

**WHAT-COMM COMMUNICATIONS CENTER
ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD
MINUTES
September 30, 2021
Meeting held Via ZOOM**

Present were:

Administrative Board Members: Bill Elfo, Sheriff, WCSO; Seth Fleetwood, Bellingham Mayor; Rud Browne, Whatcom County Council Chair of the Finance Committee; Mel Blankers, Chief of Everson Fire Department; Scott Korthuis, Lynden Mayor; Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive; Jim Peeples, Fire Commissioners Association Representative; Chief Florence Simon, Bellingham Police Department; Bellingham Fire Chief, Bill Hewett and Hollie Huthman, City of Bellingham Council Chair of the Public Safety Committee

Absent: None absent.

Other Panelists in attendance:

Bellingham Fire Department, Prospect Division Chief, Dan McDermott; Bellingham Deputy Chief, David Crass, Director of WHAT-COMM; Alys Everbeck, Deputy Director of WHAT-COMM and Forrest Longman, Bellingham Deputy Director of Finance.

Opening comments:

Sheriff Bill Elfo called the meeting to order at 1:00pm.

Sheriff Elfo asked the public if they had comments. There were no public comments made.

Approval of the Minutes

Approval of meeting minutes from the May 27, 2021, special meeting.

Discussion: No discussion.

Sheriff Elfo called for a motion to approve the minutes.

Rud Browne motioned that the minutes be approved, and Scott Korthuis seconded the motion.

Sheriff Elfo called for a vote to approve the minutes. None opposed.

WHAT-COMM/PROSPECT Budget Presentation

Presented by Alys Everbeck and Dan McDermott

Alys shared that WHAT-COMM is in need of and is asking for 3 additional dispatch positions.

Dan McDermott shared that Prospect is asking for some additional funding for replacement of their Uninterruptible Power Supply, funding to improve their triage systems and funding to add 1 additional supervisor.

There was some brief discussion regarding the budget.

Scott Korthuis motioned that we accept the budget as presented, and Rud Browne seconded the motion.

Sheriff Elfo called for a vote to approve the minutes. None opposed.

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Consolidation Discussion

Presented by Scott Korthuis

Scott summarized the sub-committee report that he provided, and he tried to include as much actual data as he could. He authored the document with assistance from some of the other sub-committee members. He stated that the most important finding he noted is the delay of 19-20 seconds when calls are transferred from WHAT-COMM to PROSPECT. He also noted that he knows additional training will be required if the centers consolidate. He discussed the disparity in call load volumes between the centers. He also mentioned WHAT-COMM's facility needs.

Sheriff Elfo asked if other Sub-Committee members had information they wanted to share.

Jim Peeples talked about how the fire association members are disappointed with the report presented by Scott Korthuis and that they feel their input and concerns were completely disregarded. He shared other information and concluded with making a motion before the Board that we remain with our current system.

Sheriff Elfo asked what Jim meant by "current system". Is the fire association opposed to co-location, or just consolidation?

Jim Peeples shared further thoughts on that and that he believes there would be opposition to both.

Satpal Sidhu is very concerned about making sure that we do what will be best for our community over the next 20 years. What is best for the departments and staffing is important, but he believes the bigger picture is that we do what is best for our entire community.

There was much more discussion and input was provided by several of the Administrative Board members.

Toward the end of the discussion Sheriff Elfo asked Jim Peeples if he would like to restate or withdraw his earlier motion? Jim Peeples withdrew his motion that we remain with our current system.

There was no final decision made about consolidating or co-locating. Executive Sidhu suggested we not pursue consolidation at this time due to the obvious resistance from the fire department, noting that strong resistance from either side would likely lead to more risk and negative impacts to service. Final comments from some of the board members was that this topic should be left open for future discussion.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 2:19 pm.

Next scheduled meeting is Thursday January 27, 2022, at 1 pm.

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