



## Thurston County Fire Protection District 8 Special Board of Fire Commissioners' Meeting Staffing Workshop February 21, 2017

MINUTES of the Special Staffing Workshop held February 21, 2017. Board members present were Commissioners Harper, Berman, Small 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 gave two handouts: notes from the previous January 30<sup>th</sup> workshop and a handout listing the responder positions, duties and minimum requirements. He explained the evening process. Participants would be divided into small groups to discuss the positions and answer the questions, "What actions could we take as an organization that will help ensure a sustainable supply of personnel for these positions?" and "What possible upstream or downstream impacts for each action?" Chief VanCamp then clarified the positions that include firefighter, driver-operator, EMT, EMT/Firefighter, company officer and battalion officer. Questions were asked for clarity.

Participants formed groups as directed. After thirty minutes they convened to larger groups to further discuss the questions. Following a short break, the groups were re-configured and repeated the same process.

Following the discussions, groups were asked to post a printed sheet with notes on the front white board and have a representative from their group share their common thoughts and ideas from their groups.

### **Presentations:**

**EMT – presented by Chris LaDue.** What could be done to help improve restrictions on recruitment? If seats are limited in Medic One, what other options could be used for training? Fire calls are low and most calls are EMS. We should encourage EMT training. We should support EMT students prior to and following their courses by providing mentorship and support. Retention was discussed. Could we find other tasks for members to do so that they're not bored? It was noted that many volunteers also work for ambulance companies and they have limited time.

**EMT/FF – presented by Brandon LeMay.** It is a challenge to get volunteers certified as both FF & EMT, but we encourage certification in both disciplines. Summer school could be an option in place of Medic One. Seeking laterals that are dual-certified would be good. We could not limit the number of recruits and take any that qualify. Quality versus quantity was discussed. We need to make their time valuable. Suggestions offered for AC's to get to know volunteers; for supervisors to set goals with members and empower them.

**Firefighters – Presented by Jennifer Leyva.** They discussed retention of FF since it isn't a challenge to get them – but to keep them. Suggested spot awards (above & beyond recognition), gift cards?, etc. these are not necessary, but help morale. Having people on your shift that you get along with – respect, sense of humor, etc. Perhaps matching skills, personality and interest to build a shift? Team bonding efforts to build comradery.

**Driver Operators – presented by Doug Kilpatrick.** Doug explained that it's more of a challenge to get DO's than it is to keep them. Many people are apprehensive, uncomfortable or feel it is too much too soon. He suggests we have honest conversations to clarify expectations and understanding of the program (which

vehicles need to be learned, in which order, etc.) We should create more flexible driving opportunities to build confidence.

**Company Officers – Presented by Brent McBride.** In order to have officers, we need to have experienced members of which to choose from. Perhaps incentives, extra pay, recognition awards, family events and other activities to build comradery would help. Often, our highly skilled members leave us for a permanent position elsewhere. This could be looked at as “progress.” We should try to understand the reasons why some members stay longer (past the 3-years mark). We should encourage proactive participation in various training opportunities, and let them know that the department will pay for the expenses. Walker Armstrong asked if using the “Weekly” to advertise training has been helpful. Brandon said it was.

**Battalion Chiefs – Presented by Brent McBride.** We need more Company Officers before they can be promoted to BC’s. They need at a minimum, three years of experience. It is not a preferred option to move current BC’s into the Company Officer role on shift. Leadership/command roles could be filled using 24/ hour career staff. He suggests we increase the training budget and offer training stipends as an incentive.

Following the presentation, Steve asked the group to share any new insights they had. The following are group observations and comments:

- Jonathan Clemens – Counter-poaching from other departments. To recruit experienced laterals that could become leaders more quickly. Rising tide lifts all boats. Improving morale would help retention.
- Richard Gleckler – He’d like a list of retention ideas that can be implemented quickly.
- Walker Armstrong – Input from members leaving the department might not always be honest. Saying family/work is the reason may not be accurate. It could be that they don’t feel valued or respected. (Sighting equipment issues as an example.)
- Dick Small – To alleviate driver anxiety, drivers need lots of low-risk drive time. Questioned whether training for officers could be done in a classroom using simulators. Further, should this be considered in our Training Center? Jonathan responded that Mark Noble TC is sufficient for Officer training.
- Alex McManus – We should look at shifts versus the whole department. Shifts need to enjoy their time together, but more social interaction among the entire department would be beneficial.
- Brandon LeMay – Is morale the real reason people are leaving?
- Damian Longmire – Several members were disappointed that historic awards (FF & Officer of the year) were not presented this year.
- Derek Hall – When people leave, they are not being replaced with experienced members. We should keep traditions in order to inspire new members. Do we have any homework?


### **Final Observations**


Mr. Byers summarized the common theme that improving and enhancing relations is key. Now we need to find a place to begin that step. Thursday will be a converging process to build a recommendation for the Board. Homework would be brainstorming specific actions. Please give input to Chief VanCamp if you have ideas that weren’t shared at tonight’s workshop.

### **Adjourn**

The workshop adjourned at 9:00 pm.


ATTEST:


  
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William Harper, as Chair for TCFPD 8

  
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Richard Gleckler, as Commissioner for TCFPD 8

  
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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