



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

Andrew Asbjornsen, City of Bellingham Finance Director

Kate Dunphy, Guild of Pacific Northwest Employees Local 1937 President

Bill Hewett, City of Bellingham Fire Chief

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

Jason Vanderveen, North Whatcom Fire and Rescue Fire Chief

One member of the public

1. Welcome and introductions

Mayor Lund called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

2. Minutes Review

Action:

Commissioner Neher moved to approve the June 8, 2026, minutes. Commissioner Buswell seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 with Council Member Hammill absent.



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3. Chapter 5 follow up, governance

Mr. Topel presented the proposed changes to Chapter 5 as outlined in the document. A few additional revisions to commissioner terms (Proposed Governance Structure Item #3) were discussed and updated in the chapter.

Mr. Topel said he consulted with one of the City's attorneys and confirmed it won't be an issue for two City Council members to be on the RFA board since it's a public meeting with public notifications, and they would be acting as commissioners of the fire authority. He also confirmed it will not be a conflict of interest for the fire authority board (with City representatives on the board) to enter into interlocal agreements with the City – that is what the legislation intended when the RFA laws were created.

Action:

Council Member Lilliquist moved to approve the commissioner term changes (Proposed Governance Structure Item #3) in Chapter 5. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 with Council Member Hammill absent.

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

4. Chapter 8 follow up, operations

Mr. Topel presented the proposed changes to Chapter 8 as outlined in the document.

Action:

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

5. Chapter 7 introduction, organization and administration

Chief Hewett gave an overview of the chapter and its purpose. On Appendix C - Organizational Chart, he explained the positions in orange are currently provided by the City to the fire department, so on day one of the RFA, these positions will need to be filled by the transitional board. He said a multi-year rollout of other internal services should be expected. Mr. Topel added that the permanent governing board will make the long-term



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decisions. Assistant Chief Pethick reviewed the staff recommendations section, and the group discussed different scenarios and suggested one change:

- Council Member Lilliquist suggested updating the organizational chart title to “Initial Organizational Chart.”

Action:

Mayor Lund suggested revisiting this chapter at a future meeting after a few updates have been made.

6. Chapter 6 introduction, funding

Chief Hewett gave an overview of the chapter and its purpose. He noted this topic will be a multiple-meeting conversation, and the goal of today’s meeting was to discuss what the Fire Department costs are today, what the revenue options are for the RFA, and how those two figures work together. He presented slides (Finance Options for RFA) and a table of expenses and revenues based on 2026 figures. The committee had an in-depth discussion about the funding structure options.

Action:

Mayor Lund suggested continuing the discussion on this chapter at a future meeting.

7. Public comment

No public comment was given.

8. Next meeting

Mayor Lund confirmed the next meeting will be held on July 6 at 2 p.m. in the Mayor’s Boardroom.

9. Adjournment

Mayor Lund adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.