

**Whatcom County Fire District #4
via Zoom Meeting
4142 Britton Loop, Bellingham, WA 98226
12:00 p.m.
March 17, 2025
Regular Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Cooley called the regular Whatcom County Fire District #4 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting for March 17, 2025, to order at 12:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Attendees: Chairman Steve Cooley; Vice-Chairman Tim Johnson; Fire Commissioner Mark Lann; Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen; Finance Specialist Jessica Koehler.

Other: Washington State Auditor Representatives Scott Hylton (Audit Supervisor) and Annika Grande (Audit Lead).

With the rescission of Proclamation 20-28, the district continues to do its best to provide accommodations to the public. A direct link allowing the public to participate in the meeting during the public comment section was included on the meeting agenda and posted on the District's website.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

AUDITOR EXIT INTERVIEW

Representatives from the Auditor's office reviewed the Accountability and Financial Statement Audit for the period from January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2023.

Exit items address control deficiencies or non-compliance with laws or regulations that have an insignificant or immaterial effect on the entity or errors with an immaterial effect on the financial statements.

Internal Control over Financial Reporting

- The audit did not identify any internal control deficiencies that we consider material weaknesses.

Compliance and Other Matters

- The results of the audit tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under the *Government Auditing Standards*.

The completed audit will be published on their website in the near future. The auditors intend to disseminate a survey for those who participated in the process to complete.

The next audit, which will cover accountability for public resources and the financial statement, will be conducted in the Fall of 2026.

Chief Van der Veen, Finance Specialist Jessica Koehler, and the administrative staff were recognized for their hard work during the audit.

Audit representatives left the meeting at 12:22 p.m.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

1. Meeting Minutes
 - a) February 10, 2024 – regular
2. Staff Reports – Chief / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
 - a) Total Revenue – February \$28,302.13
 - b) Total Expenditures – March \$22,028.97
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
 - a) Monthly Expenditure Payroll Voucher: \$483.00
 - b) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$21,545.97

Chief Cooley noted a wording discrepancy in the meeting notes from February 10. He requested that the word "advantaged" be changed to "disadvantaged."

MOTION: Commissioner Lann moved to approve the Consent Agenda as revised. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Johnson and approved 3-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Britton Rd/Northern Heights Annexation: Chief Van der Veen provided information about the proposed annexation of the Britton Rd/Northern Heights area, which includes the Britton Loop Station 12 property. The Boundary Review Board is reviewing the proposal and has not approved or rejected it.

Chairman Cooley and Chief Van der Veen met with Attorney Eric Quinn to craft a letter protesting the annexation. Although the letter was sent, Chief Van der Veen will request that the letter be withdrawn. Chief Van der Veen explained that the original 1997 interlocal agreement between multiple fire agencies clearly states that any annexations proposed by the City of Bellingham would not be contested.

11. District's Obligations. In consideration of the City's promises set forth herein, each of the Districts herein agrees as follows:

11.1. Not to commence or maintain any action, appeal, or challenge of any kind in any forum challenging annexations by the City or the annexation policies of the City or the urban growth area of the City contained in Whatcom County's Comprehensive Plan, provided that such annexations or annexation policies are consistent with (i) the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan (Ordinance No. 10706), (ii) the Bellingham Final Urban Growth Areas as approved by the Whatcom County Council (Ordinance No. 97-023), and (iii) the Urban

Fringe Subarea Plan to be adopted by the Whatcom County Council, and (iv) Fire Services Master Plan, upon adoption, if one is adopted.

The agreement allows the district to initiate conversations, negotiations, and/or arbitration to review the document if an annexation were to result in significant costs to the district and its taxpayers. Chief Van der Veen recommended that the District 4 Board utilize their attorney to investigate the sixty percent (60%) threshold and request formal negotiations with the City of Bellingham, as well as possibly consulting with the prior City Planner, Bill Geyer (1997), to review the original document's vision and intent in light of today's reality. The ultimate goal is to reach a mutually agreed-upon resolution. The Board concurred.

5. Determination of Functional Consolidation. If the City cumulatively annexes sixty percent (60%) but less than 100% of the Assessed Valuation of the Base Area of the District herein, then Functional Consolidation will occur with respect to such District, and the City and that particular District shall enter into a Consolidation Agreement. The Consolidation Agreement shall provide for the City to assume the service area of such District in its entirety and provide equivalent or better fire protection and emergency medical services to the entire area served by the District. The District shall pay the City a reasonable fee for such services, but not more than the tax revenue received by the District for such area.

The Board stated their intention to use their attorney's services cautiously.

Chief Van der Veen will keep the Board informed.

Tender and Fire Engine Purchase: Chief Van der Veen requested that these items be tabled until the April meeting. There were no objections.

Britton Loop Station 12 Exterior Project: Chief Van der Veen stated that Chairman Cooley and Chief Van der Veen reviewed one bid for the first phase of the siding project (building A firefighter bay and living quarters).

The project will not need a formal bid process based on cost, laws, and district policy. Chief Van der Veen reviewed the bid, including individual subcontractor bids and labor costs. Contractor Bob Lupal has previously vetted and completed projects for District 21. The total target estimate for siding on Building A is \$272,757.49. Another bid was received three years ago.

The Board requested that Chief Van der Veen contact the prior company, Alpine Siding, to determine if an updated bid could be submitted.

Once an answer has been received, a special meeting may be held to review the bids and officially proceed with the project.

NEW BUSINESS

- None

CORRESPONDENCE

- To the Office of the Washington State Auditor re: 2022-2023 Audit

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **April Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners present are expected to attend the April 14 meeting via Zoom.
- **Special Meeting to Review Britton Loop St 12 Exterior Project Bids:** TBD

AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Britton Rd/Northern Heights Annexation
- Tender Purchase
- Britton Loop Station 12 Exterior Project

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

ATTEST:

Steve Cooley, Chairman

Tim Johnson, Vice-Chairman

Mark Lann, Commissioner

Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief