

**Whatcom County Fire District #4
4142 Britton Loop, Bellingham, WA 98230
12:00 p.m.
March 16, 2026
Regular Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Cooley called the regular Whatcom County Fire District #4 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for March 16, 2026, to order at 12:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Attendees: Chairman Steve Cooley; Vice-Chairman Tim Johnson (Zoom); Fire Commissioner Mark Lann (Zoom); D21 Commissioner Bruce Ansell (Zoom); Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen; Deputy Fire Chief Tony Melillo.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) February 12, 2026
2. Staff Reports – Chief / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
 - a) Total Revenues – January \$3,000.50
 - b) Total Revenues – February \$50,014.09
 - c) Total Expenditures – March \$2,192.86
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) Monthly Expenditure Payroll Voucher: \$644.00
 - b) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$1,548.86

MOTION: Vice-Chairman Johnson moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lann and approved 3-0.

Chief Van der Veen provided highlights in the chief's report.

Chief Van der Veen recently met with Chief Hewitt and Bellingham Senior Planner Chris Behee separately to discuss annexation issues affecting both D21 and D4, as well as the revision of the 1997 Agreement. He confirmed that the Northern Heights Annexation has been classified as “wait and see” pending the outcome of several major public works projects that the county needs to complete first. There was also discussion regarding the Bellingham Comp Plan and the proposed extension of the Urban Growth Boundaries.

Chief Van der Veen mentioned that the city has been continually cutting programs to fund public safety. As a result, the City of Bellingham is considering forming a Regional Fire Authority with District 8 to sustainably finance the fire department in the future.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Station 12 Britton Loop Drill Ground Project Update: Chief Melillo provided an update on the Britton Loop drill ground project. Due to an unexpected issue and potentially costly repair of the Britton Loop training room HVAC system, the project has been placed on hold pending the Board's recommendation.

Additionally, Chief Melillo has asked for another local contractor to review the paving project before making a final decision on its scope.

More information will be provided during the April meeting.

D4 Engine Purchase: Chief Van der Veen provided information on the Pierce engine purchase agreement included in the board packet. The attorney's favorable opinion on the agreement was also included.

Chief Van der Veen noted that this purchase would be completed through a purchasing cooperative, which is legally defensible and quite common in government agencies. Additionally, this type of purchase often results in the lowest bid for a large capital purchase.

Once ordered, the estimated delivery period is 18 to 24 months. The cost is just over one million dollars.

Chief Van der Veen reviewed the cost and payment options of the new engine. He recommended the 50% payment option when the engine is 80% complete. This will provide up to a \$10,000 savings.

It was noted that using the purchasing cooperative is more efficient for staff and incurs no additional costs.

The engine will be stationed at Britton Loop Station 12 and will support the entire operations of both districts.

Chief Van der Veen noted that an apparatus replacement plan was submitted to the District 21 Board during their February meeting. The plan details a substantial capital expenditure to replace all apparatus in the future, contingent upon the approval of the August levy lid lift. Chief Van der Veen also mentioned that a single engine, matching the District 4 engine, will be purchased regardless.

MOTION: Chair Cooley moved to authorize Chief Van der Veen to proceed with purchasing the engine as per the bid proposal from Pierce and Hughes Fire Equipment. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Johnson and approved 3-0.

NEW BUSINESS

D21 Board Highlights: Chairman Cooley attended the February 19 District 21 meeting via Zoom. The majority of the meeting was dedicated to discussion regarding the upcoming levy lid lift request. Two different rates (\$1.10 and \$1.20) are being considered by the District 21 Board.

District 21 Chairman Ansell stated that during the February meeting, the board discussed the costs of maintaining District 21, including station repairs and upgrades, apparatus replacement, and salaries. Even if a \$1.20 levy is approved, the district will still need to seek additional funding in the future.

Britton Loop Training Room HVAC: Chief Melillo emphasized the challenges and costs associated with repairing the HVAC system. It was noted that the rest of the building's system is functioning, and the air conditioning in the training room continues to work. However, once the furnace is replaced, which will alter the refrigeration systems, the air conditioning will also need to be replaced.

Once ordered, the parts needed to repair the system will take between 12 and 18 weeks to arrive.

The plan is to go out to bid to get the most efficient and best-performing system. Additional information will be provided at the April meeting.

Commissioner Lann stated that the Britton Loop Station is the "crown jewel" of the district. He highlighted the importance of keeping the Britton Loop Station and training grounds appealing for long-term use by visitors and a wide range of business activities. The board and chiefs agreed.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Eric T. Quinn, P.S. re: Engine bid

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **April Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners plan to attend the April 13 Board Meeting.

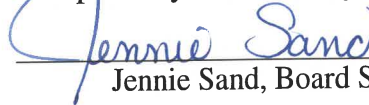
AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Training Ground Project Update
- HVAC

ADJOURNMENT

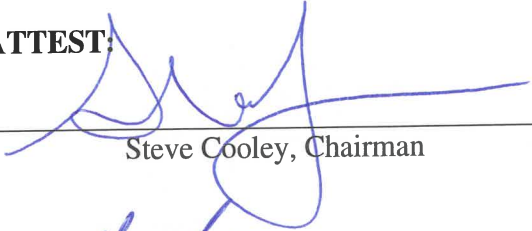
The meeting was adjourned at 12:33 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Jennie Sand, Board Secretary


ATTEST:



Steve Cooley, Chairman



Tim Johnson, Vice-Chairman



Mark Lann, Commissioner



Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief