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**EMS Advisory Board Meeting
November 13, 2009
10:00 – 12:45**

Signed In:

Gary Baar, Lynden Fire District	Duncan McLane, WCEMSTC Council
Jack Louws, Mayor – Lynden	Dan Pike, Mayor - Bellingham
Randy VanderHeiden, BFD	Bill Boyd, BFD
Bob Busch, Lummi	Al Saab, WCFD #7
Pete Kremen, County Executive	Floyd Roorda, WCFD#1
Dewey Desler, Deputy Admin.	Gene Knutson, Bellingham City Council
Dean Whitney, WCFD #21	Lynn Trzynka, SWFA
Ed Scott, Lummi Island	Dave Ralston, SWFA
Roger Christensen, BFD	Gary Russell, FD7
John Carter, City of Bellingham	Marianne Caldwell, WC Finance
Tawni Helms, Whatcom County	Bob Busch, Lummi

Introductions: Pete called the meeting to order at 10:15 and began the meeting with introductions asking everyone in attendance to introduce themselves.

Dewey reviewed the Advisory Board member list and stated that it was composed of elected officials and invested partners. He went on to address the group by outlining the discussion items; Medic 5 progress, Status of call volumes and a discussion of the min/max numbers as outlined by Duncan McLane.

Dewey began the discussion of the budget. Whatcom County collects 1/10 of 1% for EMS. 30% must go towards Criminal Justice the remaining 70% goes towards the Emergency Medical Services. A review of the County budget and fund balance indicates that revenue is down by \$300,000. The City found we needed to dedicate interest income to this fund which the County corrected by reimbursing the fund. The ending fund balance is 3.9 million for 2009. Projections reflect a certain decay over the next few years as the fund continues to decrease.

Dewey continued by saying that as colleagues and gentlemen we need to discuss a couple of lingering issues that includes the paramedic training request by the city. We

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must lay out the issues and be transparent with our numbers as they change and the program evolves. We are proposing full implementation of Medic 5 in 2011. Fire District 7 will be expending \$80,000 to accomplish this.

Immediately prior to this meeting the Mayor and Executive had a discussion, a good discussion regarding Bellingham Fire Departments paramedic training proposal. I'm not sure we've resolved the issues and there appears to remain some disagreement. However, we must remember that we are doing this to serve our community. Using this model we can continue to make improvements as the system evolves. This is your service.

Mayor Pike spoke to the indirect allocation issue included in the City's budget. He stated that he discussed the issue with his staff. The City's allocation costs are 3.3% compared to the 15% standard. He stated that he understands the concerns regarding the indirect allocation charge. The City assesses the charge to everything we do. What the City would like to avoid is creating more work by utilizing more accounting measures. He suggested that we should establish a set amount and then put this issue behind us.

Jack Louws said that he understood the reason for indirect allocation costs but the County has costs and it might behoove them to charge for their administrative costs associated with EMS. Jack said that he would rather not see us go down that road it would appear that we all could be charging for this cost.

Dewey said the model described may be something we do for a fixed fee, per unit cost. It may be a discussion for the larger community group. A per unit cost model would allow us to review the budget for relevant costs but not to the level of detail we currently must exercise.

Gary Russell said every member on the Board is an Elected Official that gets paid to be at the meetings. Fire District 7 doesn't include administrative legislative costs in their budget for EMS.

John Carter said the internal allocation is a formula based on metrics and charged at a very efficient rate.

Dan Pike said the Mayor's office isn't just him, the Mayor but includes staff as well.

Gary Russell said yes, we know it includes the office staff.

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Al Saab said there was a gentleman's agreement not to include the administration allocation in the EMS budget.

Dan Pike said the agreement changed in 2005 and there is no clarity on the issue.

Pete Kremen said to put this in perspective, the first 25 years this wonderful system was in service there was no charge. In 2001, Mayor Asmundson changed that and we the County balked/resisted the inclusion of that charge. As a result, the Mayor removed it from the bill and continued to do so through 2005. Now, 31 years later we've learned that we've been charged for this fee since 2005.

Dewey stated that charge was simultaneously removed from our What-Comm budget and continues not to be billed. We're not trying to be harsh we just don't believe it's a charge we should be paying for.

John Carter said he's new to the City and he doesn't have 27 years of history. He is willing to sit down and develop a new allocation.

Marianne Caldwell said we're not saying we want to change the formula. We just don't agree and/or believe we should be paying it.

Dewey said we're not quibbling over the general purpose allocation for the services we are paid. Fundamentally, the Mayor – Council will be there paying for them shouldn't be included.

Jack Louws said if it's relevant for the City of Bellingham it's relevant for all jurisdictions.

Dewey suggested moving on to the issue of Paramedic Training. It seems that cost is not critical. I'm in the position of asking questions regarding budget and the cost of services. Training is a very expensive function of EMS. The proposed training may be something we move out to 2011.

Bill Boyd said the Bellingham Fire District has a very long history running the program. They worked with Bellingham Technical College and found too expensive. Currently, our demographics tell us an educated historical position is that we have to have a class in 2010. Generally speaking, I've given more than adequate justification for the class. Our budget we submitted with not cost increases including the class.

Pete Kremen asked if there were any questions.

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Randy Christensen said he would like to add that it is mandated that we have the second class to achieve accreditation for the new program.

Marianne Caldwell said you can skip a year in between classes and still get accreditation.

Randy VanderHeiden said it may cost more in 2011 because wages are frozen in 2010.

Mayor Pike said it's compelling to move it out a year.

Al Saab asked if it wasn't more advantageous to bring in outside paramedics.

Randy said yes.

Jack Louws said he typically likes to make sure something is going well before I move forward. Would like to see Fire District 7 training was well spent.

Randy V. said we're talking about training for Medic 1.

Dean Whitney asked if the Bellingham Fire District class was going to be open for other students.

Randy said there is only space for six paramedics allowing time for clinicals.

Bob Busch: If you have 6 new paramedic grads will you have any issues with concurrency?

Bill Boyd said we would rotate them through. Costs assigned to Medic 1 on a shift by shift basis.

Gary Baar said BFD already has 6 reserve Medics do you have room for them? The chase car is not being fully utilized and there are 6 more units.

Bill Boyd stated that BFD is proposing to maintain the current system.

Al Saab asked if they had 2 paramedics and a student on a truck.

Randy said 2 paramedics.

Gary Russell said he had mixed feeling on both sides of the issue. He understands BFD's method. But the issue is about whether or not we have enough \$\$\$. We've been

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through the knothole. The proposed training is for a closed program using public dollars. It used to be a regional program now it is closed and only for use by partners. Gary admitted he was a little sensitive to this approach. We're no longer serving as a regional one system approach. It's not for the whole. My concern is that it remains a one system program. It's not about the money for us. I have mixed emotions and it's a hard decision. We've been on a journey to see this through and essentially been fed to the wolves. Ultimately, we don't know what the cost savings will be resulting from this different training option.

Roger said we have a different way of charging for the same class with one exception a single regional class offered at BTC which doubled our cost per student.

Al Saab asked if BFD always has 2 medics.

Bill Boyd responded that they have 2 paramedics in the County. They have 1 medic and 1 EMT in the City.

Roger asked why/how has the class been cheaper? We know it takes 1,000 hours to transform an EMT to a paramedic. What we've done historically is give the students contact hours as the 2nd EMT on the rig. It's cheaper to do it that way. That's been our history with exception to the one class at BTC.

Bill Boyd said students get through the class faster.

Dewey said what's sensitive to us in our role as County government is what Gary brings up; the closed class only to partners is limited and does not serve the entire community.

Bill Boyd said its Union/Labor issues. I've clearly stated that I don't support FD7 working with the City of Bellingham. It cannot work. They cannot train together.

Dewey then asked how can this work?

Bill Boyd said partner groups can participate.

Dewey asked if you can see a possibility in the future that interested groups can receive their training through FD7?

Al Saab said you can assign/pay staff to train. I know you're concerned with an unfair labor practice. But you as the manager can assign that work. It's a "job assignment". I don't see it.

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Bill Boyd responded that yes I have the right to assign work. Three things:
I guarantee it will end up as a ULP
There is cost associated with a ULP
There is potential damage don't to both the entities
Al Saab stated that those folks work together everyday. The animosity you're talking about may be a reflection of 5% of them not the majority.

Bill Boyd said this is different. Paramedic Training is different.

Al Saab said that's animosity not manager work.

Gary Russell said what it boils down to is that the definition of a partner is they have to be a part of the union. From our stand point its public money. I admire the work they do.

Pete Kremen said that the points Gary made have some validity. It would be better for everybody especially the public, if they could train and work side by side. My recommendation will be to support the training. It makes sense to do it in 2010. I have a high regard for both Bellingham Fire District and the small departments.

Dewey asked if it was possible to train together.

Bill Boyd said yes.

Dewey said he would love for us to collectively work together. We spend more money to duplicate classes.

Bill Boyd said we can't solve this.

Gary Russell said he disagreed. We told our people that you **have** to do this. We knew it was our obligation to run Medic 5 it was in the plan we all signed off on. This was a government choice not a union issue. It's an issue we can solve. If the government doesn't have control you might as well hand it over.

Jack Louws said 8 years ago I took over as Mayor. We were having challenges. It took the work of the two different chiefs breaking down barriers and demonstrating leadership. We will be memorializing an agreement of working together. I don't think taking the stance that we **can't** fix it is the right thing to do. Out on site, its all professionals these folks work together side by side. It saddens me that two unions have such distaste and distrust of each other that they can't work together. We need to

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look forward. We need to fix this. All the Chiefs need to sit down and resolve this. The majority of people find this mess we're in as juvenile.

Gary Russell gave a report on the Medic 5 training progress. They are finishing their excruciating training. They are now required to have 5 additional field evaluations done in Wenatchee. One student is there right now. January 2010 target date for notice in COB budget.

Hypothetically \$80,000 is on the table. We're not paying our people out of this when required to go to 12/7 we'll be coming to the County for a supplement budget request. We'll be under \$331,000 for the training. When Medic 6 is in the horizon I don't want the 6th unit I want to share the fun with someone else.

Bill Boyd reported that FD7 and BFD met a month ago (October) and discussed the deployment of Medic 5. We discussed territory. FD7 territory includes the City of Ferndale and everything else. Medic 4 would take the south side of FD7. They blocked those territories out. They also discussed call out protocols. It was a great 2 hour discussion.

Gary added that Dr. Jim Martin is Fire District 7's program director and will be helping get our certification. It's all about patient care. Our people don't have animosity.

Dewey said that discussion at the Chief level is really positive. Are you sharing that information with your captains so that everyone is aware?

Gary said yes.

Al Saab asked when the FD7 students will be certified.

Gary said 2 are getting ready for field evaluations in Wenatchee. We've gone way beyond the normal training experience.

Pete Kremen thanked the group for working together on this.

Duncan McLane reported on the EMS license for our region. We currently only 1 license based on the State's Min/Max numbers. These numbers dictate the number of licenses a region can have.

Mayor Pike said he wasn't sure why we don't just have one license it looks like we're going to two systems.

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Duncan said it looks like that but we have multiple BLS licenses here right now. If you have more than one ALS transporting agency than you need more than one license. The process to review an increase in the numbers could take up to 18 months. It's a very long process that includes lots of checks and balances.

Randy V. said numbers help.

Is this consistent with the plan? Yes

Jack Louws said he encouraged them to go forward.

Marianne said it is according to the plan, with one exception, Gary Russell thought that Medic 5 would go under the Medic 1 license. This does allow a private ambulance company to go for it. Because this is in the plan the state has it won't happen.

Roger said this is a huge discussion. How is the county going forward?

Dave Ralston asked if this was really setting up a second program if so, it needs to be addressed.

Bill Boyd said it's operational. Yes, you're setting up two systems.

Al Saab said that's why we developed the Plan so we wouldn't create more than one system, but labor didn't let that happen.

Gary said it's an integrated system. Look at what we're doing with BLS already! Our budget is now 1-2 million! We're doing work BFD used to do. We've gone down that road. Maybe this can be a Whatcom County license.

Bob Busch made an observation that in the future we need to go the voters. The public doesn't want a closed shop. We need to be unified.

Dewey said that being prudent allows us to stretch the dollars farther.

Mayor Pike said the public was very happy with the BFD when it was a closed shop. The issue is how do we work together? Certainly, by fighting we can make the levy go down.

Pete Kremen said his observation of history is that the people of Bellingham were happy but not in the county. We did have a levy go down. Bob is correct, if the same climate is in existence and we have to the public it will go down. We have a schism but it can

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be resolved. If we can mollify major obstacles we can come together and earn their affirmative vote.

Mayor Pike stated that he didn't disagree other than knowing that sometimes people look at scapegoats. We need to focus on the issues.

Pete Kremen said it has to do with relationships. It's not about growth issues. It has to do with relationships. When we developed the plan and the rest of the county felt they were part of the plan.

Gene K. said the City and County Councils were not on the same page.

Dewey said when we do it again every single elected official has to sign on to it.

Al Saab said a straw pole of the Board of Fire Commissioners confirmed that they want to stick to the plan. Bellingham Fire District signed on to the plan to save jobs. Medic 3 and 4 were saved and unfortunately, I think that's the only reason they signed on.

Gary said we've been on the mark according to the Plan that is everything up until the 5th Medic Unit.

With no further questions or comments Pete adjourned the meeting at 12:45.