

**Whatcom County Fire District #4
Whatcom County Fire District #21
Station 61 – Blaine
9408 Odell Street, Blaine WA 98230
7:00 pm
June 15, 2017
Special Joint Fire Commissioners Meeting – Consolidation**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bosman called the joint Whatcom County Fire District #21 and Whatcom County Fire District #4 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for June 15, 2017 to order at 7:02 p.m. at Station 61 – 9408 Odell Street, Blaine, WA 98230.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Attendees: Chairman Rich Bosman, Vice-Chairman Larry McPhail, Commissioners Dean Berkeley and Bruce Ansell; Fire Chief William Pernet; Assistant Chief Joe Noonchester; Division Chief Henry Hollander; Attorney Seth Woolson.

District #4 Attendees: Chairman Harry Andrews and Commissioner Mary Beth Neal.

Chairman Bosman announced that Commissioner Crawford requested to be excused due to a family illness.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

NEW BUSINESS

- **Inter-Local Agreement for Fire and Emergency Services:** Commissioners from both D#21 and D#4 reviewed and discussed the current inter-local agreement for fire and emergency services as required.

Chief Pernet shared information regarding potential future annexations by the City of Bellingham in the District #4 area. Handouts were also distributed showing the City of Bellingham's urban growth area (UGA) and annexation history. The City of Bellingham can only annex within their UGA. The potential annexation is approximately sixty five acres which starts on the south side of Mt. Baker Hwy, goes all the way to Britton Rd., covering the Hillside Estates and other property to the west. The area encompasses accounts for approximately twenty five million dollars of assessed value in the District #4 area (close to 2%) and will not trigger the mitigation clause in the 1997 agreement as a financial impact. Chief Pernet recently attended a meeting with the Bellingham Fire Department Chief to discuss the probability of the citizen driven annexation and its impacts to both departments. Additional discussions with the BFD and the City of Bellingham including annexations, mitigation and how to serve the area

better are probable. Chief Pernet expects to have additional information the week of June 19, 2017. Chief Pernet requested that both districts consider the information as they ponder future mergers or a regional fire authority (RFA) together or separately. At this point Chief Pernet recommended both districts continue with the consolidation for the next year, until they see how the future plays out.

Commissioner Berkeley recalled past conversations regarding the concern about how much the City of Bellingham will annex in the District #4 area and questioned why the districts would continue to move forward with a merger or RFA.

Commissioner Ansell asked how much in total of District #4's area has been annexed by the City of Bellingham. Chief Pernet has begun the complicated process of figuring out how much District #4 has already been annexed. The 1997 agreement states that once the City of Bellingham has annexed sixty percent of District #4s area they city must acquire the entire district. Chief Pernet noted that there are differences of opinion regarding the intent of the statement. Cumulatively if annexations in a five year timeline reach a total five percent of the assessed evaluation, the City is required to meet with the district to discuss financial impacts. The proposed annexation is under two percent. Chief Pernet also pointed out that the City of Bellingham is not aggressively looking for annexations.

Commissioner Andrews announced that Commissioner Ness plans on discussing his research of RFA's during the upcoming District #21 July meeting.

Commissioner Neal noted that during the recent District #4 meeting it was discussed to keep on working together and proceed with caution. The concern would be that if the two district's merge it could open the door for the City of Bellingham to annex more of the combined districts with little chance of ever hitting the sixty percent threshold. If however the districts formed a RFA they would become their own taxing district and annexations would affect them differently.

Commissioner Ansell requested information regarding the inter-local agreement. The current inter-local agreement is automatically renewed yearly. District #4 pays twenty five percent of the District #21 budget, minus the District #4 transport and rental fee revenue. It would take one year to separate if either district makes the decision to terminate the contract.

Commissioner Ansell requested information regarding the District #4 budget and expenses. The budget consists of the quarterly payments to District #21, bond payments for Britton Loop Station 12 and one apparatus, minor capital expenses, burn tower upgrades, commissioner pay and attorney fees. Commissioner Ansell requested a copy of the District #4 budget book. Both budgets can be found in each commissioner's budget book.

Commissioner Neal emphasized that both districts have worked and grown well together and agree that this is the future of fire service.

Chairman Bosman restated that the consensus is to continue with the agreement with the freedom to have discussions and make changes at a later date. In addition, Chairman Bosman stated that both Boards will do what's best for their constituents.

Chief Pernet reiterated that an auto aide agreement should still proceed with the City of Bellingham regardless of any annexations.

Commissioner Ansell noted that one of the issues the district agreed was important to explore as a result of the strategic planning session is mergers and consolidations. This committee made up of mainly commissioners, will be a good place to continue RFA and merger discussions.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chairman McPhail moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ansell and approved 4-0.

Harry Andrews, Chair

Kris Parks, Board Secretary