

Colorado Rangers (“CLER”) Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

10:00 AM, Friday, December 3 2021

CLER Headquarters

330 Park Avenue

Ft. Lupton, CO 80621

Attendance – Board of Directors: Senator Kent Lambert (via video teleconference), Marshal Larry Johns (via telephone) and Chief Ronald Abramson (in person). Senator John Cooke and Chief John Fryar were not in attendance and excused for good cause.

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

There were no members of the public present.

At 10:03 Chairman Lambert called the meeting to order and took roll. Chairman Lambert declared a quorum and the meeting began.

Chief Abramson moved for the approval of the minutes of the September 10, 2021 CLER Board of Director’s meeting as presented, Marshall Johns seconded the motion, and the minutes were adopted by unanimous consent.

Chairman Lambert invited Chief Abramson to provide an overview of the meeting and issues to review.

Chief Abramson stated that it had been an “interesting year” for the Rangers, in fact the fourth interesting year in a row but the results had been very good. He announced that the Annual Ranger Summit meeting was being held on December 4th at the Highlands Ranch Law Enforcement Training Facility and invited Board members to attend. The Summit had been relocated, with very short notice, from the Flatrock training facility in Adams County due to increased COVID exposure sensitivity issues at Flatrock. The Summit is an opportunity to bring all Rangers statewide together and review, among other things, newly enacted legislation affecting police officers.

Old Business:

Chief Abramson announced that the Rangers’ relationship with the Denver Police Department has continued to grow and strengthen. He recently signed an agreement with the Mayor of Denver for a three year additional engagement (2022 - 2025) with potential total payments to the Rangers of \$375,000.00 under the full contract from inception. This compares to the average Mutual Aid Agreement partner annual financial contribution to the rangers of \$4,900.

In addition, Chief Abramson reported that due to some enormously hard work by members of the Agency, the Rangers have been preliminarily awarded the third largest grant for body cameras in the State. Even though there are still two years to implement the mandatory BWC requirements, due to a terrific job by Support Division Chief Robert Gray and others, the Rangers should be able to implement a body camera program earlier than required. This was one of several significant “wins” for the Rangers in 2021.

Chief Abramson reported on the October 31 academy graduation. Although starting with a Class of 22 cadets the day before the Academy started, 14 cadets graduated from Academy # 9 after dismissals and drops. This was a much lower graduation percentage than with previous academies. The current public discourse about law enforcement may be a contributing factor but Chief Abramson will be meeting with the Chief Psychologist that performs pre-screening psychological testing and evaluation for the Rangers to make sure we are selecting candidates mentally and emotionally capable of being a law enforcement officer. Some recruits were approved by the outside psychologists but they proved not to be sound for

law enforcement duties. The “vetting” needs to be improved because, among other reasons, it is very expensive to pay for several more training positions that do not result in POST certified Ranger graduates. That said, Chief Abramson reported that he is very happy with the current size of the agency.

The Chief reiterated the demanding cycle of the need to provide a lot of service, to obtain the funds to offer substantial training academies, to provide the number of Rangers we are asked to deploy. It is a precarious cycle with a challenging balance because more Rangers meaning more insurance costs which means more agencies needed to support the higher cost structure.

New Business:

Ranger Academy 10 will probably not be held until 2023. The goal would be to train between 20 and 40 recruits. The location might be Flatrock for one more time but could also be Highlands Ranch, which is yet to be determined. The Rangers have a strong relationship with the Highlands Ranch Law Enforcement Training Center. Flatrock has gone back and forth between wanting to provide virtually all of the academy instructors to wanting the Rangers to provide internal instructors from the Rangers ranks (which is much less expensive).

Chairman Lambert asked about the balance between rural and urban service by the Rangers. He inquired if there is an over-burden on some Rangers? Is there a need for more Rangers? How does the major commitment to Denver effect the smaller communities?

Chief Abramson responded that Denver has been very cooperative and has allowed the Rangers to decrease the requested level of staffing on assignments when there are peak requirements by smaller rural agencies. Denver’s financial support, in reality, allows the Rangers to serve rural and smaller communities. Denver has been understanding regarding resource allocation.

The upcoming Denver Festival of Lights Christmas parade (the evening of December 4th) is an example of an important and urgent Denver need as a result of the Christmas Parade massacre in Wisconsin. Twelve Rangers will be serving Denver for this parade and 11 additional Rangers will be supporting Woodland Park for its Christmas Parade the same night so we were able to successfully balance resource needs.

Chairman Lambert noted the probably need to increase the number of Rangers long term; noting that the Rangers have been a victim of their own success.

Chief Abramson noted that the agency could do an academy class of up to 40 recruits but this would increase annual liability insurance by \$60,000 at current costs and up to \$80,000 annually at anticipated future costs.

Division Chief Morgan reported that there are 77 total in the agency, including a few civilians. Altogether they donated 14,912 hours of service so far in 2021. He suggested that they could do better on annual service hour requirements to fully cover Nederland.

Chairman Lambert asked if Denver has their own reserve police officer program?

Chief Abramson responded that Denver had eliminated its reserve officer program and Division Chief Morgan noted that Douglas County had cut way back on its reserve program.

Chairman Lambert stated that he intended to “loop back” with the Department of Public Safety since there is (1) a statewide shortage of regular police officers, (2) many communities are cutting back on reserves, and (3) this may justify more state funding.

Ranger Controller Norm Townley then gave the financial report. \$93,506.74 is in the checking and savings accounts and \$44,702.94 is in the Training Academy account for a total of \$138,209.68. Total liabilities consist of the badge deposit reserve of \$28,025.00. There were no questions.

The 2022 budget was reviewed. Chairman Lambert noted that the annual insurance cost had declined from \$94,672 to \$70,772. Since there is not a training academy scheduled for 2022 the total expenses is budgeted to be \$100,572 as compared to 2021's total expenses of \$237,772.

Chief Abramson explained that they had worked with CIRSA to re-evaluate Ranger policies and procedures consistent with CIRSA's recommended "Best Practices" which mainly focused on driving since that is where most insurance claims originate statewide. In addition, Ranger head count is being assessed more accurately and precisely to achieve a blended headcount for insurance purchase instead of paying on the maximum yearly headcount, which had been the practice in years past resulting in an overinflated number of Rangers and insurance costs.

The initiative goal was to drive insurance cost down for 2022. Chief Abramson proudly reported that due to outstanding leadership, very aggressive agency enforcement of policies, and outstanding training, the 36 month probationary period with CIRSA expired with no claims except for a workman's compensation claim. That claim is being contested by CLER since the Ranger cadet was not an "employee" of CLER and, in fact, never even met the pre-requisites for being a sworn Ranger (ie. completion of a POST Academy resulting in POST certification, final prerequisite training classes, and swearing-in to the agency).

Chief Abramson noted that the 2022 budget reflected \$20,000 in income from Denver. This is a base amount and there can be significant increases based on actual service, over the next three years.

Chief Abramson moved to approve the proposed 2022 operating budget. Chairman Lambert seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Chief Abramson noted that POST requires an academy to be held every three years or accreditation is withdrawn by POST. The submittal for accreditation was over 4,000 pages and a tremendous effort. He mentioned that interest is high in future Ranger recruits and 20 have already applied for the next academy. 20 to 40 very high quality cadets is the goal.

The Chief also announced that Woodland Park is the newest mutual aid agreement partner. Chief Hassler was the former Chief of Elizabeth PD and CLER board member. Woodland Park is the twenty-fourth Mutual Aid partner. Chief Abramson is having discussions with other departments. RTD approached the Rangers for support at Union Station but, after review, as much as CLER wanted to help it was not deemed an assignment the Rangers were well suited for.

Chairman Lambert questioned the jurisdiction. RTD would need enormous resources, and authority would be an issue. He wondered if the Rangers would be working for Denver or for RTD noting that RTD only has derivative jurisdiction. He explained that for operations, Rangers would need to be deployed with Denver officers.

Chief Abramson announced that, regretfully, Marshal Johns will be retiring as the head law enforcement officer of Nederland in May 2022.

Marshal Johns said that he is working to hire a new Marshal for Nederland plus other new officers noting that the town has been flooded with people in the current environment and the urban exodus.

Chief Abramson and Chairman Lambert expressed their gratitude to Marshal Johns for his invaluable guidance and service throughout the years.

The final agenda item was a discussion of community event security and the vehicle threat as tragically experienced in the recent Wisconsin Christmas Parade car attack.

Chairman Lambert stated that State resources need to be considered with large vehicles and Jersey Barriers that CDOT possesses evaluated.

Marshal Johns stated that this is an important topic noting that standard “saw horse” barriers are not effective to prevent a vehicle assault. He suggested steel Meridian three point barriers that are portable but can stop cars. Event promoters may be required to provide enhanced vehicle protection and perhaps there could be a multi agency program to share these resources

He also mentioned the chain of lethal force and the challenges of using firearms in crowded environments with the public probably behind a vehicle attempting to run over pedestrians.

Chairman Lambert explained that the right mix of barriers, police officers and explosive detection canines will be necessary. He suggested that perhaps the Department of Local affairs could provide assistance? Chief Abramson said that would necessitate a reach out to the Department of Public Safety at the appropriate time.

Public Comments:

There were no public questions or comments.

Schedule for Next Meeting:

The next Board of Director’s Meeting was scheduled for Friday February 25th, 2021 at 10:00, in Fort Lupton.

Closing Comments:

Chairman Lambert thanked the entire team and said that the Rangers are a completely different government agency now and that the State should recognize its strength and value. The “shared reserve” concept has been validated. He would expect interstate conversations in 2022. He stated that Wisconsin could recognize the success story.

Chief Abramson commented that Arizona had requested a detailed report on implementing a shared police reserve program based on the Ranger model. Chairman Lambert reiterated that the Rangers should be a model for other states.

Chief Abramson stated that Cheyenne County, Colorado is down to only two deputies to cover the entire county and have asked the Rangers to stand-by to possibly support them in regular service responses.

Chairman Lambert recalled that the Rangers predecessor, the Colorado Mounted Rangers, had significantly assisted Milliken PD.

Adjournment of Meeting

It was moved by Chief Abramson and seconded by Chairman Lambert to adjourn the meeting and it was adjourned at 11:03 by unanimous vote.