



Emergency Medical Services EMS Oversight Board

800 Chestnut Street
Virtual Meeting
June 14, 2023
2:30 PM to 3:30 PM

Minutes

EOB Members Present:

Deputy Executive Tyler Schroeder, *in the place of Executive Sidhu*
Rick Kowsky, *Cascade Amb. Citizen at Large*
Carol Frazey, *WC County Council*
Seth Fleetwood, *City of Bellingham Mayor*
Hall Walker, *Finance/Budget Citizen Rep.*

Robert Rush Jr. MD, *Medical Community Rep.*
RobRoy Graham, *Fire Commissioners Assoc.*
Michael Lilliquist, *Bellingham City Council*
Scott Korthuis, *City of Lynden Mayor*

EOB Members not Present:

Executive Satpal Sidhu, *Chair*

Other Attendees:

Rosalee Cowan, *Whatcom County EMS*
Hank Maleng, *Fire Chiefs Association Chair/WCFD16 Chief*
Jerry DeBruin, *Whatcom County EMS and Trauma Care Council/WCFD14 Chief*
Hunter Elliot, *IFF Local 106*
Diana Clinch, *Whatcom County EMS*
Steven Cohen, *Whatcom County EMS*
Lindsey Blake, *Whatcom County EMS*
Therese Evangelista, *Whatcom County EMS*
Olivia Guelich, *Whatcom County EMS*
Liz Baxter, *North Sound ACH*
Andrew Tan, *Whatcom County Finance*

Bill Hewett, *Bellingham Fire Department Chief*
Christopher Quinn, *Whatcom County Attorney*
Greg Macy, *Public*
James Hallett, *Public*
John Lewis, *Public*
Marvin Wayne, *Whatcom County Medical Program Director*
Rachel Carlson, *Whatcom County Fire District 1 Chief*
Tawni Helms, *Whatcom County Executive's Office*

1. Welcome & Introductions Chair Sidhu
2. Confirmation March 8, 2023 Minutes Chair Sidhu
Lilliquist moved approval of the March 8, 2023 minutes, Korthuis seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.
3. Finance Review (2023 Overview) Korthuis (Finance Chair)

Korthuis reviewed the May 31, 2023 financial report. GEMT is coming in shortly but has not been reflected on the EMS end fund balance yet. The finance group is monitoring the reserve fund and TAB has been tasked to propose a plan if expenses are too high and the ending fund balance goal is not met.

4. Introduction of DEI EOB Nominees/Appointment **Action Item** Councilmember Frazey
- Liz Baxter (ACH)
 - Melissa Mohilla (Citizen at Large)

Frazey introduced the two DEI EOB nominees by reviewing their introductions and CVs with the group. Baxter is nominated to represent a DEI organization on the EOB and Mohilla is the nominee for the citizen DEI representative with lived experience as a Firefighter/EMT. Frazey made a motion to appoint Liz Baxter and Melissa Mohilla to the EOB, Lilliquist seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

5. Introduction of Jim Hallett (Finance Appointment) **Action Item** Chair Sidhu
- Hallett was introduced by Schroeder as the Finance Citizen Representative. Hallett reviewed his experience with EMS and finances as a City Council Member and Mayor of Port Angeles. Korthuis made a motion to recommend James Hallett as the Finance Citizen Representative on the EOB, Frazey seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

6. Mr. R. Kowsky (Cascade Ambulance) **Rick Kowsky**
- Introduction Topic/Inclusion of Private Ambulance Companies in Whatcom Co.

Kowsky reviewed the letter he sent to Mike Hilley, this letter included a brief history of private ambulances in Whatcom County, his role on the EOB, and his request for the utilization of private agencies in primary emergency responses to lower overall costs. Kowsky requested that the group look at the scenario of private ambulances being involved in the 911 system. Frazey asked Kowsky for clarity on the request to see if it is mainly for cost-saving reasons, due to the EMS system already having adequate response times. Kowsky stated that cost-savings should be considered in this, but the expanse of private ambulance services can assist in the need for more ambulances in the community, citing the addition of two Basic Life Service ambulances that Bellingham Fire Department. Hewett clarified, stating that they are not expanding services, but expanding staffing so that the EMS functions can be separated from the fire response functions. Kowsky requested that the group include in the conversation input from private agencies about how services are provided and how private agencies can better augment emergency responses if included in the 911 EMS system.

Schroeder asked Kowsky to state his next steps request, Kowsky asked the group for an audience with his private ambulance group at the next EOB meeting or other appropriate councils to answer questions and discuss ideas and options for private agencies to assist in the EMS system. Cascade Ambulance could help provide BLS response and transport, and if needed ALS services as well. Fleetwood asked about the current restraints that are keeping private agencies from being involved in the EMS system, Kowsky explained, stating that the Whatcom County EMS System has historically been a closed system, not allowing private agencies to be dispatched through the 911 systems. Frazey asked if the

closed system of Whatcom County is unique, Kowsky stated that each County operates differently, but many areas around the state and nation use private ambulance services in the 911 system. Lilliquist asked about the primary customers for private ambulance services, Kowsky described the different types of calls they respond to, including transport to hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, and many of the same essential services that any EMS agency responds to in the state of Washington, operating with the same licensures and staffing patterns as other agencies do. Hewett clarified that the fire-based EMS system is dispatched out of the 911 dispatch center and tends to stay out of inner-medical facility transports and hospice and nursing home responses. Schroeder added that in the first and current EMS Levy Plan, there is an emphasis on the system maintaining a fire-based EMS system.

Schroeder summarized the group's asks for more clarity on Kowsky's request and asked that Kowsky's letter be reviewed and discussed at the Technical Advisory Board and the Fire Chiefs Association meetings. EOB recognized that more discussions would take place outside of the EOB about this topic and recognized Kowsky and the letter that he submitted. The EOB will anticipate future discussion to happen once there is a better sense from the Fire Chiefs Association and TAB's understanding of Kowsky's request. EOB will be open to hearing from Kowsky again in the future when there is a better understanding, discussion, and scope of Kowsky's request. Kowsky is available for questions about the request.

7. Recommendation/Request; Finance Sub-Committee **Action Item** Korthuis (Finance Chair)

- Medic 75 Unanticipated/Unrecovered Expenses

Korthuis reviewed three requests. Both BFD and LFD requests capture unanticipated costs incurred by the implementation of the fifth medic unit, Medic 75, in Lynden. The finance committee reviewed this ask and discussed the logistics of payment due to contract expiration and previously incurred expenses. Pethick added that the original budget authority in 2021 and 2022 for these Medic 75 costs was not spent entirely and that the BFD request of \$270,940.96 is not entirely an additional cost. The additional costs are for system alerting systems. Additionally, the finance committee recommended that Whatcom County pay for half of the costs of a catastrophic engine failure on the WCFD7 Paramedic Unit. All three of these costs have been reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee for recommendation to the EOB. Korthuis then made a motion to forward to the County Council a request to pay Bellingham \$270,940.96, Lynden \$11,802.48, and FD7 approximately half of \$17,500 for the additional expenses associated with one catastrophic failure of an engine and other expenses associated with Medic 75, Lilliquist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- BFD Request \$270,940.96
- LFD Request \$11,802.48
- WCFD Request Half of Catastrophic Engine Failure Repair Costs \$17,500.00

8. TAB and ALS Contract Update

Pethick (TAB Co-Chair)

Pethick updated the group on the ALS Contract. The main ALS Contract is being renegotiated over the course several meetings. The ALS Contract is now separated into two contracts, the main goal is to streamline contract processes. The TAB has broken into two sub-committees collecting data to determine a timeline and location for the next Paramedic Unit. The other subcommittee has been tasked with developing a work plan following the directions and objectives that came out of the EMS Levy Plan. They are planning next steps with priorities and timelines for those objectives from the plan to support the voter-approved plan.

9. Round Table/Good of the Order

Chair Sidhu

DeBruin asked what the current EMS Levy collection rate is, Korthuis pulled the current amount and it is 25.2. Hilley will review this difference between the 25.2 and the amount listed in the EMS Levy Plan, 29.5, and will update the EOB board members and chiefs about it.

10. Public Comment

Chair Sidhu

Hunter Elliot, of the IFF Local 106, spoke as a member of the EMS community and expressed his discomfort with a sitting EOB member representing a personal business interest to the board and asked the board to consider the ethics of that going forward. Elliot also requested that the board follow the voter-based EMS Levy Plan and its call for fire-based EMS. Elliot then stated that the inclusion of private ambulances in the 911 EMS system in the City of Bellingham would conflict with the Bellingham Municipal Code.