

Board of Fire Commissioners Special Meeting Minutes

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

March 16, 2019

1000 hours

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Elmore called the meeting to order at 1008 hours.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ATTENDANCE

Chairman Elmore, Vice Chair Steinruck, Commissioner Gagnon, Chief O'Brien, Fire District 7 Chief Meek, Representatives from Community, and Communications Director/District Secretary Laana Larson.

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

Chief O'Brien welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming out this morning. This merger is a great opportunity for us and our teams are working well together.

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

We are your fire department.

- 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.



Phone: 425.334.3034
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"Touching Lives Today ~ Planning for Tomorrow"

Fire Commissioners:
Troy Elmore, Paul Gagnon, Jim Steinruck
Fire Chief Kevin K. O'Brien

1825 South Lake Stevens Road
Lake Stevens, WA 98258

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 if there were any questions.

Chief O'Brien commented for us to have an opportunity to merge like this is amazing.

Comment - My perspective on the merger between Fire District 7 and Monroe Fire District 3, our admin staff had always been understaffed and when we merged together the efficiencies were visible overnight. We need to support our support system.

Q. We realize Lake Stevens will vote about this. Has Fire District 7 had any community meetings about the merger?

A. Chief Meek commented they had community meetings on both sides when Fire District 7 merged with Fire District 3 Monroe; and we will move into that phase. We have been using the Cushman model as a resource and it gives us a good look at our financial forecasting.

Chief O'Brien commented at one of the first joint staff meetings we had, it was awesome to see that we could have a stronger administrative team.

Q. What about Snohomish in between Lake Stevens Fire and Fire District 7?

A. Chief O'Brien commented we will continue to invite them to be a part of our discussions, and we hope that someday they will want to merge with us. We have a great relationship with Fire District 4 Snohomish.

Chief Meek commented there are four miles in between our boundaries. There will always be gaps to work with in regards to fire districts.

Q. Could you explain the boundary review process and any concerns? Could you explain the new legislation that allows this merger to take place?

A. Chief Meek commented in the past RFAs could merge without contingent boundaries, and now fire districts can as well. The process of the boundary review board is to mitigate concerns. They might take action if another agency or group submits a petition to invoke jurisdiction. We don't anticipate any problems and we assume they will approve.

Q. Are you comfortable sharing some of the names being considered for the new district?

A. Chief Meek commented that will be an organizational discussion. Our current path is to change the name and we will take membership vote.

Q. Are you moving everything to Monroe? What physical presence will there be in Lake Stevens?

A. Chief O'Brien commented it doesn't matter where administration is; we will always have a presence in Lake Stevens. We will be developing a plan to deliver to the board on where to locate administration; and we will consider whether we move admin to Monroe, Clearview, Lake Stevens, or somewhere in between. Our plan is to bring our administrations together; and our service will not change.

Q. If you move the Lake Stevens HQ to Monroe; would Lake Stevens still have some kind of physical presence?

A. Chief O'Brien commented yes.

Fire District 7 Commissioner Schaub commented we understand community pride. It is important to note this is not a takeover; it is two partners coming together. We will all be on the same team.

Vice Chair Steinruck commented the three of us currently represent Lake Stevens as Commissioners.

Fire District 7 Commissioner Fay commented we need to understand how districting will work. We were clear with the district that we are looking at a partnership; and both districts are going to protect the interests of the district as a whole. It is a complex structure.

Chairman Elmore commented it is our job is to be skeptical, to make sure choices are in the best interest of the district. I believe this merger is in the best interest for our Lake Stevens community; and we will continue to ask questions. Regionalization is the future for fire service and it is better for us to be in the forefront while we are a healthy organization.

Comment – For the firefighters this will lead to a stronger trust in training with a more coordinated response leading to a better outcome.

Chairman Elmore commented we may want to consider pushing the vote out further for the cost savings, if there isn't much on the ballot in August.

Chief O'Brien thanked Chief Meek, the Commissioners and citizens for joining us today.


ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 1051 hours.
Motion by Commissioner Gagnon and 2nd by Vice Chair Steinruck.
Vote Unanimous.

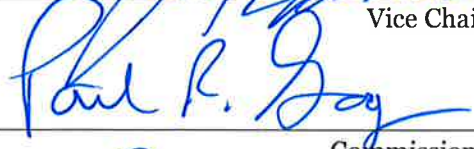
Minutes respectfully submitted by Laana Larson, Communications Director/District Secretary.




Chairman Troy Elmore



Vice Chair Jim Steinruck



Commissioner Paul Gagnon



Chief Kevin K. O'Brien