

**City of Bellingham – Fire District 8
Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee
Meeting 9**

Date: Monday, December 18th, 2017

Time: 3:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

Location: Bellingham City Hall - Mayor's Boardroom

Proposed Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes November 27th, 2017
2. RFA districts/ward maps (15 minutes)
3. Needs Statement follow up (10 minutes)
4. Life Safety Division follow up (10 minutes)
5. RFA plan acknowledgement page (5 minutes)
6. Jurisdictional Boundaries follow up (15 minutes)
7. Formation Authority (15 minutes)
8. RFA organizational chart (10 minutes)
9. Future meeting dates (10 minutes)
10. Next Agenda (5 minutes)
11. Closing Comments/Adjourn

The Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee meeting was called to order by Bellingham City Councilmember Terry Bornemann at 3:01 P.M. The meeting was held in the Mayor's Boardroom at Bellingham City Hall, 210 Lottie Street, Bellingham.

Present: Kelli Linville, COB Mayor
Bill Hewett, Assistant Fire Chief
Rob Neher, Fire District 8 Commissioner
Monea Kerr, COB Mayor's Office
Tim Kays, Fire Captain
Terry Bornemann, Bellingham City Council
Michael Lilliquist, 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
Brian Heinrich, COB Deputy Administrator
Ted Carlson, COB Public Works Director
Rob Glorioso, Local 106 President
Chris Behee, COB GIS Analyst

1. Approval of Minutes November 27, 2017

The November 27, 2017 minutes were unanimously approved.

2. RFA districts/ward maps (15 minutes)\

Bellingham Assistant Fire Chief Bill Hewett said there were two different RFA district/ward maps sent to the planning committee and Chris Behee is with us to talk about them today. Today we will look at these two different options and how we distribute wards.

Captain Kays said staff met with GIS Analyst Behee and looked at RCW 29A.76.010, which detailed criteria to follow when putting the map together.

COB GIS Analyst Chris Behee said the maps are similar to city council wards and they follow county precinct boundaries. The RCW stipulates to go for as compact a boundary as you can and to balance the population within each as closely as you can. For these scenarios, there are five wards. Scenario 1 has more geographically compact wards. Scenario 2 has more horizontal banding from north to south. In general, when dividing these up and trying to balance resident population, the north side is relatively high in the Cordata and Bakerview areas. There is a small table on each page that shows the resident population, percent population, number of registered voters, and percent voters for each ward. In Bellingham as a whole, we are dividing up a population of about 94,000 people. With the registered voter information, we wanted to get a sense of how registered voters are distributed throughout the wards. The areas for Scenario 1 have more thought put into them. Scenario 2 takes on a banding approach. There is criteria that says you should have contiguous wards and Scenario 2 violates that to some extent. This can be seen in Ward 2, with the Gooseberry Point and banding in the Barkley area. Scenario 1 is cleaner and adheres to the RCW more closely.

The planning committee discussed the RFA districts/ward maps:

- Councilmember Bornemann said I like the second one. With areas where there is water between the wards, would it be considered contiguous?
- GIS Analyst Behee said there are no significant developments there, so I do not know what the answer is.

- Assistant Chief Hewett said when we formed the South Whatcom RFA, the contiguous question came up. Using lakes or mountain tops, and no man's land is considered contiguous.
- COB Mayor Kelli Linville asked: Was there anything that stood out demographically or economically?
- GIS Analyst Behee said there wasn't a consideration of those when putting together the ward maps. Wards 1 and 2 are lower income based on what we know in Bellingham. Ward 5 is the highest income, with Ward 4 closely behind it.
- Mayor Kelli asked: would Ward 1 have the lower economic potential?
- GIS Analyst Behee said the Lummi area is low income in Ward 1 and Ward 2. Ward 1 and 2 have large housing development opportunities.
- Councilmember Bornemann said I like the first one better. I like them being all together and the numbers of this scenario.
- Fire District 8 Commissioner Roger Buswell said I like Scenario 2, because Scenario 1 puts all five commissioners in Ward 1. Scenario 2 puts two commissioners in Ward 2 and 3 commissioners in ward 1.
- GIS Analyst Behee said these are two scenarios that are building blocks, we could construct a third scenario.
- Mayor Kelli said I understand and appreciate what you are saying. It would be nice to manipulate the numbers. Having been on a redistricting commissioning, I know there is a lot of time that goes into how they divide wards up. The unintended consequences could be anything.
- Commissioner Buswell said three of our commissioners live in the same ward and that is not going to change.
- Councilmember Bornemann said it would be nice for the transition period and would want continuity moving forward. I would be in support of Mr. Behee putting together a third scenario to adjust the boundary in a way so that more commissioners could serve in continuity.
- Mayor Kelli said for the transition, do you have to serve in your district?
- Assistant Chief Hewett said one of the other reasons we liked Scenario 1 was that it follows closer to neighborhood boundaries and fire station response areas. The configuration has a little more attachment to other boundaries we naturally gravitate toward.
- Councilmember Bornemann asked: what should we do? Do we want to set it aside to think about for later?
- Councilmember Lilliquist said I would like to motion to ask Mr. Behee to try for a third scenario with different transitional boundaries.
- Commissioner Buswell said we have three commissioners living in Precinct 134, one living in Precinct 136 and one living in Precinct 133
- GIS Analyst Behee asked: would the direction be to pull Precinct 136 and put it into a different ward? The other ones aren't practical to move.

- Councilmember Bornemann said GIS Analyst Behee will take another look and bring back another option.

3. Needs Statement follow up (10 minutes)

COB Deputy Administrator Brian Heinrich presented the Needs Statement follow up. He said after last meeting, he and Communications Director Vanessa Blackburn looked at the Needs Statement and felt like the overarching need was buried deep within the document. The very first statement in this updated document reflects the desire more. The first section under Backgrounds and Needs states: “Bellingham and the surrounding areas are growing faster than our ability to meet adopted levels of service requirements for fire protection and emergency services. This growth is expected to continue and add increasing pressure on our fire protection and emergency services into the future.” The following parts reflect this first statement. In this updated document, and we also made sure to include the correct name for the proposed RFA.

The planning committee had a discussion on the Needs Statement:

- Councilmember Bornemann asked: Are there any comments on the proposed changes?
- Councilmember Lilliquist said I like the changes. The first sentence makes it seem like an overall growth issue, and it doesn’t specify that we are not meeting our level of service in some areas so it affects other areas. It’s geographic.
- Assistant Chief Hewett would it be simple to change the first word of the second sentence?
- Councilmember Lilliquist said it depends on where there is growth.
- Assistant Chief Hewett said when we talk about the fact that we are deficient in our level of service, it’s because we have grown to this point. That’s why it says “growth adds increasing pressure.”
- Councilmember Bornemann said the needs statement will be going out to the voters, so when we are talking to them about the level of service and growth, I don’t know if there will be much concern about what station needs to go adequately service the other. In terms of talking about it, I don’t know if the average voter is going to care about that.
- Mayor Kelli said the average voter is going to ask if someone is going to come when they call 911.
- Captain Pethick said maybe we should speak to population and the infill that the city does. One thing we’ve talked about is response times downtown being effected. Infill in the city effects this. Including measured growth outward from the city, population or density infill would possibly meet your concerns.
- Deputy Administrator Heinrich asked what if we added the word “where” to the second sentence?
- Councilmember Lilliquist said it has to do with level of service, and how units are pulled out of service in their primary location. This is a “where” issue. Someone might think they are well served when they aren’t after all.

- Assistant Chief Hewett said growth could mean several different things: spread in terms of acreage, vertical growth in population, etc. When you talk about certain areas, it is city wide that we have growth issues. Within six or seven blocks of Station 3, we grew 400 residences overnight. This is growth.
- Councilmember Lilliquist said it's not all about urban expansion.
- Assistant Chief Hewett said location is referring to urban expansion.
- Councilmember Lilliquist said I like Mr. Heinrich's suggestion because it talks about independency.
- Deputy Administrator Heinrich said with that suggestion, the statement would read: "Bellingham and the surrounding areas are growing faster than our ability to meet adopted levels of service requirements for fire protection and emergency services. This growth is expected to continue and add increasing pressure on **where** our fire protection and emergency services into the future."
- Mayor Kelli said we haven't kept up with our level of service. Since we are nitpicking the words, what if we say "have grown" instead of "are growing"?
- Chief Newbold said I am trying to see this from the point of view of location. If we put "where fire stations are located," some of our challenges are actually where fire protection services can be delivered. Somebody may ask "are they wanting to relocate our stations?" We are not. We are asking to add adequate services to our existing locations. Station 3 is one of our areas that is most challenged, but we may or may not be suggesting relocation for Station 3 as of now. This statement makes me think about where our stations are located and that isn't the issue.
- Deputy Administrator Heinrich asked: what if we added "provided"?
- Councilmember Bornemann asked: What do people think about the rest of it?
- Mayor Kelli said it sounds good to me.
- With the above amendments, the statement is as follows:
 - A. Background and Needs
 1. Bellingham and the surrounding areas **have grown** faster than our ability to meet adopted levels of service requirements for fire protection and emergency services. This growth is expected to continue and add increasing pressure on **where** our fire protection and emergency services **are provided** in the future.

Section 1, Background & Needs Statement was unanimously approved as amended.

4. Life Safety Division follow up (10 minutes)

Chief Newbold said his staff has been talking with Mayor Kelli about Life Safety Division, including permitting, plans review, and how the customer can best be served in terms of time and cost. He said staff cannot provide a report until January of next year. Rather than rush a final recommendation or report to this group, he would rather wait.

5. RFA plan acknowledgement page (5 minutes)

Captain Pethick presented the RFA plan acknowledgement page, which is the statement page found in the front of the RFA plan. It details who was on the planning committee and provides and acknowledgment statement with challenges and opportunities.

Councilmember Lilliquist said I would like it to say “city council member” rather than just “council member.”

Chief Hewett said we’ve reached the point we will have a draft of everything except the financial piece.

The RFA plan acknowledgement page was accepted as amended.

6. Jurisdictional Boundaries follow up (15 minutes)

Captain Pethick presented a follow up on Section 4, Jurisdictional Boundaries. He said there are parts of the RCW that need to be addressed.

The planning committee had a discussion on Jurisdictional Boundaries:

- Councilmember Bornemann said if I am a citizen and I no longer have a fire department, I may not want to enact things to help the RFA. If money is lost in annexation, we wouldn’t have fire service hanging around our neck. If we annex it, it will become part of the RFA.
- Assistant Chief Hewett said if the city grows, the RFA grows. The city could annex without having to take into account the RFA’s needs. At the same time, the RFA would have the ability to if they felt that the challenges were insurmountable, the boundary would be reviewed.
- Finance Director Brian Henshaw asked: how much is per RCW and how much is optional? The planning department is doing their Annexation Phasing Plan right now. Have you talked to Planning and Community Development Director Rick Sepler? I would ask that we regroup on this one.
- Assistant Chief Hewett said what is in here is the way that state law lays it out. There is what happens when the City annexes something that is already part of the RFA. In this case, nothing changes essentially because they were already providing service. If the City annexes Yew Street Road, on the day of annexation, the city would go through the public hearing process and if an agreement wasn’t reached, there would be the possibility of the boundary review board. If the City annexes something, it becomes part of the RFA. Other pieces deals with the RFA deciding to annex no man’s land, it’s by the state law which is by property owner’s petition and if accepted, property owners would vote on it. If the RFA wanted to merge with another fire district, the merging district would send their petition to the RFA board. The City’s annexation phasing plan is irrelevant to this, it just deals with annexation eventualities.

- Finance Director Henshaw said we need to incorporate so that we are not crossing purposes with other phasing in existence.
- Councilmember Lilliquist asked: what happens to other agreements when this is in effect?
- Assistant Chief Hewett said this is how the RFA and the city would interact, but it doesn't affect other relationships. Annexed areas become part of the RFA.
- Finance Director Henshaw said we need more time to investigate this. Becomes more complicated. Obligation to mitigate with a different fire district. What about the ???
- Assistant Chief Hewett said the city is the only one that can force the annexation.
- Councilmember Lilliquist said we suffer consequences right now and with the RFA we wouldn't have to suffer them.
- Mayor Kelli said I would like to hear what Rick Sepler has to say.
- Councilmember Bornemann asked: has this been run by City Attorney Peter Ruffato?
- Captain Pethick said I will talk with Peter Ruffato.

Staff will converse with Rick Sepler and Peter Ruffato and bring this item back for follow up.

7. Formation Authority (15 minutes)

Captain Pethick presented Section 3 on Formation Authority, which details the formation authority and what gives the RFA authority. This document is mostly copied from the Renton plan, with Bellingham specifics instead.

Councilmember Bornemann asked: are there any questions or comments? None seen.

Section 3, Formation Authority, was unanimously approved.

8. RFA organizational chart (10 minutes)

Assistant Chief Hewett presented the RFA organizational chart. He said it gives an overview of the proposed organization and what it would look like. This is not all encompassing. Some have specific names and others just have functions listed. Internal services includes the functions that would be lumped together in that division. Items highlighted in yellow include positions that would be new to the fire department.

The planning committee had a discussion on the RFA organizational chart:

- Councilmember Lilliquist said Divisions include positions and titles. The other areas don't indicate a person.
- Chief Newbold said good observation. Some are new positions and others are just functions. Into the future, it is likely that the RFA would not rely on the City for services such as HR. White indicates positions and functions that we already have. We did not assign FTEs yet on purpose. We did not indicate a person representing budget/finance, HR, etc. because there is that initial transition period for three years. The BLS aid cars

equate to 9 FTEs, so we wanted to be very clear about that. We would also be reinstating a training captain. As we transition from being a part of COB to a full RFA, we imagine we would need a more robust IT function and an IT specialist. This is modeled after transitions from other RFAs.

- Mayor Kelli asked: we would be determining the phase in time and the mechanics of what goes in where and when, before?
- Chief Newbold said it is being worked out with Forrest Longman in Finance, and Captain Pethick for budget projections.
- Assistant Chief Hewett said we are not looking for approval of this today. We are showing it to you to get the concept out there. Until we finish the life safety discussion, the internal services group will still be working. The organization is similar to what we are running today.
- Councilmember Lilliquist asked: what kind of detail do we need to map out?
- Assistant Chief Hewett said we need to provide a broad organizational chart for the plan, which is supported by the other parts of the plan. How will we organize to provide these? The plan is for the life of the RFA, but hopefully the FTE count isn't locked in for the life of the RFA. This is one piece that is still a draft. We wanted to take this opportunity to get feedback before we delve deeper. We wanted to show you what we are thinking and where we are headed.
- Assistant Chief Hewett said there are several internal groups working on different pieces of the ILA. Not on the list today is the financial piece. Until we get services questions answered, getting a good financial picture together is hard. I want to see the difference between what will transition now and what will transition later, what the differences are, and concerns that can be built into the solution.
- Chief Newbold said when we refer to staff working on these details. Staff is multidisciplinary. We have had help from IT, Finance, Public Works, Human Resources, etc.
- Mayor Kelli said I don't want to leave the commissioners out.
- Assistant Chief Hewett said those discussions are based off of the transition schedule we spoke about last time. That's where the ILA groups are figuring out nuts and bolts. We will bring this back to talk about later.

9. Future meeting dates (10 minutes)

Assistant Chief Hewett said in order for us to stay on track with our timeline, we are looking at trying to get another meeting in mid-January. We are looking at Friday, January 19th as a possible date.

Finance Director Henshaw said high level planning would work but ILA planning probably wouldn't be ready by then.

Assistant Chief Hewett said we would have a better picture on finance section for the ILA plan.

Councilmember Bornemann said the 19th works for commission members, Michael, myself and Kelli.

The next meeting will be on Friday, January 19th at 3:00 P.M. The following meeting will be on Monday, January 29th at 3:00 P.M.

10. Next Agenda (5 minutes)

For the next meeting, staff will bring more options on ward maps, have jurisdictional boundaries with opinion from Rick Sepler and Peter Ruffato, start on a draft of a financial section, and continue to clean up whatever else is found along the way.

11. Closing Comments/Adjourn

Chief Newbold said he would like to thank you to Captain Tim Kays for his service with us. It is his last meeting. He accepted a job as training division chief in the City of Vancouver.

The RFA Planning Committee adjourned at 4:04 P.M.

Recorded by Monea Kerr.