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

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.