

OLYMPIA TUMWATER REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
August 8, 2022 Page 1

RFA CONVENE: 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair/City of Tumwater Councilmember Leatta Dahlhoff, Vice Chair/Olympia Councilmember Yén Huỳnh, Tumwater Councilmember Michael Althaus, Olympia Councilmembers Jim Cooper, Tumwater Councilmember Eileen Swarthout, Olympia Councilmember Lisa Parshley, Tumwater Fire Chief Brian Hurley, Tumwater Fire Union Representative/Paramedic Lieutenant James Osberg, Olympia Interim Fire Chief Todd Carson, and Olympia Fire Union Representative/Firefighter Steven Busz.

Staff: Tumwater City Administrator John Doan, Olympia City Manager Jay Burney, Olympia City Attorney Mark Barber, Tumwater Communications Manager Ann Cook, and Tumwater Fire Department Administrative Assistant Erika Stone.

Others: Karen Meyer, The Athena Group; Karen Reed, RFA Consultant Bill Cushman, Fiscal Analyst, and Neil Blindheim, FBC Consultant.

WELCOME, Chair Dahlhoff welcomed everyone to the meeting.

AGENDA & SCHEDULE

RECAP: Karen Meyer reviewed the meeting agenda.

Karen Reed reviewed the schedule.

- August 9, 2022 – Council briefings
- August 15, 2022 – Town Hall
- August 22, 2022 – Tentative committee meeting
- September 12, 2022 – Committee to review draft RFA Plan; discuss briefing materials
- September 22, 2022 - Committee to finalize draft RFA plan and materials for councils review in October (preliminary recommendation subject to council input)
- Early October: councils review and comment on draft RFA Plan
- October (TBD) committee meeting confirm any edits to Plan to address council input; recommend final Plan
- Late October: councils review final proposal from RFA Planning Committee
- November - (TBD) meet if/as needed to address issues from council deliberations
- By February 2023 – councils determine approval of the Plan and place a ballot issue for the creation of the RFA

Ms. Reed noted that other committees have stayed engaged in the process through the election phase to support public education and outreach efforts.

OLYMPIA TUMWATER REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
August 8, 2022 Page 2

Ms. Reed described the process for determining whether the August 22, 2022 meeting would be scheduled or cancelled. The Chair and Vice Chair will work with the consultant team to determine if the meeting should proceed. Members agreed to retain the meeting on the calendar for scheduling purposes and if not needed, the meeting would be cancelled.

**RESPONSE TO
QUESTIONS ON MCU
AND PIOS:**

City Administrator Doan updated members on the status of the public disclosure requests to both cities and an article about the RFA in the *Jolt* publication that lacked information on how the RFA is funded. Staff plans to continue communicating the complex story of a RFA as clearly as possible and attending other forums to engage in conversations and answer questions. He noted the importance of recognizing that the virtual committee meetings are open to the public and that the committee is working through issues for development of a proposal that has not been completed at this point.

City Manager Burney shared that much more public communication is required following the council briefings and that there have been some good questions raised by the community that should be added to the Q&A information.

City Administrator Doan reported the Public Information Officer (PIO) position has been integrated within the staffing proposal as an administrative position. The organizational chart includes capacity for those specific responsibilities of communications and public engagement/education.

City Manager Burney updated members on the status of the Mobile Crisis Response Unit (MCU)). The unit was not included in the current financial model for a number of reasons. Currently, budgeting for the unit is in Olympia's budget and it is uncertain as to how the service would be expanded to cover the entire RFA area. Some assumptions include reimbursement of some costs similar to the BLS Transport and CARES programs. However, no analysis has been completed to determine what revenue could offset the cost. Currently, the crisis response unit in Olympia is aligned with the Olympia Police Department and is viewed as a police resource that has established good connections and partnerships. It is also important to understand the impacts if the unit was removed from the Police Department and moved to the RFA and how that could be reflected within organizational cohesion of services. It is also important to consider that by forming an RFA, costs will be higher because of the addition of programs and services in addition to establishing and maintaining reserve accounts.

**KEY MESSAGES -
ROUND 2
DISCUSSION:**

Tumwater Communications Manager Ann Cook recommended members review the key messages document emailed earlier in the day and provide any suggestions or changes via email. The document is a companion to the Q&A. She offered to forward the Word version of the Q&A to crosswalk with the key messages document. She asked to receive feedback no later than noon on August 15, 2022.

OLYMPIA TUMWATER REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
August 8, 2022 Page 3

The committee supported a recommendation to share the draft of key messages during the briefing with the councils. Several suggestions included adding more detail and clarity on the advantages of the RFA, emphasizing why a fire benefit charge is proposed, updating the Q&As based on recent community comments, explain why RFA costs would be more (adequately funding fire services and offering additional programs), and include information highlighting the differences between the RFA and two fire departments.

AGENCY NAME:

Fire Chief Hurley reported on efforts by both Fire Chiefs working with staff and Union leadership to solicit proposed names for the RFA. The proposed list is in alphabetical order and an asterisk indicates staff from both departments suggested the name:

- Brewery City RFA
- Capital City RFA*
- Capital Metro RFA*
- Capital RFA
- Central Thurston RFA*
- Columbia RFA
- Deschutes Falls RFA
- Olympia RFA*
- South Puget Sound RFA*
- South Sound RFA
- Tumwater-Olympia RFA

Feedback from members included:

- Keep the name neutral with no specific city name. Support Capitol RFA, Central Thurston RFA, or South Sound RFA
- RFA name should reflect merging of a true partnership
- It was noted that “Capital” should be corrected to reflect “Capitol.”
- Support a name joining the cities, such as Capitol RFA to reflect neutrality, as well as South Sound RFA or Central Thurston RFA
- Prefer not using Capitol RFA or Olympia RFA as it denotes the City of Olympia
- Support Central Thurston RFA as it represents the geographical area and is name neutral
- Lean towards South Puget Sound RFA, South Sound RFA, or Capitol Metro RFA
- Support Capitol Metro RFA and prefer South Sound RFA. Deschutes Falls RFA is shared by both cities and Columbia RFA is the original name of the first fire department in the state
- If retaining a municipality name is the goal, Olympia Regional Fire Authority is the best choice. Support the other recommendations as well as Capitol City to keep name simple

OLYMPIA TUMWATER REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
August 8, 2022 Page 4

- Agree neutrality is important to avoid and could support Central Thurston or Capitol City or Capitol Metro.
- No strong preference but support South Sound RFA
- Support a neutral name such as South Puget Sound RFA
- Prefer name neutrality
- Consider removing South Sound RFA
- Consider South Sound RFA and South Puget Sound RFA as the same choice

Ms. Reed reviewed the top votes of Capitol Metro RFA, Capitol RFA, Central Thurston RFA, and South Sound RFA.

Members supported a suggestion for Union representatives to poll members on the names of Capitol Metro RFA, Capitol RFA, Central Thurston RFA, South Puget Sound RFA, and South Sound RFA and provide results to the committee.

**"DRY RUN" AUGUST
9 COUNCIL
PRESENTATION:**

Ms. Reed said the review is of the presentation materials to each council during a briefing on August 9, 2022. The information includes the committee's recommendation to the councils on RFA governance, organization, financing, and to confirm commitment for the committee to continue with its work.

Ms. Reed in conjunction with City Administrator Doan, City Manager Burney, Fire Chief Hurley, and Interim Fire Chief Carson presented and described details of the 60-slide presentation in the following major categories:

- I. Recap what is a Regional Fire Authority
 - Anticipated benefits
 - Timeline
- II. RFA is a independent government operation: Administration, Cash Flow, Reserves
- III. Governance Recommendation - Option 4, phased in over time and proposed RFA Organization Chart
- IV. RFA Finance Options - Funding options for the RFA & Legal & policy implications for City property tax
- V. 7-Year RFA Finance Plan - Projected expenditures & revenues - Examples of cost impacts

Next Steps: Council support for RFA Planning Committee continuing its work. Additional input and recommendations.

Members offered the following suggestions and changes to the presentation materials:

OLYMPIA TUMWATER REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
August 8, 2022 Page 5

- The presentation should include information to enable the council to address questions from constituents on why the cities should form a RFA.
- Add additional talking points on the importance of adequately funding reserves.
- Abbreviate talking points on the initial governance board the councils supported in June.
- Emphasize the importance of service enhancement staffing.
- Point out that administrative staff to be added would assume much of the work currently provided internally by each city in support of each fire department. Address potential questions on how removal of those functions from each city could affect city staffing/operations.
- Within the staffing slide use colors to differentiate Basic Life Support Transport Units, CARES Unit, and a Two Battalion Model.
- Emphasize that the increased level of service provided by the RFA will require a fire benefit charge. Other RFAs in the state assess a fire benefit charge using the same formula.
- The slide on “Another Look at Funding Options” with two bar graphs should be represented to scale, rather not to scale as reflected on the slide.
- Need a well-defined slide describing the fire benefit charge methodology.
- Correct AV rate on slide “Another Look at Funding Options.”
- Emphasize city property tax level will decrease by \$1/\$1,000 AV when cities shift \$1/\$1,000 AV to the RFA.
- Minimize graphics that create confusion or inadvertently transmit misinformation.
- It was noted that repayment of interfund loans by RFA to cities is over a period of 5-1/2 years and not 4 years.
- Questions on the FBC for commercial uses versus residential. It was noted that the FBC formula within the program can be adjusted.

**GO/NO-GO
RECOMMENDATION
FOR COMMITTEE:**

The committee agreed to relay a go recommendation to the councils.

ADJOURNMENT:

With there being no further business, Chair Dahlhoff adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.