

**OLYMPIA TUMWATER REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PLANNING COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING**  
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**CONVENE:** 5:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Chair/City of Tumwater Councilmember Leatta Dahlhoff, Vice Chair/Olympia Councilmember Y  n Hu  nh, Tumwater Councilmember Michael Althausen, Olympia Councilmember Jim Cooper, Olympia Councilmember Lisa Parshley, Tumwater Councilmember Eileen Swarthout, Olympia Fire Union Representative Firefighter Steven Busz & Alternate Erin Johnson, Tumwater Fire Union Representative Firefighter Rian Winter (alternate for James Osberg), Tumwater Fire Chief Brian Hurley, and Olympia Fire Chief Mark John.

Staff: Tumwater City Administrator John Doan, Olympia City Manager Jay Burney, and Tumwater Fire Department Administrative Assistant Erika Stone.

Others: Karen Reed, RFA Consultant; Karen Meyer, The Athena Group, Faith Trimble, The Athena Group; and Bill Cushman, Fiscal Analyst.

**WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS:** Chair Dahlhoff welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members provided self-introduction and shared information about their favorite song to karaoke.

**WELCOME, REVIEW OF FEB. 28 SUMMARY, AGENDA, MEETING SCHEDULE:** Ms. Meyer cited the committee's feedback to schedule meetings on the first and fourth Monday of each month. Zoom links will be published prior to each meeting. She reviewed the meeting schedule and a cumulative summary of action items and follow-up questions from the last meeting:

- Form Comparables Ad Hoc Subcommittee - Steven Busz, James Osberg, Jay Burney. Status: created preliminary spreadsheet.
- Form Capital Assets Ad Hoc Subcommittee - Brian Hurley, Mark John, John Doan Status: financial spreadsheet updates, additional requests may be made by Bill.
- Internal/External website, social media, news release discussion - John Doan and Jay Burney to discuss. Status: Communications work is pending the finalization of the charter.

Follow-up questions:

- Tumwater and Olympia attorneys should have a discussion and discuss bandwidth and expertise. If not available, may need to look at hiring legal counsel
- Fire Benefit Charge requires 60% approval to create RFA.

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(Can County Assessor accommodate with timeline?)

- Consider a why/purpose statement for the RFA, for when public and staff ask questions? - Who will be on point at each city to prepare talking points, FAQs, etc?
- Agenda - Suggest adding main talking points to the agenda (to prepare report to councils)

### STAFF TEAM UPDATE:

City Manager Jay Burney advised that the City of Olympia City Attorney Mark Barber has offered to serve as the lead legal counsel for the committee's work. The City of Olympia's website will include a link to Tumwater's RFA page.

Councilmember Parshley suggested adding a go- or no-go decision point.

City Administrator Doan reported the City of Tumwater updated the City's website and added a page on the RFA, efforts continue on drafting of an outline of facilities and the process for a facility transfer, permitting requirements, and plan review and fire marshal services for an RFA, followed by a review of equipment transfer. The City of Tumwater offered to fund the consultant fee for exploring a fire benefit charge.

### REVIEW/DISCUSSION: PURPOSE STATEMENT FROM CHIEFS:

Fire Chief Hurley updated members on the status of developing a Purpose Statement. A copy of the statement will be emailed to the committee.

### UPDATE AND POSSIBLE ACTION: DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS PLAN, WEBSITE:

Ms. Meyer presented the Olympia - Tumwater RFA Planning Committee Draft Phase 1 Communication Plan January - June 2022.

Discussion followed on the different communication methods and public outreach avenues utilized by each city. Information was shared on communications methods used by the cities and the fire unions. Coordination of messaging by the cities and the unions was recommended. Following the finalization of the charter, communications staff from each City will coordinate messaging to the communities.

The committee supported the Draft Communications Plan as presented.

Ms. Meyer presented and described an outline of the Cities of Olympia and Tumwater Regional Fire Authority (RFA) Planning Committee DRAFT website content/FAQs.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

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- Q: What is a Regional Fire Authority?
- Q: How is an RFA created?
- Q: Why create an RFA?
- Q: Who else has created an RFA?
- Q: What happens to the firefighters and staff in the two cities—will they still be providing service to my community?
- Q: How is the RFA funded? Does this funding differ from current fire services funding?
- Q: What is a fire benefit charge?
- Q: How much will the RFA cost?
- Q: When will I know what the plan is for the RFA and how much it will cost me? How can I have input into the process?
- Q: What is the timeline for the project?
- Q: How is the RFA governed?
- Q: Will my fire station be closed?

Comments and suggestions offered by members included improving the response to the last question (Will my fire station be closed?), include question on continuation of response times and service level, reorder questions focusing of what, why, level of service, and health and level of service, and add question that speaks to the region's excellent cardiac save rate and the continued partnership with Thurston County Medic One.

Ms. Meyer reported a revised draft would be forwarded for the committee's review. City Administrator Doan recommended members submit any suggested changes to him and City Manager Burney to finalize and post the document on Tumwater's RFA page with the understanding the document would continue to evolve.

**REVIEW REVISED  
WORK PLAN:**

Ms. Reed reviewed a revised Draft Work Plan. She recommended providing all substantial direction to the staff team by the end of July to enable composition of the RFA Plan during August (committee break) for review by the committee in September for finalization of the RFA Plan in October and delivery to the councils in early fall.

Discussion ensued on the issue of whether to add a go- no go- decision point.

Ms. Reed confirmed direction by members of including a go- no go decision point on the June 27, 2022 meeting agenda, tentatively retain the August meeting dates although likely for staff team meetings, and schedule September 12 and 26, 2022 meetings and one meeting in October 2022.

The committee discussed scheduling town hall meetings and the

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format (virtual vs. in-person) and timing for work on combining labor contracts. Firefighter Busz updated members on the status of discussions for merging the two labor agreements.

**POSSIBLE ACTION:  
REVISED RFA  
PLANNING  
COMMITTEE  
CHARTER:**

Ms. Reed presented and reviewed each section of a revised RFA Planning Committee Charter with recent changes from Chair Dahlhoff incorporated.

Ms. Reed explained that the charter outlines the rules for the committee in terms of working and making decisions together. The difference with the Chiefs one-page outline is a description of how to respond to public inquiries about why regionalization of services is a good idea.

Following discussion, the following change was recommended:

- A quorum was revised to reflect four members rather than five members.

**MOTION:**

**Councilmember Parshley moved, seconded by Councilmember Althaus, to approve the Cities of Olympia and Tumwater Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee Draft Proposed Charter/Operating Rules as amended. A voice vote of voting members approved the motion unanimously.**

*Firefighter Busz disconnected at 6:45 p.m. to respond to a call. His alternate, Firefighter Erin Johnson joined the meeting. Firefighter Busz later rejoined the meeting.*

**PRESENTATION: RFA  
FINANCING  
INTRODUCTION - FIRE  
LEVY, OTHER  
REVENUES,  
IMPORTANCE OF RFA  
RESERVES, FUND  
BALANCE, FIRE  
BENEFIT CHARGES:**

Ms. Reed's introduction on RFA financing covered the following topics:

- Major sources of revenue for a RFA include:
  - Property Tax
  - Fire Levy
  - Fire Benefit Charge (FBC)
  - EMS Levy Allocation
- What are some of the major challenges?
- What have others done?
- Introduction to Fire Benefit Charges – A FBC is a 60% voter-approved fee collected by County Assessor and is based on fire response needs of a structure, rather than the value of the structure. Property owners exempt from property tax are exempt from a FBC. Vacant property is not subject to a FBC. The FBC is determined by a rationally based formula. It is likely the RFA will need to pursue a FBC to fund current level

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of service and operations.

Follow-up requests from members included obtaining information on other RFA's communications process for successfully passing a FBC. Include FBC in the FAQ and information on how property owners pay the FBC. Document to voters what services would be sacrificed if a FBC is not assessed. Include information within the FAQ on how the RFA could be adequately funded through the different funding mechanisms.

The committee supported a request to engage a consultant to develop a database to facilitate the FBC based on square footage, building use, sprinklers or other credits, and FBC \$ amount for each parcel.

Ms. Reed shared a timeline of revenue sources for the RFA during the first year. The first year will be dependent upon funds from each jurisdiction for the first five months.

**MEETING RE-CAP AND  
TALKING POINTS  
SUMMARY FOR CITY  
COUNCILS:**

Ms. Meyer presented talking points to update each Council:

- The RFA reviewed a charter to guide its work
- The RFA reviewed a work plan
- The RFA increased meetings to twice a month
- The plan includes updating Councils regularly and conducting two public engagement events
- The RFA continues to work on the RFA website (hosted by Tumwater) to include FAQs and RFA Planning Committee agendas and materials

Administrative Assistant Stone reviewed the actions completed by the committee:

- Approved Communications Plan
- Preliminary approval of Work Plan
- Olympia City Attorney Mark Farber will assist the committee
- Tumwater agreed to fund the Database Consultant
- The committee adopted its Charter

Follow-up items:

- Ms. Meyer will forward Purpose Statement from Chiefs to the committee
- The revised FAQs will be forwarded to City Administrator Doan and City Manager Burney for finalization based on any feedback from members
- Ms. Reed will add a go- no-go on the work plan for the June 27, 2022 meeting agenda.

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- Meetings for September and October will be added to the Work Plan
- The talking points to the Councils will be forwarded to the committee
- City Manager Burney confirmed updating Olympia's website to incorporate the committee's agendas and materials
- Ms. Reed to follow-up with other RFAs to receive information on how many pursued a FBC at start-up.

**ADJOURNMENT:**                      **With there being no further business, Chair Dahlhoff adjourned the meeting at 7:34 p.m.**

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President  
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