed with the above notion, the pre-merger FD7 and current FD3 models seemed to work fine.
- It was suggested that some of the volunteer-career issues are rooted in the segregation of the two (night-weekend versus day). We should provide over-lap of some sort.



- The intent of the ballot issue for voters of the FD7 merger emphasized improved round-the-clock staffing.
- The actual current emergency incident volume (about 2.5 per day) must be considered in IR&R design.
- It was suggested that the District become a “training organization” rather than an “IR&R organization,” to compensate to some degree the relatively low incident volume and to help address morale/comradery.
- Discussion about career staff exposure to call volume (thus experience) and the contribution to mentorship opportunities led to other officer & leadership development comments.
- Is there a way for Members to participate within busy fire departments to get some of that experience? Some incident simulation could help.

Members were asked to move into three diverse groups in order to discuss the issues related to the overall objective “Provide for consistent around-the-clock staffing for a two-station deployment model” and “How can we solve the current staffing challenges without undermining long-term volunteer recruitment and retentions?” Further, he asked that the following factor be addressed:

- Allow effective & simple communications paths [morale];
- Encourage and facilitate inter-shift mixing [morale];
- Incorporate standardized, effective and motivating initial qualifications training [competencies];
- Incorporate standardized, ongoing and motivating skills maintenance training [competencies];
- Incorporate progressive & motivating leadership development opportunities, focusing on both tactical and human-relations subject matter [competencies & morale];
- Provide for a consistently acceptable IR&R staffing level at both firestations;
- Provide for an adequate level of getting (sustainable flow of qualified new/replacement Members) for all IR&R positions;
- Provide for efficient logistic support to IR&R Members while maintaining overall asset accountability.

Following the discussions, the teams reconvened and gave a brief summary of their findings and/or proposals.

**Break-out Team A:** Clemens, Kilpatrick, LaDue, LeMay, McManus, Pawlowski and Small.

**FINDINGS:** Discussed many cultural and structural issues with regard to career-volunteer relationships and processes to improve shift operations. They had not yet developed a “structure” for a shift plan.

**Break-out Team B:** Armstrong, Harper, Gleckler, Hankins, Liukkonen, McBride and Robinette.

**FINDINGS:** Also discussed many cultural and structural issues with regard to career and volunteer staffing options.

**Break-out Team C:** Berman, Engle, Hall, Leyva, Osborne and Wilson.

**FINDINGS:** After discussing options, they proposed to utilize “discussion starter scenario 5”:

#	Description	Potential Advantage	Potential Disadvantage	Comments
5	“Dayshift Career, Night-Weekend 9 Shift Volunteer Supplemented with Career Officers”: Night & weekend staffing model of nine-shifts to be augmented with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Would expand company-level supervision allowing multi-station staffing.</li> <li>▪ Would provide improved interaction among volunteer and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impacts to volunteer company officer &amp; daytime coverage programs.</li> <li>▪ Would increase overall career staffing labor costs.</li> <li>▪ Business functions for career staff not</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Would require changes to Collective Bargaining Agreement.</li> <li>▪ Need to establish supervisory clarity among volunteer &amp; career staff positions.</li> </ul>

	<p>full-time career Lieutenant and/ or ACs staff for supervision on regular or as needed basis (e.g. one station); career FFs to remain on dayshift.</p>	<p>career staff members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increases pool of drivers &amp; instructors</li> <li>▪ Depending on staffing, could fill 9 company officer positions.</li> <li>▪ Scalable and allow for expansion to additional companies</li> </ul>	<p>being met or significantly reduced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impacts dayshift coverage, would need to be supplemented somehow.</li> <li>▪ Does not allow for leave coverage for career staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Similar to pre-merger FD7 practice.</li> <li>▪ Would require additional FTEs and additional cost from 48-hour week to 53-hour week for 24-hr scheduled staff.</li> </ul>
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They pointed out that the proposed model could be implemented with the current number of volunteer and career staff on hand. They also addressed each of the 8 guiding factors within currently available practices.

**Next Steps:** Chief VanCamp and Facilitator Byers will take the findings and work from this session and produce an agenda for a next session to be scheduled with the assistance of District Secretary Stumpf.

**Adjourn**

The workshop adjourned at 9:00 pm.

**ATTEST:**



*William Harper, as Chair for TCFPD 8*




*Richard Gleckler, as Commissioner for TCFPD 8*



*Michael Berman, as Commissioner for TCFPD 8*

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*Richard Small as Commissioner for TCFPD 8*

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*Tom Engle, as Commissioner for TCFPD 8*

  
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*Heidi Stumpf as District Secretary for TCFPD 8*