

King County Fire Protection District No. 27

Minutes

A special meeting of the Board of Commissioners of King County Fire Protection District No. 27 was held on June 29, 2018 at Station No. 271 located at 4301 334th PL SE in Fall City, Washington.

Chairperson Hansen called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

Present:

Chairperson Hansen
Commissioner Hollis
Commissioner Meredith via phone
Chief Connor
Secretary Wall

In Attendance:

Lt. LeDoux	Chief Clark	Kevin Hauglie	Cody Turcotte
Lt. Koehnen	FF Hansen	Laurie Hauglie	
FF Bandy	FF Yancey	Nick Martindale	
FF Fleming	Mike Halim	Nick Miller	
FF Jessen	Dave Hart	Nancy Moore	

BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR:

Public Comments:

Dave Hart addressed the Board and stated that the information at the Open House was uninformative and the posters were hard to understand. He stated that having a public meeting today at 9:30 a.m. on a Friday does not provide an opportunity for people who work during the day to come. He is not in favor of doing anything other than remaining a stand-alone department. The Board has not explained enough information to the public. In three years the District will be celebrating its 75th anniversary, the fire engine will be paid off, and the bond debt will be paid off, the district will be in a good position. He asked why the Board has not hired another career firefighter. He understands the career firefighter's position, more money, and more opportunities. The 77% percent of taxpayers who will save money, bothers me; the general area in town, their taxes are going up with the fire benefit charge (FBC), people with bigger houses with a million or more will get the biggest tax cuts, it's not right. I am for the fire department; I am not for the unknown. I have great respect for the Fire Chief and he and this department deserve better.

Kevin Hauglie addressed the Board and stated that in his tenure of 25 years working as a volunteer firefighter and later as a commissioner, this is not an easy decision. The conveyance of information needs to be unbiased. The factual information did not include the volunteer piece that with them there may be 3 or 4 on duty at night. The EMT training and firefighters' basic essentials firefighting training, is it not the same for volunteers and career firefighters? Taxation change to a FBC model; you need to get the information out, where people can get their tax information, and there needs to be clarity of the facts, so that the people get all of the information.

Cody Turcotte addressed the Board and stated that the timeline allows for education for citizens. We need to do what is good for the community, educate concurrent for a November timeline, then allow the citizens to vote or not. An average of 7.8% increase for the firefighters, plus full benefit package, seniority crosses over, overtime opportunities and the potential of hiring of more people. When I worked here if the M&O levy didn't pass, we had the potential of having 2 firefighters laid off. Now this opportunity presents a stable funding model for the future of our district and firefighters. The volunteers are a huge thing, they are a valuable asset and we've invested much in our district, but there is a difference between a career firefighter versus a volunteer in service coverage.

FF Josh Yancey addressed the Board and stated that as a former resident, volunteer firefighter and career firefighter. I started as a volunteer, and value them, and without apology I would have 3 career over 2 career plus 1 volunteer. Training is different; after working over 300 hundred e-shifts, and then going to the full time training academy, there are a lot of things you bring back with you, experiences and training you didn't have before. The volunteers are here to support the career staff. And hiring 1 additional firefighter would not guarantee 3-person 24-7 career staffing.

Lt. Patrick LeDoux addressed the Board and stated that I go back 19 years, worked with Kevin and Dave and more. It's not about the money, Eastside just signed a new contract and the Fall City Local in their last contract; stayed at around 2% per year, which was low to where we probably should be today. If we merge even with seniority, there are uncertainties and risks for us. A year ago we had the



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volunteer/employee survey and identified issues, six months ago we put a group of stakeholders together formed a committee and have since held 15 plus meetings and the committee moved forward and provided good information to the Board. Since then it appears that we are dragging our feet. There were meetings scheduled on 7/16 and 7/24 to receive public input, and then they were postponed. The committee worked hard, we put the pro's / cons together provided it to the Board. The information needs to be more clear, we need transparency to the facts that 77% of the taxpayers in Fall City will see their taxes go down and services go up for everyone. In addition staffing and training increases. There have been a lot of social media posts with misinformation being circulated. The Board needs to present the facts.

Laurie Hauglie stated that there is a lack of information in the community about the merger and she received the tax information from Melinda on their properties, and they will have increased taxes. She asked if the FBC model could be put on the website or made available so that citizens can find out. Chief Connor stated that citizens can call us and get their tax information; we are not able to provide it on our website.

Lt. Ledoux stated that they are willing to have a conversation and its incumbent of the Board to provide direction to the Chief. The information that we would have 3-person career staffing, a dedicated training officer, a battalion chief, service delivery would be increased. He encouraged the Commissioners to make a decision.

Nancy Moore addressed the Board and asked what happens with the fire station, the equipment, and personnel. Chief Connor replied that the building and all assets will transfer to District 10. All existing employees will be transferred to the new agency and terminated from District 27. Fire District 27 will cease to exist. Chief Connor discussed the reserve equipment and it may be housed elsewhere. He discussed that with a larger agency you would not need reserve apparatus at each station. The bond payments will end in 2021 and the citizens who voted on the bond would continue to pay it. The operational dollars would be transferred. Nancy asked if the new fire engine would stay in Fall City. Chief Connor replied most likely or there would be a comparable engine here.

Mike Halim addressed the Board and stated that he just heard of today's meeting from Laurie and as a member of the public he would have attended previous meetings if he knew about the issues. The information needs to get to the public, to your customers.

Aaron Hansen addressed the Board and stated that he has been a volunteer here for 11 years, and is committed to the fire department. There is a difference in volunteers vs career firefighters. What I want is what is best for the community and personally even if the volunteer program goes away I'm in favor of having 3-person career firefighter staffing. Lt. LeDoux commented that the volunteer program could continue.

Nancy Moore asked about the 4 options. Chief Connor discussed the options under consideration and provided a brief summary; stay as an independent agency, join EFR as a partner, merge with District 10, and partnership with Snoqualmie which has several sub-options.

Chairperson Hansen stated that she feels it is important to get the information out to the community. There have been committee meetings; we have presented information. A lot of people would like to keep things the same but when you look at the options merging with District 10 presents there are a lot of benefits to the community.

Commissioner Hollis stated that he wants to see this process slow down, it feels as though I have been pushed in a corner to get this merger done. To me 2020 is the real deadline, when the M&O levy expires. He suggested that both issues; a merger / and an M&O levy could be put on the ballot for the voters.

Chairperson Hansen asked do we want to wait and miss this opportunity to provide better service at a savings. Commissioner Hollis replied that we are not failing to provide good service and our firefighters are doing a good job out there.

Commissioner Meredith stated that these are good options, he is not indifferent to one or the other, it's an opportunity for the district to look at these options. We need to take more time getting information out. He also stated that the previous meeting dates were adjusted by the Board in response to the public input we received at the open house.



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At 10:22 am Commissioner Meredith had to hang up from the meeting.

Kevin Haugle asked if the utilization of a FBC was related to any wage increase. Chief Connor replied that it was not. The FBC is a different taxing structure that District 10 has. Currently Fire District 27's levies total \$1.67 and the fire benefit charge equivalent would be \$1.54 this year and even a little less for Fall City taxpayers at \$1.51.

Nick Miller addressed the Board and stated he is a resident of Fall City and asked is the Board telling me that I have to wait to get the benefit of increased services and decreased taxes. I don't think that these meetings will get the information out. In my opinion I take offense that the taxpayers would have to wait for this. Additionally adding one career firefighter doesn't get us to the service level of 3-person career staffing 24-7.

Commissioner Hollis stated that from day one the push has been to do the merger, yes we need to get the information out to the community, even the Board has had to digest all of the information. If you throw it out there right now it could be very challenging. He also stated that we have meetings scheduled to continue to get the information out to the community. Nick Miller commented that he sees information being put out on social media that's confusing the community; to him from the four options it's obvious which one is right.

Dave Hart commented that the elderly citizens of the community are not going to go on social media to get their information, they will vote no if they don't understand. You need to provide some informational flyers.

Lt. LeDoux stated we owe it to District 10 to make a decision. Commissioner Hollis stated that he prefers having a stand-alone department with a Chief and Secretary in the building, and continue to work with our neighboring fire departments, and yes I would like to have tax savings.

Chief Clark addressed the Board and stated that he has been involved in the discussions for the past year and with the social media blow up last night and the misstatements, I thought it was important to come and share that Fire District 10/ EFR is not here to take over. I see that there are long-time members and there have been old issues between the agencies. What is new is how EFR conducts business; we have one perspective as a collective partnership. M&O levies can be difficult to pass, and when we saw some benefits in a merger for both agencies, we brought forth the proposal. Fire districts benefit from economy of scale, the EFR Board has five political entities that make up EFR, and it's the most cost effective fire agency in the County. Fire District 10 has come into this with good faith and have held positions open for Fall City personnel.

Dave Hart asked about the suggestion that a medic unit would be in Fall City. Chief Clark briefly discussed the County's medic system and cost to add an additional unit which is governed by the County's system. Currently there is no commitment from the county on adding another unit, though the Novelty Hill / Fall City area has been pushed as a potential area for another unit. Chief Clark also discussed a battalion chief position in Fall City which has been proposed by EFR and also that the Fall City identity would remain on the building and on the apparatus. He invited anyone who had further questions to come and talk with him.

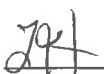
Nick Martindale addressed the Board and asked about the timeline of a ballot measure. Discussion ensued about the February election. Commissioner Hollis was concerned that a failed measure in February could bring about issues with future M&O levy requests.

Chief Clark stated that from a business perspective keeping to a timeline is important, the financial benefit that is here now could be different in a year. Currently EFR is preparing two budgets one including District 27 and we have been holding two positions open and the longer this goes on the more difficult it will be for us to do this. He suggested that at the very least the Board should render a decision. There is a 4-6 month process to put this on the ballot and if the Board makes a decision it will bring clarification to the public and then the Board could continue to educate the public.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

District 10 Financial Consolidation Model

Chief Connor provided documents outlining the timeline and process for a fire district merger. He reported on the Boundary Review Board (BRB) process which can take up to 165 days. He discussed who could



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invoke jurisdiction; a nearby city, another district, or a citizen petition from D10 or D27 with 5% of the registered voters. He discussed the SEPA – environmental review, the King County Councils review, and the preparations of resolutions by both districts. Chief Connor discussed the August 1st timeline and the effect on the tax rolls. If the merger was not complete by August 1, 2019 then the fire benefit charge method of tax collection would not be effective until the 2020 tax roll for collection in 2021, thus eliminating the projected savings of approximately \$250,000. The District would continue to collect the regular levy plus 1%, and new construction, and the excess levy would also be collected.

Chief Connor reported that if the Board is looking at a February or April election timeline we need to start the BRB process, in addition to the SEPA filing and working on new legal descriptions for the combined district. In addition the BRB process requires advance courtesy notification. Chairperson Hansen asked if District 10 has to do any of these filings. Chief Connor replied that they may have to do a SEPA filing as well. Chief Connor stated that we will have to hire out some of these items and have a team of people working on it. The Board discussed the pros/ cons of a February election vs an April election. Chairperson Hansen stated that if we file with the BRB on August 24th and if we were in the 45 day window for invoking jurisdiction and no one else invoked jurisdiction then the February 12, 2019 election is possible. Chief Connor stated that it would be.

Chief Connor asked the Board if they would like to remove the EFR partnership (option 2) from the choices, since it costs more and there have been no formal discussions with EFR concerning a partnership. Chairperson Hansen discussed also removing the fourth sub-option of option 4 with Snoqualmie. Commissioner Hollis stated that he would like to keep it open. After further discussion the Board decided to wait and provide Commissioner Meredith the opportunity to provide his input on the Snoqualmie option at the next meeting.

Commissioner Hollis moved to take the EFR partnership, option 2, off the list of considerations. Chairperson Hansen provided a second. Motion Carried.

Chief Connor reviewed the merger timeline with the Board and stated that District 27 would need to draft a resolution to petition to merge with District 10. District 10 would need to respond to our resolution with their resolution approving the merger. Another Resolution would be drafted and sent to the BRB for filing. The SEPA document would also be adopted by the Board prior to filing with the BRB. Chief Connor requested direction from the Board if he should start the process of gathering information for the initial steps in the merger timeline.

After a lengthy discussion the Board authorized Chief Connor to expend some funds and start the process of gathering the information to draft the resolutions needed, prepare the SEPA document, initiate the preparation of the legal descriptions and other items that need to occur.

Commissioner Hollis stated that he would like Commissioner Meredith present to discuss further and formally vote on the merger process.

A special meeting is scheduled to occur in conjunction with the July 24th open house / town hall meeting. Chairperson Hansen requested scheduling another meeting when Commissioner Meredith could be available prior to July 24th.

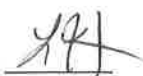
FF Jessen stated that he would like to put the dates of the Commissioner meetings out on the District's facebook page and also suggested doing an event (ad) for a few dollars which could target about 1,050 followers. It was also suggested that the Committees presentation could be posted on the facebook page.

Lt. LeDoux addressed the Board and asked if the Board would consider hiring another career firefighter. Chairperson Hansen stated that the request could be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

OTHER:

Chief Connor reminded the Board that the Volunteer Recruit graduation is scheduled for Thursday, July 12th at 7:00 p.m. The special meeting with Snoqualmie is scheduled for Monday, July 16th at 10:00 a.m. and the open house / town hall meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 24th from 6:00-8:00 p.m.




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Adjournment:


With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Hansen at 11:54 a.m.

Attest:
Melinda Wall
Board Secretary

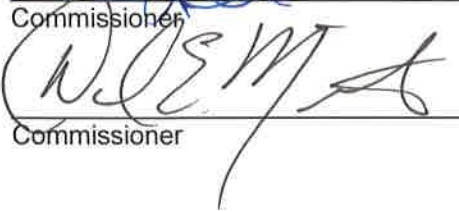
Melinda Wall



Commissioner



Commissioner



Commissioner