



Clarke County Fire & EMS Commission
101 Chalmers Court, Suite B
Berryville, Virginia 22611
(540) 955-5132

MINUTES

September 19th, 2019 6:30pm

Clarke County Government Center – Meeting Room AB

Attendees: Matt Hoff, Chairman
Mary Daniel-Alternate for Mr. Weiss
Jay Grim
Diane Harrison
Bryan Conrad
Doug Lawrence
Andrew Nicholson

Absent: David Weiss
Tony Roper

Staff: Pam Hess
David Ash (left at 7:06pm)
Brian Lichty
Melanie Radford

Chairman Hoff called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

1. Ms. Harrison made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was passed with all in favor.
2. Public Comment - None
3. Mr. Lawrence made a motion to approve the August 8th, 2019 minutes. The motion was passed with all in favor.
4. Committee Reports
 - Standards – Mr. Grim inquired if there was a similar dip in previous years during the summer months. Mr. Lichty confirmed that we usually see some kind of drop off. Ms. Harrison requested for the monthly response report to be viewed on a yearly report as well as the monthly report to look for trends and/or comparisons.
 - Technology – Nothing to report at this time. The next meeting is scheduled for October 9th, 2019.
 - Budget/Preparation - Nothing to report
5. Unfinished Business
 - Incentive program review - Mr. Lichty reviewed with the group. All 3 companies met the criteria for the month.

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- Strategic Plan Review - Mr. Lichty reviewed and read the code of Clarke on the structure of the Fire and EMS Commission for the group in its current format. Discussion -
 - Ms. Harrison opined that the structure should be revised. She believes the Commission's focus should be on processes and procedures and feels a lot of the communication doesn't happen because of the current structure. She expressed that the Commission should be a non-departmental board made up of people that can bring their expertise and knowledge to assist and make recommendations with clean vision, without emotion and would be more efficient. She thinks some of the said responsibilities should be done at a department level with the Director's oversight, not within the Commission. Mr. Lichty took specific action notes as Ms. Harrison went through the list of actions. Ms. Harrison opined the Commission should consist of five positions; a Board of Supervisors liaison, the Sheriff or a representative from the Communications Department, the Director and three citizens at large.
 - Understanding Ms. Harrison's thoughts, Mr. Conrad, Mr. Hoff, Mr. Grim and Mr. Lawrence all disagreed.
 - Mr. Conrad expressed that the Commission was to be the place where disputes were resolved, where people brought their issues and needs to be enforced that the Companies representatives do their jobs. The group has acted on things and someone hasn't liked the result, so they have tried to use other venues to change that result without following the process that was carefully outlined when the Commission was set up. It's not appropriate to change the Commission because we have been a little too soft in dealing with the issues. It needs to be made clear to the Companies that this is the place, this is where it gets done. The representatives must do their due diligence in reporting back to their departments and not lax in their responsibilities.
 - Mr. Hoff commented on Boyce's behalf, that they will not continue without a representative on the Commission and Mr. Lawrence concurred. Mr. Hoff explained that he sees Ms. Harrison's point about being able to distance yourself and see objectively but if you take out the people who are actually implementing the strategies and policies that are being sent down, taking them out of the decision making process, then you are setting yourself up for failure.
 - Mr. Grim opined that parts of the Commission are currently broken; there's not a lot of output, more spinning of wheels. He commented the Commission needs to be more strategic and less tactical, understanding some of that is an attempt to resolve incoming issues. There needs to be a change in the mandate to where it is more strategic. The guidelines in place now are appropriate but are deviated from too much. The make-up is appropriate and needs to continue to be a guiding council of people who knows what is going on in the fire-rescue system.
 - Discussion by all for resolutions included Companies following procedures, requests to be put on the agenda, Chiefs responsibilities in conveying the information back to their

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- companies after meetings with the Director, protocols and expected compliance with performance, tabling of discussions, sub committees, and refining what is in place.
- Mr. Grim commented on the Sheriff being part of the makeup on the Commission. Simply and only for the budget format, there is a perception of competing for funds with the Sheriff's office, is it a conflict, maybe he should abstain from voting. Clarification was made by Mr. Hoff, Mr. Conrad and Ms. Daniel that the Sheriff's office dispatches fire-rescue as a courtesy and having him within the Commission can help resolve issues potentially faster. That having him here makes him part of the process and more aware of situations going on. The Sheriff's budget is separate and his actually covers some items such as technology/radio towers that are not a part of the Fire-Rescue's. Mr. Hoff suggested that Mr. Grim carry this information back to his department so there is a better understanding of his role. Mr. Lawrence stated he has heard the same kind of comments and will convey this information as well.
 - Mr. Lichty stated he will take all tonight's information, summarize, broken down into elements and format to be voted on next month and will be a recommendation forwarded to the BOS. Ms. Harrison asked if a document can be put in writing that can be handed out and listed on the County website, so the departments and the public are aware of the appropriate succession/chain of command. Mr. Lichty will draw something up, discuss with the chiefs for their rank structure within their departments and bring it back to group for further discussion until everyone agrees on the format. Hopefully this could help with the lack of or where the disconnect in communication is. Mr. Grim recognized that this meeting is the best one he has been a part of or attended; discussions like this are needed for collaboration and this is where he sees the value of the Volunteer Fire-Rescue Association. Mr. Hoff stated what he sees with the Association; they have an avenue as well and can go through the Director, the Chiefs, or be put on the Commission agenda.
 - Ms. Harrison handed out the following list of notes from the mediation meeting with Boyce as asked.

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Meeting with Boyce Fire Department 2-27-19

Andrew and I met with the department's board at 6:00 pm to discuss their issues with leaving the association and how they would potentially see a future association.

Below is an overview given mainly by Lee Coffelt, Chief, with input from other board members in attendance including Matt Hoff, BJ Devers, Dale Gardner, Sr., Dale Gardner, Jr., Asst. Chief, Pete Peterson and a couple of members who were present. Bryan Conrad was unable to attend but sent in an email with his comments.

This was not something the department decided to do quickly. The process took seven months with discussions with members but began at the board level in April 2018. It was in October 2018 that the members voted to remove themselves from the organization.

The largest contributing factor for leaving was that the ideologies of the Boyce department were no longer a part of several voting decisions made in the association. The one that stands out the most is the doubling of stipend request for last year's fiscal budget. Specifically, the problem that Boyce VFC had with the proposal to double the stipends was that it totally upended the budget process that the director and the commission had been working on up until that point. Boyce VFC had voted to support that original process. That meant that county money could be spent on items that benefitted the whole county system.

Another contributing factor is that what the association had done in the past is now being handled by Director Lichty and the commission. This has led to a non-productive association with few members attending and people not stepping up for officer and committee positions. Those in attendance really felt there was no longer a need for an association because the commission handles everything they had in the past. Boyce felt that the other members of the association were using the association to "second guess" Commission decisions that they didn't like and pretending that their position represented all of the companies' positions.

We discussed how other local departments over the years, due to growth, have lost the voice of the volunteers. Those at the meeting felt that the members have that voice through their representatives on the board and the commission. Members may also attend and speak at monthly commission meetings. They felt that members were speaking to them directly and then they were relaying that to the commission and in various monthly meetings with Director Lichty. Boyce does have bingo on Thursday evenings which does make it difficult for members to attend the commission meeting and we discussed the possibility of changing the night so all stations' members may attend if wanting to.

Before ending the session, we discussed what they saw an association doing if it was to continue. The items below were their thoughts.

1. Legal standing. The association would need to legitimize itself as it currently is not.
2. The focus would be on recruitment and retention. Joining together with this focus may help the volunteer system to continue going forward as people age out and younger recruits move away. Future growth in the county is minimal so funding a large paid staff will probably not happen.
3. Election and meeting processes need to be done according to Roberts Rules.
4. Inspiring participation in the association needs to happen so there are not just a few keeping the association running.

We will meeting with the association in the next couple of weeks to go over this with them and then have a joint open meeting to discuss going forward.

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- Ms. Harrison asked if there is a process on purchasing procedures. Mr. Lichty explained the County is not a part of the individual department procurements, only if all three companies are doing a County wide system approach for a purchase, then it would follow the County's policy.
 - Mr. Lawrence verified it was ok to be put on the agenda and be able to review the topic, discuss and bring back the following month as unfinished business if needed. Mr. Hoff confirmed and indicated that a written response could be provided if desired.
6. Report from the Director of Fire and EMS - Mr. Lichty reviewed with the group. Discussion-Ms. Daniel clarified that the winner's name for the starter Emergency Preparedness kit at the Fair was actually Bray Daniel, not Daniel Broy; the hand writing on the ticket was hard to read but the correct phone number was called and she did receive the kit. Mr. Grim confirmed with Mr. Lichty, the SAFER grant only covers salaries and benefits. Mr. Lichty added two items that were not on the packets. He is pleased to announce that through a monetary donation, the department volunteers who are on a current roster will be able to sign up for a year's coverage of flight insurance through PHI Air Medical. The number of slots available will be limited and based on a first come first serve. The requested Route 7 traffic study from VDOT has come back to the BOS and is available on the County website, the same page where the BOS packets and minutes are located. Mr. Grim inquired if there were any updates on the Route 9 Loudoun closure. Mr. Lichty and Ms. Daniel remarked that the BOS is addressing the issue, a lot of the pieces are still unknown and explained that the decision is ultimately the Commissioner of VDOT's. This took VDOT and Clarke by surprise and the BOS are hoping the data driven project from Northern Virginia VDOT gets expanded to conclude what effects it will have on Clarke, Jefferson and Maryland.
7. New Business-Mr. Grim inquired on behalf of Chief White as to the absence of staffing at Blue Ridge. Mr. Lichty confirmed it's due to the summer months, vacation time, not mandating overtime and the new SAFER positions are not hired yet. Ms. Harrison asked if the evaluation report of Blue Ridge for overnight accommodations has been done, she didn't see it in the packet. Mr. Lichty explained that he has not had a chance to address it yet. Mr. Grim handed Chairman Hoff a copy of an email he sent to Chief White regarding his appointment on the Commission; listed below. Mr. Grim also commented that Chief White and Mr. Weiss met on September 17th regarding insurance issues; they have found common ground and were working to better communications. Mr. Lawrence remarked that Enders has a volunteer member taking a medic class. They will be forwarding a letter to the Commission to request assistance of reimbursement on her \$2,000.00 tuition. Mr. Lawrence made a motion to table this discussion until next meeting. The motion passed with all in favor.

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Zimbra

mradford@clarkecounty.gov

Fwd: Commission position

From : Jay Grim <jwgrim@gmail.com> Fri, Sep 27, 2019 02:58 PM
Subject : Fwd: Commission position
To : Melanie Radford <mradford@clarkecounty.gov>

As promised

Jay

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Jay Grim** <jwgrim@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Aug 20, 2019 at 5:22 PM
Subject: Commission position
To: Jacob White <jcwhi7@aol.com>

Hi Jacob,

Please accept this as my notice to not continue my position on the commission beyond the current appointment. While I certainly want to do what is in the best interest of the company, I don't feel that the time and effort spent on commission business is worthwhile as it really accomplishes nothing of value to either the company nor the citizens that we serve, but is rather a sounding board for people to read their status reports and a crutch for the Board of Supervisors to lean on regarding decisions.

I will remain in the position for another month or two while another representative is selected by the company and appointed by the Board.

Regards,

Jay

8. Summary of required action –

- Add an additional yearly overview report for the breakdown of the Monthly Response report
- Create a communication document listing succession/chain of command order
- Add Enders to the next meeting's agenda – tuition reimbursement request

9. Mr. Conrad made a motion to adjourn. The motion was passed with all in favor at 7:56pm.

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All meeting documents will be distributed at meeting. Next meeting is on October 10th, 2019 at 6:30pm in the Clarke County Government Center – Meeting Room AB

Minutes Transcribed by Melanie Radford

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