

**City of Bellingham – Fire District 8 Regional Fire
Authority Planning Committee
Meeting 5**

Date: Monday October 2, 2017

Time: 3:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

Location: Bellingham City Hall - Mayor's Boardroom

Proposed Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes September 18th, 2017.
2. Issue paper #3, level of service follow-up (discussion and maps). Pethick-20 minutes
3. Issue paper #5, follow up on rescue services, Life Safety Division functions, and OEM. Kays-30 minutes
4. Issue paper #10, follow up discussion on governance models. Hewett 20-minutes
5. Introduction to issue paper #8, assets and liabilities. Hewett- 20 minutes
6. Next Agenda/Date
7. Closing Comments/Adjourn

The Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee meeting was called to order by Bellingham City Councilmember Terry Bornemann at 3:00 P.M. The meeting was held in the Mayor's Boardroom at Bellingham City Hall, 210 Lottie Street, Bellingham.

Present: Bill Hewett, Assistant Fire Chief
 Rob Neher, Fire District 8 Commissioner
 Monea Kerr, Mayor's Office
 Tim Kays, Fire Captain
 Rick Sepler, COB Planning and Community Development Director
 Terry Bornemann, Bellingham City Council
 Michael Lillquist, Bellingham City Council
 Roger Buswell, Fire District 8 Commissioner
 Dave Pethick, Fire Captain, IAFF L106 VP
 Kristi Clift, FD Admin Services Manager
 Todd Lagestee, Citizen

Brian Henshaw, COB Finance Director
Bill Newbold, COB Fire Chief
David Lehmann, Fire District 8 Commissioner
Ron Morehouse, retired firefighter

1. Approval of Minutes August 9, 2017 meeting.

Amendments to last meeting's minutes:

- David Lehman & Rob Kinitzle were not present at last meeting and therefore should be taken off of the attendance list.

City of Bellingham Finance Director Brian Henshaw identified that on page 10 of last meeting's minutes, it was recorded that "Mayor Kelli said her assumption is that the City wouldn't charge RFA ICAP." He wanted to clarify that while the City wouldn't charge ICAP after the formation of the RFA, there would be a contract for services that the City provides. There was a discussion surrounding this issue and it was identified that ICAP would be used up until it will be replaced with a contract for services.

Other than the above amendments and notes, the September 18, 2017 minutes were unanimously approved.

2. Issue Paper #3 - Level of Service – Capt. Pethick (15 mins)

Captain Dave Pethick presented Issue Paper #3, which was a follow up on level of service. He said his staff got together with the folks at GIS and got a heat map of population at night, with data that is no more than a month old. It includes both Fire District 8 and the City of Bellingham areas.

- Councilmember Lillquist said that service to commercial populations would have a different density map because nighttime population maps provide residential data based on where people are sleeping at night.
- Captain Pethick said you will see that in the next map. The areas that have the least density are made that way for a reason. It is to keep industry in one area and parks in another. In the next map, there is a population per square mile color code. If you averaged it out, the entire color of the city would be orange. At the lower end of the City line, there is park area. Up around the airport is near where District 8 starts. The airport operations area has a low population and continues up to Gooseberry Point, where there is more population. Do we want to have more than one response area in the City or the County? Our thought was still only two levels of service: one that is the current definition of District 8 and another that is the City.
- Chief Hewett said per the NFPA, urban cut off standards are a population of 4,000 or more.
- Captain Pethick said in the 1720 - volunteer departments. 1710 - Professional. In 1720, suburban is 500-1,000 people per sq. mile. Rural is below 500.

- Chief Hewett said that when looking at the map, the darker shade of green and orange indicate urban areas. Blue indicates rural areas. How big of an area do we average out and how little do we go? When we sat down and looked at the map, we've always talked about City and urban growth being one place and the District being another. You can find pockets of blue in the City and orange in rural areas. This map shows that one side is urban and the other is rural.
- Councilmember Lillquist said the orange area is outside of city limits. You would naturally treat these areas as rural just driving through them.
- Planning and Community Development Director Rick Sepler said clearly there are urban areas and clearly there are rural areas, but there are also transitional zones. They would be part of this boundary. There are four designations - urban, rural, suburban and remote. Suburban are those transitional zones.
- Councilmember Bornemann said level of service directly links to staffing. Does it make a large difference to stick with two levels of service or switching to three to include other areas?
- Captain Pethick said this map doesn't directly correlate with our grid squares, but that might help us is if we are looking for this third section. Do you want us to look at sq. miles or every 5 miles to have some overlap or grid it down as small as this map?
- Councilmember Lillquist said he doesn't like the squares on the map because they don't observe reality on the ground. For transportation boundaries, we have areas that lump together in terms of best routes of transportation. One failure is that if a call is far away, you have to travel. Another failure is that areas where you can serve, the squares don't make sense. Do you have a map that details how engines can get to different places?
- Captain Pethick said we could look at first due response areas.
- Chief Hewett said the question arises: Are we trying to define rural by the fact that it's 4 minutes away from a fire station?
- Councilmember Lillquist said we need the right level of promise. We make a promise to people and we can keep that promise when we have equipment and personnel stationed nearby. Having the right people in the right places will allow us to promise service. Real aspects include: where are the roads from one place to another, where do people live? Where are there fire stations?
- Captain Pethick said currently there are two levels of service. They are goals and national expectations, but at 4 minutes brain and heart tissue starts to die. If we are trying to meet that goal, I would like to see an RFA plan that works to provide the services to make that happen.
- Councilmember Bornemann said we have the two, which works pretty good overall with the areas we are covering. The areas we are looking at that will probably be annexed, we need to have something in there that covers transition zones or a different level in between. Don't you think there would be a different kind of coverage to those areas?
- Chief Hewett said we should look at zoning in these areas. The county originally drew the level of service countywide - Fire District 8 & Lummi zoning do not measure up at

Gooseberry Point. Fort Bellingham has a denser population, but zoning says it's a rural area. We just happen to have what's left over of the army base.

- Fire District 8 Commissioner Roger Buswell asked: Does it make sense to put call volume in with level of service?
- Councilmember Lillquist asked: What number of calls are daytime calls in commercial areas? It's a low density area at night, but not during the day.
- Captain Pethick said the majority of calls are downtown. In the daytime, Meridian has relatively more calls during the day than at night. The busy times are 10am-10pm.
- Councilmember Lillquist said half of that is daytime.
- Councilmember Bornemann said those areas have more EMS calls than fire calls.
- Chief Hewett said retail is our lowest call volume in general.
- Captain Kays said there are a couple important things to remember - are we trying to constrain the RFA to too finite of a certain criteria? There is no specific way to define if you are going from one service area to another. The Irongate area pays the fire benefit charge, so they should get the same level of service.
- Councilmember Lillquist said that this correlates to nighttime calls. Want to promise response times in Irongate even though people don't live there at night.
- Chief Hewett asked: we don't have a high call volume to the retail corridor right?
- Captain Kays says a lot of what we do is EMS, but it's not a high percentage of the population unless you are talking about retirement homes too.
- Planning and Community Development Director Sepler said levels of service are created to assess what our needs are in future. We need something that fills the North Reserve territory gap. We can't dispute the rural areas. These other areas are pitting out - need to find a way to better service the area. Proposes solving that middle ground area.
- Councilmember Bornemann said that when we annex areas in, at what point we say "Okay, now we need another station to cover that part"? When it fills in to a certain degree? With annexation, what triggers when we need to jump to the next station and personnel needed? It shouldn't just be about numbers but about adequate personnel to cover the areas.
- Chief Hewett asked: Where is the trigger point? It's rural designated today, but when do we turn those areas into urban? As an RFA, once we identify one single boundary hopefully we aren't identifying based on the city limits, but the question comes: how do we identify when that trigger happens? The best answer is: it has to be part of our ongoing planning process. As we review our plan every however many years, how it's switched or based on zoning, we can make it be urban.
- Planning and Community Development Director Sepler said we need to be explicit. We need to tell people "Here's your existing level of service and here's what our goal is."
- Councilmember Lillquist asked: What about capital expenditures? New fire stations come online so slowly, what if there is a big annexation? In 5-10 years can the Fire Benefit Charge take care of this?
- Chief Hewett said the Fire Benefit Charge is meant to charge you for the benefit that you are receiving today, not for the future. Kytex is the main example. Facilities are there, it's

just a matter of staff switching over to an RFA. In the Kytex situation, the City would negotiate a developer. We could certainly look at this for fees.

- Fire District 8 Commissioner Rob Neher said now you have two entities you are dealing with. You have RFA providing this service while the City is providing the rest of it.
- Chief Hewett said we need the County's urban standard.
- Commissioner Neher asked: What about NFPA rural?
- Chief Hewett said yes.
- Commissioner Neher said looking at it that way, the people in the district are not losing anything. Right along City limits at Alderwood and Bennett, we have that interim where just because the area is inside the City, it doesn't make it urban. That's another conversation, if there is an RFA, they would have to chat with the City about how funds are going to be collected because you are talking about impact fees vs. the Fire Benefit Charge. That would be an RFA fee, but how would impact work?
- Chief Hewett said we have mitigation fees with Lummi right now.
- Chief Newbold said the Fire Benefit Charge in relation to capital is the service you would receive today. The RCW says the Fire Service Benefit Charge is for operations of the fire station only. If you were to skew that at all, we would have to look at the intent of operations in the RCW and make sure to be careful. By having urban, suburban, and rural categorizing, we are trying to solve a problem. It's both nighttime population and/or daytime population. By defining an area that has an urban density either daytime or nighttime, our goal is a certain level of service. The goal is to provide the highest level of service for the highest population whether at day or night. Our stations are placed for that. Call volume drives apparatus, crew and where they respond.
- Councilmember Bornemann said looking at the map, I'm starting to understand. If we go with two levels of service, urban and rural, those areas are defined by population? Is that correct?
- Captain Pethick said per the NFPA standards, yes. But we also have to keep in mind the planning department zone for future population.
- Councilmember Bornemann said when we talk about areas like out by where the Padden Horse Trails are, the population is rural. Yew St., initially we designate it as urban by the City, but it would be rural until it has an urban population.
- Councilmember Lillquist said I like what you are saying, Terry. Our standard should be driven by current call demand. Rather than population density, what about using a call volume density map. Where are we actually sending our people? Might be a better heat map for current demand. I think it would be a better starting point.
- Captain Pethick said information of where the call load is currently and also daytime population requested.
- Chief Hewett said his team will take this back and look at daytime population and call volume distribution. They will work with planning, UGA that is not part of the RFA, and look to see if there is a clear suburban area coming in our path. We are here to define a level of service for the RFA plan. If we get to clear urban and rural areas, we can put that into our plan. In time, if these things change, the RFA through strategic planning has the

opportunity to modify if need be. We will take a look at all of these and bring something back for everyone.

- Captain Pethick said the governing board will have to look at the plan every 10 years.

3. Issue Paper #5 - Primary Services - Capt. Kays (30 mins)

Captain Kays presented a follow up on Issue Paper #5, which details primary services. He said rescue services has two parts: 1. What we are doing now and 2. What we aren't doing now. Is what we are doing now something we want to continue doing? Second part is to look at what we would like to deliver in the future or how we would like to approach that.

- Chief Hewett said for Issue Paper #5, we were covering all of the functions that the RFA would provide. Do we keep providing the services we are currently providing?
- Councilmember Lillquist asked: Under confined space rescue, how is Public Works involved?
- Captain Kays said a couple agencies provide confined space rescue – City of Bellingham Public Works and WWU. Certification levels are stringent. WWU has a team and they are still working on being certified. They only serve on campus. We asked PW how their team is certified and they said they have a person certified who can go down a manhole. It's a response isolated to certain situations in their domain.
- Chief Newbold said WWU and PW have individuals that go into those specific situations, called an Entry Team. As you make an entry, you are required per WAC to have a team that remains outside of the entry point if something goes wrong. In these situations, they have the obligatory rescue team outside the entry to the confined space while the entry team is making their entry, but if something goes wrong then they have to call 911 and wait for them to come out. These situations are labor intensive and a long term process.
- Councilmember Lillquist said focusing on the upper four, would the RFA be able to take on any or all of those?
- Councilmember Bornemann said it looks like there are different jurisdictions that provide different services. Would anything have to change with the Fire Department we have right now? You don't have to have inter local between jurisdictions on a rescue team. Would continuing these partnerships work with the RFA?
- Chief Newbold said we already have.
- Captain Pethick said the RFA wouldn't come in and take them all. Does the RFA take these services when this organization is overwhelmed?
- Chief Hewett said when we went through the list, there were three that the Fire District and Fire Department are jointly doing today, and we were asked to provide more information. We are trying to identify what we mean by rescue services, what we are currently doing, etc. If it's not us, who is doing those things? From the planning committee, do you agree that the services provided should remain with the RFA?
- Councilmember Bornemann asked: Do we need anything else with that that makes those your responsibility?

- Councilmember Lilliquist said we don't want there to be a diminished level of service when the RFA takes over. Is most of this training related expertise or is it special equipment that is being used?
- Captain Kays said it's both training, initial, annual and quarterly, and equipment.
- Councilmember Bornemann said if we say yes, this should go with the RFA, is there anything that is diminished or taking away from other departments?
- Chief Newbold said no. By nature of forming an RFA, it does not change the work that PW and the City of Bellingham can do for themselves and doesn't change what WWU can do for themselves.
- Captain Kays said that on the Life Safety division handout, the left side is functions and responsibility and the right side is the benefits of maintaining this division with the RFA.
- Chief Hewett said when we look at life safety, it's kind of holistic. We can talk about different parts of this. There are parts where you might be tempted to pick and choose what goes with the RFA and what goes with the City. City permitting and planning has the most overlap. Education, community outreach, etc. is in the Fire Department's domain because of the expertise required. It is hard to be good at all of the codes. What we bring to the table is the fire related code and we believe that specialization is important. When we look holistically at the job, as much as we would like to have full time fire investigators, they would be sitting around and waiting for a fire to investigate.
- Councilmember Bornemann said the permit center is a one stop shop right now where people can obtain permits, get inspected by the fire marshal, etc. With an RFA would customers have to go to the Permit Center and an RFA office?
- Planning and Community Development Director Sepler said the whole story is that there are jurisdictions that do not have fire. The fire marshal can make a choice on the spectrum about their level of service.
- Councilmember Lilliquist asked: who is the plans reviewer or fire official for the County?
- Chief Hewett said County planning does this. Fire District 8 does not get any say in how, why, or what codes are enforced. As Rick said, there are a lot of smaller jurisdictions that don't have the ability to support specialization in their inspections. When you talk about the one stop shop, I don't believe that continuing this path prevents a one stop shop from occurring. Renton & Kent kept the fire marshal function with the RFA and they still have regular relationships with their City.
- Councilmember Lilliquist said this is important for me to hear. We want this transition to be invisible to the customer.
- Councilmember Lilliquist asked: How do we ensure the RFA keeps a tight relationship with the City? How do we recommend this or say they have to keep the relationship?
- Captain Kays said it would mean having someone here in City Hall. Chief Hewett brought up that all these need to be together in order to maintain continuity of management. From preplanning development to roads and hydrants, to systems management and inspections, and education and enforcement, to emergencies and investigations. What are the risks and what is the potential for future ones? Cause of fire?

All the way to building being dilapidated, abandoned and storage of hazardous materials. The way the fire cycle goes and having a person to fill that role is important.

- Chief Newbold asked: How do we ensure efficiency and ease for the customer? The planning committee needs to make statements like that in the plan. Fire inspection services and plans review will incorporate the best interest of the customer. It is important to describe the overall goal of providing service to customer. If tomorrow we were to become an RFA, it's not like we are packing up suitcases and leaving. We will be at our same fire stations, still at City Hall, etc. As far as customers and users, there would be no change on day 1 of the RFA. The City would agree to let them have this office space.
- Councilmember Bornemann asked: What part does the Fire Department play in liquor licenses?
- Chief Hewett said the Fire Department is the only agency that lives through the entire life cycle of a building. The Mayor's Office receives liquor license applications, and then they go to planning, police and fire. If you apply for a liquor license, the Fire Department goes out and looks at the space to make sure it is compliant. In temporary situations, the Fire Department are the ones who have the authority to step in and say "no, this won't work." An example of this is when occupancy is not conducive to the amount of a crowd that will be in attendance. The Fire Marshal takes care of these issues.
- Finance Director Henshaw said it's really unfortunate that Mayor Kelli isn't here. If it is possible, we might postpone this conversation. As we are going through individual items, it's easy to vote on them. Comprehensively, we will come up with a plan. Mayor Kelli wanted to vote on each item as it comes forward, but sometime in the future all of these need to be reconciled to meet all of the concerns of everyone. There are different opinions and different models out there. It needs to be operationally put forth in the plan. Finance gets involved in the business license side. I don't know procedurally what you want to do today but I think we should wait for the mayor. She had intended to be here but was out sick today.
- Councilmember Lillquist said I think it would be fine to wait for Kelli, but I would like to support something in the plan that says the integration of that function needs to be maintained with the City. If that integration is not recommended in the plan, it would be detrimental.
- Chief Hewett asked: From a process standpoint, is this a function of the RFA? If it is, there will be contracts required with the City to do that.
- Councilmember Lillquist said regardless of my opinion of if these things should go with the RFA or not, the integration with the City must be promised.
- Chief Hewett said this meeting is a chance for his team to get feedback from the planning committee and bring something forth when Mayor Kelli is here. First we ask, is this a service provided by the RFA? Then if we develop that it should be contracted, by putting it into the plan, it doesn't ensure that contract until the City and RFA enter into one. The specifics of what measurements the City wants in that contact comes when they negotiate that specific contract. The planning committee only says whether it is an RFA responsibility or not, while the contract is what says the stipulations to the relationship.

Our RFA plan should not be so specific that it binds us to unrealistic expectations. Our RFA plan should not lock us into logistical specifics.

- Councilmember Lillquist said he doesn't want the public to see a diminution of service. In the plan level, he would like to see general statements about integration.
- Finance Director Henshaw said the planning committee needs to look at the pros and cons of different models. What does it look like when the RFA takes certain responsibilities and contracts others with the City? What goal are we trying to achieve and what's the best way to do it?
- Councilmember Bornemann said it is important to keep existing services so that it doesn't make any problems for the customers. If that means having a fire marshal located here and that's how it's being done and it works, then it should remain that way. As long as it doesn't require any more time for customers who come in. Right now the integration is working. If we separate it, what kinds of complaints would we get? This item needs to be further discussed with the Mayor.
- Captain Pethick said we talked a lot about level of service on the Fire Department side. What I'm hearing is that separating would be a decrease in service. I think our team is the best suited for that service. Maintaining a certain level of service depends on the person with the experience doing it.
- Councilmember Bornemann said Chief Hewett's team will answer questions and bring this discussion back when the mayor is back.
- Planning and Community Development Director Sepler said he thinks it's a qualitative issue rather than a functional issue with the customer. The question is the qualitative level of the customer. It's not always a matter of time, it has to do with expertise too.
- Chief Hewett said the planning committee will talk about OEM later because the mayor has interest in this.

4. Issue Paper #10 - Governance - Chief Hewett (10 mins)

Chief Hewett said that his team looked at what kind of governance model they wanted based on South Snohomish RFA's model and they presented a sample transition. He said last meeting they heard some desire of moving to an RFA specific board in the long term. They put together a model that says on day 1 of the RFA we assume a 5-person board, with 3 elected officials from the City and 2 elected from the Fire District. Over a 6-year period, the board would change out appointed folks with directly elected commissioners. This would try to minimize the changeover of appointed people.

- Captain Pethick said there are several examples in the packet handed out at today's meeting.
- Chief Hewett said they wanted to continue the thought process and that his staff is not looking for direction or approval today. He said they wanted to see if the planning committee had any further feedback. What would you like to see? Would you like to see 5 geographic districts? 5 positions that are all at large? Wards and at large? What are your thoughts?

- Commissioner Neher said he doesn't want all 5 commissioners to be from the City and that he wants some from Fire district 8. It wouldn't be fair otherwise.
- Captain Pethick said there were questions specifically asked about proposed language. Built on a four-year transition board, statute 5226 speaks to the number of commissioners. Statute 5214 is the commissioner statute. We can do 5 members, we can do 3, or we can do the Orange County RFA example of 29. Currently, with 5 commissioners, they would represent 18,000 people per district. Legal still wants to look at this language.
- Chief Hewett said we can't do what South Whatcom did because the law has changed. If we divide the area into 5 districts, they have to be based on distribution of people. He said his team will sit down with GIS and start breaking the map into 5 different population areas. There are 7,300 people in Fire District 8. A whole other vote of the people would occur that decides if Fire District 8 goes away or not. All of the commissioner districts then have to be based on population. This could be one of the reasons the RFA would want an appointed board rather than an elected one. The City Council would have a direct hand in the operation of the RFA and the Fire District would have representation on the board as well. People who have gone through this have said that over time, it matters less to have a diverse board.
- Captain Pethick said the paperwork we put together was district only for the primary.
- Councilmember Bornemann said if we did the appointment one, we could end up with a system where the City Council could appoint members and Fire District 8 could appoint members too.
- Chief Hewett said a pro of appointment is that the City has direct representation in the RFA and the fire district maintains representation on board. A con of this could be a councilmember who wears two hats as both a councilmember and an RFA board member. If we are in the representative mode, do we create a larger board now to accommodate the additional board?
- Councilmember Lillquist said 5 directly elected commissioners is the best option in my opinion. Transformation period should include others but after that it doesn't make sense.
- Councilmember Bornemann said if we make this happen and the RFA is created, what financial liabilities for pensions and other things carries over from the City?
- Chief Hewett said that conversation gets us into Issue Paper #8, which is assets and liabilities. This discussion is meant to be an introduction and we are not looking for any discussion on this today. Some of the things that the planning committee needs to start thinking about are ownership of facilities. When the RFA is formed, do the properties titles get turned over to the RFA or do they stay with the City? In the City of Kent, all fire stations went to their RFA, except for the training facility, which was a joint facility that stayed with the City. We could see fire stations going to RFA and City Hall offices staying with the City of Bellingham. All of these things need to be gone through and identified. Do we keep these with the RFA or the City? Just wanted to bring this up for everyone to start thinking about. There was a discussion point about long term implications - could a City of Bellingham elected official also serve on the RFA board?

- Councilmember Bornemann said this time there were different questions that were raised and this gives us more food for thought to further our discussion.
- Councilmember Lillquist asked: Is it easy for finance to separate these things out?
- Finance Director Henshaw said we don't separate out a fire reserve. The fire pension does get separated out, which is delinquent and is not currently funded. For fleet, vehicles are tracked by vehicle and lease model. As a City, we are moving to a rental type model with vehicles. It has been a transition period and now we are trying to catch up. Historically, fleet vehicles were underpaid. There is no reserve specified any longer for that purpose. The mechanic 1 fund is separated out. The general fund is in transition mode with the County and we are waiting for that to be resolved. Charges, assets, buildings and facilities need to be negotiated. We can look at all these pieces individually and then at some point the operating agreement is the driver. It's also going to influence your decision. The costs are driven off of the allocations that will be developed early on next year. There are a lot of moving pieces, and when you look at them all, it may be that they drive different conversations.
- Chief Hewett said as the planning committee says yes to a particular position, it says yes to the direction they want to see the plan going in. By saying yes to a position paper, all it is saying is "in the draft plan, let's see what that looks like."

5. Next Agenda/Date (10 min.)

The next RFA planning committee meeting will be held Monday, October 16th from 3:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. in the Mayor's Boardroom at Bellingham City Hall, 210 Lottie Street, Bellingham.

6. Closing Comments/Adjourn

The RFA Planning Committee adjourned at 5:01pm.