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HAWAI'I COUNTY FIRE COMMISSION

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REGULAR SESSION - MINUTES **November 9, 2005** **Liquor Control Conference Room** **Hilo Lagoon Centre**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Fergerstrom at 10:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Neil Brazier
James Browne
Dale Fergerstrom, Chair
Rudolph Hart
Karen Maedo (10:17 a.m.)
Glen Matsuda
Wil Okabe

Excused: Karen Kudlo

A quorum was present.

ALSO PRESENT:

Tom Brandt
Kaycie Carter
Laurie Kaneta
Diane Noda, Deputy Corporation Counsel
Darryl Oliveira, Fire Chief
Noni Sanford
Desmond Wery, Deputy Fire Chief

Hawai'i County is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

Commissioners: Neil Brazier, James Browne, Dale Fergerstrom, Rudolph Hart, Karen Kudlo
Karen Maedo, Glen Matsuda, Wil Okabe

STATEMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS (Open to the Public)

Volunteer Fire Chiefs Association's President Tom Brandt mentioned that there is a need to recruit quality volunteer firefighters for the Ainaloa area.

Chair Fergerstrom asked Chief Oliveira whether the HCFD had a volunteer recruitment program.

Chief Oliveira replied that the HCFD does not have a volunteer recruitment program. The HCFD can propose to Ainaloa's Council Representative Gary Safarik the need to set up a volunteer program in that area. Thereafter, they could begin working with the Ainaloa community on establishing a volunteer unit.

Chief Oliveira mentioned that the Fire Department has spoken to Hawai'i Tribune Herald's Jason Armstrong and West Hawai'i Today's Tiffany Edwards regarding running an article on the volunteer program. They both expressed interest. However, their editors must authorize the articles.

Commissioner Browne inquired as to what the volunteer firefighters' requirements are.

Chief Oliveira answered that the HCFD had no formal standards for the recruitment of volunteers. The volunteers' requirements were old and outdated. The department will be creating a better application/recruitment flyer to inform the public of its expectations of a volunteer.

Chair Fergerstrom questioned the timeline on establishing the volunteers' requirements.

Chief Oliveira answered that it would be completed in a few months, and he would be working closely with Mr. Brandt and the volunteers on developing a proposed draft for the requirements.

Regarding releasing an article, Chair Fergerstrom asked if it was possible for someone to contact the media again.

Chief Oliveira replied that he would.

Chair Fergerstrom asked if there were any suggestions on what would be necessary to inform the public.

Commissioner Brazier stated that Hawaiian Paradise Park informs its community with newsletters.

Mr. Brandt stated that incentives are often necessary. Also, the Volunteer Fire Chief's Association is considering paying the road fees for the volunteers in the Fern Acres subdivision. He will discuss this issue further with Chief Oliveira.

Chair Fergerstrom thanked Mr. Brandt for bringing this issue to the Fire Commission, and would like him to keep the commission informed of its progress.

STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS (Executive Session)

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Okabe moved to accept the October 12, 2005, regular session minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Matsuda and unanimously carried.

APPROVAL OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Commissioner Okabe moved to accept communication number 05-015. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Matsuda and unanimously carried.

CHIEF'S REPORT

Alternative Funding and Grants

- FEMA FY 2005 Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant: On November 8, 2005, the County Council's Finance Committee reviewed and approved the acceptance of grant money for the plymo-vent emission control system. The Fire Department will continue to work with the Department of Public Works and the Department of Finance on developing a bid contract.
- State Department of Transportation Safe Highways Grant: Received formal award notice to purchase six pneumatic lifting bags on November 3, 2005.
- FEMA FY 2004 Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant: As reported last month, bid was awarded for a burn trailer. Presently, a vendor is contesting the bid, which could delay the process.

Chair Fergerstrom questioned who would handle the contesting issue.

Chief Oliveira replied that the Department of Finance's Director would review what is being contested and decide whether to accept their exception. At that time, the vendor may challenge it further with the State's Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs. There is a deadline for the funds to be used by February 2006, therefore; the HCFD hopes that this issue will be resolved soon.

Capital Improvement Projects

- Pahoia Fire Station: Presently, working with the Design Consultant on incorporating the plymo-vent emission control system into the station.
- Fire Administration and Support Facility: Data collections are completed. Project Manager Nick AhYo assessed the needs for each of the sections of the department. A recommendation was made for the design consultant to begin working on the plans for the facility. The Department of Finance has informed the HCFD that funds for the design will be available after January 2006.
- Kalaoa Fire Station: Today, November 9, 2005, a meeting is scheduled with Project Manager Nick AhYo, the Planning Department and the developer (Bolton Inc.) to determine and/or establish their commitment to the project.
- Central Fire Station: As reported last month, the Mayor's Office is handling the site acquisition with the HCDCH.
- Central Fire Station-Retrofit Project: The design contract was awarded and the repair plans are due this month. An update will be given at the next Fire Commission meeting.
- Paauilo Volunteer Fire Station: Received approval from the Department of Finance for the requested five acres. In the process of pursuing funding, possibly exploring CDBG program as a source.

Promotions and Hiring

- Internal Recruitments: Recently completed the assessment centers for Assistant Fire Chief and Battalion Chief's positions. The Assistant Fire Chief position was offered to Captain Quince Mento, who will be promoted effective November 16, 2005. Commissioner Maedo attended and observed the event and was thanked for her comments and suggestions.
- Account Clerk: Position filled on October 17, 2005.

Operations Division

- Rescue System 1 Train the Trainer Course: Held October 31 through November 5, 2005, at Bellows Air Force Base. Sponsored by the State Civil Defense Agency. Seven personnel have been certified as instructors. Captain Clint Coloma is leading the program with the rescue teams and is considering incorporating it into the Engine Company Bureau and recruit training.

Prevention Division

- Firefighter Safety Guides: The Special 20th Anniversary Edition of Firefighter Safety Guides were distributed to the commission.
- Fireworks Legislation: On October 26, 2005, Chief Oliveira attended a meeting with the Big Island Legislative Delegation.

Chief Oliveira stated that members Clift Tsuji, Dwight Takamine, Russell Kokubon, Robert Herkes and Jerry Chang discussed with him the

possibility of an all out ban for the 4th of July fireworks. The public expressed support on this matter, but would like the County to maintain its fireworks displays. Therefore, there is a consideration to use the permit fees generated for the New Years Fireworks sales to subsidize the 4th of July Fireworks display. Another issue discussed was establishing a partnership with the retail vendors so that they may assist with the fireworks permit sales. However, in order to allow them to sell the permits, the law needs to be changed. Representative Chang offered to assist the Fire Department in writing a proposal letter.

Training Division

- 33rd Fire Fighter Recruit Class: Completed their Firefighter I curriculum. Currently, they are reviewing their skills and will begin swim week on Thursday, November 10, 2005.
- 32nd Fire Fighter Recruit Class: Presently, performing their clinical portion of the EMT class. Scheduled to complete training by March 2006.
- Reasonable Suspicion Training Class: All supervisors are required to attend the Reasonable Suspicion training class, which is being scheduled by the Department of Civil Service.
- IAFF Health and Safety for the Professional Fire Fighter: Fire Rescue Specialist Garrett Kim attended the conference on October 23-27, 2005, on Oahu. FRS Kim will be leading this program because he is the fitness program administrator and has a solid background in physical training.

Commissioner Okabe questioned whether the conference was held annually.

Chief Oliveira answered that it is held annually at different locations around the country.

- OSHA 1910/NFPA 1500/and IDLH policies: Per Commissioner Browne's request at last month's meeting, the OSHA, NFPA and the Internal policies were disseminated to the commission. (see attachment "A")

Chief Oliveira stated that there was confusion regarding the two-in/two-out rule. The OSHA and NFPA regulates that interior structure fire fighting be done with a minimum of two people making an entry (buddy system) and two people staging outside. It does not preclude the responding company from taking action until the four-man team is established. It is not necessary to have four individuals on the same apparatus. There is a possibility for the arrival of multiple companies. Also, officers can perform a one-person rescue as long as there is no safety risk to that individual.

EMS Division

- MICT Class: Internship completed on November 4, 2005. Three individuals have completed training and will take their National Registry

exam on November 19, 2005. Also, two individuals extended their internship in order to develop more skills.

New Projects/Business

- Hawaii Fire Chief's Association Conference: The Fire Commission was reminded of the event; scheduled for November 17-20, 2005.

Employee/Public Relations

- Fire Prevention Week: Fire Prevention Week celebration held on October 15, 2005, at Hilo Bayfront. Appreciation was expressed to the commissioners that participated.
- 4th Annual Great Tricycle Race: Scheduled for November 26, 2005, to benefit East Hawaii Coalition for the Homeless.

Chair Fergerstrom questioned the number of vacancies in the HCFD.

Chief Oliveira replied that there were 84 vacancies, 50 were recruits at various phases of training.

Chair Fergerstrom inquired on the number of vacancies that did not include the recruits.

Chief Oliveira replied that there were 34 actual vacancies. Although there are vacancies out in the line, the salary and wages for those vacancies are being used for recruits in class. There are no funds to fill the actual vacancies because the salary and wage for one position is being used for two bodies. In the past, the Fire Department informed the commission that it could take approximately six years to catch up with filling all vacancies. At the present time, the Fire Department is in its fourth year and if everything is kept on track, by September 2006, they will succeed in filling all of its existing vacancies.

Chair Fergerstrom asked if there were any issues with recruitment.

Chief Oliveira stated that there is no shortage of applicants. However, the last recruitment had 26 no shows for the physical agility test and a great portion of the remaining applicants failed the physical agility test. Therefore, out of a pool of 120 applicants; there were a total of 58 candidates remaining. The next physical agility test will be scheduled in January 2006. At that time, the Fire Department will identify a pool of candidates for the March and September 2006 recruit classes.

Chair Fergerstrom questioned the upcoming retirements.

Chief Oliveira stated that they are anticipating approximately six retirees. The six vacancies will increase the number of vacancies to 40. Therefore, after the next

two recruit classes are hired, the Fire Department will achieve its filling of vacancies.

Commissioner Matsuda questioned what was involved in taking the physical agility test.

Chief Oliveira stated that there were four performance-tested events that are timed. These events are administered as a pass or fail test. These events include a Swimming test, a Weight Drag test, a Hose Bundle Carry test, and an Endurance Run test.

Commissioner Browne questioned whether the current members of the Fire Department were asked to perform these activities occasionally.

Chief Oliveira stated that the HCFD has not developed a re-qualification program; it is part of their peer fitness program. The department would like to implement a standardized physical agility test such as the (CPAT) Candidate Physical Agility Test. This test deals with work related skills and is used by many departments to re-certify their personnel.

Commissioner Okabe asked whether other departments around the country were administering a re-certification program.

Chief Oliveira replied that it was being administered on the island of Oahu, as a peer fitness program. However, getting a fitness program together is not easy. It is very structured and requires physician oversight. The peer fitness program is designed to help each individual meet a particular benchmark based on their ability, rather than comparing it to your peer. Also, the Union and the National Association of the Fire Chiefs endorse this program because it is designed to promote success through practice, preparation, and training.

Commissioner Okabe asked how often the peer fitness program was administered.

Chief Oliveira stated that on the island of Oahu, it is an ongoing event and the employees meet benchmarks at different times of the year. The program is set up for each employee.

Commissioner Okabe questioned whether there were any physical assessments administered to firefighters once they were hired by the County of Hawai'i.

Chief Oliveira stated they do require medical physicals and perform company drills, at which time, the company officer should monitor whether an individual is experiencing any physical limitations.

Commissioner Matsuda questioned whether the doctor would make a recommendation to the department if there were a physical limitation.

Chief Oliveira stated that the doctor does make recommendations, such as if an employee needs to be reevaluated because he/she was identified with hypertension.

Once a doctor recommends an employee be reevaluated, Commissioner Matsuda asked if the department would require an employee to undergo testing.

Chief Oliveira replied that if an employee has an injury or an illness that requires a release from his/her private physician and the county's physician, and puts them at risk of being re-injured, they are re-evaluated to see if they are compatible for the job.

Commissioner Okabe asked if an employee would be transferred to another area within the department if he/she is not able to perform a specific function.

Chief Oliveira answered that the County of Hawai'i has a return to work program. The Fire Department would try to accommodate the individual to another position within its department. If there were no positions within the department, the individual would be referred to the Department of Civil Service and be subject to a county job search. The goal is to find jobs suitable for employees who suffer from injuries or illnesses, whether it's on or off the job.

Commissioner Okabe questioned if the pay was comparable.

Chief Oliveira explained that the HCFD had an injured firefighter who was placed with the Department of Parks and Recreation and retains his pay at that position. The Fire Department is funding that position.

Commissioner Browne asked if this applied to the worker's compensation employees.

Chief Oliveira replied that it would.

Budget

- Operating Budget presentation by Chief Darryl Oliveira.
(see New Business)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Budget & Finance (Hart/Matsuda) No report.

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

Rules and Policies (Maedo) No report.

Public Relations (Browne/Kudlo) No report.

Training and Education (Brazier/Maedo) No report.

NEW BUSINESS

- Operating Budget Presentation. Power Point Presentation by Chief Darryl Oliveira.

Chief Oliveira explained that the Fire Department has two basic budget components. The program budget is the operating budget of the department, which includes the salary and wages, equipment, utilities, supplies, etc. The directive from the administration this year is to have a status quo budget. There is a need to maintain its current service delivery requirement, but also consider inflationary costs. The Mayor directs all departments to submit a supplemental budget, which basically requests additions or any identified needs of the department.

Commissioner Brazier asked what factor was used for the inflationary costs.

Chief Oliveira said that it varied. For example, the budget was set for fuel. However, this is hard to predict because everyday there is a different rate from the wholesalers. Inflationary costs are reflected as two and a half-percent, but that may not be accurate regarding fuel.

Chief Oliveira briefed the Fire Commission on the past budgets submitted to the County of Hawai'i. This year's figure of 26 million dollars represents a two and a half-percent increase over the previous fiscal year. The supplemental budget is based on the strategic plan and is currently being revised. The Fire Department's first and foremost issue on its agenda is to comply with the Federal and the State required mandates and regulations. Another priority is the need to focus on is the Records Management System. There is also a need to create additional positions, such as a Training Battalion Chief, Fire Equipment Driver Trainers, Fire Captain positions for the one-man stations, Fire Prevention auditors, and a Special Operation Battalion Chief to oversee the Ocean Safety Lifeguards when they are incorporated into the Fire Department. There is also the need to secure the Projects Manager position into the budget. Furthermore, the Fire Department wants to establish the

CPAT program, which will be used for pre-employment and re-certification of its uniformed personnel.

Commissioner Fergerstrom asked whether there were any union negotiations this year.

Chief Oliveira replied that it had already started; the contract runs through 2006. The department has started on its provisions and proposals.

Commissioner Matsuda asked when the supplemental budget would come out.

Chief Oliveira answered that it is reviewed and submitted in the early spring. First, the department sits down with the Finance Department, which reviews the program and the supplemental budget. From there they will make recommendations to the Mayor, and after that it moves to the County Council.

Chief Oliveira mentioned that the revisions would be completed by November 30, 2005. Once it is finalized, the department will do a more detailed, comprehensive budget review for the commission. This will provide the commission with an overview of what was identified as priority in the supplemental budget, and commissioners can be informed of what the problem expense areas are going to be in the program budget.

Commissioner Fergerstrom asked if bringing individuals to Hilo for the assessment centers is costly.

Chief Oliveira stated that the Fire Department pays for its panelist's per diem, hotel, and airfare.

Commissioner Brazier questioned whether the department could ever get ahead in filling its vacancies.

Chief Oliveira stated that there would always be vacancies; the department cannot hire until a vacancy is created.

Commissioner Fergerstrom commented that the HCFD and the HCPD have the biggest impact with vacancies because the hiring takes a year.

Commissioner Hart asked whether the department would give someone preference if they received MICT training.

Chief Oliveira stated that if the candidate was identified as having the certification already, they would be included in the eligible list. With the last recruitment, there were two individuals on the list; however neither of them showed up for the physical agility test.

Commissioner Matsuda asked whether a member of the public could pay for and receive MICT training.

Chief Oliveira stated that it is only available on Oahu and is a two-year program. This makes it difficult for outer island residents to go to. Also, it is difficult to work and participate in the program.

Commissioner Matsuda asked if individuals who completed and passed the MICT training were automatically put on the eligible list.

Chief Oliveira replied that they would still need to pass the written exam and the physical agility test.

- Clarifying Communication Channels by Deputy Corporation Counsel Diane Noda.

Deputy Corporation Counsel Noda stated that she was approached with a few questions. For consistency, she wanted to address this matter to the Fire Commission.

1. What should be done if a County Council Member contacts a commissioner and asks for input or information regarding the Fire Commission and the Fire Departments activities?

Commissioners should inform the Chair, who will place it on the next agenda. The commissioner who was contacted may prepare a draft and share with the members what would be submitted to the Council Member. This will keep the Commission aware of what is being reported.

2. What if a member of the Fire Department contacts a Commissioner and has an issue?

Again, the Commissioner should inform the Chair, who will place it on the agenda. The commission will discuss the issue and how it would need to be addressed.

Commissioner Maedo commented that the Fire Commission's policy is to have all issues brought to the Chair's attention.

Chair Fergerstrom agreed and stated that the commission is made to serve as a whole body; individual commissioners have no authority to act outside of the body.

- Distribution of Fire Chief's evaluation forms.

The same format will be used to evaluate Chief Oliveira. The Fire Commission will return the completed forms to Chair Fergerstrom at the December 14, 2005, meeting. He will consolidate the forms, present it to Chief Oliveira and submit the report to Mayor Harry Kim.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

According to Chair Fergerstrom, a member of the Fire Commission received an anonymous letter that was critical of his/her statements made at a previous meeting. This letter was inappropriate and not accurate. Furthermore, all commissioners have the right to speak and provide his/her opinion at meetings.

Commissioner Maedo stated that anonymity works both ways and the commission should choose to ignore the letter.

Commissioner Browne explained that he was the individual who received the letter and immediately called Deputy Corporation Counsel Noda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next meeting is to be held on Wednesday, December 14, 2005, at 10:00 a.m., in the Liquor Control Conference Room, Kona Center Building, 75-5722 Hanama Place, Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i.
- Set agenda for December 14, 2005, meeting.
 - Election of officers for 2006.

Deputy Corporation Counsel Noda announced that Commissioners Dale Fergerstrom and Rudy Hart's terms expire at the end of the calendar year. They are able to serve an additional three months. The Office of the Corporation Counsel has taken over filling the vacancies of the Boards and Commissions. She encouraged the commission and members of the public to have interested individuals apply.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

KAYCIE A. I. CARTER
Secretary