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AGENDA

ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD

Date: Thursday January 25, 2024
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Location: 625 Halleck Street, Bellingham, WA

1:00 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER – Whatcom County Sheriff, Donnell Tanksley

Point of Order: *This is a hybrid meeting. Please speak up to be heard and understood by those attending remotely and to ensure the audio recording is accurate. To make and second a motion, please raise your hand and wait to be audibly acknowledged by the Chair for clarity of the official record.*

1:10 p.m. – 1:20 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

During this period of time, citizens may request to speak informally to the Board via ZOOM on subjects not scheduled on the agenda and will be unmuted by the moderator. **EACH SPEAKER IS ALLOWED A MAXIMUM OF THREE MINUTES.** If the speaker has written comments for the Board, an additional copy should be given to Julie Knight via email at jkknight@cob.org, preferably before the meeting, for our office files.

1:20 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Approval of the Minutes

Sheriff Tanksley

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

What-Comm Year in Review

Alysn Everbeck, What-Comm Deputy Director of Operations

2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Prospect Year in Review

Dan McDermott, Prospect Division Chief of Communications

2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

What-Comm Facility Update

Alysn Everbeck, Forrest Longman, Carol Rofkar

3:00 p.m.

Adjourn

The next scheduled meeting will be held May 30th 2024, at 1 PM.

**WHAT-COMM COMMUNICATIONS CENTER
ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD
MINUTES
Thursday September 28, 2023
Meeting held at 625 Halleck Street, Bellingham WA and Via ZOOM**

Present were:

Administrative Board Members: Bill Elfo, Sheriff, WCSO; Seth Fleetwood, Bellingham Mayor; Scott Korthuis, Lynden Mayor; Jeff Hindman, Fire Commissioners Association Representative; Chief Rebecca Mertzig, Bellingham Police Department; Dan Hammill, City of Bellingham Council Chair of the Public Safety Committee; Bill Hewett, Bellingham Fire Chief; Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive; Kathy Kershner, Whatcom County Council and Larry Hoffman, Fire Chief District 7.

Other Panelists in attendance:

Bellingham Fire Department Prospect Division Chief, Dan McDermott; Bellingham Deputy Chief, David Crass, Director of WHAT-COMM; Alysnn Everbeck, Deputy Director of WHAT-COMM; Forrest Longman, City of Bellingham Deputy Finance Director and Tyler Schroeder, Whatcom County Deputy Executive.

Opening comments:

Sheriff Bill Elfo called the meeting to order at 1:00pm and asked for introductions from everyone present.

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

Approval of the Minutes:

Sheriff Elfo asked if members had a chance to review the minutes from the June 1, 2023, meeting and if there were any comments.

There being no revisions or comments, asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes.

Mayor Fleetwood motioned to approve, and Mayor Korthuis seconded.

Sheriff Elfo called for a vote. There were none opposed, the motion carried.

Sheriff Elfo brought forward Whatcom County Council's requested amendment to the Interlocal Agreement regarding participating Board members.

Whatcom County Executive Sidhu and Councilmember Kershner shared the perspective of the Council and their desire that only elected officials should serve as voting members and that all other members should be ex-officio non-voting members only. Further discussion was postponed and will be reintroduced as new business on the agenda, after the budget review and discussion.

What-Comm/Prospect Budget Presentation:

Alysnn Everbeck and Dan McDermott

What-Comm Deputy Director, Alysnn Everbeck gave a short review of the 2024 budget cost allocation. She indicated that the main increases for 2024 are bargained wages and benefits, risk and liability insurance coverage and some licensure fees.

Mayor Korthuis asked what was behind the low 1.22% increase in law enforcement fees?

Deputy Director Everbeck explained that we saw large fee increases in 2023 which was basically due to catching up on overdue needs and coming up with a more stabilized plan for future costs. The lower increase in 2024 fees is representative of the outcome of that plan.

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Prospect Division Chief Dan McDermott of Prospect's 2024 budget cost allocations. He indicated that the only new ask that Prospect has for 2024 is a request for \$30,000 to fund a server for the new Corti system which is a triage platform that will increase the efficiency of dispatch services.

There being no questions or comments, Mayor Korthuis motioned that the budget be approved as presented, and Councilmember Hammill seconded. Sheriff Elfo called for a vote. There were none opposed, the motion carried.

New Business:

Sheriff Elfo asked if there are any updates on staffing?

Deputy Director Everbeck shared that the update for WHAT-COMM is not what she hoped it would be at this time. 9 dispatchers have been hired so far this year, but we also lost 9 dispatchers this year. We are working hard to attract and hire new staff. Retention and new hire bonuses, as well as referral bonuses have been implemented. In person recruiting is ongoing at job fairs, advertising is occurring over the radio and on Facebook. Alysnn encouraged those present in the room to share the dispatch hiring information on their social media platforms as well as any additional ideas they may have that will help with the effort.

Chief McDermott indicated that they are not have any major staffing issues at Prospect right now.

Sheriff Elfo reopened the discussion regarding County Council's proposed amendment to the Interlocal Agreement.

Sheriff Elfo commented that the amendment included adding a non-voting Alternative Response Team (A.R.T.) member. He explained the A.R.T. program currently only operates in the City of Bellingham. If we are going to have a representative from behavioral health services, they should represent the whole county. He also commented that this administrative board has been operating and working well for 50 years. Instead of focusing on making this change, let's focus on people, staff, and a new dispatch building.

Chief Mertzig asked what is the reason for the requested change? She indicated that as the Director of WHAT-COMM police dispatch she is both a service provider and the agency's largest customer. She is responsible for the operations, staffing, and liability of the center. The other concern is that elected officials serving on the administrative board are transient in nature and do not obtain in-depth knowledge of center operations or needs. Much of the knowledge and understanding is lost as those positions are vacated and filled with someone who does not have prior knowledge. Progress has historically been stymied regarding key issues, but the current board has been effective. Changes now could derail necessary projects.

Fire Chief Hoffman commented that he represents all the fire districts, including Bellingham. He is the only voting member who is a fire department staff member and has the perspective of all the fire districts in Whatcom County. Why take that perspective and vote away?

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Fire Commissioner Hindman was dismayed by the lack of communication about the proposed amendment and that he and Fire Chief Hoffman were not included in the original communication. He didn't hear about it until the morning of today's meeting and that information was not communicated to him directly by Council or the County Executive. He is concerned that by removing the vote of the police and fire chiefs it is taking away the voice of those with valuable knowledge and resources regarding these vital community services.

City Councilmember Hammill stated that he does not agree that all the voting members need to be elected officials. He wants the Bellingham Chief of Police to have a vote and he wants the fire departments to also have a voice and a voting member. As far as adding representative members from A.R.T and the County Co-Responder, he believes that should be further and separately discussed.

Some other comments were, what is it that is broken and what are we trying to fix?

Executive Sidhu asked that the Administrative Board members and department representatives put their thoughts in writing and present them to Council. He wants to make sure that concerns are addressed and stated that it is easy to forget the details of what was discussed between now and the next County Council meeting, where the Interlocal Agreement amendment will be further discussed.

There was some discussion that we cannot continue services under an expired agreement. What is the reality that an amendment can be agreed upon and completed by the December 31, 2023 expiration date?

What-Comm Accounting Technician, Julie Knight commented that without a signed agreement, we do not have authority to collect fees. She suggested that the Whatcom County Council approve the Interlocal agreement without the proposed amendment. Further discussion and decisions could then continue, and an amendment could be made later.

Bellingham Mayor Seth Fleetwood made a motion that the Administrative Board urge the County Council to approve the extension of the Interlocal Agreement without the amendment. City Councilmember Dan Hammill seconded the motion.

There being no further discussion, Sheriff Elfo called for a vote. There were none opposed, the motion carried.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45pm.

Next scheduled regular meeting is Thursday January 25, 2024 at 1 pm.