

## SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

### West Klickitat County Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee

#### I. Call to order.17:00

The City of WS and KCFD3 called their meetings to order.

**Attendance:** Commissioner Montag (Chair), Commissioner Connor (Vice Chair), Commissioner Virts[arrived late] – (Quorum), City Council Members: Jason Hartman, Ben Giant (remote), Jim Ransier- (Quorum).  
Staff/volunteers: Chief Hunsaker (WSFD), Troy Rosenburg (City Manager), Bob Merritt (mHc Associates), Rozalind Plumb (Dist. Secretary), Jennifer McLean (Admin. Assistant), Stephanie Porter (WS Clerk Treasurer), David Shultz (Legal Counsel), Adam Brake (ESFD), Karl Swanson (WSFD), David Swan (WSFD), Eric Bosler (KCFD3), Ron Reynolds (KCFD3), Jeremy Grose (KCFD3), Frank Craft (KCFD3).

#### II. Approval of Agenda

All in favor of the agenda, no objections.

#### III. Business items:

##### A- Appoint Chairperson for WKRFA

1. Discussion: It was agreed that a chairperson would help keep the meetings on track. Jason Hartman volunteered to be the Chair.
2. Action: ***Motion to appoint Jason Hartman as the Chair made by Jim Ransier, seconded by Ben Giant (4 yay, 0 nay) motion passed.***

##### B- Steering Committee

1. Discussion: The group discussed the process and timeline to get the RFA to the voters. The idea of having a steering committee was to ensure the RFA Planning Committee heard from the firefighters. It was determined that a steering committee would be best utilized once the plan is completed. The steering committee to consist of two firefighters (one from each agency) and a member of the task force.
2. Action: ***Motion to bring in the Steering Committee after the plan is completed by the end of June. Made by Commissioner Montag, seconded by Councilperson Ransier, (5 yay, 0 nay) motion passed.***

##### C- West Klickitat Regional Fire Authority Final DRAFT Plan

1. Chief Hunsaker- review of questions submitted to the Consultant Bob Merritt (see attached memo).
  - i. The date the RFA would be in effect can be pushed to 2025, or whatever date is determined.
  - ii. The final RFA Governing Board could be determined within the first two years of the RFA. Initial governing board would be the 3 Fire Commissioners and 2 City Council members. The final RFA could later be a fully elected RFA Governing Board.

- iii. KCFD3 Capital Bond. If KCFD3 was dissolved, then the County could continue to levy the properties within the district.

Bob Merritt stated that the Governing Board must be approved by the committee.  
[Commissioner Virts arrived at the meeting.]

- The spirit of the RFA PLAN is to achieve 3 things.
  - (1) Bring agencies together,
  - (2) Provide a means of representative government
  - (3) Provide dedicated funding for the new entity and the future governing board.Bob Merritt has been involved with many RFA formations and advises strongly against placing too many details in the PLAN as it confines the new governing board in the future when the situation may be very different.
- The plan has been written with simple enabling legislation that mandates the governing board will have a year or two to develop a master and deployment /implementation plan.
- The Plan is designed so that it can be changed as needed. Each section has a mechanism for change.
- Bob presented the planning committee with three questions that may help triage the issues
  - Is this an item/issue that should be in the RFA Plan?
  - Is this an item/issue that should be relegated to the new governance board of the WKRFA?
  - Is this item/issue a policy or operational plan issue? (Should it be determined by the board or by the fire chief?).

#### **Discussion on the makeup of the Governing Board 3:2 or 3:3.**

KCFD3 Commissioners have experience and expertise in Fire District management, Council representatives have many other subjects to navigate. Asset transfer to the RFA is not equal from both agencies.

Perspective on the city taxes. The RFA would be adding a new tax of dedicated funding for fire protection bringing the city effectively from 0 to \$0.76 per \$1000AV. The councilors have concern about equal representation for the jump in funding for the city residents.

Interim governing board could transition to an elected RFA Governing Board later.

Discussion on RFA being one body and all board members to be elected at large. Concern that over time the board could become all city or all rural and not represent the population.

Experience from Bob Merritt indicates that the most popular and proven RFA governing boards are made up from existing elected officials that represent their jurisdictions within the RFA.

#### **Discussion on dissolution of the fire district.**

- The city jurisdiction will still exist. Elected City Council Members will represent the city residents in the RFA.
- KCFD3 jurisdiction will still exist. KCFD3 Commissioners will be elected to represent the district residents in the RFA. KCFD3 Commissioners will also continue to submit certification to levy for the Capital Bond. The district is not passing the Bond to the RFA. KCFD3 residents will continue to pay for the bond. City residents will not be paying for the bond.

#### **Critical questions identified for the Planning Committee**

- Establish governing board
- Establish beginning Levy rate  
Paid positions
- Cap on the levy lid
- Start date

**Start date:**

Discussion on start date and when funding would be available. Each agency will fund themselves for 2024 as usual. Taxes are certified in November and collected beginning January; however, funds are not usually available until April/May. The RFA would use any saved funds for January through April.

***Decision to set the effective date September 30, 2024, operational date January 1, 2025. – All in agreement.***

**Levy Rate:**

A starting Levy rate of \$0.76 per \$1000 AV was agreed as reasonable to achieve the goals recommended by the Task Force (support the volunteer firefighters for training, recruitment, provide community support for prevention and safety education, and set aside funds for replacement of fire engines and equipment).

Discussion on budget and staffing proposals:

- 1 Full Time Fire Chief
- 2 Full time Fire Fighter/EMT (40 hrs. / week)
  - specialize in Training Volunteers,
  - specialize in Prevention and Public Outreach
- 2 Part -Time Administrative staff.

Main station to be in White Salmon – HOWEVER, the Firefighters would be rotating between all stations depending on their duties.

Discussion on the wording to be used in the RFA Plan in section 7. Agreement to having 10% of the levy dedicated to Capital improvements for apparatus, equipment replacement, and facility updates.

Discussion on the Maximum Levy cap. Current Legislation states that an RFA has a levy limit of \$1.50. Committee discussed reducing the lid to \$1.00 with the intent of showing voters the RFA would not have free reign to increase tax to \$1.50 without the vote of the public.

***Committee agreed to a self-imposed cap of \$1.00 to be written into the plan.***

**Governing Board: 3:3 or 3:2**

Discussion on having a 3:3 board or a 3:2 board. If 3:3 the chairperson would not vote. The chairperson would change each year and alternate between City and District each year. The Governing Board can decide the policy for how the board will be run.

***Item tabled for the next meeting.***

**D- Public Hearing Dates:**

1. Discussion

2. Action: **Motion to have the public hearing followed by RFA meeting on July 10<sup>th</sup> made and seconded. No objections – motion passed unanimously.**

#### IV. Public Comment.

**Adam Brake (WSFD):** The fire fighters have been given a survey to complete (9 have submitted so far). There is also a memo summarizing comments that did not fit the survey. He encouraged the committee to consider two key words “Authority and Procedure”. What is the Authority by which you are acting and what is the procedure that you are required to use under that authority? Recommendations for having procedures for input from outside the governing board.

**Dave Swan (WSFD):** Recommended the governing board be representative of areas of the new RFA [voting wards]. Also suggested electing the entire board before the RFA was in effect.

**Karl Swanson (WSFD):** Hopes the governing board is structured fairly for the future, concern about the appearance of an unbalanced board.

**End public comment.**

Noted: Chief Hunsaker will forward the Firefighter survey to the planning committee.

#### V. Next meeting dates:

June 28<sup>th</sup> - WKRFA Planning Committee meeting.

July 10<sup>th</sup> - Public Hearing/WKRFA Planning Committee meeting.

July 19<sup>th</sup> - Present the plan to the White Salmon City Council.

August 1<sup>st</sup> Deadline to submit the ballot measure to the County for the November election.

#### VI. ADJOURN.

**“Motion to adjourn,” made by Commissioner Virts, seconded by Commissioner Connor.**

Meeting adjourned at 19:07 hrs.

APPROVED BY:


Attest:

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Chairman – Commissioner Thomas Montag (date)

  
District Secretary Rozalind Plumb

  
Commissioner Robert Connor

8/10/23  
(date)

  
Commissioner Charles Virts

10 Aug 2023  
(date)