City of Bellingham-Whatcom County Fire District 8
Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee

Agenda-Meeting #9
Date: Monday October 26, 2026
Time: 2:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.
Location: Bellingham City Hall - Mayor's Boardroom

1. Welcome and introductions if necessary (5 minutes)

2. Minutes Review (5 minutes)

3. Review of draft plan and suggested edits (Staff, 30 minutes)

4. Public comment (15 minutes)

- Up to 3 minutes per speaker
- Total time: 15 minutes (or as determined by chair)

5. Next meeting (5 minutes)

- Confirm date, time, and location including ongoing meeting schedule
- Identify/confirm agenda topics for meeting #10

6. Adjournment

City of Bellingham-Whatcom County Fire District 8
Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee
Meeting Minutes for August 17, 2026

Committee Members Present:

Roger Buswell, Whatcom County Fire District 8 Commissioner

Dan Hammill, City of Bellingham Council Member

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

Kim Lund, City of Bellingham Mayor

City of Bellingham Staff, Officials, and Others Present:

Rachel Carlson, Assistant Fire Chief

Forrest Longman, Deputy City Administrator

Dave Pethick, Assistant Fire Chief

Matt Stamps, Assistant City Attorney

Rod Topel, RFA Project Manager

DRAFT

1. Welcome and introductions

Council Member Dan Hammill called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. Commissioner Neher chaired the meeting from that point forward.

2. Minutes review

Action:

Commissioner Buswell moved to approve the August 3, 2026 minutes. Council Member Hammill seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0 with Council Member Lilliquist and Mayor Lund absent.

3. Review of RFA Plan Section 6 Finance

Forrest Longman presented Section A of the Finance chapter, which addresses interim RFA finances. Existing budget authority will be used through the end of 2027. From January 1, 2028 through April 30, 2028, RFA operations will be funded by the City. $10 million of that

will not need to be paid back to the City. Anything above $10 million will need to be paid back to the City by the end of 2029. This structure is designed to keep the RFA on firm footing from the start.

Chief Hewett clarified that the interim financing doesn't include District 8 because they won't be collecting any revenue in 2028 and all their funds and contracts will have already transferred to the RFA. Any costs needed by District 8, such as administration to run Commission meetings, will come from the RFA until District 8 is dissolved.

Members discussed board membership and elections.

Action:

Council Member Hammill moved to approve Section 6 as presented with the 2027 date corrected to read 2028. Commissioner Buswell seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0 with Council Member Lilliquist and Mayor Lund absent.

4. Update to completed Plan Document Draft 08-17-2026, and next steps for plan Adoption

Rod Topel asked members to email him any changes to the draft and names of anyone who should be mentioned on the acknowledgments page. Matt Stamps clarified that this is still a draft and can be modified until there is a public hearing and final vote held.

Next steps: Rod Topel displayed the suggested timelines. This group will take a short break from meeting while feedback is gathered from the rest of the Commissioners and Council Members. He reviewed the other deadlines that must be met to get the RFA on the February 2027 ballot.

5. Public comment

No public comment was given.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on October 12 at 2 p.m.

7. Adjournment

Commissioner Neher adjourned the meeting at 2:40 p.m.

DRAFT

City of Bellingham-Whatcom County Fire District 8
Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee
Special Meeting Minutes for October 14, 2026

Committee Members Present:

Roger Buswell, Whatcom County Fire District 8 Commissioner

Dan Hammill, City of Bellingham Council Member

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

1. Call to Order

Mayor Lund called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

2. RFA Presentation

Deputy City Administrator Forrest Longman gave a presentation on the RFA, including background information on the City's budget and the need for a new revenue source, how the RFA would be funded, sample costs for commercial and residential properties, and how an RFA would maintain, restore, and improve services.

3. Public Hearing

Mayor Lund opened the public hearing.

The Committee heard from three individuals.

Mayor Lund closed the public hearing.

4. Adjournment

Seeing no further business, Mayor Lund adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.

DRAFT

Bellingham Regional Fire Authority Plan

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Recognizing the challenges and opportunities that all fire jurisdictions are facing, the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County Fire District 8, through a partnership of many years, agreed to explore the different governance and funding options available to provide fire protection and life safety services, emergency medical services and emergency dispatch services to the communities we serve.

Planning Committee

Kim Lund, Mayor, City of Bellingham

Dan Hammil, Bellingham City Council

Michael Lilliquist, Bellingham City Council

WCFD8 Commissioner Roger Buswell

WCFD8 Commissioner Rob Neher

WCFD 8 Commissioner Sheena Williams

Staff Team

Chief Bill Hewett, BFD
Assistant Chief Dave~~id~~ Pethick, BFD
Assistant Chief Rachel Carlson, BFD
Christopher Hughes, BFD
Rod Toppel, Consultant
Kim Lund, Mayor, COB
Forrest Longman, Deputy City Administrator, COB

1. BACKGROUND & NEEDS STATEMENTS

SECTION 1	**BACKGROUND & NEEDS STATEMENTS**
Revision	The **BACKGROUND & NEEDS STATEMENTS** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.
Adopted	
Revised	

A. Background and Needs

1. The City of Bellingham and Whatcom County Fire District No. 8 have experienced significant growth, outpacing their ability to meet adopted levels of service for fire protection and emergency medical services. Calls for service in the City and the District increased by 35% between 2015–2025—an additional 9,000 calls per year, or roughly 25 more calls each day. This growth is expected to continue, adding substantial pressure on where and how services are delivered in the future.

2. Despite rising demand, core fire response resources have remained largely unchanged within the City and have decreased within the District. The City currently operates with the same number of primary fire response units that were available in 1976. Due to declining volunteers, Fire District 8 has reduced firefighting capacity by closing two volunteer fire stations and moved toward a full-time staffing model. For both organizations, like many peer organizations across the State, staffing and station capacity have not kept pace with service needs, resulting in a system that must continually do more with less. The growth noted above, combined with resource allocation limitations, has eroded the ability for both organizations to maintain adopted City and County response time performance measures leading to increasing response times.

3. The City Fire Department has been cross-staffing their fire and ambulance resources with a single crew of three personnel, meaning that the crew has to choose between staffing a fire apparatus and leaving their ambulance behind, or staff the ambulance and leave their fire apparatus behind. This cross-staffing model, originally adopted to maximize resource deployment, has reached the end of its practical usefulness. By independently staffing the fire apparatus and the ambulance, the department will increase unit availability and reduce response times. Assessments show cross-staffed companies operate at 86–90% availability—

below the 90–92% expected in a healthy system. While the addition of two basic life support units has improved efficiency, it has not fully offset demand.

4. Forming a regional fire authority would allow for increased and more reliable levels of service through increased staffing and resource placement. A regional fire authority provides a voter-approved funding structure that is dedicated, stable, and consistent and will meet both current and future community needs for fire and emergency medical services.

5. Communities are best served by a fire and emergency services system built on partnership, shared responsibility, and coordinated planning among local and regional governments, private-sector partners, and the community. The development of a regional fire authority strengthens these collaborative efforts.

6. Stable regional funding options enable timely development, expansion, and implementation of critical fire and emergency medical services initiatives, ensuring the system can meet growing service demands and evolving community expectations.

7. The City and the District have collaborated to provide a high level of service since 1997. This long-standing partnership has delivered strong outcomes within the limits of available resources, laying the groundwork for more unified regional service delivery.

8. The City and the District will be asking voters within each jurisdiction to consider combining their fire and emergency medical service functions into a single regional fire authority. This step would formalize existing collaboration, align service delivery, and create a sustainable system capable of meeting future demands.

RFA SECTION 1 PLAN REVISION:

The **NEEDS STATEMENT** section of **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment only by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

2. DEFINITIONS

SECTION 2	DEFINITIONS
Revision	The **DEFINITIONS** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.
Adopted	
Revised	

A. DEFINITIONS

1. The definitions in this section apply throughout this **RFA Plan**, unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

1.1. ***"Board", "Governance Board" or "Governing Board"*** means the Governance body of a regional fire authority.

1.2. **"*Bellingham Fire Department*"** means the Fire Department of the City of Bellingham.

1.3. ***"City"*** means the City of Bellingham.

1.4. ***"District"*** means Whatcom County Fire Protection District No. 8.

1.5. ***"Effective Date"*** means July 1, 2027, following the approval of the RFA Plan by voters of the Participating Jurisdictions.

1.6. **"*Emergency Management Services*"** means the services that prepare for, respond to, and minimize the impacts of disaster.

1.7. ***"Fire Benefit Charge"*** is a service charge determined by the required fire-flow and personnel and equipment costs associated with fighting a fire in a particular type and size of structure. The initial calculation method and formula is described in **(Appendix E)** of this plan.

1.8. ***"Interlocal Agreement"*** means the interlocal service agreement between the RFA and the City of Bellingham in provisioning of certain administrative and support services per this plan.

1.9. ***"Participating Jurisdictions"*** means the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County Fire District 8.

1.10. ***"RCW"*** means Revised Code of Washington.

1.11. ***"Regional Fire Authority"*** *or* ***"RFA"*** *or* ***"Bellingham Regional Fire Authority"*** means the regional fire authority formed pursuant to chapter 52.26 RCW and this plan.

1.12. ***"Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee"*** *or* ***"Planning Committee"*** means the committee created under RCW 52.26.030 to create and propose to the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County Fire District 8 the Regional Fire Authority Plan.

1.13. ***"Regional Fire Authority Plan," "RFA Plan"*** *or* ***"Plan"*** means this Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Plan, drafted and approved in accordance with chapter 52.26 RCW for the development, financing and operation of the Bellingham Regional Fire Authority.

RFA SECTION 2 PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION

The **DEFINITIONS** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment only by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

3. FORMATION AUTHORITY

SECTION 3	FORMATION AUTHORITY
Revision	The **FORMATION AUTHORITY** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment or revision only by submission of a revised RFA Plan to the electorate for approval.
Adopted	
Revised	

A. REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

1. Chapter 52.26 RCW provides statutory authority for the formation of a Regional Fire Authority by the City and the District.

B. PLANNING COMMITTEE AUTHORITY:

1. RCW 52.26.030 and RCW 52.26.040 provides statutory authority to form and operate a Planning Committee.

2. The Participating Jurisdictions formed a Planning Committee consisting of two (2) members of the City Council and the Mayor of the City of Bellingham and three (3) Commissioners of the District.

3. The Planning Committee developed and presented to the elected officials of each Participating Jurisdiction the RFA Plan.

C. RFA PLAN APPROVAL AUTHORITY:

1. The legislative body of each Participating Jurisdiction reviewed and approved the RFA plan by Joint Resolution and called for an election to approve the RFA Plan.

2. The RFA Plan is being submitted to the voters of the City and the District as a single ballot measure that must be approved by a 60% majority vote.

3. The Planning Committee has authority to take all necessary actions on behalf of the Participating Jurisdictions to place the RFA Plan before the voters and to comply with the public hearing requirements contained in RCW 52.26.230.

4. Should the RFA Plan be approved by 60% of the voters of the Participating Jurisdictions, the Bellingham Regional Fire Authority shall be formed on July 01, 2027, in accordance with RCW 52.26.070.

5. Upon voter approval of the RFA Plan, the City and the District shall continue to exist as Washington State municipal corporations. The exclusive purpose of the continued existence of the District shall be to levy and collect taxes and/or other fire protection district revenue to be transferred to the RFA until such time as the RFA collects its own revenues and to provide representation to the newly formed RFA Governance Board.

6. If the RFA Plan is not approved by 60% of the voters, then operations relating to the services set forth herein shall remain with the City and the District.

RFA SECTION 3 PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The **FORMATION AUTHORITY** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment only by submission of a revised RFA Plan to the electorate for approval.

4. JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES

SECTION 4	**JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES**
Revision	The **JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment or revision only by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.
Adopted	
Revised	

A. JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES ON DATE OF FORMATION:

1. On the Effective Date, the jurisdictional boundaries of the RFA shall be the legal boundaries of the Participating Jurisdictions. The boundaries are depicted on the map attached hereto as **Appendix A.**

B. CHANGES IN JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES AFTER FORMATION OF THE RFA:

1. Boundary Changes that do not require an RFA Plan amendment:

1.1. City annexations of areas included within the boundaries of the District. Such annexations will not affect the RFA since the areas will already be within the RFA boundaries. Pursuant to RCW 52.26.290 there will be no required assets or employee transfers between the City and District.

1.2. City annexations of areas not included within the District. On the effective date of such annexation, the territory annexed shall automatically be included within the boundaries of the RFA pursuant to RCW 52.26.290. The territory added to the RFA by such annexation shall be subject to the taxation, charges, and bonded indebtedness (if approved as part of the annexation process) of the RFA. Any transfer of assets or employees that occurs as a result of annexation shall be between the transferring entity and the RFA.

1.3. Annexation of a portion of the District by a City that is not a Participating Jurisdiction in the RFA. On the effective date of such annexation, the territory

annexed shall automatically be removed from the boundaries of the RFA. In this situation the RFA shall not be obligated to transfer employees or assets of the RFA, and the annexing city shall be restricted solely to assets and employees of the District, if any.

1.4. RFA Annexations. Pursuant to RCW 52.26.090(1)(g), the RFA shall have the authority to conduct annexations of unincorporated territory adjacent to the RFA pursuant to the statutory authority and procedures set forth in Chapter 52.04.001 through RCW 52.04.051.

1.5. RFA Partial Mergers. Pursuant to RCW 52.26.090(1)(g), the RFA shall have the authority to participate in the partial merger process under the authority and pursuant to the procedures set forth in RCW 52.06.090 and 52.06.100.

2. Boundary Changes that require an RFA Plan Amendment:

2.1. **Annexations of Adjacent Fire Protection Jurisdictions.** The boundaries of the RFA may be expanded to include adjacent fire protection jurisdictions through the Plan Amendment and annexation procedures set forth at RCW 52.26.300.

RFA SECTION 4 PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The **JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment only by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

5. GOVERNANCE

SECTION 5	GOVERNANCE
Revision	The **GOVERNANCE** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment or revision only by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.
Adopted	
Revised	

A. GOVERNING BOARD STRUCTURE AND OPERATION:

1. **Governing Board**. As provided by RCW 52. 26.080, the RFA Governing Board shall be established consistent with the terms of this Section and shall have authority as of the Effective Date.

2. **Transitional Governing Board.** Upon the Effective Date, the RFA shall be governed by a Transitional Governing Board consisting of five (5) voting members as follows:

a) **Position 1**. Position 1 shall be filled by a District Commissioner appointed by the District Board and expire on December 31, 2027.

b) **Position 2**. Position 2 shall be filled by a District Commissioner appointed by the District Board and expire on December 31, 2029.

c) **Position 3.** Position 3 shall be filled by an elected city council member appointed by the Bellingham City Council and shall expire on December 31, 2027.

d) **Position 4.** Position 4 shall be filled by an elected city council member appointed by the Bellingham City Council and shall expire on December 31, 2029.

e) **Position 5.** This position shall be filled by the elected Mayor and expire on December 31, 2029.

3. **Permanent Governing Board and Commissioner Districts**. RFA governance shall transition from the Transitional Board to a Permanent Governing Board consisting of five (5) elected commissioner positions as follows:

a) **Position 1** shall be filled by a registered voter residing within Commissioner District No. 1 and shall serve an Initial Term of six (6) years. The initial election for this position shall be at the 2027 general election.

b) **Position 2** shall be filled by a registered voter residing within Commissioner District No. 2 and shall serve an Initial Term of two (2) years. The initial election for this position shall be at the 2029 general election.

c) **Position 3** shall be filled by a registered voter residing within Commissioner District No. 3 and shall serve an Initial Term of six (6) years. The initial election for this position shall be at the 2027 general election.

d) **Position 4** shall be filled by a registered voter residing within Commissioner District No. 4 and shall serve an Initial Term of six (6) years. The initial election for this position shall be at the 2029 general election.

e) **Position 5** shall be filled by a registered voter residing within Commissioner District No. 5 and shall serve an Initial Term of six (6) years. The initial election for this position shall be at the 2029 general election.

3.1. With the exception of Position 2, all initial terms shall be six (6) years. The initial term for Position 2 shall be a two (2) year term for the sole purpose of staggering elections into the future. After the Initial Terms set forth above, all commissioner terms shall be six (6) year terms.

3.2. For all Commissioner Positions 1-5, the following voting and eligibility conditions apply:

a) To be eligible to hold a commissioner position the person must be a registered voter who resides within the applicable commissioner district; and

b) Only registered voters of a commissioner district may vote at a primary election to nominate candidates for the commissioner position of such district; and

c) All registered voters of the RFA shall be eligible to vote at a general election to elect a commissioner of the commissioner district; and

d) No elected commissioner shall hold any other public office that would be incompatible with the office of fire commissioner, while serving as a fire commissioner; and

e) No elected commissioner shall hold any other employment with the Regional Fire Authority.

3.3. On the Effective Date, the commissioner boundaries of the RFA shall be the boundaries depicted on the map attached hereto and marked as **Appendix B** of this RFA Plan.

In determining the boundaries of such districts, the planning committee was guided by the following principles:

a) The population of each district shall be relatively equal; and

b) Commissioner districts shall be drawn in accordance with RCW 29A.76.

4. **Governing Rules.** The RFA Governing Board shall adopt by-laws, to govern RFA affairs, which may include:

a) The time and place of regular meetings;
b) Rules for calling special meetings;
c) The method of keeping records of proceedings and official acts;
d) Procedures for the safekeeping and disbursement of funds; and
e) Anty other provisions the board finds necessary to include.

5. **Authority.** The RFA Governing Board shall have all the power and authority granted governing boards under Washington State law; and shall include the power and authority to make any decisions appropriate for the RFA and for matters related to Title 52 RCW.

6. **Compensation of Governing Board.** Commissioners of the Governing Board will receive compensation in the same manner and under the same conditions as provided by law for commissioners of a fire protection district organized under Title 52 RCW.

RFA SECTION 5 PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The **GOVERNANCE** section of the **RFA Plan** may be amended by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

6. FUNDING AND FINANCE

SECTION 6	FUNDING AND FINANCE
Revision	The **FUNDING and FINANCE** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment or revision by the Governing Board except when voter approval is required by statute.
Adopted	
Revised	

A. INTERIM RFA FINANCES:

1. From July 1, 2027 through December 31, 2027, RFA operations will be funded by each Participating Jurisdiction using remaining funds budgeted by each Participating Jurisdiction for fire department/district services for the 2027 calendar year. Such funding may be further defined by interlocal agreement.

2. From January 1, 2028 to April 30, 2028 (or such later date that the RFA receives its first installment of tax and FBC revenue), RFA operations will be funded by the City of Bellingham. The RFA shall reimburse the City for any funding for this time period in excess of $10,000,000 by not later than December 31, 2029. Such funding may be further defined by interlocal agreement.

B. RFA FINANCES:

1. **Tax Levies.** The RFA shall be authorized to levy and collect taxes in accordance with RCW 52.26.050 (1) (b) at the initial tax levy rate of $1.00 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation.

2. **Benefit Charge.** The RFA shall be authorized to impose a benefit charge on all improved properties within the RFA service area, initially based upon the general formula and methodology provided in Appendix E in accordance RCW 52.26.050(1)(a).

3. **Service Contracts**. To the extent permitted by law, the RFA Governance Board shall have the authority to pursue and contract with agencies and entities exempt from property taxes in accordance with RCW 52.30.020 and related statutes.

4. **Fire Impact and Mitigation Fees.** On the effective date, all District impact and mitigation fees shall transfer to the RFA for the continued imposition and collection.

5. **Additional Revenue Options.** The RFA Governing Board shall have the authority to pursue, subject to any applicable statutory voter approval requirements and the RFA Plan Amendment, if required, all additional revenue sources authorized by law including but not limited to revenue sources specifically identified in Title 52 RCW and Title 84 RCW that are not otherwise addressed in chapter 52.26 RCW.

C. TRANSFER OF ASSETS:

1. **District Assets.** On the Effective Date, the District shall immediately transfer all District Assets to the RFA, including but not limited to the following assets:

1.1 The real property identified in Appendix D, and any building fixtures, furniture and contents thereof. Real property shall be transferred by quitclaim deed.

1.2 The apparatus/vehicles identified in Appendix D, together with any replacement vehicles. All titles to applicable vehicles shall be transferred from the District to the RFA.

1.3 Capital Reserve Fund. On the effective Date, the District shall transfer its Capital reserve fund to the RFA for the purposes of establishing a Capital projects and equipment Reserve Fund. The Capital reserve fund shall be used for capital expenditures having a cost greater than $25,000.00 and a service life greater than ten (10) years (e.g., major equipment, fire apparatus, etc.).

1.4 Reserve Fund. On the effective Date, the District shall transfer its reserve fund to the RFA for the purposes of establishing a Reserve Fund.

2. **City Assets**. On the Effective Date, the City shall immediately transfer to the RFA the following assets:

2.1. The real property identified in Appendix D, and unless otherwise excluded, any building fixtures, furniture and contents thereof. Real property shall be transferred by quitclaim deed.

2.2. The apparatus/vehicles identified in Appendix D, together with any replacement vehicles. All titles to applicable vehicles shall be transferred from the City to the RFA.

2.3. Unless otherwise specified herein or in a separate agreement no other City funds shall be transferred to the RFA.

2.4. All reports, documents, surveys, books, records, files, papers, or written material used by the City to carry out the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties of the City that are owned by or in the possession of the City.

3. City water systems including fire hydrants and related appurtenances shall not be transferred and shall remain City property.

4. Except as otherwise provided in this RFA Plan, whenever any question arises as to the transfer of any funds, books, documents, records, papers, files, equipment, or other tangible property used or held in the exercise of the powers and the performance of the duties and functions transferred, the governing body of the Participating Jurisdiction owning such assets shall make a determination as to the proper allocation.

D. DEBT:

1. The following **City Debt** shall be retained by the City:

1.1 Obligations and assets related to City of Bellingham's Firefighter's Pension and/or LEOFF 1 retiree medical.

2. The following **District Debt** shall be transferred and assumed by the RFA.

2.1 A Washington State LOCAL loan to finance Station 34 replacement.

2.2 Future District Expenses. All ~~future costs incurred by~~expenses of the District on and after the Effective Date shall be the responsibility of the RFA.

RFA SECTION 6 PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The **FUNDING AND FINANCE** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment or revision by the Governing Board except when voter approval is required by statute.

7. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE - PERSONNEL – ADMINISTRATION

SECTION 7	**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE - PERSONNEL - ADMINISTRATION**
Revision	The **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE - PERSONNEL - ADMINISTRATION** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.
Adopted	
Revised	

A. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE.

1. **Organizational Chart.** The RFA shall be organized as provided in Appendix C of this RFA Plan.

B. PERSONNEL.

1. **Fire Chief.** On the Effective Date, the Fire Chief for the Bellingham Fire Department shall serve as the Fire Chief of the RFA. The Fire Chief shall at all times be appointed and serve at the pleasure of the Governance Board.

2. **Personnel.** Except as otherwise provided in this Plan, all, existing personnel of the Bellingham Fire Department shall transfer to the RFA to fulfill assigned duties as outlined in the organizational structure in Appendix C of this RFA plan**.** All City Fire Department personnel shall be transferred on the Effective Date at their current rank, grade and seniority.

3. **Agreements.** All current employee agreements, collective bargaining unit agreements, outstanding labor issues, personal service contracts, and any other contracts or agreements pertaining to work, duties, services or employment with the City shall be transferred over with all personnel on the Effective Date.

C. ADMINISTRATION.

1. **Administration.** All current administrative and business functions, agreements, documents, operations, and policies and procedures from the City Fire Department shall be transferred over to the RFA unless otherwise noted in this Plan.

2. RFA Administrative Responsibilities. On the Effective Date, the following functions of the RFA shall be the responsibility of the RFA. The RFA desires to contract with the City of Bellingham to perform some of the functions described below by reimbursing the City appropriate service costs. The RFA and the City will continue to evaluate these transition timelines. During any of these transitions, if by mutual agreement of the RFA and the City, parties may choose to extend or terminate early with at least 180 days' notice.

2.1. Human Resources. The RFA intends to hire an HR/Finance Director immediately but will also contract all these services with the City of Bellingham through the first full calendar year after the Effective Date, December 31, 2028. Including but not limited to recruitment and hiring, labor relations and negotiations, all administrative functions related to the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Family Care Act (FCA), and all other state and federal employment and labor laws. Unless otherwise mutually agreed by the City and the RFA, the RFA will assume all HR related functions with its own staff starting January 1, 2029 of the second full calendar year after the Effective Date.

2.2. Legal Services. The RFA will obtain its own legal counsel upon the Effective Date or as soon thereafter as is reasonably practicable.

2.3. Health Insurance. The RFA will provide its own health plan upon the Effective Date or as soon thereafter as is reasonably practicable.

2.4. Risk Management. The RFA will obtain its own property, liability, auto and other insurance coverage, to include Labor and Industries time loss, Liability, and property insurance, and will obtain its own unemployment and workers compensation policy (either through the State of Washington or a self-insurance program) upon the Effective Date or as soon thereafter as is reasonably practicable.

2.5. Payroll Services. The RFA intends to hire an HR/Finance Director immediately but will also contract time sheet and payroll services with the City of Bellingham through the first full calendar year after the Effective Date, December 31, 2028. Unless otherwise mutually agreed by the City and the RFA, the RFA will assume all payroll related functions with its own staff starting January 1, 2029 of the second full calendar year after the Effective Date.

2.6. Accounting Services. The RFA intends to hire an HR/Finance Director but will also contract these services with the City of Bellingham through the first full calendar year. Unless otherwise agreed to mutually by the City and the RFA, the RFA will

assume all accounting and financial management functions with its own staff starting January 1, 2029 of the second full calendar year after the Effective Date.

2.7. Fleet Maintenance. The RFA intends to contract all fleet maintenance, fueling procurement, radio, and make ready services with the City of Bellingham starting upon the Effective Date and continuing for the first 3 calendar years unless mutually agreed to terminate sooner. The service agreement may be extended for additional 3-year periods upon mutual agreement.

2.8. Facilities, IT, Communication. The responsibility for major repairs and equipment replacement shall transfer to the RFA upon the Effective Date. The RFA intends to contract facility operations including but not limited to custodial maintenance and supply, routine maintenance, and small repairs with the City of Bellingham upon the Effective Date and continuing for the first calendar year unless mutually agreed to terminate sooner. The service agreement may be extended for an additional period upon mutual agreement.

2.8.1. The RFA intends to contract all IT operations including but not limited to hardware and software, GIS, internet access, web and social media hosting and content management, phone, cell phone, wireless devices, and new software selection/implementation upon the Effective Date and continuing for the first 3 calendar years unless mutually agreed to terminate sooner. The service agreement may be extended for additional 3-year periods upon mutual agreement.

2.8.2. The RFA will assume all communication functions upon the Effective Date. For this section, communication functions include but are not limited to Public Information Officer (PIO) responsibilities, press releases, interoffice and external mailing and postage, printing and publications.

3. **City Retained Administrative Service Responsibilities.** The City of Bellingham shall continue to provide the following services:

3.1. LEOFF Board. The City of Bellingham LEOFF Board will continue to oversee LEOFF 1 benefits for City retirees in accordance with the City of Bellingham LEOFF 1 Policies and Procedures.

3.2. Civil Service Board. The City will negotiate with collective bargaining representatives of the transferring employees who are presently covered by civil service regarding the establishment of a civil service system within the authority, in accordance with RCW 52.26.100 (6)(b). RFA shall establish its own Civil Service

process no later than January 1 of the second full calendar after the Effective Date, unless the City and its collective bargaining representatives agree to eliminate the civil service system for its transferring employees. The City will continue to provide a Civil Service Board during the interim at no cost to the RFA.

3.3. Others. Unless specified herein, the RFA shall establish its own services no later than January 1 of the second full calendar after the Effective Date to perform any functions not identified in this Plan. City will provide such services during the interim and may recover any service costs from the RFA.

4. **Volunteer Pension and Relief Board.** Responsibility for the Volunteer Pension and Relief Board shall transfer to the RFA upon the Effective Date.

5. **Seamless Transition.** Unless otherwise noted in the RFA Plan, the transfer of authority and the administration and management of the RFA shall be seamless and shall initially model the current administrative and management components of the current City of Bellingham Fire Department.

RFA SECTION 7 PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE – PERSONNEL - ADMINISTRATION** section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment only by a simple majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

8. OPERATIONS AND SERVICES

SECTION 8	**OPERATIONS AND SERVICES**
Revision	The **OPERATIONS AND SERVICES** section of the **RFA Plan** is subject to amendment by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.
Adopted	
Revised	

A. FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES:

1. Except as otherwise provided in this Plan, all powers, duties, and functions of the City and the District pertaining to fire protection and emergency service shall be transferred to the RFA on the Effective Date.

2. Current staffing models, standards of coverage, deployment standards, field operations, command staffing, and operational policies and procedures of the City of Bellingham Fire Department shall be transferred to the RFA and continued at the current level of service on the Effective Date.

3. The RFA will uphold the actual operational performance level that existed at the time of formation while working toward achieving the adopted levels of service identified in the City and County Comprehensive Plans. The RFA Governing Board may adjust service levels in the future as appropriate, based on community expectations, operational needs, and available resources.

4. All existing mutual aid, automatic aid, and contractual service agreements currently held by the City or the District will be transferred to the Regional Fire Authority (RFA) on the effective date. These agreements will remain in full force and effect, ensuring uninterrupted regional response capability throughout the transition. The RFA will assume all associated rights, responsibilities, and obligations under each agreement. Following formation, the RFA Governing Board may review these agreements to determine whether updates or modifications are necessary to best support regional service delivery.

B. FIRE PREVENTION AND INVESTIGATION SERVICES:

Fire prevention and Investigation services include permit review, fire code enforcement and fire origin and cause investigations and fire prevention education. Currently Bellingham Fire Department provides variations of these services across three different Authorities having Jurisdiction (AHJ).

1. Existing Service Providers:

1.1. The Bellingham Fire Department currently provides Fire Prevention Services pursuant to RCW 19.27 within Bellingham city limits.

1.2. In the unincorporated areas of Fire District 8 that are within the bounds of the Lummi Nation, the Bellingham Fire Department provides fire protection systems permit review and fire prevention education.

1.3. In the unincorporated areas of Fire District 8 outside of the Lummi Nation, the Bellingham Fire Department provides fire prevention education.

2. Fire Prevention and Investigation Service Providers on Effective Date:

2.1. On the effective date, Fire Prevention and Investigation Services within the boundaries of the RFA shall be provided in accordance with applicable RCWs and interlocal agreements with the appropriate AHJs.

C. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES:

1. Existing Service Providers:

1.1. The Bellingham Fire Department currently provides emergency management services within Bellingham city limits.

1.2. Whatcom County currently provides emergency management services within the District.

2. Emergency Management Services on the Effective Date:

2.1. On the Effective Date, emergency management services within the boundaries of the RFA shall be provided as follows:

a) Within the City of Bellingham: The City of Bellingham shall remain the provider of emergency management services within the Bellingham city limits.

b) Within unincorporated Whatcom County: Whatcom County shall remain the provider of emergency management services within unincorporated Whatcom County.

D. Fire and EMS Dispatch:

1. Existing Service Providers:

1.1 The Bellingham Fire Department currently provides fire and EMS dispatch services for all of Whatcom County pursuant to an interlocal agreement with Whatcom County.

2. Fire and EMS Dispatching Services on Effective Date:

2.1. The RFA will assume responsibility for County wide fire and EMS dispatching previously provided by the City.

E. TRANSITION OF SERVICES:

1. In order to effectuate the transition of services identified above, the following shall occur on the Effective Date:

1.1. The Fire Department staff assigned to the Life Safety Division shall be transferred over to the RFA.

1.2. The RFA Life Safety Division shall be organized as provided in Appendix C (organizational chart).

1.3. The City of Bellingham intends to designate the Fire Chief and Fire Marshal of the RFA as the Fire Chief and Fire Marshal of the City of Bellingham for the purpose of fulfilling duties and responsibilities that are assigned to the Fire Chief and Fire Marshal in the Bellingham Municipal Code.

1.4. Unless otherwise noted in the RFA Plan or the Inter-local Agreement, the transfer of authority and the Life Safety Division of the RFA shall be seamless.

1.5. The RFA shall enforce Fire Code within the City of Bellingham. Except as provided in the Interlocal Agreement, the City should provide the necessary prosecution and police support for code enforcement matters.

1.6. The RFA shall conduct origin and cause investigations within the City of Bellingham. Except as provided in the Interlocal Agreement, the City should provide the necessary law enforcement support for criminal fire investigation matters.

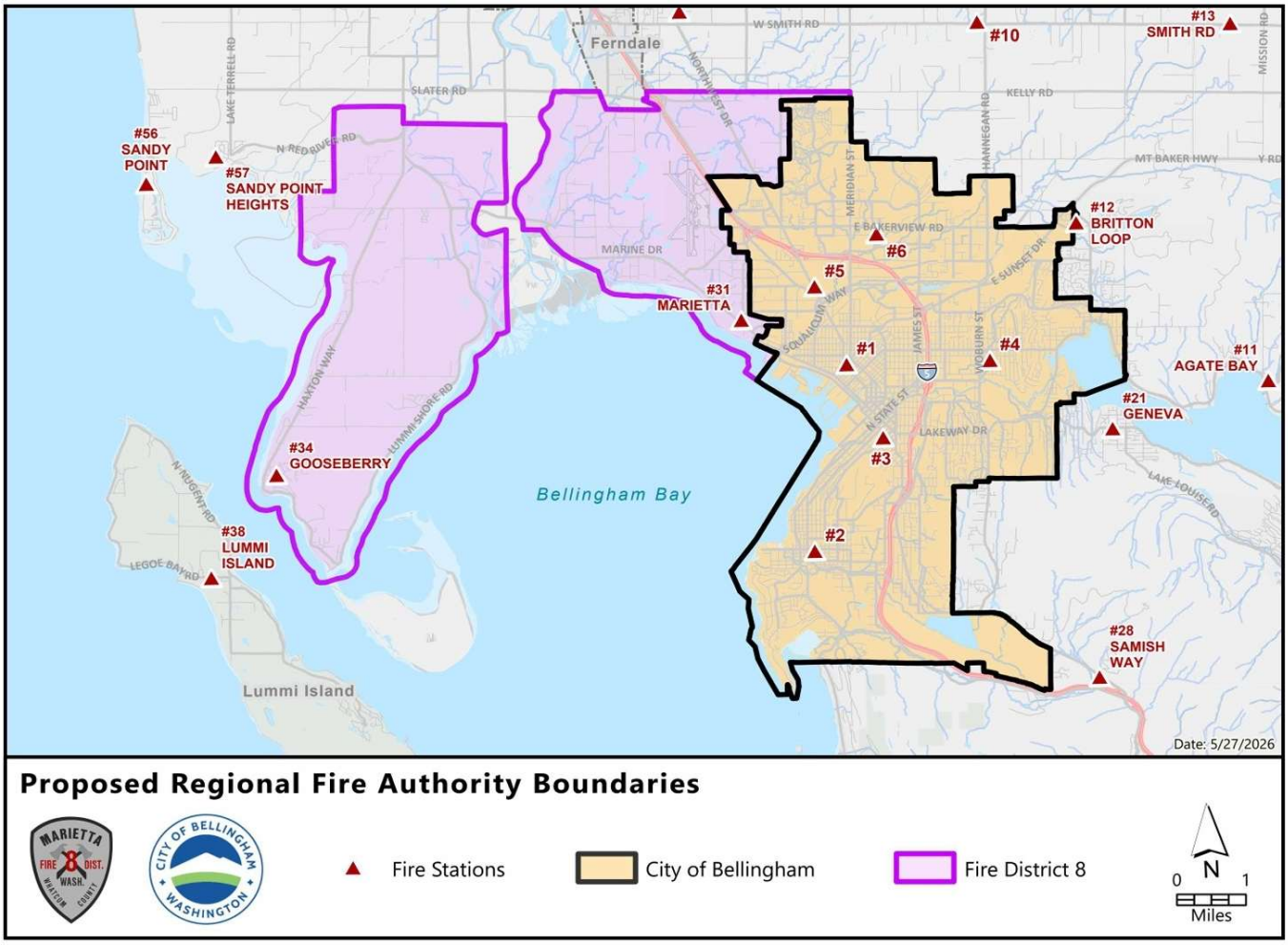
1.7. The City of Bellingham will retain emergency management authority within its jurisdiction in accordance with Washington State law.

1.8. All fire department dispatch personnel currently assigned to provide county-wide fire and EMS dispatching services will be transferred to the RFA ensuring continuity of staffing, operations, and service delivery. Dispatching services will continue without interruption, with the RFA operating under the current dispatch center, systems, and protocols used at the time of formation.

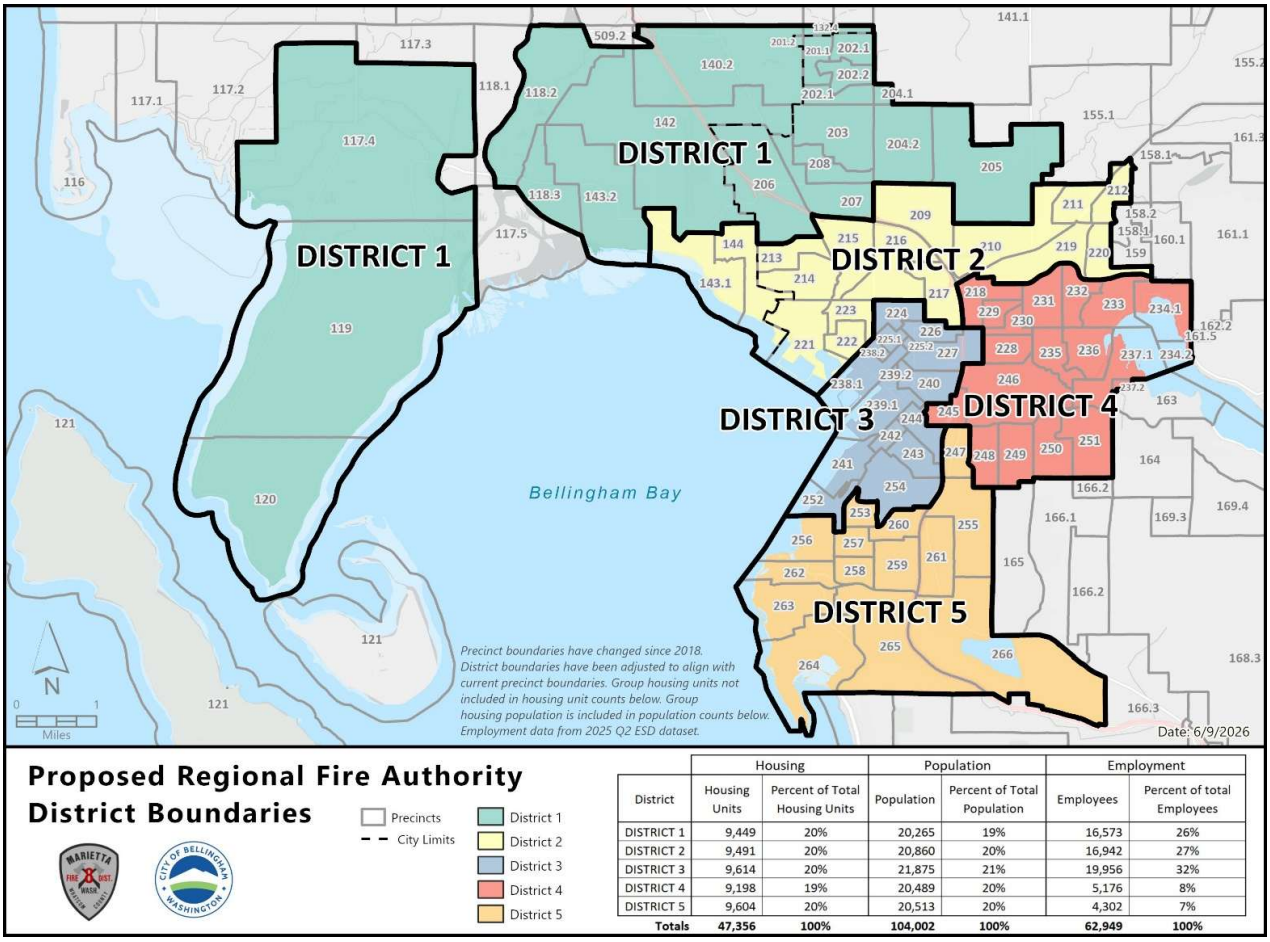
RFA SECTION 8 PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The **OPERATIONS AND SERVICES** section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment only by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

Appendix A: Bellingham Regional Fire Authority Boundaries

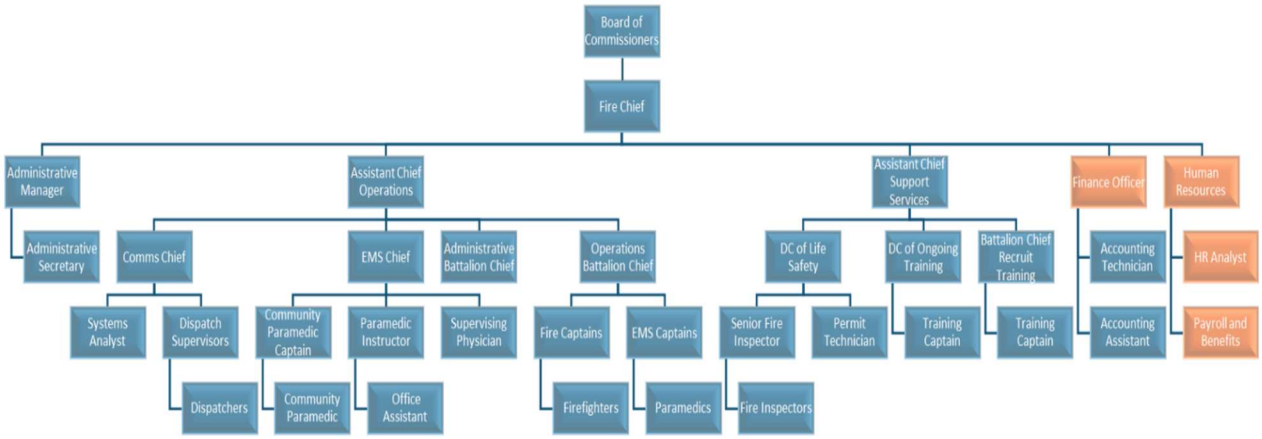


Appendix B: Bellingham Regional Fire Authority Fire Commissioner Districts



District	Housing		Population		Employment	
	Housing Units	Percent of Total Housing Units	Population	Percent of Total Population	Employees	Percent of total Employees
DISTRICT 1	9,449	20%	20,265	19%	16,573	26%
DISTRICT 2	9,491	20%	20,860	20%	16,942	27%
DISTRICT 3	9,614	20%	21,875	21%	19,956	32%
DISTRICT 4	9,198	19%	20,489	20%	5,176	8%
DISTRICT 5	9,604	20%	20,513	20%	4,302	7%
Totals	**47,356**	**100%**	**104,002**	**100%**	**62,949**	**100%**

Appendix C: Bellingham Regional Fire Authority Initial Organization Chart at Effective Date



Organizational positions marked in orange will be new FTE required to support the Fire Authority.

Appendix D: Real and Personal Property – Stations, Vehicles, and Apparatus

Stations

Agency	Facility Name	Address	Property ID	Geo ID
Bellingham Fire Department				
BFD	Station 1	1800 Broadway St. Bellingham, WA 98225	53394	3802255305360000
BFD	Station 2	1590 Harris St, Bellingham, WA, 98225	16649	3702012520790000
BFD	Station 3	1111 Billy Frank Jr St, Bellingham, WA 98225	77263/77289	3803312444860000/ 3803312474960000
BFD	Station 4	2306 Yew Street, Bellingham, WA 98229	66315	3803210220160000
BFD	Station 5	3314 Northwest Ave, Bellingham WA 98225	47309/47318	3802132520610000/ 3802132580550000
BFD	Station 6	4068 Deemer Rd, Bellingham WA 98225	61473	80318200507000
BFD	Boathouse	South Harbor Loop Dr, Bellingham WA 98225		
Whatcom County Fire District 8				
FD#8	Station 31	2913 Bennet Dr., Bellingham WA 98225	49738	3802232143190000
FD#8	Storage Facility	4504 Curtis Rd., Bellingham WA 98225	43574	3802042900030000
FD#8	Station 34	2600 Mackenzie Rd, Bellingham, WA 98225	41489	3801344141460000

Real Property Specifically Excluded From Transfer to RFA

Agency	Facility Name	Address	Property ID	Geo ID
BFD	Bank Building	3250 NW Avenue, Bellingham WA 98225	47320	3802132630250000
BFD	Downtown Public Safety Office	1306 Commercial St, Bellingham WA 98225	N/A	N/A

Apparatus – Bellingham Fire Department

	Vehicle Type	Manufacturer Name	Vehicle Description	Model Year	Model Number	License	VIN
4521	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2019	E450	70218D	1FDXE4FS0KDC52161
4522	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2019	E450	70217D	1FDXE4FSXKDC52894
4523	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2022	AMBULANCE	74458D	1FDXE4FN3PDD18929
4524	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2022	AMBULANCE E450	74456D	1FDXE4FNXPDD18930
4525	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2022	AMBULANCE E450	74457D	1FDXE4FN1PDD18931
4514	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2015	E350	59475D	1FDWE3FS8FDA05238
4517	*Ambulance*	*FORD*	*AMBULANCE*	*2015*	*E350*	*60184D*	*1FDWE3FSXFDA05242*
4526	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2023	E450	77110D	1FDXE4FN5PDD39135
4527	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2023	AMBULANCE	77291D	1FDXE4FN5PDD39166
4528	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2023	E450	77293D	1FDXE4FN8PDD39114
4529	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2023	E450	77294D	1FDXE4FN6PDD39161
4530	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2025	E450	82729D	1FDXE4FN4SDD03350
4532	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2025	E450	84579D	1FDXE4FN5TDD01737
4531	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2025	E450	82728D	1FDXE4FN3SDD03355
4499	Fire Boat	MOOSE BOATS	FIRE BOAT	2015	M2-38		1RO38085D515
4908	Fire Truck Ladder	PIERCE	AERIAL FIRE TRUCK	2008	20495	46348D	4P1CA01H28A008628
4916	Fire Truck Ladder	PIERCE	AERIAL FIRE TRUCK	2019	ARROW XT	66527D	4P1BCAGF5KA019891
4909	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2009	PUMPER	46359D	4P1CJ01A29A009282
4910	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2009	PUMPER	46360D	4P1CJ01A49A009283
4912	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2009	PUMPER	46364D	4P1CJ01A89A009285
4914	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2009	PUMPER	46366D	4P1CJ01A19A009287
4915	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2018	PUMPER	64137D	4P1BAAFF4JA018771
4917	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2020	PUMPER TH385	66572D	4P1BAAFF2LA021283
4918	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2021	TH410	70306D	4P1BAAFF5MA022963
4919	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2021	ENFORCER JK294	64139D	4P1BAAFF6NA024061
4920	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2022	ENFORCER JK294	77486D	4P1BAAFF0RA026930
8012M	Sedan Compact	FORD	COMPACT SEDAN	2007	FOCUS	42281D	1FAHP34NX7W259419
2062A	SUV Compact	FORD	SUV - FIRE	2007	ESCAPE XLS	42272D	1FMCU92Z88KA13351
8024	SUV Compact	FORD	COMPACT SUV	2017	ESCAPE SE	62212D	1FMCU9G99HUA40152
2048A	SUV Large	CHEVROLET	SUV 4X4	2007	SUBURBAN	42261D	3GNFK16387G210905
8023	SUV Large	FORD	SUV, RED	2016	EXPEDITION SSV	60293D	1FMJU1GT7GEF26682
8031	SUV Large	CHEVROLET	SUV, RED	2017	SUBURBAN	61187D	1GNSKKEC6HR220694
8020	SUV Large	FORD	SUV, RED	2015	EXPEDITION SSV	59858D	1FMJU1GT9FEF42199
8021	SUV Large	FORD	SUV, RED	2015	EXPEDITION SSV	59859D	1FMJU1GT1FEF42200
8030	SUV Large	FORD	SUV, RED	2017	EXPEDITION	61178D	1FMJU1GT7HEA53366
8033	SUV Large	CHEVROLET	SUV, RED	2017	SUBURBAN	62664D	1GNSKKEC9HR308526
8056	SUV Mid-Size	CHEVROLET	SUV, RED	2023	TAHOE SSV	76217D	1GNSKLED1PR301860
8057	SUV Mid-Size	CHEVROLET	SUV, RED	2023	TAHOE SSV	76216D	1GNSKLEDXPR301839
Oct-85	Trailer Cargo 5k#-20k#	INTERSTATE	EQUIPMENT TRAILER	2008	CARGO TRAILER	46304D	4RACS12268N061117
Oct-86	Trailer Cargo 5k#-20k#	INTERSTATE	EQUIPMENT TRAILER	2008	CARGO TRAILER	46305D	4RACS12288N061118
Oct-87	Trailer Cargo 5k#-20k#	INTERSTATE	EQUIPMENT TRAILER	2008	CARGO TRAILER	46306D	4RACS122X8N061119
10-104	Trailer Flat <5k#	BULLDOG TRAILER MFG	FLATBED TRAILER	2014	508S	55823D	4RJFS0816E1104699
10-103	Trailer Flat 5k#-20k#	BULLDOG TRAILER MFG	FLATBED TRAILER	2014	716S	55822D	4RJFS1627E1104700
2129	Truck 150	FORD	1/2 TON HYBRID ELECTRIC TRUCK	2018	F150XL PLUGIN HYBRID	66503D	1FTEX1EB9JKD73643
2132	Truck 150	FORD	1/2 TON HYBRID ELECTRIC TRUCK	2018	F150XL PLUGIN HYBRID	66502D	1FTEX1EB0JKD73644
2137	Truck 150	FORD	1/2 TON TRUCK	2022	F150 LIGHTNING	77424D	1FTVW1EL1PWG25088
2076	Truck 250	FORD	3/4 TON PICKUP EXT CAB 4X4	2008	F-250	46335D	1FDSX21R28EE49381
3100	Truck 350	FORD	1 TON SERVICE TRUCK	2023	F350 CREW CAB	77414D	1FT8W3BA3PEE10507
2149	Truck Compact	FORD	COMPACT TRUCK	2024	MAVERICK	77431D	3FTTW8J9XRRA20146
2154	Truck Compact	FORD	COMPACT TRUCK	2025	MAVERICK CREW CAB	824423D	3FTTW8B35SRB25063
4035	Van ADA	FORD	CARGO VAN	2020	TRANSIT SVI	66583D	1FTYE2CG0LKB74586
4036	Van ADA	FORD	CARGO VAN	2020	TRANSIT SVI	66582D	1FTYE2CG2LKB74587
4042	Van Cargo Max	FORD	CARGO VAN	2023	E-TRANSIT	77427D	1FTBW1YK5PKB33774
4041	Van Passenger	FORD	PASSENGER VAN	2023	TRANSIT	77085D	1FBAX2Y89PKB71192

Apparatus – Whatcom County Fire District 8

	Vehicle Type	Manufacturer Name	Vehicle Description	Model Year	Model Number	License	VIN
D8-8003	Sedan Compact	CHEVROLET	DISPATCH CAR	2011	IMPALA	96604C	2G1WD5EM1B1150870
D8-8004	Truck 150	FORD	TRAINING	2022	F150	D4733C	1FTFW1P8XNKE89948
D8-8005	Truck	FORD	LIFE SAFETY TRUCK	2024	MAVERICK	D4762C	3FTTW8J94RRA20319
D8-8505	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2009	PUMPER TRUCK	D2643C	4P1CJ01A69A009284
D8-8106	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2015	E450 SUPER DUTY	B1588C	1FDXE4FS1FDA26829
D8-8108	Ambulance	FORD	AMBULANCE	2023	E450	D9875C	1FDXE4FNXPDD39115
D8-8502	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2005	CONTENDER	50185C	4P1CC01A45A004931
D8-8504	Fire Truck Pumper	PIERCE	PUMPER TRUCK	2016	ENFORCER JK294	B5002C	4P1BAAGF5GA01549
D8-8902	Trailer	ALCON	LIFE SAFETY TRAILER	2023	CARGO TRAILER	D4741C	5WFBE1219RB044689
D8-8903	Trailer	EAGLE	PUMP PROP TRAILER	2021	CARGO TRAILER	D8854C	184Bu1019NC036866

Appendix E: BRF~~F~~RA Fire Benefit Charge

The Fire Benefit Charge (FBC) funding method is a voter-approved, two-part funding system authorized by State Law in 1987 that balances general purpose taxes with a user fee charged. Under this system, the Fire Department is funded by:

a) A property tax of up to $1.00 per $1,000 assessed values of property to support day to day operations and capital needs of the fire department and;

b) A Fire Benefit Charge (FBC) of up to 60% of the operating budget and can be used only for day to day operational expenses such as salaries, equipment, fuel and utilities.

A. Fire Benefit Charge – (FBC) Formula

FBC is only imposed on improvements to real property and personal ~~property, and~~property and must be reasonably apportioned based on the services afforded to these properties. The primary factor of the formula is based upon the amount of "required fire flow" or water needed to extinguish a fire, the number of firefighters and equipment needed to effectively deliver the required fire flow and their associated cost for fighting a fire in the type and size of structure being assessed. As structure size or fire loading within a structure increases, the need for required fire flow, firefighters, and equipment also increases. The following formula is adopted for calculating the FBC for Bellingham Regional Fire Authority. The formula is based on the Insurance Services Office (ISO) required fire flow, fire risk, and firefighting effort factors.

FBC = √AREA* 18 * Category Factor (CF) * Risk Factor * Fire Flow Factor/Cost per Gallon (CPG) * Balancing Factor *Sprinkler Multiplier

A matrix showing initial values of these factors is attached herein as Exhibit 1. The initial values, factors, discounts and exemptions are subject to change as necessary to comply with the statutory requirements of RCW 52.26.180.

B. Definitions:

1. √**AREA**: The square root of the total gross square feet of the buildings/structures located upon the property. FBC will not be applied to parcels with a total improvement square footage less than 400 sq. ft.

2. **18**: A constant established by the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) to calculate the water or fire flow needed to extinguish a fire for a specific structure based on its size.

3. **Category Factor**: Multiplier based on property use and size. This information is obtained from the Whatcom County Assessor database for each building subject to the FBC.

3.1 **Category Use Factor Building Use Factors:**

a) Residential Use: ICC R3 building units to include but not limited to Single dwelling units (1 unit per lot), plus ADUs; Duplexes; and townhomes not classified as a multi-unit structure.
b) Manufactured/Mobile Homes: Each mobile home unit whether it is located on a single land parcel or in a mobile home park.
c) Multi-unit: Including condominium when ownership information is available in the Whatcom County Assessor's database; and all other attached residential building structures.
d) Commercial Buildings: All other uses including storage facilities, warehouses, offices and commercial businesses.

4. **Risk Factor:** The risk factor represents the degree of risk caused by the use and size of a structure. The risk factor reflects the need for larger and/or more specialized effective response forces.

5. **Fire Flow/Cost per Gallon**: The relative cost of providing the required fire flow per gallon during a fire incident.

6. **Balancing Factor:** The balancing factor is used as an adjustable multiplier to finely tune the FBC calculation across all properties to reach the desired target FCBC amount.

~~7.~~ **Sprinkler Multiplier:** The Sprinkler multiplier is a discount applied to commercial and multi-unit buildings with full-coverage sprinkler system as defined by NFPA 13, 13R and 13D.

8. Exemptions to the Fire Benefit Charge : FBC exemptions are defined in state law as follows:

a. Religious Use: Personal property or improvements to real property owned or used by recognized religious denominations or religious organizations, including sanctuary, schools, and educational facilities. However, a benefit charge does apply to personal property and improvements to real property owned or used by any recognized religious denomination or religious organization for business operations, profit-making enterprises, or activities not including use of a sanctuary or related to kindergarten, primary, or secondary educational purposes or for institutions of higher education. RCW 52.26 180(2)(a).

b. Certain Tax-exempt properties: The following tax-exempt properties are exempt from the FBC:

i. Property of housing authorities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 35.82.210. RCW 52.26.180(2)(b).

ii. Property of nonprofit entities providing rental housing for very low-income households or providing space for the placement of a mobile home for a very low-income household that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.560. RCW 52.26.180(2)(c).

iii. Property of nonprofit homes for the aging that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.041. RCW 52.26.180(2)(d).

iv. Property of nonprofit organizations, corporations, or associations providing housing for eligible persons with developmental disabilities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.042. RCW 52.26.180(2)(e).

v. Property of nonprofit organizations providing emergency or transitional housing for low-income homeless persons or victims of domestic violence who are homeless for personal safety reasons that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.043. RCW 52.26.180(2)(f).

vi. Property of the state housing finance commission that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.135. RCW 52.26.180(2)(g).

vii. Property of nonprofit corporations operating sheltered workshops for persons with disabilities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.350. RCW 52.26.180(2)(h).

c. Qualifying senior citizens, disabled persons, disabled veterans. Fire benefit charges are reduced by 25%, 50%, or 75% for qualifying senior citizens, disabled persons, and disable veterans, depending on their combined disposable income under WAC 458-16A-140. RCW 52.26.270.

d. Personal Property not Assessed: Personal property not assessed and subject to ad valorem taxation under RCW title 84. RCW 52.26.190.

e. Public Entities are not Automatically Exempt from the FBC. Public entities are subject to the FBC, except as follows:

i. **Public Schools Districts:** Public school districts who pay a per student stipend to the RFA are not subject to the Fire Benefit Charge. RCW 52.30.020.

ii. **. State agencies or institutions and municipal corporations:** A state agency or institution or municipal corporation who contracts for service with the RFA are not subject to the Fire Benefit Charge. RCW 52.30.020.

~~**8. Exemptions to the Fire Benefit Charge RCW 52.18.010:**~~

~~**a. Religious Use:** Personal property or improvements to real property owned or used by recognized religious denominations or religious organization, including sanctuary, schools, and educational facilities. RCW 52.26.180(1)~~

~~**b. Any of the following tax-exempt properties:**~~

~~i. Property of housing authorities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 35.82.210~~

~~ii. Property of nonprofit entities providing rental housing for very low-income households or providing space for the placement of a mobile home for a very low-income household that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.560~~

~~iii. Property of nonprofit homes for the aging that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.041~~

~~iv. Property of nonprofit organizations, corporations, or associations providing housing for eligible persons with developmental disabilities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.042~~

~~v. Property of nonprofit organizations providing emergency or transitional housing for low-income homeless persons or victims of domestic violence who are homeless for personal safety reasons that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.043~~

~~vi. Property of the state housing finance commission that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.135~~

~~vii. Property of nonprofit corporations operating sheltered workshops for persons with disabilities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.350~~

~~**c. Property not Assessed:** Personal property not assessed and subject to ad valorem taxation under RCW title 84.~~

~~**d. Public Schools:** Public schools who pay a per student stipend are exempt from the Fire Benefit Charge.~~

~~**e. Entities with Contract for Service:** Entities who contract for service with the RFA are exempt from the Fire Benefit Charge.~~

C. Implementation Process:

The initial implementation of FBC requires 60% voter approval for a period of up to six years. Every six years, voters have the opportunity to reauthorize with 50% voter approval, the Fire Benefit Charge.

The state law requires annual public hearings prior to the next year's rates being adopted. Hearings are held prior to November 15 each year, by the Bellingham Regional Fire Authority Governance Board to establish the FBC. After the FBC has been established, property owners subject to the charge will be notified of the amount of the charge.

The Governing Board will form a Review Board for at least a two-week period to review written complaints from property owners. The final Benefit Charge will be added to the property tax bill.

Exhibit 1: FBC Formula Reference

FBC formula reference

```
FBC = sqrt(total_sqft) × 18 × category_factor × risk_factor × cost_per_gallon × balancing_factor × sprinkler_multiplier
```

Term	Description
total_sqft	Sum of eligible improvement square footage for the property
18	A constant established by the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) to calculate the water or fire flow needed to extinguish a fire for a specific structure based on its size
category_factor	Multiplier based on property use category (residential, commercial tier, etc.)
risk_factor	Per-land-use-code modifier reflecting relative risk (default 1.0)
sprinkler_multiplier	Multiplier applied to properties with sprinkler systems (e.g. 0.9 = a 10% reduction)
cost_per_gallon	Cost of water per gallon for fire suppression
balancing_factor	System-wide adjustment factor to calibrate total revenue

Core factors

Category factors

Residential	0.5
Mobile Home	0.15
Multi Unit	0.9

RFA-wide factors

Sprinkler Multiplier	0.9
Cost Per Gallon	61
Balancing Factor	0.014004869

Category factors set category_factor (commercial: see Commercial tiers).
RFA-wide factors go straight into the formula.

Commercial tiers

Tier	Factor	Max Sq Ft
Commercial 1	0.5	2,000
Commercial 2	1	3,000
Commercial 3	1.5	5,000
Commercial 4	3	10,000
Commercial 5	4	25,000
Commercial 6	5	50,000
Commercial 7	6	70,000
Commercial 8	7	100,000
Commercial 9	8	200,000
Commercial 10	10	No Max