



NORTH WHATCOM REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING #4

via Zoom Meeting
3:00 p.m.
October 22, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mark Chamberlain called the Regional Fire Authority (RFA) Committee Meeting for October 22, 2020, to order at 3:07 p.m. via Zoom Meeting.

ATTENDEES

Committee Members

Chairman Mark Chamberlain (D4), Vice-Chairman Scott Fisher (D21), Commissioner Dave Hanson (D4), Commissioner Bruce Ansell (D21), Commissioner Harry Andrews (D4), Commissioner John Crawford (D21), and Commissioner Rich Bosman (alternate D21).

Guests

Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen, Consultant Karen Reed, Financial Analyst Bill Cushman Board Secretary Jennie Sand (21), Local 106NW Kenneth Cunningham, and District Administrator/Board Secretary Kris Parks (D4).

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Consultant Karen Reed welcomed the group and announced that Financial Analyst Bill Cushman will be participating in a portion of this meeting.

2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

All committee members have reviewed the agenda.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Fischer moved to approve the October 22, 2020 agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Andrews and approved 5-0.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Andrews moved to approve the October 7, 2020 minutes. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Fischer and approved 5-0.

4. FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

Consultant Karen Reed confirmed that the Committee members had brought Committee recommendations from past meeting(s) to their respective Boards for review. Items

reviewed included the charter, work plan, communications plan, website data and shared funding.

Commissioner Hanson stated that the District 4 Board was pleased with the shared information. Chairman Chamberlain noted that the District 4 Board favors bringing in an election consultant specialist at the appropriate time.

Commissioner Ansell noted that with three NWFR members already on the committee and one alternate, only one commissioner needed to be updated. All are in support.

5. UPDATED SIDE BY SIDE COMPARRSION UPDATE

Consultant Karen Reed noted that one data point had been added to the side by side comparison chart. Both Districts had similar county average assessed values for residential properties (D4 \$266,895 and NWFR \$266,620). The amounts include only residential homes and residential, buildable lots, but no commercial properties. Chief Van der Veen may request Financial Analyst Bill Cushman to review the data and calculations used to determine the home values.

Karen noted that the comparison data will be utilized moving forward. In addition, the residential values will be utilized to determine the impact of potential future levy rates.

6. COMMUNICATIONS PLAN, WEBSITE POSTING DISCUSSIONS

Consultant Karen Reed discussed the next steps for the communication plan.

There is support for retaining a communication specialist to assist with public outreach if the committee remains on track for an election in the spring of 2021.

Commissioner Ansell suggested stating, " *the Planning Committee had their first meeting August 26 and plan to meet twice per month instead of listing each meeting date* ".

There was discussion regarding removing the benefit service charge language. It was noted that it may be confusing to voters since there are no plans to implement a benefit service charge in the near future. For transparency, it was decided to leave the benefit charge information in and add language alerting the voters that at this time the Planning Committee does not see a need for a benefit service charge however the citizens will be kept up to date on any funding mechanisms. A link could also be added if a voter wants to find out additional information about a benefit service charge.

The NWFR staff will post the revised text on the RFA website and update it as directed.

7. DRAFT VALUES AND PRINCIPLES STATEMENT

Consultant Karen Reed presented the updated draft Statement of Shared Values and Principles for discussion, revisions and suggestions.

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Fischer moved to approve the Values and Principles Statement as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hanson and approved 5-0.

Karen noted that the Values and Principles Statement can be taken to the respective Boards for review.

8. RFA GOVERNANCE

Consultant Karen Reed reviewed the information provided regarding RFA Governance Boards including basic rules and best practices.

- All board members must be elected officials
- Initial board seats need to be appointed.
 - NWFR and WCFD4 must continue to have District Commissioners until they are dissolved, and be able to appoint members to RFA Board until the RFA Board can become directly elected (first election for direct election RFA Board members will be November 2023).
 - Current District commissioners can elect to not run however, they must be replaced by their respective Boards so long as the Districts remain in place.
- RFA Board structure may change over time by a majority vote as long it is stated in the Plan. There are many structures the Committee could recommend:
 - Districted, at-large positions or combination
 - Can adjust to add additional agencies in the future
- No legal limit on the number of board members, but there is a practical limit.
- Can include non-voting members
- Terms may not exceed six years and must be staggered
- In an RFA with districted board positions, the candidates must reside in the district.
- RFA Board members may be a mix of “directly elected” and “appointed”.

The total RFA population will be approximately 44,000.

The Committee reviewed how other RFA’s have addressed governance.

Karen noted that the decisions before the Committee are to confirm:

- Preferred initial board structure (October 2021 – December 2023)
- Whether to include a plan for a future board and what that plan should look like. Voters will want to see what the plan is for how RFA will be governed now and in the future.

Initial/Transition Governance Board	Future Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of commissioners • Who appoints them • How terms will be staggered (if the appointee terms are not otherwise staggered) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of commissioners • Number appointed or elected • Number of districts and at-large positions • How the terms will be staggered

There was discussion regarding district or at-large positions. Districting will be based on the 2020 census (population and natural geographic aspects of the area) which is reevaluated every ten years. Chairman Chamberlain noted that it will be important to have members from each area, at least until the NWFR and WCFD4 are dissolved (2 years).

Commissioner Ansell stated that he is not in favor of districts, since there is a potential to create more issues. The Committee agreed that at-large positions are simpler and preferred.

There was consensus regarding initially bringing all commissioners (eight) into the RFA Board, but ultimately having a five-member board. There was further consensus not to replace those initial RFA Board members if they resign. Karen noted that the Plan will need to include language if one of the commissioners resigns prior to an election. Karen noted that regardless of the number of commissioners an election to elect the RFA Board members must be held in November of 2023.

Karen will provide examples of five-member governance boards (at least one from each NWFR/WCFD4). In addition, Karen will bring back language based on this discussion.

Both current interim fire commissioners will need to run for office during the 2021 election if they want to remain on the Boards (NWFR/WCFD4).

There was discussion regarding the pros and cons of dissolving the Districts (NWFR/WCFD4) after the RFA is formed.

9. STAFFING/FACILITIES/APPARATUS WORK GROUP

Consultant Karen Reed noted that the subcommittee has not yet had a chance to meet.

10. REVIEW OF A SAMPLE SEVEN YEAR FINANCIAL FORECAST FOR A HYPOTHETICAL RFA

Financial Analyst Bill Cushman introduced a strategic financial planning model. Bill noted that he has worked with approximately sixteen fire districts who utilized his strategic analysis model to assist them in forming RFAs. The model answers three significant questions.

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to go?
- How do we get there?

Bill noted that a documented plan will show the path of how to get to where the RFA wants to go over time. Bill plans to utilize the Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) Plan along with other pertinent data to determine where the Districts are now. Bill will involve the commissioners to determine what the goals are and finally how these goals can be accomplished.

Bill's services will include financial prioritizing, providing a model to accomplish the goals and provide immediate feedback, direction and options to assist with making the best decisions for the RFA.

Bill reviewed the areas of the model and how each section works alone and together.

- Executive summary - aid in communications between commissioners and chiefs
- Cash flow
- Cash Flow Balance Summary
- Strategic Plan
- Property Tax
- Revenue
- Employee Database
- RFA Assessed Values
- Program Summary
- Emergency Reserve
- Apparatus Reserve
- Equipment Reserve
- Facility Reserves
- Debt Service Reserve
- Retirement Reserve
- Reserve Summary

Consultant Karen Reed noted that the subcommittee's work will be important to the creation of the model. As more data is provided and inputted into the model, Bill will review various options with the Planning Committee.

Commissioner Ansell anticipates that Bill's model will work very well.

11. FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETING DATES

Chief Van der Veen will continue to send out Doodle polls to determine upcoming meetings.

Next meeting Monday, November 2, 2020, from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

12. NEXT AGENDA(S)

- Governance
- Organizational Chart
 - Staffing gaps
- Staffing/Facilities/Apparatus Work Group (*possible*)

13. CLOSING COMMENTS

Chairman Chamberlain noted the group had a good conversation.

The Committee thanked Bill for his time and presentation.

14. ADJOURN

MOTION: There being no further business Vice-Chairman Fischer moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:47 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Andrews and approved 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Jennie Sand, Recording Secretary

ATTEST:



Mark Chamberlain, Chairman