

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

APRIL 12, 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, Cindy Blaufuss

Guests: Kathy White, Dennis Wheeler, Peter Rigelman, Andy Zimmerman, Marion Calhoun, Mark Zielinski, Jim Fossi

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

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to approve the April 6 Committee Minutes, there was a second from Commissioner Zimmerman. The minutes were approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DRAFT REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PLAN:

Chief Brett summarized the progress on the RFA feasibility process. He explained both fire districts will request a levy increase to \$1.50 if they remain separate districts, but the districts are able to do more with the same funding if combined.

Marion Calhoun expressed concern about a levy increase when inflation is at its highest. Commissioner Dormaier said when the city of Wenatchee annexed into CCFD1, it was understood rate increases would be needed every seven to ten years. Commissioner Fennell said the districts are equally impacted by the high inflation.

DOR REVIEW OF MULTI-YEAR, 6% LEVY:

The statutory limit is a 1% annual increase in tax collection, but Chief Brett recommends the RFA Plan request a six-year, 6% increase. This allows the RFA to keep a rate closer to a \$1.50/\$1000 to better manage funds with less need for debt. This language has not been included in an RFA Plan before. The attorney has asked the Department of Revenue to review the request. A response is expected by May 9. If it is not allowed, the RFA could go back to the voters to request a 6%, multi-year increase. The tax rate is capped at \$1.50/\$1000.

Marion Calhoun asked if CCFD1 and DCFD2 would ask for the same tax increases if they remain separate entities. Chief Brett confirmed the districts would request the same increase, up to a \$1.50/\$1000 with 6% increases for six years. DCFD2 needs the additional funds to staff the new Rock Island station when it is finished in the fall. Rock Island is a critical demand area that needs staffing.

GOVERNANCE:

Last week the discussion focused on a transition from Fire District Commissioners to at-large RFA Commissioners, and a decrease from six to five Commissioners through attrition. The desire for five is arbitrary, but it does provide a built-in tie breaker.

Commissioner Dormaier presented a proposal that would keep the fire districts in place for the purpose of electing Fire Commissioners. The two fire districts would be equally represented in the RFA. If the Commission transitions to an odd number of members, that position would be an at-large RFA

Commissioner representing the entire jurisdiction. This option may include some incidental costs. Commissioner Fennell will contact other RFAs with similar governance for more information.

Commissioner Dormaier said the Plan could structure a change after the current terms expire in 2027. Kathy White supported the idea of Douglas County representation through 2027 with Commissioners considering a transition at that time.

The consensus was to request Governance language keeping the two fire districts and current six Fire District Commissioners through 2027. The Commissioners will have the option to amend Governance in 2027.

An “opt out” clause was also discussed to provide an option to dissolve the RFA. Commissioner Fennell stated the primary reason for the RFA is to improve services with tangible benchmarks.

RFA NAME:

Those in attendance prefer using Wenatchee Valley in the name. The members of the Local favored Wenatchee Valley Fire Department as a name. Other options include Wenatchee Valley Regional Fire Authority, Wenatchee Valley Fire Authority, or Wenatchee Valley Fire & Rescue.

DRAFT BUDGET: A budget update was not presented.

NEW BUSINESS

The next meeting was scheduled for 5:00, Wednesday, April 20 at Fire Station 1 in East Wenatchee. There being no further business, the Planning Committee adjourned at 3:10.