



**North County Regional Fire Authority  
COMMISSIONER'S MEETING**

**JUNE 26, 2024  
4:00pm**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Chair Oertle called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

The following attendees were present:

**COMMISSIONERS**

Ric Cade  
Rob Johnson  
~~Leonard Kelley~~, absent  
Greg Oakes  
Marilyn Oertle  
Al Schreiber  
Holly Sloan-Buchanan

**FIRE AUTHORITY STAFF**

John Cermak, Fire Chief  
Dave Kraski, Deputy Fire Chief  
Kari Wheeler, Administrative Assistant/Comm. Secretary  
Randy Krumm, Finance Director  
Greg Koontz, Battalion Chief of Training  
Doug ten Hoopen, AC Support Services

Commissioner Chair Oertle led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC AND EMPLOYEE COMMENTS** – *there were no public or employee comments*

**IAFF LOCAL 3438 REPORT** – *Local IAFF 3438 Political Action Chair, Kirk Normand, addressed the Board of Commissioners with the following Statement:*

Members of the Commission

I'm Kirk Normand with Local 3438, and I'm here today asking for your help. As first responders, the citizens trust us to protect them. To keep them safe. To come when they call and protect them from harm. Today I'm here representing the members of 3438 asking you, the commission, to protect us.

Some of you may know, but most do not, the psychological scars that first responders carry from bad calls. The piercing wail of a grieving mother when an hour of CPR isn't enough to save her baby. The unrecognizable features of a car full of teenagers ejected in a rollover accident. A family, homeless in an instant after a fire guts their home, asking where they're supposed to go next. The utter devastation of trying to save a life, only to fail, and be left to ride home in silence from a call with only your thoughts and remorse.

The trauma we suffer from our work is killing us. Nearly 50% of first responders meet the criteria for PTSD. Suicide rates amongst first responders are 30% higher than the general population. The toll taken by the calls we respond to has downstream effects in our personal lives as well. Missed holidays, sleep disorders, PTSD, and a multitude of other problems create higher divorce rates and more stressful home lives.



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But it doesn't have to be this way. Skilled, Specialized Peer Support is designed to help us process the things we see at work and mitigate the impacts to our personal lives.

The North County Regional Fire Authority has recently elected to discontinue peer support services for its employees and instead refer them to the Employee Assistance Program, or EAP. While potentially beneficial to workers in a typical American corporate office setting, the EAP is woefully incapable of meeting the needs of our group. With a crisis response team comprised of members not trained to support first responders specifically, and a turnaround response timeline of 5-7 days, they cannot be there in time to support a member in their darkest hours. We are a 24/7 response group with specific, highly-specialized needs that is now being asked to utilize a 9-5 standard support service.

Again, we NEED specialized, skilled Peer Support to help us process the things we see at work and the resulting stresses in our lives.

Prior to separation from Northwest Incident Support, Julie Boyer was the one we called when we needed help. In 2023 alone, she performed over 176 peer support 1 on 1 sessions. These included critical incident stress debriefings after traumatic calls, counseling at-risk individuals during times of crisis, supporting loved ones of first responders, and many other critical support tasks.

Over the last three years Julie has further supported your first responders by helping 8 members through advanced PTSI treatment programs. She has provided 60 counseling referrals for professional psychological care, and implemented the training and organization of our local Peer Support Network.

The most important number representing the work that Julie does with her team, however, is this: **Twenty-Two**. Julie's team has intervened on behalf of 22 individuals within this agency who were actively suicidal at the time of contact. That's 16% of the people who work here. Look around you... that's one out of every 6 people in this room.

The impact of Julie and her team's work cannot be overstated. She has saved the lives of our coworkers and their families.

When the public calls 911, we respond. No questions, no judgement, no conditions. We show up, help, and protect them.

When your first responders need help, we call Julie. She steps between our members and devastating hopelessness, protecting us from the kinds of horrors that only first responders can understand. Her trustworthiness, compassion, understanding, and skill are often the only viable lifeline available to our members.

I am asking, WE the union, are asking you to help us. Please provide better than the EAP. Please protect us by hiring Julie Boyer and Pacific Northwest Support Services for peer support and counseling.



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**Discussion:** Commissioner Cade requested the Board have a briefing, possibly at the mid-year retreat / work session; adjusting his request to indicate if not enough time for briefing at the June 27 retreat, then as a priority for an upcoming meeting; Commissioner Oakes agreed with the need for Commissioners to have a better understanding of the situation regarding peer support and chaplaincy services that are offered to NCRFA life staff.; If able to gather background information quick enough, a possible discussion on this topic could happen at the retreat, otherwise, HR Director Allison Jubb, will bring an update to the Commission at the July 10 regular meeting.

**MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA**

1<sup>st</sup>: Commissioner Cade      2<sup>nd</sup> Commissioner Schreiber

**Discussion:**

**APPROVED:** Unanimous

**MOTION TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**

1<sup>st</sup>: Commissioner Oakes      2<sup>nd</sup> Commissioner Cade

**Discussion:** none – [see attachment](#)

**APPROVED:** Unanimous

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*No items on the agenda.*

**NEW BUSINESS**

May Financial Report – presented by Finance Director, Randy Krumm – *no action*

[See attachment](#)

**ASSIGNED QUATERLY DIVISION PRESENTATIONS**

2024 Q1 Snohomish County Fire Training Academy – BC Shaughn Rice

[See attachment](#)

2024 Q1 CARES Program – CRP Matt Hickman

[See attachment](#)

**CHIEF'S REPORT**

[See attachment](#)



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**GOOD OF THE ORDER**

*Commissioner Johnson shared that he is looking forward to going on a Disney Cruise with his wife and grandson.*

**MOTION TO ADJOURN 5:05pm**

**1<sup>st</sup>:** Commissioner Cade

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Commissioner Kelley

**Discussion:** None

**APPROVED:** Unanimous

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**Marilyn Oertle  
Commission Chair**

7/12/2024

**Date Signed**

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**Kari Wheeler  
Commission Secretary**

7/12/2024

**Date Signed**