

**Whatcom County Fire District #4  
via Zoom Meeting  
4142 Britton Loop, Bellingham, WA 98226  
12:00 p.m.  
February 9, 2023  
Board Work Session**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Lann called the special Whatcom County Fire District #4 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for February 9, 2023, to order at 11:00 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Attendees: Chairman Steve Cooley; Vice-Chairman Tim Johnson; Fire Commissioner Mark Lann; Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen; NWFR Chairman Bruce Ansell; Consultant Liz Loomis and A.J. Chippendale.

With the rescission of Proclamation 20-28, the district continues to do its best to provide accommodations to the public. A direct link allowing the public to participate in the meeting during the public comment section was included on the meeting agenda and posted on the District's website.

**WELCOME**

Consultant Liz Loomis welcomed everyone to the meeting. The District 4 Board has hired Liz Loomis Public Affairs to assist with providing information to the public regarding the future of the fire district and assisting with a future levy lid lift.

Liz Loomis reviewed the topics discussed during a communications planning call on Thursday, January 12, 2023. Topics included key messages, communications plan, letter disbursement, public meeting dates, news releases, citizen participation via committee, and website and Facebook announcements.

This was not a special meeting, as only one Board member attended.

**Letter to the Public:** A concern was expressed regarding the letter's readability. Chairman Cooley indicated that he wanted to be part of reformatting the letter and having the Board review his formatting changes during the upcoming regular board meeting. Any changes will be shared with Liz Loomis. Vice-Chairman Johnson noted that he was pleased with the letter and suspects it is close to being completed. Vice-Chairman Johnson requested that the district's attorney review the letter before it is disseminated to the public.

The letter is from the District 4 Board to District 4's customers residing in their response area.

**Communications Plan:** Liz Loomis shared a communications plan and timeline, which included general consulting, paid communications, earned media, social media, owned media, public outreach, and events.

**Letter Mailing:** Liz Loomis discussed when and how the planned letters would be disseminated to the targeted public in a timely and guaranteed manner. Only one of the letters can be targeted to the levy lid lift. The remaining letters are expected to be more general and discuss the current state of the district and potential consequences if the levy fails.

A longstanding and reliable company will do the letter printing and mailing out of Skykomish.

The letter is expected to be mailed out hopefully by the end of February.

**Public Outreach and Events:** The Board members and the Fire Chief will communicate directly with all households in the response area through various avenues, including special community meetings at three specific demographic areas. An invitation to all constituents will be invited to a Board meeting where the resolution to move forward with a levy lid lift is considered. Additional meetings will then be held at the three specific demographic areas to answer questions regarding the ballot measure.

Liz Loomis will create a PowerPoint and supporting factual documentation for all public outreach.

A training session is expected to be conducted for the Board and the Fire Chief, in March, before any public meetings and again once the ballots have been sent. This way, everyone involved is clear about the message being disseminated to the public. The District 21 Board and their emergency personnel, and the labor group will be kept up to date with District 4's development, so everyone receives and disperses the same message.

The district can educate but not advocate. However, the labor group may choose to conduct a private campaign to advocate for the levy, with which the Board cannot collaborate.

**Public Meeting Locations and Dates:** Possible meeting locations include Britton Loop Station 12, the Rome Grange on the Mt. Baker Highway, and by the lake in a private home.

It was suggested that the dates be spread out between seven working days in mid-March. Chief Van der Veen will contact the Rome Grange to determine the availability. The Britton Loop Station 12 meeting room can be scheduled for an evening or Saturday meeting. A private home meeting will be scheduled based on what works best for the homeowner and their neighbors.

It was clarified that once the levy lid lift is placed on the ballot, the district must advertise for a pro and con committee. Their statements will be inserted into the voter's pamphlet. As a result, some members supporting the district will also want to play a more significant role in assisting the district at meetings, the pro committee, hosting educational meetings, and individual campaigning.

**News Release:** Once the letter has been distributed, a news release will be drafted, inviting the public to attend the meetings for additional information. A template will be sent out to the Board for review. A media list has also been created regarding where to send the news

release. Community contacts such as churches, granges, and other organizations that may circulate a newsletter will also be added.

**Citizens on Committee:** It was proposed prior that the Board select one citizen from each of the three demographics to participate on a committee and be a part of the process. Liz Loomis provided some names that had been suggested, although more are still necessary. Community member participation provides a welcome and unique perspective to the group.

**Website:** The District 4 website will also be updated as needed with specific information regarding what plans are being considered and news articles. Liz Loomis will provide the draft text for review. The information will be added to the website before the community letter is received. There is a link on the North Whatcom Fire and Rescues' webpage to District 4's webpage.

**Social Media/Facebook:** Knowing that District 4 does not have a Facebook following, the district will partner with North Whatcom Fire and Rescue to share pertinent information and news media links monthly on their Facebook page. The hope is that the Local will also post the information on their Facebook page. Chief Van der Veen will forward the Local's contact information to Liz Loomis.

A map will be included in the first release outlining District 4's response area and the boundaries between the districts.

**New Business:** Chief Van der Veen recently talked with a local radio station interested in covering the District 4 and North Whatcom Fire and Rescue story. They also partner with Cascadia Daily News which recently dispersed a news article regarding the failure of the District 21 levy in 2022. Chief Van der Veen will forward the information to Liz Loomis to be added to the media list. Local area newspapers will also be included.

It is anticipated that there will be confusion regarding the recent approval of the Whatcom County EMS levy. Information will be included regarding the passing of the recent Whatcom County EMS Levy in the list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) for the website and other messages. Rising property values education will also be provided along with how the district is actually funded.

#### **FOLLOW UP ITEMS**

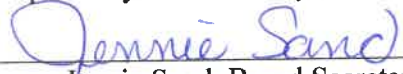
- Revise Key Messages and community plan
- Revise community draft letter
- Confirm dates and locations for public meetings
- Coordinate mailing timeline and production
- Lakeside Citizen contact information for committee
- Draft and revise press release
- Add community contacts to media list
- Share committee contact invitations
- District 4 web access
- Draft website text
- Provide NWFR with social media updates

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 2, 2023, @ 12:00 p.m. via Zoom. SPECIAL MEETING

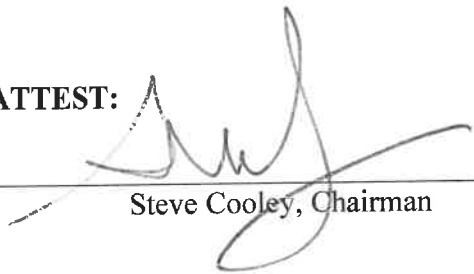
**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** There being no further business, Chairman Cooley moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:13 p.m. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Johnson and approved 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

  
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Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

**ATTEST:**

  
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Steve Cooley, Chairman

  
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Tim Johnson, Vice-Chairman

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Mark Lann, Commissioner

  
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Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief