

Gaston County Fire Commission Meeting

February 20th, 2025

The meeting was held Thursday February 20th, at 6:00 p.m. in the Emergency Operations Center located at 615 N Highland Street, Gastonia.

I. Call to Order, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance

Rob Smith called the meeting to order. Brian Weyeneth motioned to approve the agenda as presented, with the exception of removing Ag Center's Certificate of Need at Chief Towery's request. The motion was seconded by Scott Zander. The motion was passed unanimously.

II. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. Business Agenda

- A. Scott Zander made a motion to approve the January 15th, 2025, meeting minutes. Brian Weyeneth seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.
- B. Chris Eason presented information on health insurance for full-time employees on behalf of the Crowders Mountain Fire Department. He also provided details regarding the sale of Crowders Mountain Station 2 to the City of Bessemer. Chris reviewed the history of previously approved Certificates of Need for parking lot and roof repairs at the station. However, a commercial realtor has advised against completing these repairs prior to the sale. Crowders Mountain has identified a potential location for their new station near the 74 corridors.
- C. Fire Chief Woody Thomas presented CON 2052182-25 on behalf of Crowders Mountain Fire Department for (2) Ford F-350 Brush Units and 1 Skid Unit in the amount of \$160,000.00 bank financed. Their existing brush units, which are 17 and 20 years old, have increasing maintenance costs and reliability concerns. To address these issues, they plan to replace them with new trucks. Both current units are fully paid off and will be listed for sale on GovDeals. The Closest Department subcommittee will meet with Crowders Mountain for further discussion. Richard Albaugh made a motion to approve the CON. The motion was seconded by Scott Zander. The motion was passed unanimously.
- D. Captain Chad Belcher presented CON 2052182-23 on behalf of Lucia Riverbend Fire Department requesting approval to purchase a Deep Trekker Pivot ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) in the amount of \$74,585.72 with \$25,000.00 of station funds, requesting \$49,585.72 out of the Capital Fund. The ROV will serve as the primary tool for recovery in water-related incidents. Scott Zander made a motion to approve the CON. The motion was seconded by Richard Albaugh. The motion was approved unanimously.
- E. Fire Chief Ronnie Capps presented CON 2052182-24 (via ZOOM) on behalf of Union Road Fire Department requesting approval to purchase Airpacks. They made the purchase using state grant funding for 25 Scott X3 air packs, 50 masks, 3 RIT packs, 50 air bottles, flow testing for all packs for five years and first hydro

on bottles at the five-year mark. The cost was \$310,200.00. Eric Withers made a motion to approve the CON. The motion was seconded by Justin Westbrook. The motion was approved unanimously.

- F. Fire Chief Corey Jonas presented CON 20252182-26 on behalf of the East Gaston Fire Department, requesting approval to purchase the retired Engine 34 from the City of Mount Holly Fire Department. The department cited increased downtime due to maintenance issues with their current Engine 30 as the primary reason for needing this apparatus. The total request is \$100,000.00, with \$50,000.00 allocated for the purchase of the apparatus and the remaining \$50,000.00 designated for wrapping, upfitting, and equipping the unit as needed. Of the \$100,000 request, \$50,000 is being requested from the Capital Fund. After a lengthy discussion, much of which focused on the department's limited funds, Richard Albaugh motioned to table the Certificate of Need. Brian Weyeneth seconded the motion, which was approved. Justin Westbrook abstained from voting.
- G. Fire Chief Mark Wright presented CON 20252182-27 on behalf of the Tryonota Fire Department, requesting approval to purchase a new Smeal Metro Star Engine for \$950,000. The department is requesting that the County fund the request in their annual budget until the terms of the financing are complete. After extensive discussion regarding the Fire Commission's inability to approve a fire truck purchase in the new budget before the budget review process has begun, Scott Zander motioned to table the request until budget discussions. Justin Westbrook seconded the motion, which was approved. Rob Smith and Richard Albaugh abstained from voting.
- H. Sub-Committee Updates
 - Rescue: Scott Zander advised on their subcommittee's efforts to reorganize their existing information and seek clarification from departments regarding any missing details.
 - Capital: Richard Albaugh led the discussion requesting an update on the capital fund balance and asked for a quarterly statement outlining the current balance and expenditure report for FY 25.
 - Closest Department: Justin Westbrook advised no update; the sub-committee is meeting March 4th.
- I. Fire Service Agreement Update: Scott Hunter advised that the draft contract has been sent out to the Fire Chiefs and must be returned to Scott by March 1st. The contract will then be uploaded to the shared drive for the Fire Commission to review. Any changes made will be disseminated back to the Fire Chiefs no later than April 1st for their final review. The finalized contract is due back to Scott by May 1st. The budget and contract will be presented to the Board of Commissioners around May 13th.
- J. Emergency Management & Fire Services Update: Scott Hunter proposed an amendment to the Certificate of Need (CON) requirements and set a Business Agenda Deadline, suggesting that fire departments must submit a CON or FD Business at least 14 days prior to a meeting. This change would allow sufficient time for thorough review, as late submissions often result in missed details or

mistakes. Brian Weyeneth made a motion, which was seconded by Eric Withers. Richard Albaugh and Justin Westbrook were opposed. The motion was approved.

IV. **New/Old Business**

- A. The Fire Commission reviewed a Certificate of Need previously submitted by Fire Chief Brad Presswood of Alexis Fire Department, requesting approval for the removal and replacement of failed concrete in the driveway of their main station on Highway 27, totaling \$59,505.00. This was tabled at the November 19th, 2024, meeting until CON Requirements were approved. The request was for funding from the Capital Fund. Scott Zander made a motion to approve the CON, with \$50,000.00 from the Capital Fund, and Brian Weyeneth seconded. The motion was approved. Will Keller abstained from voting.

- V. The next meeting date is **March 13th, 2025**.

VI. **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Scott Zander, seconded by Richard Albaugh. The motion was approved unanimously.