

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 July 24, 2018 at Station No. 271 located at 4301-334th PL SE in Fall City, Washington.

Chairperson Hansen called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Present:

Chairperson Hansen
Commissioner Hollis
Commissioner Meredith
Chief Connor
Secretary Wall

In Attendance:

See attached list

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Presentation to the Public:

Consolidation Exploration and Evaluation

After introductions, Committee Representatives Dale Sherman and Nora Hightower facilitated a power point presentation on the available options that the Committee looked at to address the issues of financial sustainability and service delivery. The following options were under consideration: 1) Stand-Alone Fire District, 2) Merge with Fire District 10, and 3) Partnership with the City of Snoqualmie. A fourth option to join Eastside Fire and Rescue (EFR) as an interlocal agreement partner had been previously been taken off the table by the District 27 Board of Commissioners.

The presentation outlined how the three options would affect the fire district's future governance, taxes, service and operations. After the presentation the floor was opened for public comments at 6:25 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

Nancy Moore commented about three-person career staffing and asked about the daytime vs nighttime call data. Chief Connor discussed the bell curve data of peak alarm times. Nancy also commented on the proposal to hire another career firefighter and asked if the current employees would stay in Fall City. Chief Connor replied that there are some provisions in the statutes that allow employees certain rights when districts merge and that the Union would negotiate on behalf of the uniformed employees.

Mary Butler commented that she was very concerned about the lack of notice and information going out to the community. She encouraged the Board to use the Fall City Community Association (FCCA), local Yahoo groups, and other media. She thanked the Board and yielded the balance of her time back to Nancy.

Nancy Moore commented about taxes possibly going down, though expenses are not going down. She shared her concern that the fire benefit charge (FBC) could be automatically increased. She commented that the station would not be staffed with a fire chief and an administrative assistant and that the community would lose its local representation.

Dave Hart commented about the request to see the District's five-year financial projections and why it has taken so long to meet with Snoqualmie and why more meetings with them have not occurred.

Rick Reynolds commented that he is a long-time resident of Fall City and that he started his fire service career here. He stated that he is a firefighter with EFR and discussed the professionalism and high level of service that EFR would bring to the community. He also commented on stabilized funding and firefighter training.

Danielle Bothwell commented on there not being enough definitive data to continue pursuing the option with Snoqualmie and that the most feasible option is to work with District 10. She wanted some assurances that there is going to be consistent three-person career staffing. She commented that there is a savings with this proposal, and it should be put to a public vote.

Aaron Hansen commented on the transport costs and discussed how the private ambulance companies already charge for this service. He commented on the changes to the Fire District's volunteer program. Aaron also commented on the nighttime and three-person career staffing.



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Joe Springer commented that he's been a career firefighter in Fall City for fifteen years, and conveyed that we will have the same small town feeling around here if we merge with District 10. He commented on issues of financial sustainability, and the uncertainty that firefighters could lose their jobs if the excess levy doesn't pass. He encouraged the Board to put the District 10 merger on the ballot.

Tammy Hance asked if the full-time uniform firefighters were represented by a union and how they feel about the merger. She also recommended having these issues discussed at the FCCA meetings.

Jon Wisemen, IAFF Local 2878 President representing Eastside, Fall City, Snoqualmie, and Duvall stated that Fall City firefighters would come over with their full seniority. The Union supports the District 10 merger option, it provides an opportunity to lower taxes and increase service levels, which would provide three-person career staffing, a training division, fire marshal services and other services.

Jane Krein asked Chief Connor "if you are just an average resident in Fall City what option would you choose". And she wanted to know why Snoqualmie decided not to join EFR.

Chief Correria thanked the committee members for their presentation. He provided a brief overview of the past history between Snoqualmie and District 10 / EFR.

Chief Connor replied that his job here is to represent the citizens and to listen to them. He stated that there are three great options available.

Gary Smith commented that he also was a volunteer here and currently works for Redmond Fire. He stated that there is a lot of confusion of what is being decided today, there should be a campaign to discuss the issues, and provide the community with the facts. He conveyed his appreciation to the small town community and to the volunteer program which has evolved over time. He also would like to see three-person career staffing and encouraged the Board to put it out to the voters.

Irene Pike commented that she was born here in Fall City and that she is very proud of the Fall City Fire Department. She commented that the community had an option of joining EFR in the past and they declined. She had heard that Snoqualmie did join and when they did, they took away some of their equipment. She asked what guarantee do we have that that's not going to happen here.

Chief Clark stated that he has been the Fire Chief at EFR for the past two and half years and as far as he knew, Snoqualmie was not part of EFR for very long and that was twenty years ago. He discussed the direction that the agency is moving toward today, and that they would not go into any community provide a service and then take resources away. He further discussed EFR's apparatus replacement, budget process and projections, and commissioner representation on the EFR Board.

Committee Representative Nora Hightower asked Chief Clark to clarify the District 10 and EFR relationship, since the EFR partnership option is no longer under consideration.

Chief Clark provided an overview of the EFR Partnership, its operations and the elective body representation, which includes District 10, District 38, Cities of North Bend, Sammamish, and Issaquah.

Tami Hance asked why choosing District 10 is irreversible and choosing Snoqualmie would be reversible, and why District 27 would go into a contract that was irreversible. Chief Connor discussed the difference with merging into Fire District 10 and becoming a partner with EFR.

Chief Correria also clarified the relationship on the table with Snoqualmie; option one through three, is an Interlocal Agreement form of government, were District 27 is a signatory with Snoqualmie. He stated that with District 10, if a majority of the voters elect to merge into District 10, than District 27 will no longer exist and becomes part of District 10.

Tom Wall commented on there being transparency to all of the risks when this goes out to a vote, like the risk of losing all the capital spent on the buildings and equipment, and the cost to get the District back if the merger with District 10 went sideways.

Commissioner Hollis replied that we can't get it back after the merger; it will be a done deal.

Commissioner Meredith responded that we would be joining a group that is better equipped and better financed than we are today as a small stand-alone district. District 10 will have the same responsibility to provide the service and equipment and the Commissioners here would be included in helping direct that operation.

Commissioner Hollis stated we would be included with District 10 and we would also be with EFR, so Sammamish or Issaquah could be making decisions for EFR that would ultimately affect operations in Fall City.

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Chief Clark discussed capital expenses and clarified that EFR does not own anything; therefore the Board of Directors for EFR does not make decisions on station funding or improvements. The equipment and station here today is owned by District 27, if you merge with District 10, it will be owned and funded by District 10 which Fall City would be represented.

Kimberly Baker commented about the concern of increased taxes, and about the high level of support for the past excess levies. She conveyed some concerns about the uncertainty of that support continuing and the impact to the firefighters of District 27. She stated that it's not very often that I hear that I'm going to get better services for less money. She commented on the services that would be provided by EFR and stated that she would be in favor of the District 10 merger.

Jon Wiseman discussed how all of the departments currently work together and that this community will have more input as part of Fire District 10. He commented about having one strong fire district to give an equal voice and to better support the east king county residents.

Kevin Hauglie commented on the District's current service and mutual aid. He commented about the request for additional financial information and about the future economics of the District and how the community has always supported the District. He further commented that Fall City's representation would be very limited in the totality of EFR.

Irene Pike asked about her future services and where the firefighters would be responding from. Chief Connor replied that nothing would change from what we are doing right now; we work together with our neighbors. He also discussed the avl (automatic vehicle location) system that the fire agencies are moving towards.

There was discussion about EFR's pilot program of collecting fees for motor vehicle accidents.

Silvermoon Johnson asked about the fire benefit charge and how it is assessed. Chief Connor provided an overview about the fire benefit charge which is based on the square footage of a home. He also discussed the rate class differences for multi-family and commercial buildings.

Discussion ensued about response time objectives for Fall City and EFR. Mutual aid was also discussed.

Kevin Hauglie asked if the Board would like to share some thoughts or comments.

Commissioner Hollis stated that the District 10 option is a good option; ultimately I think it will be on the ballot. I just think it's a little premature, we need to look at the options with Snoqualmie, there's been a big push to get the merger with District 10 on the ballot now and not do that analysis with Snoqualmie. He felt that the real deadline is 2020 when the M&O levy expires. "We can have, assuming it's still available the District 10 option on the ballot in 2020 or a new M&O levy as a stand-alone. Eighteen months from now, we can get a lot of information out, do additional analysis, and if we choose not to take the path with Snoqualmie then we have these two options, only we've had the opportunity to analyze all of the information".

Kimbra Baker asked if District 10 would offer this again and commented about it being re-analyzed and possibly pushed back because we didn't take the opportunity now. Commissioner Hollis conveyed that District 10 would probably still want to do the merger at a later time.

Jason Bresler stated that he volunteered here for about five years and works for Woodinville Fire & Rescue. He discussed firefighter training, and the possibility that firefighters could lose their jobs if an excess levy did not pass. He was also in support of having three-person career staffing in Fall City.

Chief Correia stated that it's important to realize that the depth of the conversation with Snoqualmie Officials has not yet occurred. We started discussing this back in December and produced a staff report which was presented to the community group in March. The first joint meeting with the Fire Commissioners and Snoqualmie Officials occurred on July 16th. Thus far the conversation has been about three persons staffing, service to the community and trying to avoid the maintenance and operations levy. The Snoqualmie Officials stated that they are interested in further discussions and left it up to the Board of Commissioners to come back with another meeting. Chief Correia conveyed that Snoqualmie is certainly interested and willing to continue this conversation but we also don't want to feel like we are getting in the way.

Aaron Hansen asked about the benefit to Snoqualmie, and commented that Fall City would most likely be a junior partner. Chief Correia stated that the departments are very similar, community orientated, and the volunteers work alongside with the career firefighters. Snoqualmie has three-person minimum staffing and they run an overstaff model. Chief Correia stated that one of the benefits we see with Fall City is

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sharing that over staff model and bringing Fall City up to three-person career staffing. He stated that Snoqualmie wouldn't be pursuing this if it wasn't mutually beneficial and our goal is to really look at what is the benefit for both parties. He further discussed how this partnership could evolve and if either agency wanted to they could dissolve the partnership.

Further discussion on a Regional Fire Authority (RFA) model ensued. Chief Correira further stated that an RFA is different, because it's voter-approved and would be more permanent where an interlocal agreement can be dissolved.

Commissioner Meredith stated "that he works in the utilities industry and there are a lot of similarities between that and the fire service, in that the organizations are expected to provide every possible service and to the extent that no one in the public really has to worry about it. There is a lot of responsibility to do the right thing for everybody in the community and most people aren't thinking about it until they have to make that call. Our obligation is to try to do the very best that we can for everyone involved. We heard from two individuals tonight that started their career here and had to go elsewhere, at least at that time to continue their career. We have a continual rotation of volunteers who we are basically training for other departments, I would much rather be training people for our department. The size we are today it's just not realistic. I think we can have influence, I think we can be contributors and as we heard, the main areas of District 10 really are other small communities, and we can have an influence amongst that group, and see some real benefits. For me the real deadline for this is not 2020, the deadline is the next call that two people go out in the truck and they can't do what they need to do."

Commissioner Meredith also discussed the meeting with Snoqualmie and he expected that any arrangement with them, they would be the lead agency. He further discussed the excess levy, "the District asked for the minimum amounts to keep going, and the District did get great support, but we're not talking about the same level of service. There are a lot of opportunities with District 10, career opportunities for the people in our department, I don't like the fact that we say if you want to advance or if you want to do something different you're going to have to go somewhere else. I think we can have that here and the Commissioners here can be a real contributor in that organization. I think it is my responsibility to give the voters the option."

Commissioner Meredith stated "so what we started right now, is just the process, we can't decide on the merger, all we can do is put it on the ballot, and to do that there are several legal steps that have to happen and we will continue to talk to Snoqualmie but we have to start this other process in order to have a choice and not just automatically add on another year and be sitting here again next year at this time, talking about the same things."

Tammy Hance commented on knowing what the cost would be to taxpayers in Fall City to provide the higher level of service; she was concerned about this being an irreversible decision, and not having all of the information available to make an informed decision.

Jane Krein commented that there should be some numbers available so that people can make an informed decision on which way they would like to go. She felt that many people in Fall City would choose to keep the fire department and somehow subsidize the station.

Commissioner Meredith stated that overall the costs is probably several hundred thousand dollars.

Chairperson Hansen stated that she feels it's also important to give the voters a say, and by not moving forward with the SEPA documents and the various documents required by the Boundary Review Board process, we would delay giving the voters the opportunity to vote on it.

Commissioner Hollis stated that I'm not saying that the voters shouldn't vote for this. I just think that it's a little premature and we could have better information available, there are a lot of different avenues to look at. Commissioner Hollis also stated that as a stand-alone department we are doing a good job right now.

Rick Reynold commented on the benefits with District 10, the funding issue goes away, the maintenance and operations levy goes away, and you get all the other benefits and pay less.

Tom Wall was concerned that the Board would be rushing into this decision without having all of the information available, for all of the options. He asked if Fall City implemented the fire benefit charge would it provide the funding for three person career staffing.

Commissioner Meredith discussed the problem with the District's smaller population and how the fire benefit charge varied widely. He further stated that in the District 10 model, District 27's area is about 20% and so it's essentially averaged into the existing 80% of District 10, the allocations are different and effectively District 10 taxpayers pick up a portion of our costs.

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Chairperson Hansen stated the problem with waiting is there is not a guarantee that all career positions would remain available.

Kyle Jacobson commented that he was a volunteer here and went to work for the Kirkland Fire Department. He commented that two of Fall City's firefighters left because they were nervous about the excess levy failing. He conveyed his support for the department and would like the firefighters here to have additional opportunities.

Nancy Moore commented that the cost to remain stand-alone needs to be answered. If you're talking about doing something equivalent you need to find out what that will cost. The public may be willing to invest in that, to stay local, or not, and maybe D10 or Snoqualmie is a better option. So I think that is a pretty simple straight forward request for information that should be easy to provide.

Commissioner Meredith replied that an revised model could be provided from our current projections.

Katherine Ross stated that for Snoqualmie, having local firefighters is very important to us, and I know that being community centered is very important to Fall City as well. She stated that there are a lot of things that Snoqualmie can offer which both communities would like.

Mary Butler commented about the petition to merge with Fire District 10 under new business. She hoped that the Commissioners would commit to providing the financial analysis as requested and also let the public know what they are deciding about discussions with Snoqualmie.

Commissioner Meredith stated that the "Petition to Merge" with District 10 is starting the process of the King County Boundary Review Board, it's not a vote to merge, it's a vote to start the process, of being able to request an election next year. He also commented that the City of Snoqualmie is on the monthly meeting agenda for on-going discussion.

Aaron Hansen commented on the resources of a larger department, whether it's Snoqualmie or District 10, they can provide those extra services with their larger base. He commented on losing taxpayers to annexations and the limited revenue sources available to the District in the future.

NEW BUSINESS:

Petition to Merge with Fire District 10

Commissioner Meredith moved to approve Fire District 27's "Petition to Merger" with Fire District 10 as presented. Chairperson Hansen provided a second to the motion. The Board voted, Chairperson Hansen and Commissioner Meredith in favor, Commissioner Hollis opposed.

Motion Carried.

The Board thanked everybody for their comments.

OTHER:

Adjournment:

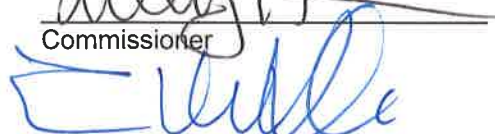
With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Hansen at 8:20 p.m.


Attest:

Melinda Wall
Board Secretary

Melinda Wall


Commissioner


Commissioner


Commissioner

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Special Meeting – July 24, 2018

Attendees:

Chief Jeff Clark (EFR)
Chief Jon Parker (EFR)
Chief Mark Correira (Snoqualmie)
Councilmember Katherine Ross (Snoqualmie)
Chief David Burke (Duvall)
Committee Representative Nora Hightower (D27)
Committee Representative Dale Sherman (D27)
IAFF 2878 Union President Jon Wiseman
Captain Ken Larson
FF Joe Springer
FF Jordan Jessen
FF Aaron Hansen
FF Travis Smith
FF Richards
Nancy Moore
Mary Butler
Dave Hart
Rick Reynolds
Danielle Bothwell
Gary Smith
Irene Pike
Kimbra Baker
Tom Wall
Tami Hance
Jason Bresler
Kyle Jacobson
Silvermoon Johnson
Jay Bluher
Jane Krein
Laurie Hauglie
Kevin Hauglie