

Colorado Rangers ("CLER") Board of Directors Meeting

10:00 AM, Friday, May 21 2021
CLER Headquarters
330 Park Avenue
Ft. Lupton, CO 80621

Attendance – Board of Directors: Senator Kent Lambert (via video teleconference), Chief John Fryar (via video teleconference) and Chief Ronald Abramson (via teleconference). Marshall Larry Johns joined the meeting at 10:52 (via teleconference). Senator John Cooke's absence was excused.

Attendance – CLER Command Staff & Support Staff: Deputy Chief Robert Pabst (in person), Operations Division Michael Morgan (via video teleconference), Support Division Chief Robert Grey (via teleconference), General Counsel Ken Wills (via video teleconference), Ranger Controller Norm Townley (in person), and Board Secretary Ranger Carl Luppens (via video teleconference).

At 10:00 Chairman Lambert called the meeting to order and took roll. Directors Lambert, Fryar and Abramson were in attendance via teleconference. Chairman Lambert declared a quorum and the meeting began.

Chief Abramson moved for the approval of the minutes of the February 26, 2021 CLER Board of Director's meeting as presented, Chief Fryar seconded the motion, and the minutes were adopted by unanimous consent.

Old Business:

Chief Abramson requested deferral of his opening remarks and discussion and those items were moved to the later section of the agenda to get the benefit of as much of Marshall Johns' input as possible..

Deputy Chief Robert Pabst reported that the Rangers had served 3,728 hours year to date even with the reduced event activity of partner agencies.

Chairman Lambert asked what is the level of effort divided between rural and urban departments supported by the Rangers? Have any IGA partners not received service yet this year?

Deputy Chief Pabst responded that yes, some departments had not requested service yet this year.

Senator Lambert warned us not to be surprised if demand suddenly increases with the re-opening of most of the State due to reduced virus restrictions.

Chief Abramson instructed Division Chief Morgan to contact the new Police Chief for Monument since in the past Rangers have provided substantial, regular service to Monument.

Division Chief Michael Morgan stated that schedules were starting to fill out and showed a numerical breakdown of hours by agency served **[we should include chart?]**

Senator Lambert inquired about the Rangers capability to provide a narcotics detection dog for the truck stop drug trans-shipment points such as in Monument.

Chief Abramson responded that, when the Rangers had to certified drug dogs they got very limited use.

Division Chief Morgan indicated that the Rangers have a potential explosive detection canine that is awaiting recertification.

Support Division Chief Robert Gray reported via telephone that the Rangers have potentially the best quality cadet class coming up for Ranger Academy #9 which will start on June 4th. He also mentioned that there have been a number of challenges holding the academy and the recruits together and defending against the onslaught of negative press regarding the police. 43 candidates paid \$250 each and started the application process. 17 were rejected but 13 withdrew during the process including 5 after they had been fully processed and had reached "cadet" status. There were 18 new candidates last month. 5 recruits are going to their Chief's interview very soon as the final step towards qualifying for the academy.

Senator Lambert emphasized quality and his support for attracting the most qualified entry class which would result in better Rangers on the street in the long run.

Chief Abramson stated that his goal was to lower the average age of Rangers to get, among other things, a longer tenure of service. The average Ranger age is 52 years old currently; recruits are in the "high" 40's. Older average age today has resulted in large part from former Colorado Mounted Rangers transitioning to much of the initial new Rangers membership.

Senator Lambert asked where are the new recruits coming from?

Support Division Chief Gray reported that some are retired military, some are armed security, some are engineers and other business professionals. Most are financially "upwardly mobile" since it is fairly expensive to volunteer as a Ranger.

Chief Abramson emphasized the effort to expand the gender and racial diversity of the Rangers but that, despite an all out effort last year, the Rangers are predominantly white males.

Senator Lambert asked if the Rangers reached out to community college police and criminal justice programs for recruits?

Chief Abramson responded that they had reached out, in particular to Ames Community College but that community college graduates were generally seeking full time paid employment.

Ranger Norm Townley then gave the financial report. \$ 143,654 is in the checking and savings accounts, of which \$ 44,751 is in the Training Academy account. There were no questions.

New Business:

Chief Abramson discussed changes to the nature of policing and consideration of the appropriate size for the Rangers mentioning that half of the new Ranger applicants did not follow through and complete the application process. Well over 100, maybe as many as 140 expressed serious interest but were, for one reason or another, discouraged from completing the process. The recruiting ratio has changed, There will be potentially 20 new officers coming from Academy 9 and possibly 10 new Rangers who were previously P.O.S.T. certified,

Chief Fryar explained that the unemployment rate for police officers without "liabilities" was about zero. Demand exceeds supply everywhere. 90% of his police officer job applicants have "problems" and the washout rate is high. He does well on female recruits, about 30% which is typical, but, in a community that is 53% Hispanic, he cannot recruit from that cultural segment. Also, candidates, today, get job offers but then decline employment.

Chief Abramson reminded the board that, for the Rangers, we don't even have money as a "currency" to attract officers. Chief Abramson then identified a significant problem, the Adams County Sheriff's Office has been actively targeting and recruiting Rangers away from CLER. 11 X-Rangers have gone over to ACSO in the last year including one who had been an unpaid volunteer firearm's instructor who accepted a paid firearm's instructor position with Adams County.

Chief Abramson has written a letter to Adams County Chief Bethel requesting a meeting with the Flatrocks training chief, the Sheriff and the County Attorney. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the Rangers have paid Adams County over \$700,000 for training. It is a problem when the Rangers pay Adams County to train officers and then Adams County recruits those officers away and gets the financial advantage of the money the Rangers paid. The Rangers wired approximately \$150,000 to Adams County (Flatrocks Training) last week for the next Ranger police training academy.

Senator Lambert commented that he has several concerns when an entity created by the legislature, i.e. the Rangers, is negatively impacted by other governmental entities. The Colorado State Patrol has a similar issue with troopers it trains being recruited away by larger police departments. Smaller local governments are being disadvantaged by larger police departments taking officers they have trained.

Chief Fryar commented that he has worked for smaller agencies his entire career and it has always been a problem. Two years ago he complained that ACSO was recruiting his cadets away from Fort Lupton Police Department.

Chief Abramson is increasing the Ranger service hours from 300 to 450 (three years at 150 hours each year) required to avoid academy tuition reimbursement. ACSO has waited until service hour requirement has been completed or, with paid officers, offering hiring bonuses that offset any tuition reimbursement costs.

General Counsel Ken Wills suggested that leaving an entity under such circumstances might breach the common law duty of loyalty and the officers should at least repay training dollars. He also mentioned a potential unjust enrichment cause of action.

Senator Lambert asked if Mr. Wills knew of supporting case law and asked Chief Abramson to have Mr. Wills review the recruit contract.

Chief Abramson told the board that one excellent recruit was scared off by the potential \$9,500 tuition repayment possibility but that Chief Gray did an great job persuading him to continue as a cadet.

Senator Lambert commented that "if we set a standard of hours, we may not prevail if that up front agreement was met".

Chief Abramson added that we might add to the standard contract a provision that new Rangers cannot go to the training agency for 5 years.

Mr. Wills asked if it would hurt ACSO to lose the Ranger training funds?

Senator Lambert asked about the impact of taking the training dollars somewhere else.

Marshal Johns joined the meeting at 10:52.

Chief Abramson advised him of the discussion of ASCO stealing Rangers who had trained with ASCO.

Chief Pabst mentioned that, after the most recent payment to Flatrocks, the Rangers have \$44,751 left in the training account.

Chief Abramson stated that the Rangers have up to three years to host another academy without losing POST accreditation. He asked, "What should be our training cycle?" The State may not fund future training academies. He then asked the board about future meeting. Quarterly? Have two full meeting each year and two other with reduced scope? Zoom teleconferences?

Senator Lambert stated that quarterly was still good so as to stay close due to the volatility of many issues. There may be new missions that come up on an emergent basis. The level and frequency of board contact was noted as important.

Marshall Johns commented that funding issues with the State could be tough due to the “defund the police current “climate”. He asked, “What is the attrition rate with current Rangers?”

Chief Abramson stated that attrition is not high, 80 Rangers is the base and we have lost 20 over 36 months. He asked, “What is the right number” and stated that, “80 to 90 may be too many”. It might be good to slim down and support fewer departments more extensively.

Chief Gray explained that he has had numerous discussions with the insurance agency and that there was some prior confusion; the 3year probationary period was just a time period to be fully subscribed and not a term at which insurance rates would be reevaluated and could significantly decrease. The total insurance premium is not directly tied to the number of Rangers and the premium will likely go up for all police. Even after implementing all of CIRSA’s “best practices”, premium rate reductions will be minor.

Chief Abramson again asked, “How do we ‘right size’?” The Rangers have 10 to 12 close relationships and we have three years of operating history.

Public Comments:

There were no public questions or comments.

Schedule for Next Meeting:

The next Board of Director’s Meeting was tentatively scheduled for Friday September 10th, 2021 at 10:00, in Fort Lupton with video teleconference participation possible for board members.

Closing Comments:

Chief Abramson expressed deep appreciation to Senator Lambert for his commitment and efforts and Senator Lambert modestly said that he only spent a few hours compared to the volume of time donated collectively by all the Rangers.

Adjournment of Meeting

Chief Fryar moved and Marshal Johns seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting and it was adjourned at 11:10 by unanimous consent.