

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
SITTING AS THE GOVERNING BODY OF FIRE DISTRICT #1**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**November 14, 2007**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of the County Commissioners of Sedgwick County, Kansas, was called to order at 9:09 a.m., on Wednesday, November 14, 2007 in the County Commission Meeting Room in the Courthouse in Wichita, Kansas, by Chairman David M. Unruh; with the following present: Chair Pro Tem Thomas G. Winters; Commissioner Tim R. Norton; Commissioner Kelly Parks; Commissioner Gwen Welshimer; Fire Chief Gary Curmode, Fire District #1; Fire Marshal Tim Millspaugh, Fire District #1; Mr. William P. Buchanan, County Manager; Mr. Rich Euson, County Counselor and Ms. Lisa Davis, Deputy County Clerk.

**ROLL CALL**

The Clerk reported, after calling roll, that all Commissioners were present.

**Chairman Unruh** said, "Next item."

**AWARDS**

**A. AWARDS FROM THE SEDGWICK COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #1**

**Fire Chief Gary Curmode**, Fire District #1, greeted the Commissioners and said, "Today is with sadness but also some sincere feelings, we have some awards for some of our firefighters and also some plaques in remembrance for the family of Lieutenant Bryon Johnson, who lost life in the line of duty September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Fire Marshal Tim Millspaugh is chairman of our awards committee and at this time I'll introduce Tim and he will take the awards from here."

**Fire Marshal Tim Millspaugh**, Fire District #1, greeted the Commissioners and said, "We're going to be handing out four awards today in connection to the incident south of Haysville that involved Lieutenant Bryon Johnson. We've got Bryon Johnson's family, wife and parents, here. We've also got awardees from the fire department here as well, so I will get right into the awards."

### **Regular Meeting, Fire District #1, November 14, 2007**

Stephanie, where are you at? Come over here Stephanie. Dispatcher Stephanie Ricker, Sedgwick County, Kansas; on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007 Stephanie Ricker was working as dispatcher on a grass fire south of Haysville. During the course of the call, Lieutenant Bryon Johnson was critically injured. Numerous requests were made for help at the scene to Ms. Ricker and she stayed with the incident every step of the way, giving the on-scene firefighters confidence that their requests were being handled.

Ms. Ricker handled a very emotional and trying incident with a great deal of poise and composure to assure the crews would be taken care of. Dispatcher Ricker also performed the last alarm on the radio on the day of Lieutenant Johnson's funeral and did so, obviously hurting as so many were, but she completed the last alarm much like she did the actual alarm on September 24<sup>th</sup>. For her actions dealing with this incident, Stephanie Ricker is being awarded the Certificate of Merit. The firefighters have made it clear they don't want to say anything because they're not in tune to being up here in front of people like this and I don't blame them.

Firefighter Kenneth DeHoff, Sedgwick County, Kansas; on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007 Firefighter Kenneth DeHoff responded to assist on a grass fire. Upon arrival, Firefighter DeHoff noticed that a firefighter appeared to be lying on the ground and was possibly injured. Upon further assessment of the situation, Firefighter DeHoff found the downed firefighter to be critically injured. He then notified 9-1-1 dispatch of the situation and called for more assistance from the Fire Department and EMS.

Firefighter DeHoff took control of a very emotional and complex incident and without hesitation called for the proper assistance. Firefighter DeHoff, along with Firefighter Burdick, performed CPR on the critically injured firefighter. For his display of leadership and composure under a very stressful situation, Firefighter DeHoff is being awarded the Award of Merit.

Firefighter Brad Burdick, Sedgwick County, Kansas; on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007 Firefighter Brad Burdick of the Sedgwick County Fire Department responded to a grass fire. Upon arrival, Firefighter Burdick and Lieutenant Johnson found a working grass fire in a field with power lines down in the area. Burdick drove the squad as the fire line was being extinguished, while Lieutenant Johnson walked the hose line.

Once the fire was out, and overhaul was being, Firefighter Burdick lost sight of Lieutenant Johnson and immediately got out of the truck to check on him. He found Lieutenant Johnson lying on the ground unconscious. With little regard to personal risk, Firefighter Burdick pulled Lieutenant Johnson away from the area he was laying in and began assessing his lieutenant's condition.

## Regular Meeting, Fire District #1, November 14, 2007

Firefighter Burdick began performing CPR with help from Firefighter DeHoff, Firefighter Burdick attempted to save Lieutenant Johnson's life by risking his own in his dedication to protect and save a brother firefighter. For his actions, Firefighter Burdick is being awarded the Medal of Valor.

Lieutenant Bryon Johnson, Sedgwick County, Kansas; on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007 Lieutenant Johnson responded to a grass fire. Upon arrival, Lieutenant Johnson along with Firefighter Brad Burdick found a working grass fire in a field with power lines down in the area. Lieutenant Johnson was on the hose line extinguishing the fire when he came in contact with a live power line, causing him to collapse immediately.

Firefighter Burdick pulled him from the area and began CPR, with assistance from Firefighter DeHoff. Lieutenant Johnson was flown to Via Christi St. Francis on EagleMed. He was pronounced deceased at Via Christi shortly thereafter.

Lieutenant Johnson made the ultimate sacrifice in his dedication and effort to protect the citizens of Sedgwick County and is posthumously awarded the Line of Duty Death Medal of Valor.

Commissioners, that's it for the awards this morning. We thank you for allowing us to do this in front of you. Actually, we have one more thing, sorry."

**Fire Curmode** said, "These are two axes that we will be presenting to the family. They're very heavy, so we'll just hold them up here for a minute and then we'll give them to the family at the end. But these were the actual axes that were used at Station 34 and Station 4 prior to that when it was down in 63<sup>rd</sup> and South Broadway. They were actually . . . we carried new ones on the casket, but on the original plaques, these are axes that are the first line of equipment off the fire apparatus and the last one put back on.

I have a letter from the men and women of Sedgwick County Fire District #1 to the family:

*Dear Johnson Family,*

*It doesn't take the critical eye long to find the imperfections in this plaque. Some of these imperfections are therefore on purpose. One of the first things you may notice is the Maltese Cross in the center of the plaque. It does not sport a brilliant luster. Instead it is dull and appears to have run through a hammer mill. To understand the significance of this, you must go back in history to the origin of the Maltese Cross. The Maltese Cross first appeared during the Crusades. It was given to a particular group of knights who unselfishly risked their lives to save their comrades from the burning oil that was being hurled at them from the fortress walls. These knights would rush into the inferno to pull their comrades to safety.*

## **Regular Meeting, Fire District #1, November 14, 2007**

*In an effort to distinguish these knights and their bravery from the others, the Maltese Cross was bestowed upon them and they wore it proudly on their armor and shields. With this in mind, we wanted the cross on this plaque to display the same raw courage and selflessness demonstrated by the first firefighters. We also wanted it to be a symbol of the dedication, service and raw tenacity often shown by Bryon.*

*Lastly, we wanted it to be a tribute to you, Bryon's family, and your unwavering courage. It is cut and hammered from a single solid piece of brass and proudly displays the marks of the smith's hammer, just as our lives often display the marks left on us by both tragedy and triumph.*

*In the end however, those marks result in a work of art. The helmet shield also displays some imperfections. Our purpose for this is to give the appearance of age and use. Bryon was no stranger to fire. In fact, a quick look at his first firefighter's helmet will tell you he was not afraid to get in and get personal with the enemy. It was discolored from heat and smoke and most of the reflective tape was melted off.*

*We wanted the shield to display that same fearless attitude, it displays Bryon's rank, one brass lieutenant's bugle, and is set on a solid copper shield. The shield was cut from a solid sheet of copper and heat-formed to the proper shape. The marks from this work were purposely left on the shield as a reminder of Bryon's courage. The bugle was cut from a brass expansion ring used to connect fire hose to the couplings.*

*The ax mounted on the plaque is a pike-headed axe. This type of ax has been long associated with the fire service. It is one of the first tools carried off the truck by a firefighter and one of the last to be put back on. It is a tool of extreme importance to a firefighter. It is used to open walls, force open doors, aids the firefighter in search and rescue and may even become his last line of defense, should he become trapped.*

*This particular ax carried an honor far greater than any it was created for. It served its final duty by carrying Bryon to his final resting place. It is mounted with great pride on this plaque as a reminder of Bryon's service and his dedication to the fire service. Most importantly, it serves as a memorial to a dear husband, a father, son, brother and friend.*

*It is with great honor and pride that we present these plaques to you, his family. You are forever a part of our fire department family and will forever be on our minds and in our prayers.*

*Sincerely,*

*The men and women of Sedgwick County Fire District #1*

**Regular Meeting, Fire District #1, November 14, 2007**

**Chairman Unruh** said, “Well Chief Curmode and Fire Marshal Millspaugh, we want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to participate with you in the opportunity to recognize meritorious service of our firefighters and especially to acknowledge the sacrifice and the loss by the Johnson family and Mr. Johnson and the parents, we have grieved with you and we appreciate the ultimate sacrifice that Lieutenant Johnson gave to the citizens of Sedgwick County. And to the firefighters and the dispatcher who played a significant role in this, we also want to express our gratitude and thankfulness from the commission and from the citizens of Sedgwick County. But we’re grateful for your service, we know it’s a dangerous activity and we appreciate your commitment to our citizens. Thank you very much.”

**Chief Curmode** said, “Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners.”

**Chairman Unruh** said, “Commissioners, is there anything else to come before this board sitting as the governing body of Fire District #1? Seeing nothing else, I will adjourn the Board of County Commissioners sitting as the governing body of Fire District #1.”

**B. OTHER**

**C. ADJOURNMENT**

**Regular Meeting, Fire District #1, November 14, 2007**

There being no other business to come before the Board, the Meeting was adjourned at 9:23 a.m.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF  
SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS**

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**DAVID M. UNRUH**, Chairman  
First District

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**TIM R. NORTON**, Commissioner  
Second District

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**THOMAS G. WINTERS**, Commissioner  
Third District

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**KELLY PARKS**, Commissioner  
Fourth District

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**GWEN WELSHIMER**, Commissioner,  
Fifth District

ATTEST:

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**Don Brace**, County Clerk

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_, 2007