



**Thurston County Fire Protection District 8  
Special Board of Fire Commissioners' Meeting  
Staffing Workshop  
March 20, 2017**

MINUTES of the Special Staffing Workshop held February 23, 2017. Board members present were Commissioners Harper, Berman, 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 wrap up the process, acknowledge the hard work and time put forth by participants and to converge two final proposals. Further, he explained that the group would re-visit the draft proposal from the last meeting as well as come up with an additional alternative proposal. These final two proposals will be fine-tuned (to include estimated costs, time-lines, etc.) by Chief VanCamp, who will then provide recommendations to the Board for their approval.

He explained the challenge of the evening: Participants will be broken into two (self-selected) groups. Proposals shall be developed to meet the defined factors provided at the last workshop:

- 1) *Promoting effective & simple communications paths (morale);*
- 2) *Encouraging and facilitating inter-shift "mixing";*
- 3) *Incorporating standardized, effective & motivating initial qualifications training (competencies);*
- 4) *Incorporating standardized, effective & motivating ongoing skills maintenance training (competencies);*
- 5) *Incorporating progressive & motivating leadership development opportunities, focusing on both tactical and human-relations subject matter (competencies & morale);*
- 6) *Providing for consistently acceptable IR&R staffing levels at two fire stations;*
- 7) *Providing for a sustainable flow of qualified new/replacement members for all IR&R positions; and*
- 8) *Providing for efficient logistical support to IR&R members while maintaining overall asset accountability.*

Both groups will finalize details of their proposal. One group will work on the proposal from the last meeting; the second group will develop an alternative proposal.

A group discussion ensued with several participants expressing comments and concerns. One comment shared was that volunteer members wondered what role the Board members had in the workshops if they were the ones to ultimately make the final decision. Each Board member responded.

- Commissioner Gleckler's goal is to determine how to better retain volunteers
- Commissioner Berman's goal is to answer the initial question as to how to staff two stations 24/7 and also how to have more overlap with career and volunteers
- Commissioner Harper noted that these workshops are public meetings and the Board is free to participate. He appreciates hearing from the members. Further, he is concerned with costs and timelines, which will impact where he stands
- Commissioner Engle is here to observe. The Board's function is to approve policy and budget; further, retention of volunteers is paramount.
- Commissioner Small is here to listen and learn. He is also a taxpayer in our service area and would like to keep taxes low while retaining volunteers. Further, as a Board member, he would like to know the short and long-term impacts of proposals.

**Proposal one** - Derek Hall and Jennifer Leyva gave a brief recap of the proposal that had been discussed at the last meeting.

Career staff (Lieutenants) to work with volunteers on nights & weekend shifts. This would allow for: overlapping between career and volunteers, more leadership available on shifts to help mentor and train new members, sustainable staff flow, more dual-trained leaders, more flexible I&R and more support for the Officer Development program. She clarified that this proposal would not discredit any current officers, nor would they lose their position or shift. The intent would be to fill current gaps with Lieutenants (perhaps to have them pull shifts at Station 8-3.)

Following the summary, many participants shared comments and concerns and asked questions for clarity. Highlights included:

- We've struggled with the same problem to staff two stations for years. Why is this a crisis now?
- Due to accelerated recruitment efforts, one estimate is that we will meet our membership goal in two years.
- Looking at the current shift roster, we may want to move members to other shifts in order to balance skill level.
- Proper vetting of proposals is crucial
- Even though recruitment efforts are accelerated, and a record number of new members are joining, we also have a rapid attrition rate – three years is the average for a member to stay with the Department.
- If we “stay the course” while ramping up efforts in other areas, we could solve our problem
- We could also move forward with staying the course but also add the career staff element – the two proposals don't have to be in opposition.

Participants then separated into two groups. Following the work effort, they reconvened to share the final proposals. Steve brought attention to the “Parallel Thinking” diagram, noting the yellow was for sunny and the black for critical. He asked that each representative share their group's proposal and how it met the prescribed parameters.

**Group 1--“Collaboration”**, members included Jonathan Clemens Derek Hall, Milt Harper, Doug Kilpatrick, Brandon LeMay, Jennifer Leyva, Brent McBride, Alex McManus, Travis Osborne, Les Robinette, Chris Pawlowski and Kaleb Wilson. Jennifer Leyva, Alex McManus and Les Robinette were the spokespersons for the group, and offered the following points:

- The proposal was meant to “break myths & fears” expressed about career & volunteer staff;
- No volunteer or career officers would lose their jobs;
- Does not diminish volunteer officer training & opportunities;
- Has the benefits of staffing Station 8-3 sooner and doubles mentorship of new officers;
- It helps grow the leadership & training within the organization;
- Keeps long-terms spots (positions) open;
- Helps prevent putting members into positions they are not ready for;
- More manageable amount of staffing;
- They acknowledged that Dayshift coverage would need to be addressed, including ACs on the engine;
- The proposal would cost extra money for career staffing costs, and, specific details on individual responsibilities still need to be worked out.

**Group 2--“Stay the Course”**, members included Walker Armstrong, Mike Berman, Tom Engle, Rich Gleckler, Bill Halbert, Matt Hankins, Chris LaDue, Dave Liukkonen, Damian Longmire and Dick Small. Matt Hankins and Chris LaDue shared the “Stay the Course” proposal:

- Improve Programs, Acknowledge deficiencies: ODP, Driver's training program, training differences;
- Empower volunteers with more responsibility and decision-making opportunities;
- Offer on-going training for officer, clash of leadership is a concern;

- Bring on people who want to be here now, not six months from now, and involve members who have the drive to help;
- Explore different methods of providing timely volunteer support: logistics;
- Accountability for training: standardization and follow-through; and
- Updating SOPs and SOGs, improved exit interview process with 3<sup>rd</sup> party process, honesty & open, and track turn-over data.

Steve asked that members consider each proposal with a focus on the “positive aspects” only.

**Positive Comments for Group “Collaboration”** – Working together as one department; staffing 83 (main goal); addressing tough questions sooner; solves the problem immediately; mentorship helps achieve leaders sooner.

**Positive Comments for Group “Stay the Course”** – Standardize training; on-going officer development; non-disruptive; cheaper; comfortable; acknowledge deficiencies.

Steve asked that members consider each proposal with a focus on the “risks”.

**Risks with Group “Collaboration”** – Perception that we are understaffed; difficult decision to reverse; is the problem really being solved; there could be push-back due to uncomfortable feelings; not ideal to use just one person.

**Risks with Group “Stay the Course”** – Takes time; doesn’t blend career with volunteers; lots of work.

**Next Steps:** Please give all notes to Chief VanCamp who will compile data (costs estimates, etc.) and prepare the two proposals with appropriate financial, staffing, administrative, operations and implementation details for recommendations to the Board. He reserved the right to provide a “hybrid” recommendation that may incorporate segments of both proposals as a third recommendation to the Board. In any event, he will schedule a review process for workshop participants of all recommendations prior to his final presentation to the Board.

**Adjourn:** Participants were again thanked for all their hard work and effort towards the project. Thanks to facilitator Steven Byers for his hard work as well. The workshop adjourned at 9:15 pm.

**ATTEST:**



*William Harper, as Chair for TCFPD 8*



*Richard Gleckler, as Commissioner for TCFPD 8*



*Michael Berman, as Commissioner for TCFPD 8*



*Richard Small as Commissioner for TCFPD 8*



*Tom Engle, as Commissioner for TCFPD 8*



*Heidi Stumpf as District Secretary for TCFPD 8*