



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

Committee Members Present:

Roger Buswell, Whatcom County Fire District 8 Commissioner

Dan Hammill, 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:

Michael Lilliquist, City of Bellingham Council Member

City of Bellingham Staff, Officials, and Others Present:

Andrew Asbjornsen, City of Bellingham Finance Director

Kate Dunphy, Guild of Pacific Northwest Employees Local 1937 President

Bill Hewett, City of Bellingham Fire Chief

Christopher Hughes, City of Bellingham Fire Systems Analyst

Eric Johnson, City of Bellingham Budget and Treasury Manager

Forrest Longman, City of Bellingham Deputy City Administrator

Iris Nott, City of Bellingham Legislative Policy Analyst

Dave Pethick, City of Bellingham Assistant Fire Chief

Rod Topel, RFA Project Manager

One member of the public

1. Welcome and introductions

Mayor Lund called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m.

The committee members introduced themselves.



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2. Minutes Review

Action:

Commissioner Neher moved to approve the May 22, 2026, minutes. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0 with Council Member Hammill abstaining, and Council Member Lilliquist absent.

3. Chapter 1 follow up, background and needs

Mr. Topel presented the proposed changes to Chapter 1 as outlined in the document.

Action:

Commissioner Buswell moved to approve the changes to Chapter 1. Commissioner Neher seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 with Council Member Lilliquist absent.

4. Chapter 4 follow up, jurisdictional boundaries

Chief Hewett presented a corrected map of the proposed RFA boundaries (Appendix A), and he and Assistant Chief Pethick outlined the changes.

Action:

Commissioner Buswell moved to approve the changes to Appendix A - RFA Boundaries. Council Member Hammill seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 with Council Member Lilliquist absent.

5. Chapter 5 introduction, governance

Chief Hewett gave an overview of the chapter and its purpose. Mayor Lund asked how commissioners will be identified for the transitional board. Chief Hewett said the state's RCW allows the committee to identify the structure of the transitional board. Assistant Chief Pethick said the transitional board will need to be a committee of five, with meetings occurring monthly or bimonthly, so the workload should be considered when appointing members. Mr. Topel said consistency over the three-year period will be important, so representatives should be willing to commit for their position's full term. Chief Hewett and Dan Hammill noted that it will be important for City Council and District 8 to appoint members to the transitional board who have the ability to commit to the duration of the position's term and won't be limited by their City Council/Commission terms. Chief Hewett



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mentioned that members on the transitional board will not need to live within the district they're appointed to, but once the positions become elected, members will be required to live within the district they are representing.

The members reviewed the document and suggested changes:

- Mr. Topel suggested updating the commissioner districts map (Appendix B) so each district is a different color. Mayor Lund agreed.
- Chief Hewett suggested the City consider appointing Mayor Lund to the transitional board due to the executive branch's involvement with interlocal agreements that will be required in the process. Mayor Lund agreed that the mayor's involvement will be critically important.
- Council Member Hammill and Chief Hewett suggested checking with the City's legal department and City Council office on the requirements for issuing notices of potential quorums for council members.

Action:

Mayor Lund asked staff to incorporate the suggested changes and return with the revised chapter at the next meeting.

6. Chapter 8 introduction, operations and services

Mr. Topel gave an overview of the chapter and its purpose. Chief Hewett said the City's fire department currently provides services to two separate authorities having jurisdiction (AHJ) within Fire District 8: one area governed by Whatcom County, where the City provides fire prevention education, and one area governed by Lummi Nation, where the City provides permit review and public education. Mayor Lund suggested a revision for clarity to the third bullet in the Transition of Services section. Council Member Hammill asked if union labor agreements will be transferred to the RFA. Chief Hewett noted that all collective bargaining agreements will stay in place until the RFA renegotiates with the unions. There are currently five labor agreements for City fire department employees: 106B, 106S, 114, 231, and 1937. Assistant Chief Pethick mentioned that it is preferable not to have an RFA civil service commission but instead bargain directly with the local unions. Mr. Topel mentioned the state's RCW outlines provisions for collective bargaining agreements and civil service. Council Member Hammill asked what City assets will be transferred to the RFA. Deputy Administrator Longman and Chief Hewett explained that the intent is for major assets to move to the RFA but there may be assets the city will need to keep, such as certain communication systems/equipment, one example being the City property on Northwest



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Ave where Life Safety staff is currently located – that building would remain a City asset. They are working with the IT and public works departments to identify assets that need to be retained. Council Member Hammill asked if the fire pension fund will be moved to the RFA. Deputy Administrator Longman explained that the fire pension fund will stay with the City because pension-holders were City employees at the time.

Action:

Commissioner Neher moved to approve the changes to Chapter 8 with one minor revision. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 with Council Member Lilliquist absent.

7. Public comment

No public comment was given.

8. Next meeting

Mayor Lund confirmed the next meeting will be held on June 22 at 2 p.m. in the Mayor's Boardroom. Mr. Topel noted the committee will begin the framework for Chapter 6 – funding, which is a significant chapter so it will likely be the only topic on the agenda.

9. Adjournment

Mayor Lund adjourned the meeting at 3:04 p.m.