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A Newsletter of Camano Island Fire and Rescue

Summer 2014 | www.camanofire.com

Chief Ganz retires, reflects on 38-year career

The glue that holds Camano Island Fire and Rescue (CIFR) together — that's how Chief Mike Ganz is described by retired Stanwood Mayor Dianne White. Yet, when Chief Ganz talks about the trials of bringing the District through the Great Recession, he is clear that the so-called "glue" of the District has been the "hand-in-hand" teamwork of the Administration and the Board of Fire Commissioners.



After a 38-year career, Chief Ganz reflected recently on his start in the fire service: "I took a ride on a Seattle medic unit in the mid 1970s and knew at that point that it was what I wanted to do." He was hired by the Bellevue Fire Department in 1977, and later went to medic school, training at Harborview for his paramedic certification. Promoted to Lt. Paramedic, captain, and battalion chief, the young medic

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Reflections of Colleagues:

"Chief Ganz has the institutional knowledge. The glue that has held (CIFR) together is Chief Ganz."

Retired Stanwood Mayor Dianne White

"He is the consummate professional."

City of Arlington Fire Dept.

Chief Bruce Stedman

"He is probably the best Chief we could ever have... the Board worked extremely well with him."

CIFR Chairman Steve Lich

"We have been through some really tough times, especially the last couple of years. I think we came out the other side in pretty good shape. We have done a real good job because of Mike's work."

CIFR Commissioner Pat Metz.

New Chief: Michael Schick from Louisville, Colorado was selected as CIFR's next Chief. The Board of Fire Commissioners made the appointment last week. Together with stakeholders and staff, they interviewed several candidates after a national search.



Camano Island Fire and Rescue Commissioners Erik Shouse, at left, and Paul Williams, at right with wife, Gina.

New Commissioners reflect on goals, challenges

It is a sense of community service that motivates Camano Island Fire and Rescue's two newest Commissioners. Erik Shouse got involved, he said, because he was concerned about prompt response times to emergencies.

Williams was concerned with public education. "I didn't come in here with an agenda for change. My only concern was educating or communicating with the public about what the District does and what the District plans to do. It is always evident during elections that there's a misunderstanding about what we do."

The five-member Board of Fire Commissioners represents the citizens of Camano Island, and provides the oversight and direction for the fire department. As an elected official, they are the direct conduit for citizens to the District. It's a complicated task.

"The learning curve is crazy. There are a lot of irons in the fire," said Shouse. "This is exciting for me to be able to look towards the future."

Shouse is a career firefighter and paramedic with Snohomish County Fire District 7. He said his experience as a firefighter is an asset to the board. But he's looking to other Commissioners for some guidance on how to approach the District's Strategic Planning process. "It's exciting, but it's uncharted territory for me. I will be relying on more of the other board members, and I'm excited to see what Commissioner Williams brings."

Commissioner Williams has a lot of experience with strategic planning processes. He has been through the process as a member of the Board of Directors for Skagit Preschool

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Continued: Chief Ganz retires this summer from CIFR

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firefighter worked his way up in leadership positions. He worked later with the City of Redmond as a deputy chief of operations and then became Chief of Arlington's fire department.

Chief Ganz has spent the past nine years as Chief at CIFR. In that time, he helped implement a long-range capital facilities plan, passing bonds to meet construction standards for earthquake safety, integrating Emergency Medical Services into the fire district, and doubling the size of the department's paid firefighting staff.

He feels the District has weathered some big changes, as well as the financial storm of the Great Recession, and come out on top with a stable financial picture, improved infrastructure, and a good relationship between staff, administration, and the Commission.

"There are always challenges out there," said Chief Ganz, referencing the possibility of shorter response times. The infrastructure is there to house more crews, but the funding for increased staffing is not. "The next Chief and Commission will need to determine what mix of career and volunteer staffing makes economic sense for the community, with the ultimate goal of shorter response times."



Island living comes with a bounty of blessings, including crabbing season, swimming and water sports. These opportunities also come with dangers, and we want to help you...

Stay Safe This Summer!

Life Jackets: Lifejackets are crucial safety equipment this summer. There are FREE life jackets for your use at four of the island's public boat launches: Cavalero, Utsalady, Camano Island State Park, and Maple Grove boat launches.

Sky Lanterns: A Sky Lantern cannot be controlled once released. They have the capacity to reach up to 1,500 feet in altitude and can travel up to 20 miles from the point of release. Sky Lanterns should never be flown when there is any noticeable wind present. Instead, wait for a calm day. Wind may blow the sides of the sky lantern device inwards, forcing the hot air out, and potentially causing the sky lantern to fall back to earth, introducing a potential fire threat.

Resources

www.camanofire.com

Water Safety:

Great information on personal flotation devices:
<http://tinyurl.com/k3lfc38>

Boater Checklist: <http://camanofire.com/?p=1363>

Fireworks:

Can you tell a fire cracker from an illegal explosive?
<http://tinyurl.com/pnxtaed>

Details on fireworks restrictions: <http://tinyurl.com/3p2mdd3>

Outdoor Burning:

Permitting and more: <http://tinyurl.com/olbtldr>

Asst. Chief Yengoyan achieves milestone

Assistant Chief Levon Yengoyan with Camano Island Fire and Rescue has achieved a significant milestone in his career, graduating from the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program.

A select number of fire officers from across the country ever attain this level of certification. They leave the four year program with an understanding of the need to transform their organization from reactive to proactive, as well as to be increasingly diverse, and to understand the value of research and lifelong learning in their profession.

"It's a capstone. It really is," said CIFR Chief Mike Ganz. "The program covers executive leadership, executive



development, and strategic management of change."

Assistant Chief Yengoyan came to CIFR as a volunteer in 2001 and served as a Battalion Chief. By 2009 he became a full-time Assistant Chief with the District.

With a bachelor's and master's degrees in wild-life biology, and 15 years spent as a GIS Mapping consultant, "Assistant Chief Yengoyan is particularly vital as a member of the Northwest Incident Management Team where his mapping skills are very helpful. He is able to bring some of those skills here to us," said Chief Ganz.

Read more about this on www.camanofire.com



At top, Assistant Chief Craig Helgeland presents Kara Shelley with a \$1,500 scholarship. Shelley will study paramedic training with a minor in nursing. The scholarship is funded from citizen purchases of house signs from the District, as well as from the Island County Fire Chiefs and the Halli Trust Fund.

Otto Wiedmann and his friend Tony Racine-Sanchez received a fire truck ride this past May to Ut-salady school. Firefighter Dennis Wischmeier drove the engine. At the school, three different teachers asked if Dennis had time to show their class the fire truck, which he was glad to do.

Shouse, Williams reflect on new roles as Commissioners

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and Resource Center, and in his roles with the American Academy of Pediatrics' Asthma and Immunology, the District Little League, and his own business as a medical doctor. "Strategic Planning is a productive and necessary process," said Williams.

Both Shouse and Williams want faster response times for fire and medical aid calls. The Commission is analyzing the national standards for rural response and "we are not far off in our response times," said Williams, adding in the short-term some adjustments can be made, but long-term reduction will require more staffing. That's a money issue, and Shouse notes that the public will decide if they also want to dedicate more funds to faster service.

"You can't make changes in a snap," said Shouse. "Unfortunately, change takes time."

A measure to renew an expiring levy will be run in 2015 to maintain the existing level of funding. That doesn't represent an increase in taxes, and would keep the district funding and staffing at status quo. Any proposed increase would be voted on by the public if the Commission feels it's necessary. Both noted a lot of education and conversation would need to take place first.

"A lot of people on Camano have just moved from an urban environment," said Williams. "They are used to a rapid response. But on the island, there is more distance and sparser population. The long transport times are what really hurt us."

Like Shouse, the Commissioner role offers challenges for Williams. "It's totally new and different for me. That's what excites me. I have been practicing medicine for 37 years and been involved at local, state, regional and national medical organizations and in the community. It's exciting for me to get involved in something different where I can use the skills and talents I have in a different purpose and a different focus. But it's still actually all about serving people."



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