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**Summary Minutes of the Joint Commissioner Meeting
February 6, 2019**

The Board of Fire Commissioners for SCFPD #7 and Lake Stevens Fire met in special session on February 6, 2019 at Station 31's Training Room located at 163 Village Court, Monroe, WA 98272.

Commissioner Waugh called the meeting of the Joint Board of Fire Commissioners to order at 1800 hours. Commissioners Fay, Snyder, Waugh, Wells and Woolery with Snohomish County Fire District 7 and Commissioners Elmore, Gagnon, and Steinruck with Lake Stevens Fire were present. Commissioner Schaub was absent with prior notice.

BENEFITS OF A POTENTIAL MERGER of LAKE STEVEN & FIRE DISTRICT 7

Chief O'Brien presented the Districts merging goals of improving service, planning regionally, and improving fiscal accountability. Service will be improved by being more efficient, improve staffing and training opportunities. Regional planning will strategically place stations to maximize response time and standardize training and operations. Fiscal accountability is improved by reducing duplication and streamlines services.

The financial model reflects the management plan and also captures the current operations model. It was noted that the proposed organizational chart efficiencies are also achieved with not backfilling some chief retirements. Year-end cash balance is at or above 25% threshold and includes inflation.

CFO Tabor explained the assumptions for the financial model analysis. If the assumptions are changed the model significantly changed. Commissioner Fay requested to have a list of the assumptions for the commissioners to include with the financial model.

The model regionals Emergency Response Organization would be 11 fire stations, 234 career personnel, 40 part-paid personnel, 140 square miles, 162,000 residents, 17,600 estimated calls, and a \$27,373,329,265 A/V.

The merger management plan considers a new organization with a suggested new District name, focus will be on culture, Executive Staff would be a structured selection process and Chief O'Brien as suggested Chief with Chief Meek as liaison.

A draft organizational chart was reviewed next regarding structure of the new organization.

It was expressed than an August vote would be helpful. If the Commissioners agree to move forward, Lake Stevens would need to submit a petition in February. Resource allocation and timeline details were further discussed.

Commissioner Fay questioned if an August ballot is too soon. In light of Pat Sikora's report where staff comments were made regarding the tight timeline in the last merge. He welcomed a conversation regarding this topic. Chief Meek commented that he felt the District 3 and 7 merge moved much faster than the current merge discussions. Brief discussion took place surrounding this. Chief O'Brien noted that he felt that the merge would actually help both organizations. AC Andrews noted that he felt one of the major factors in the last merge that caused hardship was a mid-year merge and the plan with the current merge would be a January 1 merge. Commissioner Snyder believed that many situations and hurdles that we came up on in the last merge were not predictable and to keep that in mind with future merges.

Commissioner Fay requested some examples of duplication were there would be merged efficiencies. Chief O'Brien noted immediate areas to be financial software, negotiations with lawyer fees, 1 audit, 1 WSRB rating, 1 grant writing process etc. Commissioner Wells asked for specific suppression efficiencies. Chief O'Brien explained them to be shift coverage, regionalizing the MSO positions to provide service when units are out of service, ladder trucks that Lake Stevens doesn't have, sharing the resources with the goal of no longer browning out, equipment sharing of Tech Rescue, and Paramedics have a larger pool at Lake Stevens that could help out District 7.

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2 Commissioner Fay asked for other commissioners to comment on their feelings or anxieties of the merge.
3 Commissioner Gagnon noted he was all in. Commissioner Elmore noted that small departments are no longer
4 considered regionally efficient and are not the way of the future. Not touching borders doesn't bother him. He also
5 felt unified training and procedures will improve service on calls and that being proactive is the way to go.
6 Commissioner Woolery noted that his concerns were that it was too fast last time much as Commissioner Fay's
7 concern is but feels the timing seems right and that the staff seems ready for it. Chief Meek pointed out a similarity
8 where Lake Stevens conduct teams and committees much like District 7.
9

10 Commissioner Waugh noticed that he's seeing more of a bit of reluctance to pass every fire levy. But in using the
11 model in different ways, it seems to show that District 7 would be better off alone and he would like to dig deeper
12 to see why that is. In the model assumptions he sees large jumps from 2023 to 2024 and 2025 and wants to make
13 sure these are good assumptions. Reading the Sikora report with the comments on the last merge from the boots on
14 the street, he's has reservations. Commissioner Elmore observed that he's not sure anybody's budgets are
15 sustainable long-term and he's not sure that Lake Stevens would necessarily be a drain on District 7. He appreciated
16 the concern, but feels Lake Stevens doesn't stand alone with sustainability concerns and believes all fire districts
17 have similar concerns and is hearing this same message with many fire districts in Washington.
18

19 FF Union President Michael McConnell commented that Union 2781 has been trying to come up with ways that
20 the union can help with the merge process and to mitigate some of the issues from the last merge by learning from
21 the past and improving the future. Getting the shadow shifts going is very helpful to gain some familiarization in
22 cultures. Joint officer meetings are also already under way and are discussing the "Why" things are done to gain
23 understanding and buy-in. He commented on the small district feel with the comfort level of knowing everyone, the
24 area, had more control over change, vacationing with the same people you work with but these things not promoting
25 growth. Brief discussion took place surround growth and what that meant culturally.
26

27 Commissioner Fay noted that while being uncomfortable is good for growth, he has a very real concern over the
28 collaborative comments from the Sikora report noting the "take-over" feeling and feelings of people not feeling
29 valued and with Lake Stevens Fire already expressing these concerns. He strongly encouraged not ignoring those
30 comments while the District press ahead.
31

32 Commissioner Fay asked the Lake Stevens Fire Commissioners if there was anything concerning them about how
33 things get done at the Board level. He recognized that District 7 Commissioners didn't take the time to understand
34 how the District 3 Commissioners did business and suggests taking the time to do this with the current merge. He
35 wants all the commissioners to bring up any concerns when they arise so they can be addressed as a team right
36 away. Commissioner Wells reflected on her emotions after reading the Sikora Report and could not believe what
37 was caused to the staff in the last merge. While she recognized that the overall health of the organization is good
38 but that there were far too many comments made regarding the upcoming merger. She stressed that face-to-face
39 communication absolutely needs to be the #1 focus (not flooding staff with paper) and currently holds trepidation
40 for the merge because of it. Her other concern is that she doesn't want to put the staff through the same thing they
41 just experienced.
42

43 Commissioner Elmore commented on the commissioner's cultural differences and differences as individuals.
44 He encouraged the commissioners to bring those concerns forward to the commissioners attending the retreat and
45 looks forward to working on things together there.
46

47 Brief discussions took place surrounding the Sikora report results and the speed in moving forward with the current
48 merge. Commissioner Wells noted she realized that we are a fire department and a large percentage of them are the
49 firefighters but wanted to point out that an important small group is also the administrative staff.
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51 **PETITION FOR LAKE STEVENS FIRE TO MERGE INTO FIRE DISTRICT 7**

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53 Commissioner Waugh noted the District 7 commissioners reviewed it at the last meeting and will be up for action
at the next meeting.

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2 Commissioner Waugh asked what the Lake Stevens Commissioner's would like to set for joint meetings going
3 forward. Lake Stevens will discuss dates in their next board meeting but that District 7 maybe should pick first as
4 they possibly have more moving parts.
5

6 **MERGING EXECUTIVE STAFES**

7 Chief O'Brien noted that if feedback from the Board is that they'd like to move forward, the plan would be to work
8 with the management plan with Chief Meek and O'Brien joining offices together and start looking at merging the
9 executive staff.


10
11 Commissioner Waugh asked how they would make the determination to merge positions, how the administrative
12 staff would end up, board scheduling, how some of the budgeting and finance decisions, when an FTE is added to
13 the District, etc. Should there be those discussions now to get it out in the open to start thinking about for future
14 meetings.
15

16 Commissioner Steinruck commented on gaining input and managing from the bottom up. He recommends the
17 commissioners not getting into a lot of that, as much of it should come from administrative staff. Of course, some
18 may come to the Board to act on. Commissioner Waugh felt that a petition by the Commissioners would be helpful.
19

20 **MOTION:** Commissioner Gagnon moved and Commissioner Steinruck seconded to sign the petition for the
21 Lake Stevens Fire commissioners to approve the merge into Snohomish County Fire District 7. On vote, **Motion**
22 **Carried 3/0**
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24 The meeting was adjourned at 1947 by Commissioner Waugh.
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26 **Snohomish County Fire District #7**
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31 Jamie Silva
32 Secretary of the Board
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