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**EMS Advisory Board Meeting
September 12, 2008
1:30 – 4:40 p.m.**

Signed In: Butch Hinchey, NWFBS Gary Baar, Lynden Fire District
Jack Louws, Mayor – Lynden Jerry Martin, WCFD #7
Randy VanderHeiden, BFD Bill Boyd, BFD
Paul Guy, FD2 Al Saab, WCFD #7
Pete Kremen, County Executive Floyd Roorda, WCFD#1
Dewey Desler, Deputy Admin. B. Buchanan, Bellingham City Council

Introductions: Pete began the meeting with introductions asking everyone in attendance Advisory Board and audience to introduce themselves.

Meeting notes from December 2007 were reviewed. Jack Lou made a motion to accept the notes as written. Al Saab seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

A review of the City of Bellingham budget began with Randy VanderHeiden. He highlighted the following:

- July 2008 closed out with a \$600,000 budget savings. However, new budgeted expenses will eat up that savings. Additionally, there was a wage lapse for the ½ time medic unit staff person. Chase car personnel was hired in August.
- More savings was realized with the lapse in paramedic training that was scheduled/budgeted to begin September 2008.
- Revenues increased by approximately \$100,000.
- Anticipated expenses include rebuilt chassis \$120,000. more capital expenses that include cardiac monitors at \$20,000. Bellingham is still evaluating products and will go to bid soon.
- Smith Road Station installation of meterman exhaust to address employee safety issues.

Dispatch fees were covered in Medic 1 budget. Year end statements will go to districts for BLS services. Those revenues are not reflected in the revenue picture.

What-Comm billing services are being resolved so that it won't be a medic 1 budget item anymore.

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Randy went on to review the 2009 Budget fee increases:

- Billing contracted services for billing services to Medicare
- Reimburse \$75 flat rate + per mile reimbursement for BLS calls
- BLS stipend line item increased for additional contracts. Same for BFD for their increased calls.

Replacement of paramedic unit. 2007 7 million 253,000 revenue.
2008 230,000 went back into budget (wage contract)

Jack Louws asked what is the ATC Director?

Randy said it was for 2008 Medic 1 pays only for Fire personnel used for medi 1 salaries and wages.

Administrative staff total \$395,00. covers 7 staff.

Jack Louws stated that he understood after further review. There are operational charges and administrative charges.

Dewey said there projections made in the Plan for increases. Have you looked at those projections and what's happening.

Randy said they are watching the trends but found it is hard to compare projections because they don't fit into the charges as outlined.

Dewey Medicare revenue decreased then increased when rates went up 3.5 – 4%

Randy agreed that there were some challenges with Medicare billing. He went on to say that the trend will go back down.

Retro pay for personnel went up 3.5% in 2007 and benefits will go up 15% in 2008.

Dewey included stated that fuel costs would also be increasing. Although they have gone up they still have a \$14,000 buffer. Dewey went on to say that overall revenues are on track to be higher in 2008. Expenditures are reflected as below the budgeted amount.

Randy agreed and stated the increase was largely due to the Medicare billing. Randy said the decrease in expenditures will be short lived as it was due to the retro pay for

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2007 which has just been settled, Also the projected capital expensed have not yet occurred.

Dewey said we need to continue watching those numbers.

Roger stated that we will be real close to the projected budget.

Bill Boyd added that the retro pay can come out of this years budget.

Dewey asked if Bellingham was able to avoid the B&O tax.

Randy stated not entirely, Bellingham needs to pay tax and then get reimbursed at the end of the year.

Dewey said we are budgeting and expending more than we projected. But revenues through Medicare and sales tax are increasing only slightly. Economy may not keep up with the trend. Plan anticipates additional expenses for Fire District 7 per contract. Fire District training in 2008 will cost \$86,000. and 241,000 in 2009. for a total of \$331,000.

Jack Louws said we're approaching the need to strategize for new funding. In 3-4 years we are going to need more money.

Dr. Wayne said the scary thing is not knowing the impact of the Olympics. He went on to say that he has met with lots of people, border folks and the like and it is generally agreed that there will be a significant increase in the population that will need to be served as a result of the games.

Gary Baar asked what the 4.5 units account for.

Dewey responded by saying they include 4 Medic units and one chase car. Details still need to be worked out. Can we discuss service numbers?

Randy reviewed the graphs that include service calls. The threshold number is 2600 calls. Beginning to exhaust the current capacity. Medic Unit calls may begin to rise. Medic 3 and 4 close to equal on their call volumes. Fire district 7 and Lynden are holding majority of BLS calls. Medic 3 only goes to serious ALS calls.

Medic unit calls down from 40% BLS to 25%. This is a direct result of a better job triaging calls at the dispatch level. Through training and education staff are now more comfortable identifying BLS calls.

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Bill boyd said that ALS calls will likely not go down anymore. We've bought a couple of years with this system but that as good as it gets.

Randy state that Medic 1 transports to city address ratio is interesting because most ALS calls are for the County. Projections for County growth were good.

Dewey asked if they collected the same data for BLS calls.

Randy said no, just for the city.

Gary Baar suggested that the final call disposition (inclusive of BLS and ALS calls) would be in the year end report.

Dewey recalled purchasing some pretty sophisticated software to help dispatch make BLS and ALS determination.

Randy agreed and said it has helped to improve that determination. Bill Boyd added that they are now dispatching BLS calls more appropriately instead of consistently defaulting to ALS.

Roger said the national trend is 55% BLS to 45% ALS cals.

Dewey asked if the chase car was contributing and what kind of impact has it had?

Randy said the chase car only just began in August and there for we don't have a lot of data or input yet. They've been dispatched on multiple district calls. There are a few hiccups with Districts and the EMS Supervisor that are being worked out. Communication is a key factor.

Dewey one of the rationales for the chase car was to assist Districts with BLS calls. What kind of units are you using? Randy answered that they are using a pick up truck that is equipped with all of the essential tools.

AI asked if protocols have been developed for the deployment of the chase car?

Randy said yes, we've been doing this for more than 20 years.

AI responded by stating communication and developing a system for call outs should be happening.

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Dewey asked to discuss the update he sent out. He said he could have included the concerns of City of Bellingham with BTC regarding costs and quality of training.

He asked if anyone had any questions regarding the update. None.

Dewey then reviewed the proposed contract with FD 7. He said we have a commitment to the people and the need to develop trust of people if we are going to ask for more. We have been working with the City of Bellingham and agreed to some guiding principles. We've also worked with Fire District 7 for training. To move forward with training provisions we documented and said we should do. The key section of the contract is within the Intent and Payment sections. Dewey reviewed the content of those sections and asked if anyone had any questions. He continued by stating it is important to point out that FD7 has committed to moving forward in a cost effective way. They received a \$110,000 grant from King county for the classroom training costs. Fire District 7 has also agreed to pay the wages of the fire fighters in paramedic training.

He said there are still questions on the table.

- When and how will the 5th unit be implemented? Will it be 24/7 or 12/7?
- Dispatch development
- Building capacity

Gary reiterated the position of Fire District 7 and said they have continued to move forward with the plan but not without pain. He believes this could be a model program. He said he believed strongly that it worked out this far because of the efforts FD7 has made. The contract includes only 1 time training costs. It is a modest cost to the system because Fire District 7 is cross staffing everything until they are ready to implement the 5th medic unit. We are all part of the EMS community.

Dr. Wayne said he wanted to make a few points. Number 1, he has been here for 35 years. In that 35 years, the program has evolved. He is incredibly grateful for the work done by EMS program. He knows Whatcom has the best cardio results.

Number 2, since the day we planned this I've been supportive as the medical director. He believes strongly that Whatcom County has a unique community that has special needs and characteristics. It is not a 5 minute transport community so training has to be specialized.

Number 3, he is confident there will be a training at the first of the year. It will cost no more and perhaps even less than the training costs at Harborview.

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Number 4, Our training is a model to the nation. He believes there is duality of costs to find training outside of Whatcom County. Quality Management costs and other additional costs cause him concern. Dr. Wayne said the training will not provide the timeline called for in the plan. He went on to say that all of the districts should play in the same sandbox and train together. He ended by saying he is proud of the work we've done.

Gary Russell said he would love to train here, but there is no option for his crew to train here. Gary went on to say that the duality of costs are not driven by Fire District 7. I know we will pass all protocols and evaluations. There is no doubt we are dedicated and committed.

Dr. Wayne asked why they can't train here.

Gary said Local 106 will not allow it.

Jack Louws asked what legal right the local has to block the training?

Gary Russell said they control ambulances, calls, etc. We will need to ride. The plan is breached and broken and we need to go back to the public.

Dr. Wayne asked if they would face the same issues in Seattle shouldn't we be making extra efforts to train here? Making the assumption there is training in early 09 we would still be on track.

Dewey stated that we spent weeks exploring options. We tried hard to find training locally.

Dr. Wayne said Mike Lopez from the Department of Health confirmed that the WWU can be certified if they have the credentials and tools, etc. Clearly they do.

Pete Kremen asked what the rationale to move to WWU was.

Bill Boyd stated that it would cost less and they would have more flexible scheduling.

Dr. Wayne said he can control the educational component. He can control tests and fairness on tests. What I can't control is the field training. I can ask, plead and request but I can't control that. I am frustrated that we can't work together.

Jack asked Chief Russell in his own opinion what are the union issues that need to be resolved?

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Rob Wilson identified himself and said that Local 106 was asking to keep the system unified. They would welcome Fire District 7 as 106 members.

Gary Baar said he worked hard to share the mission of the EMS plan to his community.

Dewey stated here's where the rub is. We discussed at length where to train. It still remains unclear where/when and if local training is available. Fire District 7 brought a lot to the table to make this happen and we had to make a decision for the training opportunity.

Jack Louws asked if they are successful at Harborview are we only postponing union issues?

Dr. Wayne said they will need to pass written protocols, hospital protocols and field certification. He also stated that they would not get certified because of the union.

Gary restated that they have breached the contract. The system will split. We (FD7) have fulfilled our commitment of the Plan and our community. We'll test the waters.

Dr. Wayne asked if we have to fix this problem when the paramedics get back from Harborview aren't we delaying the process. Is there a way to figure out how to make this work?

Bill Boyd said since 1999 we've been trying to plan for this unified system. The locals are stand alone entities. I respect all unions that work hard to benefit their members. Also, with respect to those rights we cannot get seriously involved with this situation. We have no control. The ruling is out there I can't ask my guys to evaluate FD7 paramedics because it goes against the arbitration ruling.

Butch asked why Local 106 is insisting that the FD7 paramedics become local 106 members?

One local 106 paramedic (didn't get name) said the positive result of everyone working under Medic 1 as local 106 members is that the you get the cost savings through economy of scale. Better for the taxpayers.

Commissioner Dodson said that 4 years ago the city of Bellingham pulled out of their commitment to the county. Do we need a new medical Director?

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Dr. Wayne said I certify I don't train/ We've established that to be a paramedic in Whatcom County you must be certified through my protocols for your benefit and public safety to protect us from fly by nighters.

Al Saab said we're taking a huge risk. The question whether or not Seattle will train is relevant but we don't know.

Dr. Wayne said we have to learn how to work together.

Jack Louws said we need to move forward. It doesn't feel good to act on this contract. He proposed a white board discussion to develop a clear picture of what is happening. He stated he was not comfortable approving the contract today with so many unknowns.

Chief Fields asked if this body (EMS advisory board) had the authority to advise the two locals to sit down and work this out. If we're at an impasse what happens next?

Dewey said I'm not an attorney, but I know we've signed written agreements with small cities to take their tax dollars to put into EMS services. The cities can say we're in breach and ask for their money back.

Dr. Wayne asked if there was a willingness and/or interest for the locals to work this out.

Fire District 7 member said we've been trying to talk with Local 106 for 2.5 to 3 years with little or no progress. We need to get trained and if the Medical Director can't control the process of the evaluations maybe we should do it elsewhere perhaps in Skagit.

Dr. Wayne said I don't have control. It doesn't matter who is the Medical Director they will face the same issues.

Rob Wilson stated that they have asked to work with FD7 multiple times.

Jack Louws said it seems to me if this Board wants to support the training then we need you the medical director to open the training.

Dr. Wayne stated that he has not authority over the evaluation. If they train outside the Whatcom training they still have to go through our evaluations.

Chief Boyd said we need to continue putting as much resources as we have into building capacity. This issue needs to get fixed. I can wait for cooler heads to prevail.

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Keeping the community safe is the central community issue. Dr. Wayne has stood by his principles and put his neck on the line and done a heck of a job.

Pete echoed Bill's praise for Dr. Wayne stating that Dr. Wayne deserved the credit and then some. He also cautioned the board to not short change the Cities and Whatcom County for what they have accomplished.

Rich Kichener said we've been vilified. We understood and agreed with the plan. Rob and I were fully aware that there would be more labor concerns down the road but didn't want to risk losing the community support. We have since considered cost efficiencies and duplicities amidst labor concerns. There are some big issues.

Mark Kuhl said the as president of local 3855 I will do whatever it takes to work with Local 106.

Jack Louws made a motion to review the city and county 2009 budget if agreed, then approve. The motion was seconded and approved.

Al Saab made a motion to send the FD7 training contract to the County Council. Butch seconded the motion. A vote was taken on the motion.

Four voted in favor of the motion to send the contract to the County Council; Butch Hinchey, Al Saab, Gary Baar, Paul Guy (Gary B. not a voting member)

Three voted against the motion; Jack Louws, Floyd Roorda, and Barry Buchanan

Gary Russell noted that Gary Baar was not an active voting member of the advisory board. So with more deliberation Pete Kremen voted in favor of the motion.

Pete went on to say we should formalize next steps. He would like to see two point people from each union. Both Local presidents agreed to formalize a discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 4:40