

City of Bellingham – Fire District #8 Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee

Draft Proposed Charter / Operating Rules

Version dated 6/26/17

- A. **Mission of the Regional Fire Authority (RFA) Planning Committee:** The mission of the Planning Committee is to create and propose to the elected leadership of the City of Bellingham (“City”) and Whatcom County Fire District #8 (“District”) a plan (“Plan”) for a regional fire authority encompassing the entire territory within the jurisdictional boundaries of the District and the City, including the proposed governance, design, financing and development of fire protection and emergency service facilities and operations, including maintenance and preservation of facilities or systems, all as authorized by Ch. 52.26 RCW. The Planning Committee is advisory to the Mayor and City Council of the City and to the Board of Commissioners of the District. The Planning Committee shall seek to develop a Plan which, if approved by the voters of the City and District, will achieve the following goals and outcomes:
1. To provide sustainable funding and service levels to meet the needs of the City and the District.
 2. To continue efficiency of operations of both the City and District.
 3. To fund specific service level improvements to better serve the residents and businesses within the proposed RFA.
 4. To ensure the Plan addresses the concerns and needs of both the City and the District and is ultimately supported by both the City Council and the District Commissioners.
 5. To provide transparent, understandable information to the public about the potential impacts of the proposed RFA.
 6. To ensure meaningful public input opportunities during the planning process, and to consider public input received in the drafting of the Plan.
 7. To ensure the governance plan for the RFA provides equitable representation of the two member agencies, and to provide sufficient flexibility in the Plan to allow additional agencies to join the RFA in the future without needing to resubmit a new RFA plan to the voters of the City and the District.
 8. To complete the Plan with sufficient detail, based on documentable information, and by a reasonable date, so that the City Council and Board of Commissioner may review and deliberate on the Plan and make an informed and timely decision whether to place the proposal on the ballot for voter approval, at a date to be identified by the planning committee.

B. **Membership:** The Planning Committee membership shall include 3 elected representatives from the City of Bellingham and 3 elected representatives from the Fire District #8 Board of Commissioners.

C. **Process:**

1. Schedule. The Planning Committee will meet approximately once a month from June of 2017 through July 2018, and additionally as needed.
2. Developing Preliminary Recommendations, Public Outreach Process. The Planning Committee will accomplish its mission by reviewing staff-developed reports, information, options and recommendations and considering public input. The Planning Committee will identify preliminary recommendations with respect to all items that must be included in the Plan. The Planning Committee shall also provide advice on the public outreach effort accompanying the development of the Plan and public education effort after the Plan is approved.
3. Periodic Updates to Council and Board. The Planning Committee will provide periodic updates to the City Council and Board of Commissioners in the form of preliminary recommendations, in order that the Council and Board may provide timely input on the development of the Plan.
4. Council and/or Board Deliberations. The City Council and/or Board of Commission may determine they need additional time to deliberate on a preliminary recommendation from the Planning Committee, and if so, the Planning Committee will shift its work plan so as to not delay the schedule any further than necessary. A Council or Commission choosing to deliberate on a preliminary recommendation will make every effort to conclude its deliberations by the end of its next regularly scheduled meeting.
5. Reconciling Direction from Council and Board. If either the City Council or Board of Commissioners is opposed to any preliminary recommendation of the Planning Committee, they will so advise the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee will then work to amend the preliminary recommendations to reconcile it with input from the City Council and Board of Commissioners, and bring revised preliminary recommendations back for review by the City Council and Board of Commissioners. In the event of any apparently irreconcilable conflicts between the City Council and the Board of Commissioners, the Planning Committee will so notify the Council and Board and propose a resolution. Work on the project will cease, at any point at which either the Council or Commission adopts a resolution to halt work on the project.

- D. **Public Input.** All meetings of the Planning Committee shall be open to the public and shall be duly noticed as public meetings as required by law. The Planning Committee is required by statute to ensure there are opportunities for public input in the development of the Plan. The Planning Committee shall adopt a plan for public input, which will at a minimum include conducting two public information and input sessions before the Plan is approved by the Council and District. The City and District will also host a website where the public and other stakeholders can gather information and review the agendas, proceedings and materials considered by the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee may determine whether to take public comment at its meetings, and shall provide the public a means to submit written comments at Planning Committee meetings and online. If the Planning Committee determines to take public comment at its meetings, it shall approve the rules relating to such comment.
- E. **Public Communications.** Members of the Planning Committee may be called on from time to time to comment about the activities of the Planning Committee or the subject matter under deliberation. In such communications, Members will take care to distinguish any official Planning Committee positions from individual Member positions. Members agree to refer inquiries from the press to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee for response on behalf of the Planning Committee.
- F. **Compensation.** Members of the Planning Committee shall be compensated by each Member's appointing agency in compliance with the Member's appointing agency's policies (e.g., City or District).
- G. **Chair and Vice-Chair of Planning Committee:** At its first meeting, the Planning Committee will elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair from among its Members. One of these officers must be a City representative, and one must be a District representative. The Chair and Vice-Chair will review and approve agendas in advance of meetings. The Chair will preside over the meetings; the Vice-Chair will preside over the meeting in the absence of the Chair. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall serve as spokespersons for the Planning Committee and shall sign transmittals and reports of the Planning Committee, and assume such other duties as may be delegated to them from time to time by the Planning Committee. Any vacancy in the post of Chair or Vice-Chair may be filled by the Planning Committee upon a vote of a majority of the Planning Committee.
- H. **Resignation and Appointment of Replacement Members.** Any Member of the Planning Committee may resign, and such resignation shall be effective upon submitting written notice to the Chair and the resigning member's agency CEO (Mayor or Fire Chief). The

legislative body of the resigning Member's agency shall take prompt action to appoint a replacement member.

I. **Planning Committee Meetings.** Notice of all meetings of the Planning Committee shall be given by the Chair or his/her designee in writing by electronic mail or personal delivery to all Members at least seven (7) days prior to the date on which the meeting is to be held; provided, however, the Panel Chair may call for special meetings, and not less than three (3) days' notice may be given for a special meeting. Any notice shall specify the date, time and place of the meeting; provided, however, notice may be waived in writing signed by the person or persons entitled to such notice, whether before or after the time at which the notice is required to be given, which shall be equivalent to the giving of such notice.

1. Attendance. Panel members may participate in meetings via conference call but are strongly encouraged to attend each meeting in person.
2. Agendas. Prior to each regularly scheduled meeting, the Planning Committee, the Chair and Co-Chair shall work with staff to confirm an agenda for the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting any Member may request that the Chair add an item to the agenda. The decision whether to add an item shall be made by the Chair. Agendas will be made available to the Members electronically (by email) at least 3 days prior to the meeting. Staff supporting the Planning Committee shall make best efforts to provide all meeting materials to the Panel at least 2 days prior to the meeting date.
3. Quorum. A quorum at any meeting shall consist of Planning Committee Members who represent a simple majority.
4. Rules of Order. All meetings of the Planning Committee shall be conducted in accordance with the latest edition or revision of Robert's Rules of Order, except as otherwise provided in this Charter.
5. Minutes. Summary minutes shall be kept of Planning Committee meetings, recording attendance, general discussion items, decisions and votes (where taken). Minutes shall be available to the public.

J. **Decision Making:**

1. Votes. The Planning Committee shall attempt to make decisions by consensus, defined as approval from not less than two-thirds of the Planning Committee members from each of the City and District. Where such consensus cannot be achieved, items may be approved

by a majority of the Planning Committee Members, however, the lack of consensus shall be noted. The minutes shall reflect the votes of each member. Each Member of the Planning Committee has one vote. No proxy voting is allowed.

2. Routine Items. Routine actions of the Planning Committee will be confirmed by the vote of a majority of the Members of the Committee.

3. Approval of Final RFA Plan. Notwithstanding the terms of Section I.1-2, the final proposed Plan must be approved by not less than two-thirds of Planning Committee members from both the City and District.

K. **Staff support for Planning Committee**: Staff support will be provided by the employees of the City and District. Both agencies acknowledge that additional consultant support may be necessary to develop all the information sought over the course of this effort.

L. **Funding**: If there are any unanticipated costs associated with the planning process, the Planning Committee will make a recommendation as to how costs of the project should be allocated between the City and District and shall forward that for action by the appropriate City/District processes.

N. **Approval and Amendment of this Charter**: This Charter shall be approved by vote of not less than two-thirds of the Members of the Planning Committee and two-thirds of the Members from the City of Bellingham and Fire District 8, and any amendments must be similarly approved.