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HAWAI'I COUNTY FIRE COMMISSION

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REGULAR SESSION - MINUTES

April 12, 2006

Conference Room 105A

Hawai'i County Building

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Brazier at 10:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

John Bertsch
Neil Brazier, Vice-Chair
James Browne
Karen Kudlo
Glen Matsuda
Wil Okabe

Excused: Karen Maedo

A quorum was present.

ALSO PRESENT:

Nick AhYo
Tom Brandt
Kaycie Carter
Russell Enriques
Laurie Kaneta
Doug Keown
Becky Keown
Desmond Wery, Deputy Fire Chief
Diane Noda, Deputy Corporation Counsel

Hawai'i County is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

Commissioners: John Bertsch, Neil Brazier, James Browne, Karen Kudlo
Karen Maedo, Glen Matsuda, Wil Okabe

STATEMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS (Open to the Public)

None

STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS (Executive Session)

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Matsuda moved to accept the March 8, 2006, regular session minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Browne and unanimously carried.

APPROVAL OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Commissioner Browne moved to accept communication numbers 06-005 and 06-006. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Okabe and unanimously carried.

CHIEF'S REPORT/NEW BUSINESS

Vice-Chair Brazier requested that the topic under new business, Overview of the Volunteer Program, be addressed in the Chief's report.

On behalf of the Fire Department, Deputy Chief Desmond Wery welcomed newly appointed Fire Commissioner John Bertsch. He mentioned that Fire Chief Darryl Oliveira was unable to attend today's meeting because his is on Oahu attending HFFA Fire Negotiation meetings.

- Overview of the Volunteer Program by Captain Russell Enriques and Volunteer Fire Chief Tom Brandt.

Captain Russell Enriques explained that the Hawai'i County Fire Department was founded in 1888 and began with volunteers. The first paid firefighter was hired in 1924 to oversee the volunteers. On the Big Island, the HCFD currently has a combination of paid and volunteer firefighters. The Volunteer Training Division operates to provide direction, coordination and oversight to the volunteer fire program. The instruction, certification and support of the volunteer program fall primarily on the personnel of the Volunteer Training Division. At the present time, Captain Enriques is the sole person in the division. Presently, there are 24 volunteer companies situated around the island, which are comprised of approximately 350 volunteer firefighters. The fleet of trucks consists of 35 operating vehicles. These vehicles are older model vehicles and have been donated by other counties or are on loan from the Department of Forestry. The structure of the organization is paramilitary. Operations fall under the incident command system and orders are given by

career Captains, Battalion Chiefs and Assistant Fire Chiefs. The average age of the volunteer firefighters is 46 years old. The average call response depends on the company and its location. The services of the volunteer firefighters are without monetary compensation. However, once a year the Fire Department honors them with a small monetary appreciation award.

Vice-Chair Brazier asked how many female volunteer firefighters there are.

Ms. Noni Sanford replied that 1/8 of the volunteers in East Hawai'i are female.

According to Volunteer Fire Chief Tom Brandt, within the past three months, three females volunteered.

Captain Enriques estimated that there are a total of approximately 10-15 percent female volunteers.

Commissioner Okabe questioned the budget appropriated for the volunteer program.

Deputy Chief Wery replied that \$78,875 of the budget was designated for the volunteer program.

Commissioner Okabe asked whether the funds included the maintenance of the vehicles and the purchase of uniforms.

Volunteer Fire Chief Brandt replied that the awards money was used to buy the volunteer's shirts.

Commissioner Kudlo asked what the prerequisite of a volunteer is.

Captain Enriques replied that the volunteer would perform three drills administered by the company or himself. A screening would occur to determine whether the individual is compatible with the crew and qualified to work. Thereafter, a PUC physical would be required.

Volunteer Fire Chief Brandt stated that it is also required that the individual possess a valid Hawai'i drivers license.

Once a call out is made, Captain Enriques explained that the driver or the Volunteer Chief would go to the location of the truck, start the truck, wait three minutes for other crew members, and then respond to the scene. Otherwise, crew members may respond to the scene by using their own private vehicles.

Commissioner Kudlo asked whether each volunteer was given a pager.

Captain Enriques answered that the HCFD cannot afford to outfit each volunteer with a keynote pager.

Commissioner Kudlo inquired on whether the pagers were included in the budget designated to the volunteer program.

Captain Enriques replied that it was.

Commissioner Okabe asked whether the volunteers and paid firefighters received the same training.

Captain Enriques replied that the volunteer program's training is a condensed version of the career firefighters.

Commissioner Kudlo inquired as to how volunteers receive their gear.

Captain Enriques replied that logistically the Fire Department supplies them with their gear and keeps track of their physicals.

Commissioner Matsuda asked whether there was sufficient number of applicants for the volunteer program.

Captain Enriques answered that it depends on the location. There are some volunteer companies that need to recruit more individuals and others that require a waitlist. Chief Oliveira previously discussed with him decreasing the voluntary companies' maximum members from 15 to 12. At the present time, the minimum per company is six.

Commissioner Kudlo mentioned that the Koa Kai Estates Community Association wants to make a monetary donation to the Ocean View Volunteers and asked how this type of donation might be disbursed.

Deputy Corporation Counsel Noda answered that donations can be offered directly to the Fire Department. However, it would need to be approved by the County Council.

Once the monetary donation is accepted and approved, Commissioner Kudlo asked whether purchases would be made for that station's needs.

Deputy Corporation Counsel Noda replied that the money would go to the HCFD, and the department would purchase the station's needs.

Captain Enriques commented that there is a time consuming process involved when receiving donations.

Commissioner Kudlo asked when Captain Enriques would be given assistance in the Volunteer Division.

Volunteer Fire Chief Brandt stated that the County Council was very firm at the March 29, 2006 meeting that the additional assistance would be funded through the supplemental budget.

Deputy Chief Wery concluded that in the past two years, the department has placed a position to assist in the training division on its supplemental budget. There is also a need to acquire a driver trainer position to help support training to the volunteer and career fire fighters. Also, the Fire Department is considering creating a Training Bureau Battalion Chief position to oversee the entire volunteer program.

CHIEF'S REPORT (cont'd)

Budget

- FY 2006/07: The department's budget review was heard before the County Council on March 29, 2006. Council members were receptive to the supplemental budget submittal and understand the needs of the Volunteer section.

Alternative Funding and Grants

- U.S. Fire Administration FY 2005 Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant: Bid specifications were submitted to the Finance Department for the emission control devices at the stations. Received approval from the State's Department of Land and Natural Resources Historic Preservation division for the proposed attachments to buildings (Central and Kawaiiani Fire Stations).
- U.S. Fire Administration FY 2004 Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant: Captain Glen Honda and Firefighter Keola Payao attended a pre-construction meeting in Canada regarding the fire-training unit (burn-trailer). The design is for a 43-foot trailer/chassis equipped to be removable; two burn props; two smoke machines for live fire training, etc. This apparatus will allow the department to provide live fire training across the island. The cost is approximately \$450,000. Presently, it is in the building stage. The deadline for delivery is September 5, 2006.
- U.S. Fire Administration FY 2006 Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant: Assistant Chief Quince Mento submitted a grant application to purchase wildland fire safety shoes for all line company fire fighters.
- Office of Domestic Preparedness: Recently received three vehicles that were used to tow Mako trailers stationed at South Kohala, Keauhou and Kaumana Stations. Also took delivery of two 25-foot new rescue boats on March 29, 2006.

Capital Improvement Projects – Report Provided by Projects Manager Nick AhYo

Projects Manager Nick AhYo explained that compared to last year's eight CIP projects, the department this year has a total of 15 projects. Also, this year's 15 projects have totaled approximately \$65 million dollars.

- Makalei Fire Station: The Department of Public Works selected Architects Hawai'i. This consultant was used for the Pahoia Fire Station, which is being used as a template for the new station. Architects Hawai'i is

reviewing the list of requirements submitted by the HCFD and will be putting together a fee proposal. Once the proposal is reviewed and approved by the HCFD, the design and construction of the facility will begin.

- Pahoia Fire Station: Advertised for bids on April 3, 2006. A meeting is scheduled for April 24, 2006, to deal with the prospective construction companies who may have questions regarding the plans. At that point, they will submit their bids, which will be opened sometime in May.

Commissioner Bertsch questioned whether the building permits were issued for this project.

Projects Manager Nick AhYo replied that all the necessary permits were in order and the project is ready to go.

- Fire Administration & Support Facility: Completed the input work for the volunteer portion. Currently working on the aquatic portion of the training building.
- Central Fire Station: Regarding the Lanakila site, the State is willing to relinquish 1.99 acres of land to the County; originally it was 1.5 acres. A survey of the site is being conducted to advise the State of the specific boundaries of the site. Also, the demolition of the buildings on the property is being explored.
- Central Fire Station-Retrofit Project: In response to the department re-advertising for bids, a bid for \$350,000 was received. The Fire Department has authorized the Department of Public Works to award the bid. Therefore, a contract will be developed allowing construction to begin.

Promotions and Hiring

- Internal Recruitments: Active recruits include Fire Prevention Inspector (3 vacancies closed on April 6), Fire Captain (13 vacancies closed on April 10), Fire Rescue Specialist (closed on April 17).
- Firefighter Recruit: Will be scheduling interviews for approximately 100 candidates from both agility tests to select for 34th and 35th recruit classes.
- Firefighter Recruit Agility Tests: In response to Commissioner Matsuda's question at last month's meeting on whether candidates were considered for the second agility test if they failed to show on the first, the Department of Civil Service allows qualifying individuals one opportunity at taking a performance test, unless the recruitment is open on a continuous basis. The purpose is to provide other qualifying applicants with an opportunity. There are always a small percentage of individuals who do not show up for Civil Service tests. Rescheduling for performance tests are done only for extenuating circumstances.

Emergency Operations Division

- Waiakea High School Fire: A fire was reported on April 11, 2006, at 1:12 a.m. The first unit arrived at 1:18 a.m. The fire appears to have started at the administration building's registrar office. Previously, there were two other fires that occurred at the school within the past six weeks. The fire is suspicious and is being investigated by the Prevention Inspector and the Police Department.
- California/Nevada/Hawai'i Conference: Five personnel will attend the California-Nevada-Hawai'i conference on April 19-21, 2006, on Maui. Funding will be through the Rural Development program grant. The Department of Land and Natural Resources are sponsoring the conference.

Support Services Division

- Puuanahulu Volunteer Fire Company: Deputy Corporation Counsel Noda is finalizing the license agreement rather than a lease agreement. Under a license agreement, the volunteers will not have exclusive use of the station because occasionally the community association will be using the station for its country fair and other annual events. At this time, the ADA physical inspection of the building is being addressed. Although design plans were submitted to DCAB and the paper plans were approved, a physical inspection has not yet occurred. This matter will be finalized soon.
- Ocean View Ambulance: The title has been corrected. The community association has approved the draft donation agreement and is currently waiting for the Carrus Foundation's final approval.

Training Bureau

- Upcoming off site National Fire Academy classes: Preparation for Initial Company Officers on April 13-14, 2006. Executive Skill Series Managing and Leading Change will be held on April 24 and 25, 2006.
- Arson Detection Training: Anticipating bringing back arson detection training next month.
- Platform aerial and brush truck for Captain Cook Fire Station: Captain Glen Honda is working on specifications.
- Kalaoa and Captain Cook pumper: Kalaoa pumper is in the build stage. Also, waiting for notice to proceed on the Captain Cook pumper.

Commissioner Browne questioned the time frame on getting the platform aerial out for bid.

Deputy Chief Wery replied that the department is hoping to provide the specifications to the Purchasing division by June or July.

Commissioner Browne questioned when it would arrive.

Deputy Chief Wery predicted that it would be the middle of next year.

- Volunteer Chief's Meeting: Scheduled for April 29, 2006, at the Civil Defense Agency.

New Projects/Business

- 2006 Legislature
 - HB 1833 (Fireworks Permits): Still alive. Amended several times but at present it is back to its original format, which will allow the County to designate authorized vendors to issue fireworks permits. If approved, it will be effective July 1, 2006.
 - SB 218 (MICT Stipend): To offset the hardships incurred by students who desire to participate in MICT training program. If approved it will designate 10 students per year who are public or private EMT's and currently do not have access to a training stipend program. The dollar amount is not yet determined, and the bill is presently in House (Committee of Labor & Public Employment.) If approved, the effective date is July 1, 2006.
 - SB 3146 (Appropriation for Emergency Medical Services):
 - **Part I:** *Provides for funding to provide intra-island emergency aeromedical services to rural Oahu only*
 - **Part II:** *Appropriates out of the general revenues of State of Hawai'i for FY 2006/07 as a grant-in-aid to County of Hawai'i for dedicated EMS personnel to staff the aeromedical helicopter.*
 - **Part III:** *Appropriates two emergency mobile urgent care units to be stationed at Ocean View and Volcano fire stations. Representative Robert Herkes is supporting this project.*
 - **Part IV:** *Appropriates ALS units to various areas on Oahu.*
 - **Part V:** *Appropriates ALS service for Haiku district on Maui.*
 - **Part VI:** *Appropriates emergency services at Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center.*
- Media Relations: Media-Fire Department meeting to be held on April 27 at the Hawaii Community College. Invitations were sent to the Hawai'i Tribune Herald, West Hawai'i Today, Honolulu Advertiser, and the Honolulu Star Bulletin. The objective is to create a face-to-face working relationship and understanding between the media and the Fire Department. Also, to present to the media the legal policies/issues concerning the release of information to the public. The Office of the Corporation Counsel will be providing a HIPAA presentation.

Employee/Public Relations

- Waikoloa Fire Station Open House: Informed by Chief Darryl Oliveira and Battalion Chief Reuben Chun that the event was highly successful. Appreciation was expressed to Commissioner Browne for his support.

Commissioner Browne suggested that other Fire Stations conduct open houses. Smaller communities may especially benefit from this type of event.

- 4th Annual Employee Awards and Recognition Dinner: Held on Saturday, March 18, 2006, at King Kamehameha Hotel in Kona. Great attendance by the volunteer firefighters. Next year's event will be held on March 10, 2006, in Hilo.
- Mother's Day Rose Project for American Cancer Society: Coordinated by Firefighters Shane Paulos, Gabriel Sasaki and Patrick Springer, who will be selling rose bouquet orders at the Merrie Monarch Festival on April 20-22, 2006. The rose order preparation will be on May 11, followed by delivery on May 12, 2006.
- Emergency Medical Service Week: The 6th Annual EMS Week will be held on Sunday, May 28, 2006 at Liliuokalani Park. This year a Keiki Fun Run will be incorporated. Invitations have been sent to Commissioners.

Deputy Chief Wery entertained questions by the commissioners.

Commissioner Kudlo questioned whether the self-contained breathing apparatus was delivered to the stations.

Deputy Chief Wery replied that the department would first conduct a fit test and then it will be delivered.

Commissioner Kudlo asked what would happen to the old apparatus.

Deputy Chief Wery stated that there is consideration to keep them as back up or donate them to the South Pacific Islands, where there is a need for improvement with gear.

Commissioner Kudlo stated that a woman she knew inquired on what would be done with the old apparatus, and if the County of Hawai'i would be willing to donate it to the Fire Department in the Philippines where her son is employed.

Deputy Chief Wery replied that that would be a consideration.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Budget & Finance (Matsuda) No report.

Office Management and Staffing (Brazier/Okabe) No report.

Rules and Policies (Maedo) No report

Public Relations (Browne/Kudlo) Commissioner Kudlo mentioned that she was trying to find Ms. Diana Bertsch to thank her for her donation to the Sayre Foundation. Commissioner Bertsch informed her that Ms. Bertsch was his wife.

Also, Commissioner Kudlo is waiting to hear from Denise Laitnen with Firewise as to whether she would be willing to attend a future meeting to discuss being hired to assess several of the fire areas in Kau.

Commissioner Kudlo asked if she could distribute to the public the Bon Fire cards presented to the commission at the previous meeting. Laurie Kaneta will provide this to her.

Training and Education (Brazier/Maedo) No report.

NEW BUSINESS

- Overview of the Volunteer Program by Fire Chief Darryl Oliveira.
(Discussed earlier in the Chief's Report)

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Commissioner Bertsch stated he read the past minutes and believes that the commission is concerned about the lower rank and file surpassing the administrative level's salaries. Publicly, and from what he reads, the Fire Chief and the Deputy Fire Chief are doing a fantastic job. It is the commission's primary responsibility to encourage these individuals to stay in their positions. Also, the commission should encourage the lower ranked officers to try to move up to the executive level. This is not going to happen if there is a disparity in the salary range. From what he understands, there are some lower staff individuals making more money annually than the Fire Chief. He stated strongly that this is a problem.

When Chief Mahuna was first selected as Police Chief, Commissioner Bertsch was on the Police Commission. At that time, the Police Commission met with the Salary Commission, because the salary issue was in the same predicament as the Fire Department is facing. The Salary Commission agreed and was able to compensate both Police and Fire Chief appropriately, which rectified the problem. Now three or four year later, the same problem exists. Unfortunately, at the present time, the Salary Commission is unable to meet because it does not have a quorum. The Police Commission tried to address this issue through written communication to the County. Commissioner Bertsch requested that the Fire Commission agree to possibly collaborate with the Police Commission in order to resolve this issue.

Vice-Chair Brazier stated that the Fire Commission attended three or four of the Salary commission meetings to have the Fire Chief's salary elevated to be comparable to the Police Chief's, and agreed that the Salary Commission was not able to meet because of not having a quorum.

Commissioner Okabe suggested that before the next Fire Commission meeting, the administration should compare all the County Fire Department's salary and compensations islandwide. If the Fire Commission decides to do a joint venture with the Police Commission, a comparison should be presented to the Salary Commission.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next meeting is to be held on Wednesday, May 10, 2006, at 10:00 a.m., in the Liquor Control Conference Room, Hilo Lagoon Centre, 101 Aupuni Street, Hilo, Hawai'i.
- Set agenda for May 10, 2006, meeting.
 - Vice-Chair Brazier appointed the Budget and Finance committee to report on a comparison of all other Counties' Fire Departments administration's salaries.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

KAYCIE A. I. CARTER
Secretary