

**RFA PLANNING COMMITTEE,
SPECIAL MEETING OF CHELAN COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 1 &
DOUGLAS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2
APRIL 6, 2022**

Chelan County Fire District 1: Commissioner Phil Dormaier, Commissioner Gordon Zimmerman, Commissioner Cam de Mestre

Douglas County Fire District 2: Commissioner Dave Fennell, Commissioner Danny Johnson, Commissioner Ettore Castellente

Staff: Fire Chief Brian Brett, Terri Woods, and Cindy Blaufuss

Guests: Kathy White, Kay McKellar, Dennis Wheeler, Pete O’Cain, Peter Rigelman, Ken Christensen, Deedee Christensen, Chet Christensen

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 pm.

Commissioner de Mestre made a motion to approve the March 31, 2022, Committee Minutes, there was a second from Commissioner Zimmerman. The minutes were approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DRAFT REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PLAN:

Chief Brett recapped the March 31 meeting for the guests present, explaining that the RFA Feasibility began a year ago when the two fire districts entered into an Interlocal Agreement for Fire Chief Services. Since that time, Chief Brett has prepared a draft RFA budget with cash flow information, and the two districts have been began responding as one district. The volunteer business model historically used by both districts has become less viable as unfunded mandates and community needs increase. Combining operations seems to be the best use of resources.

Chet Christensen asked how many volunteers are active with the two districts. Dennis Wheeler (President of the CCFD1 Volunteer Association) said last night’s combined Volunteer Business meeting drew five experienced volunteers and three new volunteers. The districts are not getting the turnout they once did.

Attorney Brian Snure has been retained as the joint counsel for the RFA Planning Committee. He completed a review of the draft RFA Plan presented last week and provided feedback.

- Effective Date – Placing the RFA on the August ballot with an effective date of September 30 would allow the RFA to levy taxes beginning in January 2023. If the RFA does not pass, the districts can begin the process to request separate levy increases in 2023; both fire districts will need to request levy increases by 2024.
- Multi-Year Levy with a 6% Limit Factor – Chief Brett explained the multi-year 6% increase would allow the RFA to keep the levy rate closer to a \$1.50/\$1000. The additional 6% also allows the RFA to accrue funds for apparatus and facility projects rather than relying on additional bonding. The use of a Capital Replacement Fund provides more financial flexibility and the ability to keep firefighters employed in the event of an economic downturn. Brian Snure is reviewing the legality of this option with the Department of Revenue.
- Governance – One option is converting the six Fire District Commissioners to RFA Commissioners as terms expire. Over time, the Commission could be reduced from six to five when a position is vacated.

Commissioners can either represent separate voting districts or represent the RFA at-large. The original draft plan recommended two Commissioners from each district and one at-large. If voter districts are used, they would be subject to re-districting to keep equal populations.

Kathy White wants to be certain that Douglas County is represented in the RFA.

Ken Christensen asked if all six current Commissioners are in favor of the RFA. Commissioner Dormaier said the RFA shows potential, but he wants to review all the evidence; more work remains to be done.

Commissioner Fennell supports the concept because he has seen the benefits around the state. He believes the structure is useful but does not like the idea of losing representation.

Commissioner Dormaier added that when DCFD2 needed administrative assistance, they asked CCFD1, and it has come together and worked well. Joint leadership has solidified service, and he is proud of the accomplishments over the past year. Commissioner Fennell agreed there are advantages for the public because of the operational efficiency.

Chief Brett will follow up with the attorney for clarification on RFA governance for the meeting Tuesday.

- IAFF MOU – Chief Brett explained both districts are represented by the same IAFF Local. Separate contracts would remain in place through year-end, with a combined contract effective in 2023. He and IAFF Local President Pete Rigelman both expect the transition to go well.
- RFA Name – The Wenatchee Valley RFA was used as a placeholder on the draft RFA Plan. The Committee discussed names. Both Apple Valley and Columbia River are already used. Several in attendance prefer Wenatchee Valley. Suggestions to help retain community identity included adding high school mascots or “Serving Sunnyslope” to apparatus based upon the fire station locations. The discussion will continue at the next meeting.

DRAFT BUDGET: A budget update was not presented.

NEW BUSINESS

EQUIPMENT COMPATABILITY: With the exception of SCBA, all equipment is compatible. DCFD2 is scheduled to replace SCBA by 2024 and CCFD1 by 2028. Personnel can dual-certify on the SCBA, but it would require two masks for all firefighters. New SCBA will need to be purchased at the same time to ensure compatibility.

There being no further business, the Planning Committee adjourned at 3:00.