

**Whatcom County Fire District #4  
via Zoom Meeting  
4142 Britton Loop, Bellingham, WA 98226  
12:00 p.m.  
February 10, 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 February 10, 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.

District 21 Chairman Bruce Ansell joined the meeting at 12:04 p.m.

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

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Meeting Minutes
  - a) January 13, 2024 – regular
2. Staff Reports – Chief / Operations / Training / Technical Support
3. Financial Report
  - a) Total Revenue – January \$4,269.08
  - b) Total Expenditures – February \$874,727.89
4. Voucher / Payroll / Benefits
  - a) Monthly Expenditure Payroll Voucher: \$644.00
  - b) Monthly Expenditure Voucher: \$874,083.89

**MOTION:** Commissioner Lann moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. 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 at this time.

The complete Notice of Intention for the proposed annexation of approximately 146 acres into the City of Bellingham was received by the Whatcom County Boundary Review Board. After being reviewed for completeness of the materials and accuracy of the legal description of the affected property, it was accepted for filing on January 22, 2025.

Department heads within the City of Bellingham provided written information regarding the impacts and potential ways to mitigate those impacts.

In this written impact statement, Bellingham Fire Department Chief Hewett discussed the 1997 interlocal agreement, which could trigger the sixty percent threshold. The agreement is vague, making it difficult to know how to proceed. Chairman Cooley would like to investigate the best way to determine the sixty percent threshold before the City Council makes the annexation decision without burdening the administrative staff. Chairman Cooley and Chief Van der Veen plan to discuss the topic with Attorney Eric Quinn, which may include correspondence to the City Council.

Chairman Cooley stated that the other option is to request a contract with the City for fire and EMS services.

District 21 Chair Ansell noted that if the annexation is approved, more resources will be required to expand the Bellingham Fire Department, which they may not have. The loss of District 4 would affect District 21's budget by twenty-five percent, specifically the administrative department, which already has minimal staffing. District 21 Chair Ansell expressed his desire to continue providing fire and EMS services to District 4, at least until District 21 can pass their levy.

Chief Van der Veen stated that it makes more sense for the districts to remain together. The City does not have tenders or brush trucks required to serve the rural areas of the proposed annexation.

In addition, if the annexation goes through and after the City's three-year obligation to provide the District with the lost revenue, the remaining property owners must make up the difference. More investigation will be necessary to determine the value of the annexed property before any decision is considered.

The Board stressed that their duty is to its employees and customers. Their goal is to remain fiscally responsible and to govern. Unless it proves to be a huge advantage, the District is amenable to continue to contract for services with District 21. Bellingham Fire Chief Hewett may be available to attend the March meeting or a special meeting for further discussion if necessary.

Chief Van der Veen will ascertain when the City Council plans to hold an open meeting to discuss the annexation further.

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

**Britton Loop Station 12 Exterior Project:** Chief Van der Veen stated that one bid is expected by the end of the week, which will be forwarded to each commissioner individually.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- None

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- Whatcom County Boundary Review Board re: Proposed annexation
- Temporary Restraining Order in the case of New York v. Trump

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **March Board Meeting Attendance Query:** All Commissioners present are expected to attend the March 17 meeting via Zoom.

**AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Jennie Sand, Board Secretary

**ATTEST:**

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Steve Cooley, Chairman

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Tim Johnson, Vice-Chairman

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Mark Lann, Commissioner

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Jason Van der Veen, Fire Chief