

Board of Fire Commissioners Special Meeting Minutes

10518 – 18th Street SE, Lake Stevens, WA 98258

February 26, 2019

1730 hours

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Elmore called the meeting to order at 1730 hours.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ATTENDANCE

Chairman Elmore, Commissioner Gagnon, Chief O'Brien, Deputy Chief Huff, Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal Messer, Director of Finance & Administration Leah Schoof, Fire District 7 Deputy Chief Scott Dorsey, various members from Lake Stevens Fire and the community, and Communications Director/District Secretary Laana Larson.

Vice Chair Steinruck is an excused absence.

MINUTES

Minutes 19-02-06

Minutes 19-02-07

Minutes 19-02-21

Motion to approve the February 6, 7, and 21, 2019 Commissioner Meeting Minutes as submitted.
Motion by Commissioner Gagnon and 2nd by Chairman Elmore.
Vote Passed, Vice Chair Steinruck is an excused absence.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Investment Report

Vouchers

Motion to approve Expense Vouchers dated February 13, 2019 in the total amount of \$135,145.09 as submitted.
Motion by Chairman Elmore and 2nd by Commissioner Gagnon.
Vote Passed, Vice Chair Steinruck is an excused absence.

Motion to approve Expense Voucher dated February 20, 2019 in the total amount of \$12,903.51 as submitted.
Motion by Commissioner Gagnon and 2nd by Chairman Elmore.
Vote Passed, Vice Chair Steinruck is an excused absence.

Motion to approve Capital Initiative Vouchers dated February 13, 2019 in the total amount of \$8,560.63 as submitted.
Motion by Chairman Elmore and 2nd by Commissioner Gagnon.
Vote Passed, Vice Chair Steinruck is an excused absence.

Motion to approve Capital Replacement Vouchers dated February 13, 2019 in the total amount of \$47,537.44 as submitted.
Motion by Commissioner Gagnon and 2nd by Chairman Elmore.
Vote Passed, Vice Chair Steinruck is an excused absence.

Payroll

Motion to approve the 2019 February Payroll in the total amount of \$570,471.85 as submitted.
Motion by Commissioner Gagnon and 2nd by Chairman Elmore.
Vote Passed, Vice Chair Steinruck is an excused absence.

Expense Line Item Review Summary & Reports

Director of Finance & Administration Leah Schoof commented our annual SERS fee is the only addition to the review summary.

CORRESPONDENCE

Thank You for Your Thoughtfulness

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion

Fire District 7 Partnership

Chief O'Brien commented we are looking forward to our discussion at 6pm this evening. So far we've sent out a press release, the SEPA package has been sent to the City of Monroe, City of Lake Stevens and it is posted on our website as well. This starts the legal process of merging, and we will also be talking with our community about this process.

Community Resource Paramedic

Chief O'Brien highlighted the Community Resource Paramedic interaction summary. We appreciate the update from CRP Craig Fischer.

Fire District 7 Deputy Chief Dorsey mentioned we just recently signed a contract with North Sound, and it will be an ongoing project over the next couple of years. The goal is to make Medicaid more efficient; and so far we have received three payments which helps offset the cost of the program.

Medical Services Officer

Chief O'Brien commented we have signed MOU 2019-03 Medical Services Officer and the application process is open. We hope to have the program up and running by April 1.

Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau

Chief O'Brien commented the Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau is an agency that reviews fire districts and establishes a protection class rating. The lower the rating the better, and it potentially leads to lower insurance rates. We have just received notice our WSRB Rating has been lowered by one point; we will be rated a 3 in the City and a 4 in the County effective June 1, 2019. We used to be rated a 4 in the City and a 5 in the county. This is great news for our community.

Chief O'Brien thanked the Commissioners and our members for their ongoing support.

Action

Resolution 2019-02 Changing Regular Meeting Schedule

This resolution changes our March 7 Regular Commissioner Meeting to Monday, March 4.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2019-02 Changing Regular Meeting Schedule as submitted.

Motion by Chairman Elmore and 2nd by Commissioner Gagnon.

Vote Passed, Vice Chair Steinruck is an excused absence.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion

MOU 2019-04 Full-time Firefighter Attending Harborview Paramedic Program

Chief O'Brien commented this is a first time review for MOU 2019-04, and it has not yet been approved by the bargaining group. We are planning for a joint testing process with Fire District 7 and there will be a class at Harborview in September. We hope to send one of our members.

Action

None

The next Regular Commissioner Meeting is scheduled for 5:30pm Monday, March 4th at the LSF Conference Center located at 10518 – 18th Street SE, Lake Stevens, WA.

At 1746 hours Chairman Elmore requested a break for 14 minutes.

At 1800 hours Chairman Elmore reconvened the open public meeting and moved forward with the public presentation regarding a potential merger with Fire District 7.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATION REGARDING POTENTIAL MERGER WITH FIRE DISTRICT 7
INCLUDING TIME FOR QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

Chief O'Brien thanked everyone for joining us, it is great to see people come out this evening. He introduced Fire District 7 Deputy Chief Scott Dorsey. Tonight we are here to talk about a proposed merger between Fire District 7 and Lake Stevens Fire. You have seen the tremendous growth in Snohomish County and we are trying to keep up. We need to be strategic and that is what this merger is about. This is about putting two teams together to create a strong regional team.

Chief O'Brien gave a presentation with the following highlights:

Thank You for the Opportunity to Serve

- LSF Serves 44,000 people over 42 square miles
- Highly-trained personnel
- 6,000 calls on average a year
- Proud to be debt free
- Operates under a balanced budget
- Long history of passing its independent audits by the state

How Are Emergency Services Funded?

Like most fire districts, daily operations at Lake Stevens Fire are funded by a Fire Levy and an EMS Levy Paid through property taxes

- Fire Levy approved by voters at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value
- EMS Levy approved at 50-cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value

Improve Service & Efficiency

We always look for ways to improve service and be more efficient for our taxpayers. The demand for emergency services continues to increase in Snohomish County as our population grows. Many fire districts are considering partnerships and mergers to be more efficient and improve emergency services.

Already Sharing Services

We currently share fire marshal services, training programs, and a community resource paramedic with Snohomish County Fire District 7. This year, we are working towards integrating our management and administrative teams.

We Are Stronger Working Together

Snohomish County Fire District 7 and Lake Stevens Fire are strong operationally and financially. A merger would enable better deployment of personnel to provide an improved emergency response for both communities. The combined financial strength of both agencies also improves the ability to fund capital needs, such as apparatus, equipment and stations. Both districts would still have local stations, professional firefighters and strong involvement in our communities for events like Aquafest.

What We Both Do

- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Fire Suppression and Prevention
- Rescue
- Community Risk Reduction
- Helping People
- Community Events

Merger Goals

- Improve Service
 - More efficient
 - Additional staffing and training opportunities
 - Improve emergency response capabilities for the people we serve

Regional Planning

- Stations can be located strategically to maximize response time and area
- Emergency units can be placed to better meet response time goals
- Standardized training and operations
- Coordination and planning with our regional partners is critical

Fiscal Accountability

- Streamlines services
- Reduces duplication

Charting the Course

- Combining our people will create a stronger team.
- Developing leaders internally for the future of the organization.
- Mentorship at all levels of the organization.
- Reaching out to our regional partners.
- Serving our communities is at the heart of what we do.

Timeline

The merger is being considered for the August 2019 Primary Election Ballot.

- February 6 - Fire District 7 / LSF Joint Board Review Management Plan and Forecasting Model
- February 2019 – LSF Submits Petition
- March 14 – Fire District 7 Accepts Petition
- March 15 – SEPA adoption, Legal description to Boundary Review Board
- May 10 – LSF Submits Resolution for August Ballot
- August 6 – Proposal on Ballot for Lake Stevens Voters

Same Levy Rate

The merger is a way to improve emergency services for our community at the same levy rate previously approved by voters.

Voters in both districts have previously approved a combined levy rate of \$2 per \$1,000 of assessed property value to fund emergency services.

- Fire Levy \$1.50 per \$1,000

- EMS Levy \$0.50 per \$1,000

These levy rates would not exceed \$2 for taxpayers in both districts if a merger were approved by voters.

Management Plan

- Improve Services in our Communities
- Create a New Organization
- Begin Strategic Planning Now
- Focus on Culture – Cultural Integration Team ASAP
- Sound Financial Forecasting Model Developed
- Consider New District Name
- Boards to Select Governance Model
- Chief O'Brien Serves as Chief – Chief Meek is Liaison
- Executive Staff – Structured Selection Process

Management Efficiencies

- Efficiencies in Emergency Response Operational Services
- Improved Staff Deployment
- Efficiencies in Admin Services, Community Risk Reduction
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Professional Development Opportunities
- Enhanced Fleet and Facility Maintenance
- General Quality Improvement
- Preparing for the Future

What a Merger Would Look Like

11 Fire Stations

234 Responders

140 Square Miles – 4 miles between service areas

162,000 Residents

17,670 Calls

\$27,393,329,265 A/V

More Firefighters to Respond to Calls

Combined total of 234 ready to respond to alarms

Especially important for large scale incidents, weather events, wildland fires, or disasters

Chief O'Brien asked for questions from the audience.

Q. We understand Lake Stevens will have an opportunity to vote on this, does Monroe also have a say?

A. Chief O'Brien commented the Fire District 7 Commissioners have a say on whether we will vote on it or not.

Q. We are currently under budget and debt free, is Fire District 7 in the same situation?

A. Chief O'Brien commented Fire District 7 does have a small amount of debt. If we merge, we would share one budget and everyone would vote on the levies.

Q. What does SEPA stand for?

A. Deputy Chief Messer commented State Environmental Protection Agency.

Q. Why Fire District 7 and not Fire District 4?

A. Chief O'Brien commented we have reached out to Fire District 4, but they don't want to be involved in a merger discussion at this time.

Q. Didn't Fire District 1 go through some issues and get smaller?

A. Commissioner Elmore commented Woodway went to Shoreline.

Chief O'Brien commented they have gotten bigger taking in Lynnwood and they are now a Fire Authority.

Deputy Chief Dorsey commented Fire District 7 just recently went through the process of merging with Fire District 3. A lot of these questions came up with Monroe as well. Fire District 7 adopted Monroe as their community as well; and we have blended into one family.

Q. When you went through the merger process with Monroe, did you do cross training with the firefighters?

A. Deputy Chief Dorsey commented we did a shadow program where firefighters could ride along and get familiarized with new equipment, etc. We already operate under the same protocols.

Q. Are the work shifts the same?

A. Deputy Chief Dorsey commented yes, Lake Stevens Fire just made a change to the 4 platoon system.

Chief O'Brien commented the firefighters have a union, and the structure is the same for both.

Deputy Chief Dorsey commented the unions are essentially the same. They would have to formally merge at some point.

Commissioner Elmore commented they all operate under the Washington State Firefighters Council.

Q. It sounds like you are going to do it regardless, whether the community supports it or not. It seems strange to merge management and administration prior to the vote.

A. Chief O'Brien commented we need to work together to be sure it is going to work. We will keep trying and continue to seek how we can be more efficient. For example our EMS programs, we are in the process of bringing our programs together. We also regionalize with the county on training. Should the voters say no, we will need to regroup.

Q. If we sell the Professional Building, what happens to the funding?

A. Chief O'Brien commented it would go into the new district. Fire District 7 has eight responding stations, they are almost three times as large.

Q. Are they debt free?

A. Chief O'Brien commented they have some bond debt.

Deputy Chief Dorsey commented our goal at Fire District 7 is to buy with cash when we can; we are not looking to create a large amount of debt. We just finished a fire station so now we will be paying it off.

Q. What about Granite Falls Fire and Getchell Fire?

A. Chief O'Brien commented Getchell Fire District 22 might be interested, though not sure about Granite Falls Fire District 17. A merger process is challenging and it is a step process. We look forward to additional agencies joining us.

Q. Does Fire District 7 have equipment that we don't currently have at Lake Stevens Fire?

A. Chief O'Brien commented yes, they have a ladder truck and specialized rescue equipment. And they have more of what we have in Lake Stevens.

Q. What about the communications system for both agencies?

A. Chief O'Brien commented we would use the same communication system.

Q. What is the final timeline for the merger?

A. Chief O'Brien commented January 1, 2020.

Response from the audience that is not a lot of time.

Q. What about the new fire station for Lake Stevens?

A. Chief O'Brien commented we are trying to fund it with the current levy dollars we have.

Q. What isn't working that would be enhanced by this merger?

A. Chief O'Brien commented everything is working well; we have a great team and a great community. Our job is to look at how we can be better and improve efficiencies as we look to the future. We do our best to do the right thing by you, and we are looking forward to building a stronger team.

Q. We need more specifics on what would change with the merger.

A. Chief O'Brien commented we would have a larger group of people to draw from, we would streamline administrations, and there would be less chief officers.

Q. Fire District 7 has a full garage; what do we do with our mechanics?

A. Chief O'Brien commented our mechanic does the work in the apparatus bay or we send it out to Monroe.

Q. Fire District 7 is three times as large, and Lake Stevens Fire is off to the north. How is it determined where the money goes, where it comes from, where the next station goes, etc? Does Fire District 7 have three times as many Board Members?

A. Chief O'Brien commented we plan to operate as we are today during the first year; and we will learn more about each other and look at the data before making those decisions. Our job is to constantly research. Currently Fire District 7 has six Commissioners and they will pare down to five in January. Ultimately the Commissioners will decide what size the Board will be.

Deputy Chief Dorsey commented we have a great new software that allows us to play out many of the *what if* scenarios before asking the Commissioners about financial decisions.

Q. Are you considering projected growth with the software?

A. Deputy Chief Dorsey commented he is not sure if we can add that scenario into it, but will check into it.

Q. What about staffing, what is the forecast two years down the road?

A. Deputy Chief Dorsey commented at this point we are hitting a retirement season; and we have a lot of new hiring going on. It is constant transition at this time.

Chief O'Brien commented Lake Stevens Fire is doing well. Right now we staff a daytime aid unit at Station 82, and we plan to make this a 24 hour shift this summer.

Q. Since Fire District 7 currently has a bond; does Lake Stevens Fire take on the debt of Fire District 7 at the time of the merger?

A. Chief O'Brien commented yes, it is built into our financial model.

Director of Finance & Administration Leah Schoof commented it currently comes out of their expenses, and it is not necessarily an additional expense for us.

Q. Why an election in August, rather than going with a bigger election?

A. Chief O'Brien commented we have some good operational momentum and this seems like good timing.

Chief O'Brien commented our contact information is posted on our website. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss this further if you have additional questions. We appreciate your time.

Contact Information for Fire Chiefs:

Fire Chief Kevin O'Brien, Lake Stevens Fire
425.212.3044 / kobrien@lsfire.org

Fire Chief Gary Meek, Snohomish County Fire District 7
360.794.7666 / gmeek@snofire7.org

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 1850 hours.
Motion by Commissioner Gagnon and 2nd by Chairman Elmore.
Vote Passed, Vice Chair Steinruck is an excused absence.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Laana Larson, Communications Director/District Secretary.

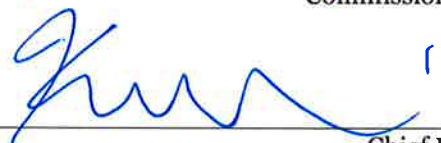


Chairman Troy Elmore

Vice Chair Jim Steinruck



Commissioner Paul Gagnon



Chief Kevin K. O'Brien