VASHON ISLAND FIRE & RESCUE
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

Minutes

Date: 04/23/2017
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Place: 10020 SW Bank Rd, EOC Room

SPECIAL MEETING – BOARD RETREAT

Present: Camille Staczek, Chair
Brigitte Schran-Brown, Vice-Chair
David Hoffmann, Commissioner
Candy McCullough, Commissioner
Ron Turner, Commissioner
Charles H. Krimmert, Fire Chief
Robert Larsen, Assistant Chief
Jojo Weller, Minute Taker

Guests: Mike Brown, Father Tryphon, Josh Munger, Ben Davidson, Mike and Patti Kirk, Susan Reimer.

BOARD DISCUSSION ABOUT STRATEGIES

MISSION/LAWS/STRATEGY

- Mission: VIFR is dedicated to the protection of life, property and the environment.
- Title 52 & Commissioners' Handbook: Commissioners are not allowed to vote on operational decisions.
- We need a one, five and ten year outlook to keep solvent.

CALL VOLUMES

- In the last 17 years, our call volume has increased 60%.
- In the last 20 years our population has only increased by 3%. Today we have approximately 4,700 households on the island; we should plan to see about 5,500 households in the next 20 years. The largest component of our population is 50/60-year-olds so as this group ages, we will see an increase of call volume at approximately 2,000 calls a year, but afterwards this may plateau.
- Two years ago we committed to the community we would handle 2.5 calls deep.
- Assuming a housing cost index average for the nation at $100, Vashon is $163. If zoning and water availability were not factors, it could top 4,000 new homes, but is unlikely.
- We may need more staffing (and therefore lodging) during Fourth of July and Strawberry Festival.

STAFFING

- The Board is supportive of the volunteer program and enhancements.

- While the island will always have a need to have, support and entice volunteers, that doesn't mean the volunteers are actually here. Our volunteers are down 69%.
- Today's culture does not support this level of volunteerism with the arduous level of physical training and time commitment.
- Every day there is a chance we will have more calls than we have personnel to respond on a daily basis. Just today, two chiefs responded in primary vehicles to a fire (meaning the rest of the paid staff were either answering medical emergencies or transporting patients).
- Discussion about the CARE Cars type program (pre-hospital checks on patients before they become a medical emergency). While the program could bring in some funds, before contracting with an agency or business to do that, it might take a sufficient amount of personnel who are not tied up in transporting patients already to make those calls. It would cost up front to buy a vehicle, stock and staff it. This option is further down the road from the immediate budgetary issues.
- The Board may be unaware of how dedicated and precious our members are. If a staff member gets a cold, we're in trouble. People are doing extraordinary work. We are not exceeding our community's expectations; however, the community has far more expectations than what we can provide. Three times in the last month we've gone four calls deep – amazing group of people we have here.
- After looking at the number of households and what people could afford, the chief believes it is realistic to eventually staff two stations. That would double the work force. Battalion chiefs could coordinate stations. To compliment that we would need twice as many volunteers. That type of aspiration has a lot of merit for this Board to present to the community.
- Ben Davidson would like to address the staffing issue right now. There has to be some way to get the money we need for staff so that we can do the job the community thinks we are doing and sometimes we're not because, again, we don't have the people.
- Patti Kirk agrees. There have been a lot of call backs. (Comment from the Board: 50 call backs in the first quarter of this year compared with 30 call backs a year the previous two years.) Patti and Mike have lived on the island for 51 years; they've seen the volunteers severely decline and she doesn't see that changing.
- The only way to address staffing is create more revenue.
- The chiefs are creating a part-time paid firefighter program. They will grandfather in the current volunteers but in the future it will be a FF/EMT program. If 16 positions can be filled, these individuals work five shifts per month. The goal is three career firefighters on each shift, although there would be 17 voids for the rest of 2017 to cover a whole month together collectively; only two would be on duty. Then we will fill the two available beds with two volunteers. On island volunteers would still be free to respond from home. So that's the best that the chief can give the Board at this time to address both those issues.
- Bonds do not address staffing; but a levy would.
- It was suggested that former volunteers here that have gotten career jobs with other departments could, if the union allowed, serve as volunteers here. So could island residents who work for off-island departments. This has not been discussed with Operations and could pose a safety hazard in that other departments may train differently, have different apparatus and equipment and would be hard for them to work cohesively with us. Would paid firefighter/EMTs consider a second unpaid job when they have a job? Would they want to commit the time, training and meetings with us?

- Captain Josh Munger likes this part-time program because if you've got five firefighters or FF/EMTs ready to respond, it makes all the difference. He thinks it's a great idea to reward volunteers monetarily and make it worth their while to be here.
- The Board had the foresight to hire two new firefighters who finish the academy in less than a month.
- Josh Munger doesn't know how we'd cover the time gap if transporting all patients to the hospitals in order to get paid by Medicare and Medicaid.
- Ben Davidson worries about the fire side. Anytime we do not have four firefighters on duty then we can't keep two in and two out. That is not an ideal situation and one he found himself in not long ago. He worries that he won't be able to do his job and someone may be at risk.
- Mike Brown wants the two in, two out. Chief responded that today you would get two or three. Today a homeowner got an engine with one firefighter. We are qualified firefighters and while you may not get them all on the engine, you would have two enroute. We will do everything we can to save everyone and their house – that's our goal and aspiration. But we can only do what we can with what we have.

REVENUE

- Whether to keep or surplus an asset is a commissioner decision, but not what is done with that asset operationally.
- As far as budget forecasting, we are facing a half million dollar deficit this year. Given the status of the Bennedsen house right now, the chief believes converting the asset to cash is to the District's better advantage right now.
- Commissioner Staczek provided the WFCA Legislative Report reflecting House Bill 1764 replacing the 101% property tax revenue limit with a limit tied to cost drivers. Apparently this is a federal program that has been passed and now the states are close to adopting. [attached]
- We need our citizens to support us on keeping up the service we provide. We need a lid lift now and then we can start growing incrementally from there.
- While purchasing the Bennedsen House was a great idea, our backs are against the wall and it is reasonable to sell it now. So long term, we don't rule out that we might try this again, but short term, we have to balance the budget. If selling the Bennedsen house will help accomplish that then we should do it.
- The public needs to know what the actual repercussions will be if we don't get the money we need.
- Father Tryphon knows we need a viable fire department. He would hate for the community to learn of our needs "the hard way." He would like to see us raise taxes, which has not been done for 25 years for a fire department, which is one of the best, and the (Bennedsen) house sold so that when the community calls upon us we can answer.
- No one is questioning the need to raise the levy ever since the Board saw that we have a $400,000-$500,000 deficit this year, but we won't see that money until next year. We're going to have to dig into our reserves and the Bennedsen House can lessen or eliminate that impact.
- We will need to make a decision which levy amount to go for in August for the November election. The Chief is writing papers on the status of various facets of the District which will be done by the end of June so the Board has July to consider and make their decision.

- It will cost approximately $20,000 to paint and fix up the Bennedsen Residence for an approximate house sale of $600,000.
- Part of Tuesday's meeting is that the Board will be asked to transfer some of the ALS funds into a fleet reserve; another account that needs to be set up is a fund to receive funds from the Bennedsen House sale for facilities.
- Another fund that needs to be started is for equipment. We were fortunate enough to secure a grant for SCBAs but we need a fund to start saving now for 10-15 years when they will need to be replaced. That will have even more impact on next year's budget because we have not previously had those funds for saving for future forecasted needs.
- We have to look ahead one year, five years and ten years to keep this District solvent.
- This Board has authorized transport fees multiple times so the chiefs are pursuing it. There is a third party who will help us with it, including coordinating with the county, for a reasonable fee. Right now they are forecasting cost per call, potential revenues and those that, in spite of receiving a bill, won't or can't pay.
- It takes six to twelve weeks to get approved to bill Medicare and Medicaid, but we could actually start the transport for fee program and bill later.
- Medicare reimburses transports for a flat rate of $415 no matter what you bill. Medicaid pays $115 and both those require transportation all the way to the hospital. If we transferred the patient at the dock to Tri-Med, we couldn't bill because that would be "double dipping."
- Resident vs. non-resident transport fees: A/C Larsen has talked to five fire chiefs about this aspect. If you bill the community member (within this taxing district) then we get what the insurance will pay. If you bill someone outside of Vashon then you can bill the insurance and after that, the balance is billed to the person. That's the program we're seriously considering adopting. The collection rate 50-60% is when billing the patient the difference.
- During a short visit with Dow Constantine, we let him know that our first line engine is 16 years old – one year past the standards.

FACILITIES

- Regarding lodging, we have five beds here at Station 55. If we look at placing (our goal) three career FF/EMTs on duty at any one time that would leave two beds for essentially part-time paid firefighters who want to serve full shifts. On island volunteers traditionally respond from home as the chief has – so we don't really hurt them. It does limit our ability to lodge off-island volunteers down to two per shift.
- If the Board wants to retain the Bennedsen Residence for lodging for a couple of days a year we can do that, but it would cripple us for 365 days a year.
- This extends to Station 56; commissioners cannot decide what apparatus or volunteers respond to that station. That is an operational issue. Commissioner Brown was incorrect in making a motion (in the last meeting) to repurpose that station. Of the volunteers who do stay once a week at the Bennedsen House; one is an off-islander, one an islander who could respond from home.
- Chief says they are actively developing a program to accommodate staff.
- Perhaps there are alternative housing options within the community we could use in the interim, such as a studio or mother-in-law apartment that someone might be willing to provide or temporary lodging like the Burton Inn – just for ideas.
- Selling the Bennedsen house now is a good idea as the chief suggests because we are now past the days when we could expect a solid volunteer corp. Plus, we're going to have to

dig into our reserves and the Bennedsen House can lessen or eliminate that impact. We do have time to decide. We need a resolution.

- Patti Kirk sees no reason for keeping the house as it never fulfilled its objective.
- The Chief suggests we are a three station District. We have Station 55 and in order to have most of the houses within five miles of a station, one station would be at about 240th and Wax Orchard. Another would be on Maury, probably somewhere around the area of the golf course.
- Bonds address facilities and fleet.
- To the suggestion that the Bennedsen could be rented out for income, the downside to renters is they may not pay their rent. Then it's hard to evict them and renters can do tremendous damage.

COMMUNICATIONS

- The Board needs to come to a unified position, to give direction to the chief and also inform the public.
- We should learn from the school district as far as engaging the community and asking for support. Some people don't even know that we respond to EMS calls. Others expect that if they dial 9-1-1, they expect an experienced responder that shows up with the proper equipment at the right time. It's our job to help people understand how hard we work to make that happen.
- We need to give the community our big picture and let them know what we need for a viable fire department. People need to know that we are in the depths of a budget deficit. They need to understand we want to fulfill our mission but we can't do it without more money. We need to show our dwindling revenue and our increased expenses.
- A foundation might help.
- Mike Kirk thinks when we told the public back in the 1970's what it cost to run those three rigs we had, the public responded. He thinks the feelings are still there if we tell the public what we need and why.
- We could have a big meeting at the high school and tell them what we want to tell the community what we have and ask them what they really want.
- The Chief's white papers studying the status of different facets of the District and reporting to the Board will also be released to the public so they understand better our needs and objectives. It also supports and justifies the why we are running with the precious and dedicated efforts of a few. That we're running with trucks that have seen better days, that we're in buildings that we're worried about shaking apart. That story will be foundational to them.
- Those white papers will be finished by the end of June so that Board members will have the month of July to study before making their decisions. The filing deadline for the tax levy is in August for the November election.
- We are competing with parks, schools, the swim team and campaigns for a homeless tax, and a science and arts tax. We're still waiting for the state legislature to determine the education costs.
- Father Tryphon and Mike Kirk would be happy to be part of a committee to let the island community know that if we want to be safe, have aid cars, engines and professionals to attend to us, we need to pay for it. We should form a strategy starting with Rotary, small community groups and explain what that means for their neighborhood.
- We are not exceeding our community's expectations; however, the community has far more expectations than what we can provide.

- In order to educate the public of our situation, they need to realize the very real ramifications if we don't get our funds. This isn't scare tactics – it is reality. Board members would feel terrible if we had a major scene that we couldn't handle and had to answer to the public.
- The expertise the chief is receiving is that we have to build our story so that when we go to the public for money, we can answer questions about why we need it and what we need it for. We need to groom the path we are taking.
- Part of the story is how we got here – not meaning to throw anyone under the bus, but if we understand what happened, then we can promise the public we will not be going there again.
- While we could place an article in the Beachcomber, there is a cost. The chief will be providing copies of his white papers to the media as well as the Board.
- It was suggested we use media to create a vehicle for internal communication.
- The chief is building the District's IT support and infrastructure.

NEXT STEPS:

Today we are arriving at a long range forecast that can be modified on a regular, annual basis. This is critical because it will allow us to make decisions on current stations.

Consensus:

1. All commissioners are in agreement on aspirational goals.
2. Immediately attempt to cover 2.5 calls deep.
3. Have VIFR become a three station district (with most households within five miles), with smaller stations west of Burton and in the golf course area.
4. Staff two stations with sufficient personnel with supporting volunteer and part-time paid staff.
5. Review future goals in concert with the annual budget development.
6. Review fleet replacement in concert with the annual budget development.
7. Eventually the Board needs to review fire emergency readiness for two in, two out.
8. Keep VIFR a combination department.
9. The intention is that if you are an island volunteer with only one certification (Firefighter or EMT) you will still be welcome to volunteer in the future.
10. Establish a committee to go out to the public with elements of our story so we can talk about raising funds.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:06 p.m.

The next Regular Meeting will be on Tuesday, 04/25/17 at 6:30 p.m. at 10020 SW Bank Rd, Vashon, EOC Room

Approved this 23rd day of May, 2017.

Camille Staczek, Chair

Jojo Weller, Minute Taker

Chief's Report
for the
Fire Commissioners' Meeting
of
09 May 2017

As a brief overview of the District, focusing on highlights since the board's meeting, please accept the following information:

1. **Overarching Operational Topics**:
    a. The Part Time Paid (PTP) program (Previously the Enhanced Volunteer Program) is advancing with a target roll out date yet defined…
        i. This program is in tandem with the fees for transport program which is also being targeted to roll on or before the PTP program…
        ii. In association with the transport fees program we are investigating following with a voluntary post-insurance payment waiver program…

2. **Overarching Training Topics**:
    a. Recruits Lenz and McMillian graduate next Monday (15 May 17) at 18:00
        i. Event is located at: River of Life Fellowship
        10615 Southeast 216th Street
        Kent, Washington 98031

3. **Service/Call Volumes**:
    a. As of 07:30, shift change today, the District has responded to 550 calls…
        i. Last year on this date call count was 566…

4. **Staff/Personnel**:
    a. A volunteers meeting has been established for the 16th to discuss volunteer programs and the PTP program…
    b. Chief staff is actively investigating and working to organize a volunteer firefighter fire academy, on island, for this summer…

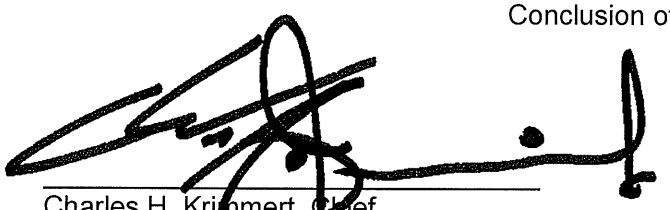
5. **Fleet**:
    a. This evening's first presentation is on our fleet so there is nothing to note here…

6. **Facilities**:
    a. The second half of this evening's presentation is on our facilities so there is nothing to note here…

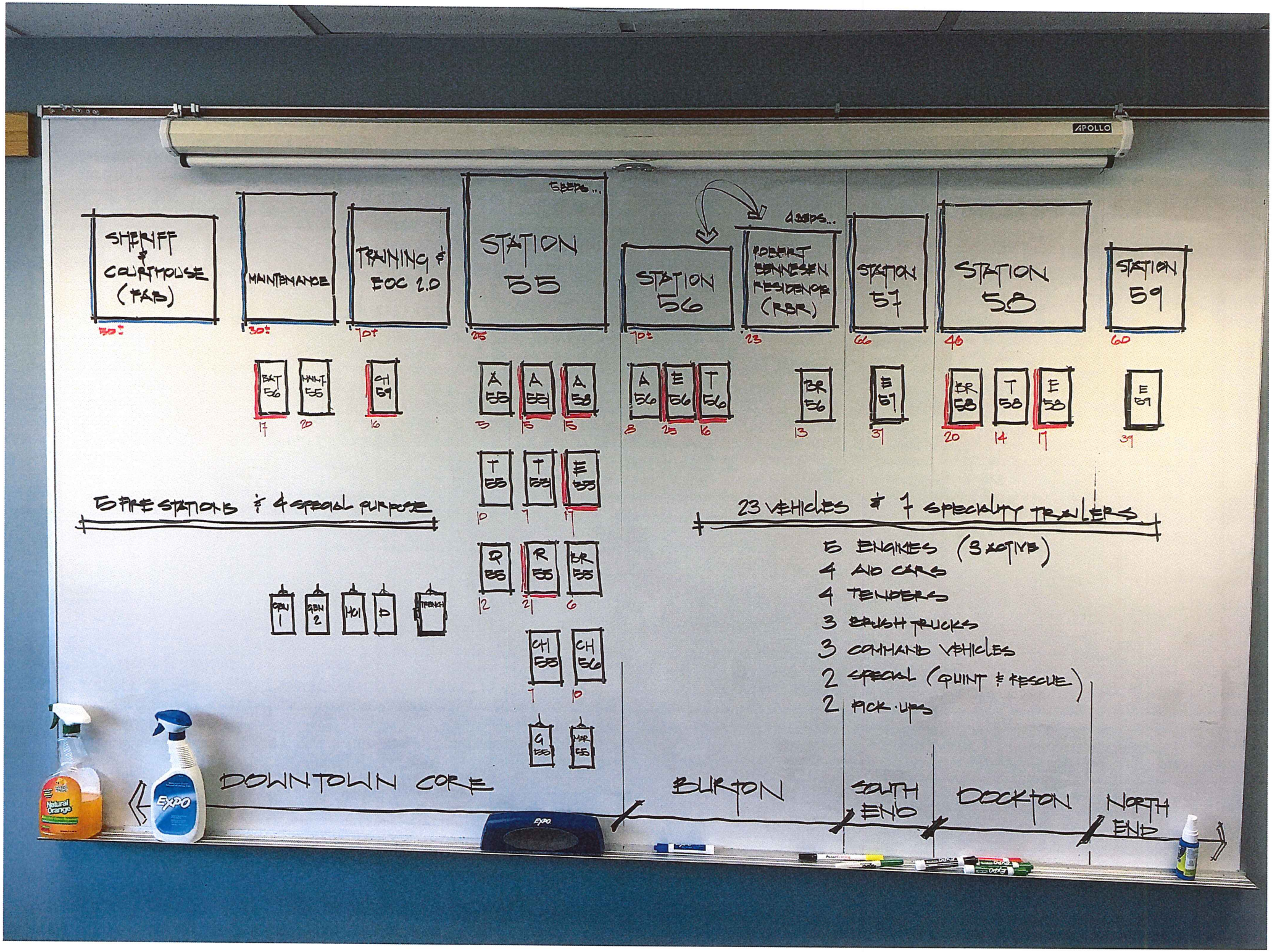
7. **Financials**:
    a. I would like to thank Barbara O'Block for her services over the last several years. Moving forward we shall being working with Lake Kennedy McCulloch on a reduced level and on an 'as needed' basis…
    b. The final transfer of funds from King County Medic One is being processed; with such the ALS financial transition will be completed…

8. **Miscellaneous/Noteworthy Topic(s)**:
    a. During the week of April 23th Chiefs Larsen & Krimmert attended Zone 3 Operational Chiefs & Chiefs meetings in Kent…

Conclusion of Report



Charles H. Krimmert, Chief
Vashon Island Fire & Rescue
1 206 463 2405 (Office) Extension 301
1 206 300 0952 (Mobile)


SHERIFF & COURTHOUSE (FAB)
MAINTENANCE
TRAINING & EOC 2.0
STATION 55
STATION 56
ROBERT BENNESEN RESIDENCE (RBR)
STATION 57
STATION 58
STATION 59
5 FIRE STATIONS & 4 SPECIAL PURPOSE
23 VEHICLES & 7 SPECIALTY TRAILERS
5 ENGINES (3 ACTIVE)
4 AID CARS
4 TENDERS
3 BRUSH TRUCKS
3 COMMAND VEHICLES
2 SPECIAL (QUINT & RESCUE)
2 PICK-UPS
DOWNTOWN CORE
BURTON
SOUTH END
DOCKTON
NORTH END