

**Klickitat County Fire District 3 Commissioners Meeting**  
**119 NE Church Street**  
**May 1, 2023, at 1700 (4:30 pm)**

**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING**  
**West Klickitat County Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee**

**Call to order.17:00**

**The City of WS and KCFD 3 called their meetings to order.**

**Attendance**

Commissioner Montag (Chair), Commissioner Connor (Vice Chair), Commissioner Virts – (Quorum),  
City Council Members: Jason Hartman, Ben Giant (remote), Jim Ransier- (Quorum).  
Staff/volunteers: Wes Long (Fire Chief), Rozalind Plumb (Dist. Secretary), Jennifer McLean (Admin.  
Assistant), Bob Merritt (mHc Associates) Chief Hunsaker (WSFD), Stephanie Porter, David Shultz

Approval of agenda – motion to approve agenda as presented made by Commissioner Connor seconded by Commissioner Virts.

Request to move public comment to the beginning made by Councilman Ransier. No objections from KCFD3 commissioners, all council members in agreement – motion carried.

**Public Comment.** Specifically for public to make statements and not for dialogue with the committee.  
Karl Swanson – WSFD volunteer. Reiterated his position that personnel are the primary missing link in an otherwise functioning system. Moving forward we need consolidation. Concern with the rush to get it on the August Ballot. Concern that something may be overlooked in the rush.

Adam Brake – WSFD volunteer- Supporting Karl in trying to understand the strategic objective of this initiative. Has only had the chance to read the previous draft of the plan and the Task Force report. Questions the data on which the committee is making decisions. Highlighted boiler plate language and presumptuous statement that the department is not meeting community needs. He stated that it is not backed up with any survey research, outreach to people that have received services from the department, or any interviews with the firefighters and officers of the departments involved. He also highlighted that SW Fire is not mentioned in the report. [SW Fire consists of WSFD, KCFD3, and Bingen FD]. He requested the committee look to Dispatch for data on the number of emergency vehicles responding to a call. As that data is not reflected in the reports the committee are working off. He suggested that they reconcile their information before building budgets. He also noted that the firefighters have yet to be involved in crafting the documents and putting forth input.

Karl Swanson – Also added that Bingen serves in our cumulative responses and is consistently on scene but not counted in this report.

**Business items:**

A- Formation of WKRFA Plan. Robert Merritt

He noted that other entities were invited to take part but declined. The group was tasked to study the two agencies that were interested based upon outreach to citizens who also did outreach themselves and brought that back to the report.

There have been approximately 14 edits/updates to the WKRFA plan. He proceeded to address each update by page starting at page 5, and included pages 7, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19,24, 29,

Updates addressed funding during the transfer period, transfer of facilities- detailing how to handle the WSFD building which is dual purpose with Public Works. discussion on responsibilities for maintenance and repairs. Committee requested further language for this section that ensures the new governing board clearly address this.

Reminder that this is a skeleton framework for the RFA. The RFA Governing Board with input from the volunteers, will need to create the “master and deployment plan” in the 1<sup>st</sup> year.

Discussion on posting the draft plan as soon as possible to enable public review before the public Comment next week on May 8<sup>th</sup>. There was concern that the draft should be as polished as possible. Given the short timeline it is very important to put the best product before the public to maintain their confidence.

P. 17 - Opening Levy rate. Funded in fiscal year 2024. The levy rate will need to cover four elements; annual operating cost, and put money aside to cover future apparatus, equipment, and facilities replacement costs.

Both Fire Chiefs and staff have looked at the 2022 and 2023 budgets and worked to combine them for a projected draft 2024 budget. Initial draft 2024 Budget was estimated at \$1,303,555,56. The 2024 *draft* budget of \$1,303,555,56, included increased staffing, increased volunteer stipends, and anticipated costs to implement the training, recruitment, and public education programs. The Apparatus, Equipment and Facilities funds are to cover current unfunded liabilities to replace items. The annual amount to be set aside each year for replacement funds was calculated based on the current age of the item, the anticipated life expectancy, current market replacement cost and anticipated future cost.

	Rate/1000
1. 2024 Annual operating costs (\$1,303,555.56)	0.91
2. Apparatus replacement costs	0.53
3. Equipment replacement costs	0.15
4. Facilities replacement costs.	0.08
<b>total</b>	<b>1.67</b>

2023 combined WSFD & KCFD3 2023 budgets (\$92,530.00 and \$528,664.11) total \$621,194, at \$0.76 per \$1000AV. This does not adequately cover unfunded liabilities. It was noted that KCFD3 has consistently set aside 5% annually towards future needs and has been able to set aside enough to purchase a new fire engine in 2024.

Discussion on the anticipated replacement costs being \$0.76 per \$1000 AV and estimated operating costs including full time staffing being \$0.91/ \$1000 AV, giving a total of \$1.67/\$1000AV. The maximum an RFA can levy is \$1.50 per \$1000AV.

Discussion on including interest earned on savings to offset the increased inflation of future costs

Discussion by the committee on what would be an acceptable levy rate to voters. \$1.50 was not viewed as an acceptable levy rate and committee requested further review to find a reduced levy rate. The unfunded liabilities could be reduced by economies of scale in the future and reduce liability. There was consensus to meet the task force recommendations for operations and training, and retention. The goal is to get under one management system. The facilities are in good condition and annual savings could be put toward the liabilities.

Committee agreed to a levy rate of no more than \$1.05/\$100 AV. There was still concern that it is a lot to ask for most families. It was noted that \$1.05 can be posted in the DRAFT plan and can be changed before it becomes final.

It was also noted that the future increases to the annual levy are only 1% per year, so the levy rate usually reduces while inflation increases. The City of White Salmon currently has a property tax of \$0.76 per \$1000, while the City of Goldendale is \$2.83. With the \$1.05 that increases the City of White Salmon property tax to \$1.81.

Staff to address the budget to meet a reduced initial levy rate.

Discussion on the timeline to go to the vote on August 1 requires the plan to be submitted to the county auditor by May 12, 2023, to get on the ballot. If successful in an August Vote, the RFA could be in effect on September 30, 2023, and be able to collect levy funds beginning January 2024 (taxes are received in April/May and November). If waiting until November election, the RFA would be in effect on January 1, 2024, but taxes would not be collected until 2025. This would leave the RFA having to fund operations for a year using the reserve funds both entities bring to the RFA.

Consensus was to make the draft plan available for public review and public comment. The draft plan will have a \$1.05 levy rate. The dollar amount can still be adjusted before the plan is finalized.

#### **B- Appointment of Pro and Con Committees**

As part of the election process, it is advised to have committees write an explanation of benefits and drawbacks of the ballot measure. KCFD3 was able to gather response for a pro committee and on 4/27/2023 appointed a 'pro committee roster' consisting of Alison Hennessy, Eric Wilson, and Chris Wiggins.

The 3 WKRFA members from White Salmon City Council approved the appointment of the pro committee roster.

***Motion made by Councilman Hartman, seconded by Ransier (3 yay – motion carried).***

Con Committee – There has been no response to date for a con committee.

#### **Next steps:**

The updates made today (5/1/2023) to the draft plan will be available and posted for public review on 5/2/2023.

**May 8<sup>th</sup>** -Public Hearing for the committee to receive input from the public on the plan. Following the Public input, the committee will need to take action to either approve or reject the RFA Plan. If approved the plan will be sent to the full City Council and the KCFD3 board for approval to place on the ballot.

**May 10<sup>th</sup>** -Joint meeting with City Council and KCFD3 to review and approve the plan.

ADJOURN.

*"Motion to adjourn," made by Councilman Hartman, seconded by Commissioner Montag.*

Meeting adjourned at 19:30 hrs.

APPROVED BY:

Attest:

*Thomas Montag 6/8/23*  
Chairman – Commissioner Thomas Montag (date)

*Rozalind Plumb*  
District Secretary Rozalind Plumb

*Robert Connor 6/8/23*  
Commissioner Robert Connor (date)

*Charles Virts 8 June 2023*  
Commissioner Charles Virts (date)