



City of Bellingham-Whatcom County Fire District 8 Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee Meeting Minutes for May 22, 2026



Committee Members Present:

Roger Buswell, Whatcom County Fire District 8 Commissioner

Michael Lilliquist, City of Bellingham Council Member

Kim Lund, City of Bellingham Mayor

Robert Neher, Whatcom County Fire District 8 Commissioner

Sheena Williams, Whatcom County Fire District 8 Commissioner

Committee Members Absent:

Dan Hammill, City of Bellingham Council Member

City of Bellingham Staff, Officials, and Others Present:

Bill Hewett, Fire Chief

Christopher Hughes, Fire Systems Analyst

Forrest Longman, Deputy City Administrator

Dave Pethick, Assistant Fire Chief

Rod Topel, RFA Project Manager

1. Welcome and introductions

Chief Hewett called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m.

Members and supporting staff introduced themselves.

2. Purpose of the committee, deliverables & expected timelines

Assistant Chief Pethick gave background information and an overview of the process and timeline. This committee is expected to develop a plan that will be submitted for approval by the governing bodies by October or November in time for a February 2027 ballot measure. Members and staff discussed the timeline.

3. Leadership election for the committee

Assistant Chief Pethick explained that the RCW gives the committee authority to elect officers and adopt rules and operating procedures.



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Action:

Commissioner Buswell nominated Mayor Kim Lund as chair.

Commissioner Neher nominated himself as co-chair.

Both nominations were approved 4-0 with Michael Lilliquist and Dan Hammill absent.

4. Review of draft proposed charter and operating rules

Note: Council Member Michael Lilliquist joined the meeting at the beginning of discussion of this item.

Staff and members reviewed the document and discussed the importance of keeping a regular schedule and communicating planned absences. Assistant Chief Pethick reviewed the proposed timing of agenda and meeting materials.

Action:

Commissioner Neher moved to adopt the charter and operating rules. Council Member Lilliquist seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0 with Dan Hammill absent.

5. Introduction to Chapter 1, background and needs

Assistant Chief Pethick gave an overview of the structure of the chapter and its importance. Members reviewed the document and suggested changes. Staff will incorporate the suggested changes to the document and return with the revised chapter at the next meeting.

6. Introduction to Chapter 3, formation authority

Assistant Chief Pethick gave an overview of the chapter and its purpose. He summarized updates made to the Options and Analysis section. Members reviewed and discussed.

Action:

Council Member Lilliquist moved to approve the use of the issue paper as the substance for the chapter on formation authority. Commissioner Buswell seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0 with Dan Hammill absent.

7. Introduction to Chapter 4, jurisdictional boundaries

Assistant Chief Pethick gave an overview of the chapter and its purpose.



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Action:

Council Member Lilliquist moved approval of the issue paper to serve as the substance for the chapter on jurisdictional boundaries and annexation and to approve the jurisdictional boundaries of the RFA formation. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0 with Dan Hammill absent.

Chief Hewett pointed out that there are a few errors in the boundary map. Staff will correct the map and bring it back at the next meeting for review.

8. Public comment

No public comment was given.

9. Next meeting

Assistant Chief Pethick confirmed the next meeting will be held on June 8 at 2 p.m. in the Mayor's Boardroom.

Members discussed the agenda for the next meeting and communications with staff in the interim.

10. Adjournment

Mayor Lund adjourned the meeting at 2:10 p.m.