

REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

**Implementation Guide
for Fire Departments
in Washington State**

Jointly developed by the
Washington Fire Chiefs (WFC),
and the Washington State Council
of Fire Fighters (WSCFF)



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Forward

In 2004, the Washington Fire Chiefs (WFC) led a legislative effort to provide fire districts, municipalities and tribal nations the ability to “formally” join together in the provision of fire and emergency services. This ability had formerly been available via mergers (between fire districts); annexations (by cities into fire districts, or by cities of unincorporated territory previously protected by fire districts); through interlocal agreements or contractual consolidations (between any set of entities related to specific operational items like “training”, “administrative services”, or for entire department operations); and joint powers agreements (basically an agreement allowing entities to share resources and authority via a contractual arrangement). All of these “tools” are still available to the fire service and used by many agencies. A new “tool” in the tool kit, adopted by the State Legislature in 2004, is the Regional Fire Authority (RFA).

The RFA, as previously stated, is a municipal corporation which allows fire districts, municipalities (city departments), or tribal nations to join together for the provision of fire and emergency services. The RFA can combine fire districts to fire district; city to city; fire district to city; or any combination one can think of. Organized under Title 52 of the RCW (Revised Code of Washington), the RFA operates very similar to that of a fire district (also organized under the auspices of Title 52 RCW. The RFA has its strengths built around the formation of a “planning committee”, who establishes the vision, operational aspects, and funding methodology for the RFA prior to taking it to the ballot for citizens in all affected areas to determine if the RFA is right for them. The RFA can combine entire fire departments (as stated earlier, in various combinations); or, it can be used to establish operational guidelines and a funding mechanism for subsets of fire departments such as “Hazardous Materials RFA”, “Paramedic/ALS Service RFA”, “Training RFA”, etc. While the RFA is still considered a new tool in the fire service tool kit, its advantages will be seen over the years as different methodologies and uses of the RFA come to pass.

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In a joint venture, the Washington Fire Chiefs (WFC) and the Washington State Council of Fire Fighters (WSCFF) have developed this implementation guide to assist agencies in determining if the RFA is right for them; then, if that determination is made in the positive, how to initiate the RFA process.

This Implementation Guide is divided up into the following sections:

- I. **RCW 52.26**
- II. **Fire Authority Development Process**
- III. **Frequently Asked Questions**
- IV. **Implementation Matrix**
- V. **Sample Resolutions and Other Miscellaneous Information**

It is hoped that the enclosed information will assist Fire Department leaders determine if the Regional Fire Authority makes sense for them as an option to assist in regionalization of services.

Sincerely,

*Allen Church, Fire Chief
South King Fire & Rescue*

*Kelly Fox, President
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R.C.W. 52.26

Adopted in 2004

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Title 52

Title 52 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) provides the laws pertaining to Fire Districts. In 2004, RCW 52.26 was adopted by the State Legislature and added to Title 52 which allows for the formation and operation of Regional Fire Authorities (RFA). The RFA, in effect, operates like a fire district and thus has been codified under the majority of the laws applicable to fire districts. There are, however, differences between an RFA and a fire district in areas which will continue to be identified over the upcoming years related to legislative updates.

RCW 52.26 provides legal descriptions of the process related to the formation of the Planning Committee and its function (52.26.030 and .040); a funding model related to taxation or the benefit charge (52.26.050 and others within 52.26); organization of the governing board (52.26.080); the powers of the governing board (52.26.090); and many other pertinent sections related to operations of the RFA.

The following section captures the most important aspects of RCW 52.26, others of which may be found by reviewing a copy of the RCW's either on line (internet) or via a hard copy:

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Chapter 52.26 RCW

Regional fire protection service authorities

RCW Sections

- 52.26.010 Findings
- 52.26.020 Definitions
- 52.26.030 Planning committee - Formation - Powers
- 52.26.040 Planning committee - Formulation of service plan - Competition with private ambulance service
- 52.26.050 Service plan - Taxes and benefit charges
- 52.26.060 Service plan - Submission to voters
- 52.26.070 Service authority - Formation - Challenges
- 52.26.080 Organization and composition of governing board
- 52.26.090 Powers of governing board
- 52.26.100 Transfer of responsibilities and employees to authority - Civil service system
- 52.26.110 Withdrawal, reannexation of territory
- 52.26.120 Dissolution of fire protection district - Election - Transfer of responsibilities
- 52.26.130 Debt - Interlocal contracts - General obligation bonds
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- 52.26.150 Levy of taxes - To be made by county or counties where authority is located
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- 52.26.170 Collection of taxes
- 52.26.180 Benefit charges
- 52.26.190 Benefit charges - Exemptions
- 52.26.200 Benefit charges - Resolution - County assessor's duties
- 52.26.210 Benefit charges - Administration and collection by county treasurer
- 52.26.220 Benefit charges - Submission to voters - Renewal
- 52.26.230 Benefit charges - Establishment - Public hearings - Notice to property owners
- 52.26.240 Benefit charges - Limitation on imposition of property tax
- 52.26.250 Benefit charges - Complaints - Review board
- 52.26.260 Benefit charges - Model resolution - Assistance by Washington fire commissioners association
- 52.26.270 Benefit charges - Additional exemption
- 52.26.280 Civil service - When authorized or required
- 52.26.290 Annexation of territory
- 52.26.900 Captions not law - 2004 c 129
- 52.26.901 Severability - 2004 c 129

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RCW 52.26.010

Findings

The legislature finds that:

1. The ability to respond to emergency situations by many of Washington state's fire protection jurisdictions has not kept up with the state's needs, particularly in urban regions;
2. Providing a fire protection service system requires a shared partnership and responsibility among the federal, state, local, and regional governments and the private sector;
3. There are efficiencies to be gained by regional fire protection service delivery while retaining local control; and
4. Timely development of significant projects can best be achieved through enhanced funding options for regional fire protection service agencies, using already existing taxing authority to address fire protection emergency service needs and new authority to address critical fire protection projects and emergency services.

RCW 52.26.020

Definitions

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

1. "Board" means the governing body of a regional fire protection service authority.
2. "Regional fire protection service authority" or "authority" means a municipal corporation, an independent taxing authority within the meaning of Article VII, section 1 of the state Constitution, and a taxing district within the meaning of Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution, whose boundaries are coextensive with two or more adjacent fire protection jurisdictions and that has been created by a vote of the people under this chapter to implement a regional fire protection service authority plan.
3. "Regional fire protection service authority planning committee" or "planning committee" means the advisory committee created under RCW 52.26.030 to create and propose to fire protection jurisdictions a regional fire protection service authority plan to design, finance, and develop fire protection and emergency service projects.
4. "Regional fire protection service authority plan" or "plan" means a plan to develop and finance a fire protection service authority project or projects, including, but not limited to, specific capital projects, fire operations and emergency service operations pursuant to RCW 52.26.040(3)(b), and preservation and maintenance of existing or future facilities.
5. "Fire protection jurisdiction" means a fire district, city, town, port district, or Indian tribe.
6. "Regular property taxes" has the same meaning as in RCW 84.04.140.

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RCW 52.26.030

Planning committee - Formation - Powers

Regional fire protection service authority planning committees are advisory entities that are created, convened, and empowered as follows:

1. Any two or more adjacent fire protection jurisdictions may create a regional fire protection service authority and convene a regional fire protection service authority planning committee. No fire protection jurisdiction may participate in more than one authority.
2. Each governing body of the fire protection jurisdictions participating in planning under this chapter shall appoint three elected officials to the authority planning committee. Members of the planning committee may receive compensation of seventy dollars per day, or portion thereof, not to exceed seven hundred dollars per year, for attendance at planning committee meetings and for performance of other services in behalf of the authority, and may be reimbursed for travel and incidental expenses at the discretion of their respective governing body.
3. A regional fire protection service authority planning committee may receive state funding, as appropriated by the legislature, or county funding provided by the affected counties for start-up funding to pay for salaries, expenses, overhead, supplies, and similar expenses ordinarily and necessarily incurred. Upon creation of a regional fire protection service authority, the authority shall within one year reimburse the state or county for any sums advanced for these start-up costs from the state or county.
4. The planning committee shall conduct its affairs and formulate a regional fire protection service authority plan as provided under RCW 52.26.040.
5. At its first meeting, a regional fire protection service authority planning committee may elect officers and provide for the adoption of rules and other operating procedures.
6. The planning committee may dissolve itself at any time by a majority vote of the total membership of the planning committee. Any participating fire protection jurisdiction may withdraw upon thirty calendar days' written notice to the other jurisdictions.

RCW 52.26.040

Planning committee - Formulation of service plan - Competition with private ambulance service

1. A regional fire protection service authority planning committee shall adopt a regional fire protection service authority plan providing for the design, financing, and development of fire protection and emergency services. The planning committee may consider the following factors in formulating its plan:
 - a. Land use planning criteria; and

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- b. The input of cities and counties located within, or partially within, a participating fire protection jurisdiction.
 2. The planning committee may coordinate its activities with neighboring cities, towns, and other local governments that engage in fire protection planning.
 3. The planning committee shall:
 - a. Create opportunities for public input in the development of the plan;
 - b. Adopt a plan proposing the creation of a regional fire protection service authority and recommending design, financing, and development of fire protection and emergency service facilities and operations, including maintenance and preservation of facilities or systems. The plan may authorize the authority to establish a system of ambulance service to be operated by the authority or operated by contract after a call for bids. However, the authority shall not provide for the establishment of an ambulance service that would compete with any existing private ambulance service, unless the authority determines that the region served by the authority, or a substantial portion of the region served by the authority, is not adequately served by an existing private ambulance service. In determining the adequacy of an existing private ambulance service, the authority shall take into consideration objective generally accepted medical standards and reasonable levels of service which must be published by the authority. Following the preliminary conclusion by the authority that the existing private ambulance service is inadequate, and before establishing an ambulance service or issuing a call for bids, the authority shall allow a minimum of sixty (60) days for the private ambulance service to meet the generally accepted medical standards and accepted levels of service. In the event of a second preliminary conclusion of inadequacy within a twenty-four (24) month period, the authority may immediately issue a call for bids or establish its own ambulance service and is not required to afford the private ambulance service another sixty (60) day period to meet the generally accepted medical standards and reasonable levels of service. A private ambulance service that is not licensed by the department of health or whose license is denied, suspended, or revoked is not entitled to a sixty (60) day period within which to demonstrate adequacy and the authority may immediately issue a call for bids or establish an ambulance service; and
 - c. In the plan, recommend sources of revenue authorized by RCW 52.26.050, identify the portions of the plan that may be amended by the board of the authority without voter approval, consistent with RCW 52.26.050, and recommend a financing plan to fund selected fire protection and emergency services and projects.
 4. Once adopted, the plan must be forwarded to the participating fire protection jurisdictions' governing bodies to initiate the election process under RCW 52.26.060.
 5. If the ballot measure is not approved, the planning committee may redefine the selected regional fire protection service authority projects, financing plan, and the ballot measure. The fire protection jurisdictions' governing bodies may approve the new plan and ballot measure, and may then submit the revised proposition to the voters at a subsequent election or a special election. If a ballot measure is not approved by the voters by the third vote, the planning committee is dissolved.

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RCW 52.26.050

Service plan - Taxes and benefit charges

1. A regional fire protection service authority planning committee may, as part of a regional fire protection service authority plan, recommend the imposition of some or all of the following revenue sources, which a regional fire protection service authority may impose upon approval of the voters as provided in this chapter:
 - a. Benefit charges under RCW 52.26.180 through 52.26.270;
 - b. Property taxes under RCW 52.26.140 through 52.26.170 and 84.52.044 and RCW 84.09.030, 84.52.010, 84.52.052, and 84.52.069; or
 - c. Both (a) and (b) of this subsection.
2. The authority may impose taxes and benefit charges as set forth in the regional fire protection service authority plan upon creation of the authority, or as provided for in this chapter after creation of the authority. If the plan authorizes the authority to impose benefit charges or sixty (60) percent voter approved taxes, the plan and creation of the authority must be approved by an affirmative vote of sixty (60) percent of the voters within the boundaries of the authority voting on a ballot proposition as set forth in RCW 52.26.060. However, if the plan provides for alternative sources of revenue that become effective if the plan and creation of the authority is approved only by a majority vote, then the plan with alternative sources of revenue and creation of the authority may be approved by an affirmative vote of the majority of those voters. If the plan does not authorize the authority to impose benefit charges or sixty (60) percent voter approved taxes, the plan and creation of the authority must be approved by an affirmative vote of the majority of the voters within the boundaries of the authority voting on a ballot proposition as set forth in RCW 52.26.060. Except as provided in this section, all other voter approval requirements under law for the levying of property taxes or the imposition of benefit charges apply. Revenues from these taxes and benefit charges may be used only to implement the plan as set forth in this chapter.

RCW 52.26.060

Service plan - Submission to voters

The governing bodies of two or more adjacent fire protection jurisdictions, upon receipt of the regional fire protection service authority plan under RCW 52.26.040, may certify the plan to the ballot, including identification of the revenue options specified to fund the plan. The governing bodies of the fire protection jurisdictions may draft a ballot title, give notice as required by law for ballot measures, and perform other duties as required to put the plan before the voters of the proposed authority for their approval or rejection as a single ballot measure that both approves formation of the authority and approves the plan. Authorities may negotiate interlocal agreements necessary to implement the plan. The electorate is the voters voting within the boundaries of the proposed regional fire protection service authority. A simple majority of the total persons voting on the single ballot measure to approve the plan and establish the authority is required for approval. However, if the plan authorizes

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the authority to impose benefit charges or sixty (60) percent voter approved taxes, then the percentage of total persons voting on the single ballot measure to approve the plan and establish the authority is the same as in RCW 52.26.050. The authority must act in accordance with the general election laws of the state. The authority is liable for its proportionate share of the costs when the elections are held under RCW 29A.04.321 and 29A.04.330.

RCW 52.26.070

Service authority - Formation - Challenges

If the voters approve the plan, including creation of a regional fire protection service authority and imposition of taxes and benefit charges, if any, the authority is formed on the next January 1st or July 1st, whichever occurs first. The appropriate county election officials shall, within fifteen (15) days of the final certification of the election results, publish a notice in a newspaper or newspapers of general circulation in the authority declaring the authority formed. A party challenging the procedure or the formation of a voter-approved authority must file the challenge in writing by serving the prosecuting attorney of each county within, or partially within, the regional fire protection service authority and the attorney general within thirty days after the final certification of the election. Failure to challenge within that time forever bars further challenge of the authority's valid formation.

RCW 52.26.080

Organization and composition of governing board

1. The board shall adopt rules for the conduct of business. The board shall adopt bylaws to govern authority 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. Any other provisions the board finds necessary to include.
2. The governing board shall be determined by the plan and consist solely of elected officials.

RCW 52.26.090

Powers of governing board

1. The governing board of the authority is responsible for the execution of the voter-approved plan. Participating jurisdictions shall review the plan every ten (10) years. The board may:

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- a. Levy taxes and impose benefit charges as authorized in the plan and approved by authority voters;
 - b. Enter into agreements with federal, state, local, and regional entities and departments as necessary to accomplish authority purposes and protect the authority's investments;
 - c. Accept gifts, grants, or other contributions of funds that will support the purposes and programs of the authority;
 - d. Monitor and audit the progress and execution of fire protection and emergency service projects to protect the investment of the public and annually make public its findings;
 - e. Pay for services and enter into leases and contracts, including professional service contracts;
 - f. Hire, manage, and terminate employees; and
 - g. Exercise powers and perform duties as the board determines necessary to carry out the purposes, functions, and projects of the authority in accordance with Title 52 RCW if one (1) of the fire protection jurisdictions is a fire district, unless provided otherwise in the regional fire protection service authority plan, or in accordance with the statutes identified in the plan if none of the fire protection jurisdictions is a fire district.
2. An authority may enforce fire codes as provided under chapter 19.27 RCW.

RCW 52.26.100

Transfer of responsibilities and employees to authority — Civil service system

1. Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, all powers, duties, and functions of a participating fire protection jurisdiction pertaining to fire protection and emergency services shall be transferred to the regional fire protection service authority on its creation date.
2.
 - a. Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, and on the creation date of the regional fire protection service authority, all reports, documents, surveys, books, records, files, papers, or written material in the possession of the participating fire protection jurisdiction pertaining to fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties shall be delivered to the regional fire protection service authority; all real property and personal property including cabinets, furniture, office equipment, motor vehicles, and other tangible property employed by the participating fire protection jurisdiction in carrying out the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties shall be transferred to the regional fire protection service authority; and all funds, credits, or other assets held by the participating fire protection jurisdiction in connection with the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties shall be transferred and credited to the regional fire protection service authority.
 - b. Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, any appropriations made to the participating fire protection jurisdiction for carrying out the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties shall be transferred and credited to the regional fire protection service authority.

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- c. Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, whenever any question arises as to the transfer of any personnel, 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 fire protection jurisdiction shall make a determination as to the proper allocation.
3. Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, all rules and all pending business before the participating fire protection jurisdiction pertaining to the powers, functions, and duties transferred shall be continued and acted upon by the regional fire protection service authority, and all existing contracts and obligations shall remain in full force and shall be performed by the regional fire protection service authority.
4. The transfer of the powers, duties, functions, and personnel of the participating fire protection jurisdiction shall not affect the validity of any act performed before creation of the regional fire protection service authority.
5. If apportionments of budgeted funds are required because of the transfers, the treasurer for the authority shall certify the apportionments.
6. a. Subject to (c) of this subsection, all employees of the participating fire protection jurisdictions are transferred to the jurisdiction of the regional fire protection service authority on its creation date. Upon transfer, unless an agreement for different terms of transfer is reached between the collective bargaining representatives of the transferring employees and the participating fire protection jurisdictions, an employee is entitled to the employee rights, benefits, and privileges to which he or she would have been entitled as an employee of a participating fire protection jurisdiction, including rights to:
 - (i) Compensation at least equal to the level at the time of transfer;
 - (ii) Retirement, vacation, sick leave, and any other accrued benefit;
 - (iii) Promotion and service time accrual; and
 - (iv) The length or terms of probationary periods, including no requirement for an additional probationary period if one had been completed before the transfer date.
- b. If any or all of the participating fire protection jurisdictions provide for civil service in their fire departments, the collective bargaining representatives of the transferring employees and the participating fire protection jurisdictions must negotiate regarding the establishment of a civil service system within the authority. This subsection does not apply if none of the participating fire protection districts provide for civil service.
- c. Nothing contained in this section may be construed to alter any existing collective bargaining unit or the provisions of any existing collective bargaining agreement until the agreement has expired or until the bargaining unit has been modified as provided by law.

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RCW 52.26.110

Withdrawal, reannexation of territory

1. As provided in this section, a regional fire protection service authority may withdraw areas from its boundaries or reannex into the authority areas that previously had been withdrawn from the authority under this section.
2. a. The withdrawal of an area is authorized upon: (i) Adoption of a resolution by the board approving the withdrawal and finding that, in the opinion of the board, inclusion of this area within the regional fire protection service authority will result in a reduction of the authority's tax levy rate under the provisions of RCW 84.52.010; or (ii) adoption of a resolution by the city or town council approving the withdrawal, if the area is located within the city or town, or adoption of a resolution by the governing body of the fire protection district within which the area is located approving the withdrawal, if the area is located outside of a city or town, but within a fire protection district.
- b. A withdrawal under this section is effective at the end of the day on the thirty-first day of December in the year in which the resolution under (a) (i) or (ii) of this subsection is adopted, but for purposes of establishing boundaries for property tax purposes, the boundaries shall be established immediately upon the adoption of the resolution.
- c. The withdrawal of an area from the boundaries of an authority does not exempt any property therein from taxation for the purpose of paying the costs of redeeming any indebtedness of the authority existing at the time of withdrawal.
3. a. An area that has been withdrawn from the boundaries of a regional fire protection service authority under this section may be reannexed into the authority upon: (i) Adoption of a resolution by the board proposing the reannexation; and (ii) adoption of a resolution by the city or town council approving the reannexation, if the area is located within the city or town, or adoption of a resolution by the governing body of the fire protection district within which the area is located approving the reannexation, if the area is located outside of a city or town but within a fire protection district.
- b. A reannexation under this section shall be effective at the end of the day on the thirty-first day of December in the year in which the adoption of the resolution under (a)(ii) of this subsection occurs, but for purposes of establishing boundaries for property tax purposes, the boundaries shall be established immediately upon the adoption of the resolution.
- c. i. Referendum action on the proposed reannexation under this section may be taken by the voters of the area proposed to be reannexed if a petition calling for a referendum is filed with the city or town council, or governing body of the fire protection district, within a thirty-day period after the adoption of the resolution under (a)(ii) of this subsection, which petition has been signed by registered voters of the area proposed to be reannexed equal in number to ten percent of the total number of the registered voters residing in that area.
- ii. If a valid petition signed by the requisite number of registered voters has been so filed, the effect of the resolutions shall be held in abeyance and a ballot proposition to authorize the reannexation shall be submitted to the voters of the area at the next special election date specified in RCW 29A.04.330 that occurs forty-five or more days after the petitions have

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been validated. Approval of the ballot proposition authorizing the reannexation by a simple majority vote shall authorize the reannexation.

RCW 52.26.120

Dissolution of fire protection district – Election - Transfer of responsibilities

Any fire protection district within the authority may be dissolved by a majority vote of the registered electors of the district at an election conducted by the election officials of the county or counties in which the district is located in accordance with the general election laws of the state. The proceedings for dissolution may be initiated by the adoption of a resolution by the board. The dissolution of the district shall not cancel outstanding obligations of the district or of a local improvement district within the district, and the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the district was located may make annual levies against the lands within the district until the obligations of the districts are paid. All powers, duties, and functions of a dissolved fire protection jurisdiction within the authority boundaries, pertaining to providing fire protection services may be transferred, by resolution, to the regional fire protection service authority.

RCW 52.26.130

Debt - Interlocal contracts - General obligation bonds

1. An authority may incur general indebtedness for authority purposes, issue bonds, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness not to exceed an amount, together with any outstanding nonvoter approved general obligation debt, equal to three-fourths of one percent of the value of the taxable property within the authority. The maximum term of the obligations may not exceed twenty years. The obligations may pledge benefit charges and may pledge payments to an authority from the state, the federal government, or any fire protection jurisdiction under an interlocal contract. The interlocal contracts pledging revenues and taxes are binding for a term not to exceed twenty-five years, and taxes or other revenue pledged by an interlocal contract may not be eliminated or modified if it would impair the pledge of the contract.
2. An authority may also issue general obligation bonds for capital purposes not to exceed an amount, together with any outstanding general obligation debt, equal to one and one-half percent of the value of the taxable property within the authority. The authority may provide for the retirement of the bonds by excess property tax levies. The voters of the authority must approve a proposition authorizing the bonds and levies by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of those voting on the proposition at an election. At the election, the total number of persons voting must constitute not less than forty percent of the voters in the authority who voted at the last preceding general state election. The maximum term of the bonds may not exceed twenty-five years. Elections shall be held as provided in RCW 39.36.050.
3. Obligations of an authority shall be issued and sold in accordance with chapters 39.46 and 39.50 RCW, as applicable.

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RCW 52.26.140

Levy of taxes - Levies authorized by special election – Indebtedness - Definition

1. To carry out the purposes for which a regional fire protection service authority is created, as authorized in the plan and approved by the voters, the governing board of an authority may annually levy the following taxes:
 - a. An ad valorem tax on all taxable property located within the authority not to exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value;
 - b. An ad valorem tax on all property located within the authority not to exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value and which will not cause the combined levies to exceed the constitutional or statutory limitations. This levy, or any portion of this levy, may also be made when dollar rates of other taxing units are released by agreement with the other taxing units from their authorized levies; and
 - c. An ad valorem tax on all taxable property located within the authority not to exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value if the authority has at least one full-time, paid employee, or contracts with another municipal corporation for the services of at least one full-time, paid employee. This levy may be made only if it will not affect dollar rates which other taxing districts may lawfully claim nor cause the combined levies to exceed the constitutional or statutory limitations or both.
2. Levies in excess of the amounts provided in subsection (1) of this section or in excess of the aggregate dollar rate limitations or both may be made for any authority purpose when so authorized at a special election under RCW 84.52.052. Any such tax when levied must be certified to the proper county officials for the collection of the tax as for other general taxes. The taxes when collected shall be placed in the appropriate authority fund or funds as provided by law, and must be paid out on warrants of the auditor of the county in which all, or the largest portion of, the authority is located, upon authorization of the governing board of the authority.
3. Authorities may provide for the retirement of general indebtedness by excess property tax levies as set forth in RCW 52.26.130.
4. For purposes of this chapter, the term "value of the taxable property" has the same meaning as in RCW 39.36.015.

RCW 52.26.150

Levy of taxes - To be made by county or counties where authority is located

At the time of making general tax levies each year, the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which a regional fire protection service authority is located shall make the required levies for authority purposes against the real and personal property in the authority in accordance with the equalized valuations of the property for general tax purposes and as a part of the general taxes. The tax levies are part of the general tax roll and must be collected as a part of the general taxes against the property in the authority.

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RCW 52.26.160

Taxation of lands lying within authority and forest protection assessment area

In the event that lands lie within both a regional fire protection service authority and a forest protection assessment area they shall be taxed and assessed as follows:

1. If the lands are wholly unimproved, they are subject to forest protection assessments but not to authority levies;
2. If the lands are wholly improved, they are subject to authority levies but not to forest protection assessments; and
3. If the lands are partly improved and partly unimproved, they are subject both to authority levies and to forest protection assessments. However, upon request, accompanied by appropriate legal descriptions, the county assessor shall segregate any unimproved portions which each consist of twenty or more acres, and thereafter the unimproved portion or portions are subject only to forest protection assessments.

RCW 52.26.170

Collection of taxes

It is the duty of the county treasurer of the county in which the regional fire protection service authority created under this chapter is located to collect taxes authorized and levied under this chapter. However, when a regional fire protection service authority is located in more than one county, the county treasurer of each county in which the authority is located shall collect the regional fire protection service authority's taxes that are imposed on property located within the county and transfer these funds to the treasurer of the county in which the majority of the authority lies.

RCW 52.26.180

Benefit charges

1. The governing board of a regional fire protection service authority may by resolution, as authorized in the plan and approved by the voters, for authority purposes authorized by law, fix and impose a benefit charge on personal property and improvements to real property which are located within the authority on the date specified and which have received or will receive the benefits provided by the authority, to be paid by the owners of the properties. A benefit charge does not apply to personal property and improvements to real property owned or used by any recognized religious denomination or religious organization as, or including, a sanctuary or for purposes related to the bona fide religious ministries of the denomination or religious organization, including schools and educational facilities used for kindergarten, primary, or secondary educational purposes or for institutions of higher education and all grounds and buildings related thereto. 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

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institutions of higher education. The aggregate amount of these benefit charges in any one year may not exceed an amount equal to sixty percent of the operating budget for the year in which the benefit charge is to be collected. It is the duty of the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the regional fire protection service authority is located to make any necessary adjustments to assure compliance with this limitation and to immediately notify the governing board of an authority of any changes thereof.

2. A benefit charge imposed must be reasonably proportioned to the measurable benefits to property resulting from the services afforded by the authority. It is acceptable to apportion the benefit charge to the values of the properties as found by the county assessor or assessors modified generally in the proportion that fire insurance rates are reduced or entitled to be reduced as the result of providing the services. Any other method that reasonably apportions the benefit charges to the actual benefits resulting from the degree of protection, which may include but is not limited to the distance from regularly maintained fire protection equipment, the level of fire prevention services provided to the properties, or the need of the properties for specialized services, may be specified in the resolution and is subject to contest on the grounds of unreasonable or capricious action or action in excess of the measurable benefits to the property resulting from services afforded by the authority. The governing board of an authority may determine that certain properties or types or classes of properties are not receiving measurable benefits based on criteria they establish by resolution. A benefit charge authorized by this chapter is not applicable to the personal property or improvements to real property of any individual, corporation, partnership, firm, organization, or association maintaining a fire department and whose fire protection and training system has been accepted by a fire insurance underwriter maintaining a fire protection engineering and inspection service authorized by the state insurance commissioner to do business in this state, but the property may be protected by the authority under a contractual agreement.
3. For administrative purposes, the benefit charge imposed on any individual property may be compiled into a single charge, provided that the authority, upon request of the property owner, provide an itemized list of charges for each measurable benefit included in the charge.
4. For the purposes of this section and RCW 52.26.190 through 52.26.270, the following definitions apply:
 - a.
 - i. "Personal property" includes every form of tangible personal property including, but not limited to, all goods, chattels, stock in trade, estates, or crops.
 - ii. "Personal property" does not include any personal property used for farming, field crops, farm equipment, or livestock.
 - b. "Improvements to real property" does not include permanent growing crops, field improvements installed for the purpose of aiding the growth of permanent crops, or other field improvements normally not subject to damage by fire.

RCW 52.26.190

Benefit charges - Exemptions

All personal property not assessed and subjected to ad valorem taxation under Title 84 RCW, all property under contract or for which the regional fire protection service authority is receiving

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payment for as authorized by law, all property subject to chapter 54.28 RCW, and all property that is subject to a contract for services with an authority, is exempt from the benefit charge imposed under this chapter.

RCW 52.26.200

Benefit charges - Resolution - County assessor's duties

1. The resolution establishing benefit charges as specified in RCW 52.26.180 must specify, by legal geographical areas or other specific designations, the charge to apply to each property by location, type, or other designation, or other information that is necessary to the proper computation of the benefit charge to be charged to each property owner subject to the resolution.
2. The county assessor of each county in which the regional fire protection service authority is located shall determine and identify the personal properties and improvements to real property that are subject to a benefit charge in each authority and shall furnish and deliver to the county treasurer of that county a listing of the properties with information describing the location, legal description, and address of the person to whom the statement of benefit charges is to be mailed, the name of the owner, and the value of the property and improvements, together with the benefit charge to apply to each. These benefit charges must be certified to the county treasurer for collection in the same manner that is used for the collection of fire protection charges for forest lands protected by the department of natural resources under RCW 76.04.610 and the same penalties and provisions for collection apply.

RCW 52.26.210

Benefit charges - Administration and collection by county treasurer

Each regional fire protection service authority shall contract, prior to the imposition of a benefit charge, for the administration and collection of the benefit charge by each county treasurer, who shall deduct a percentage, as provided by contract to reimburse the county for expenses incurred by the county assessor and county treasurer in the administration of the resolution and this chapter. The county treasurer shall make distributions each year, as the charges are collected, in the amount of the benefit charges imposed on behalf of each authority, less the deduction provided for in the contract.

RCW 52.26.220

Benefit charges - Submission to voters - Renewal

1. Notwithstanding any other provision in this chapter to the contrary, any benefit charge authorized by this chapter is not effective unless a proposition to impose the benefit charge is approved by a sixty (60) percent majority of the voters of the regional fire protection service authority voting at a general election or at a special election called by the authority for that purpose, held within the authority. A ballot measure that contains an authorization to impose benefit charges and that is approved by the voters pursuant to RCW 52.26.060 meets the proposition approval requirement of this section. An election held under this section must be held not more than twelve (12) months prior to the date on which the first charge is to be assessed. A benefit charge approved at an election expires in six (6) years or fewer as authorized by the voters, unless subsequently reapproved by the voters.

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2. The ballot must be submitted so as to enable the voters favoring the authorization of a regional fire protection service authority benefit charge to vote "Yes" and those opposed to vote "No." The ballot question is as follows:

"Shall the regional fire protection service authority composed of (insert the participating fire protection jurisdictions) be authorized to impose benefit charges each year for (insert number of years not to exceed six (6)) years, not to exceed an amount equal to sixty (60) percent of its operating budget, and be prohibited from imposing an additional property tax under RCW 52.26.140(1)(c)?"

YES NO

2. "Authorities renewing the benefit charge may elect to use the following alternative ballot:

"Shall the regional fire protection service authority composed of (insert the participating fire protection jurisdictions) be authorized to continue voter-authorized benefit charges each year for (insert number of years not to exceed six (6)) years, not to exceed an amount equal to sixty (60) percent of its operating budget, and be prohibited from imposing an additional property tax under RCW 52.26.140(1)(c)?"

YES NO

RCW 52.26.230

Benefit charges - Establishment - Public hearings - Notice to property owners

1. Not fewer than ten (10) days nor more than six (6) months before the election at which the proposition to impose the benefit charge is submitted as provided in this chapter, the governing board of the regional fire protection service authority shall hold a public hearing specifically setting forth its proposal to impose benefit charges for the support of its legally authorized activities that will maintain or improve the services afforded in the authority. A report of the public hearing shall be filed with the county treasurer of each county in which the property is located and be available for public inspection.
2. Prior to November 15th of each year the governing board of the authority shall hold a public hearing to review and establish the regional fire protection service authority benefit charges for the subsequent year.
3. All resolutions imposing or changing the benefit charges must be filed with the county treasurer or treasurers of each county in which the property is located, together with the record of each public hearing, before November 30th immediately preceding the year in which the benefit charges are to

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be collected on behalf of the authority.

4. After the benefit charges have been established, the owners of the property subject to the charge must be notified of the amount of the charge.

RCW 52.26.240

Benefit charges - Limitation on imposition of property tax

A regional fire protection service authority that imposes a benefit charge under this chapter shall not impose all or part of the property tax authorized under RCW 52.26.140(1)(c).

RCW 52.26.250

Benefit charges - Complaints - Review board

After notice has been given to the property owners of the amount of the charge, the governing board of a regional fire protection service authority imposing a benefit charge under this chapter shall form a review board for at least a two-week period and shall, upon complaint in writing of an aggrieved party owning property in the authority, reduce the charge of a person who, in their opinion, has been charged too large a sum, to a sum or amount as they believe to be the true, fair, and just amount.

RCW 52.26.260

Benefit charges - Model resolution - Assistance by Washington fire commissioners association

The Washington Fire Commissioners Association, as soon as practicable, shall draft a model resolution to impose the regional fire protection service authority benefit charge authorized by this chapter and may provide assistance to authorities in the establishment of a program to develop benefit charges.

RCW 52.26.270

Benefit charges - Additional exemption

A person who is receiving the exemption contained in RCW 84.36.381 through 84.36.389 is exempt from any legal obligation to pay a portion of the benefit charge imposed under this chapter as follows:

1. A person who meets the income limitation contained in RCW 84.36.381(5)(a) and does not meet the income limitation contained in RCW 84.36.381(5)(b) (i) or (ii) is exempt from twenty-five percent of the charge;

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2. A person who meets the income limitation contained in RCW 84.36.381(5)(b)(i) is exempt from fifty percent of the charge; and
3. A person who meets the income limitation contained in RCW 84.36.381(5)(b)(ii) shall be exempt from seventy-five percent of the charge.

RCW 52.26.280

Civil service - When authorized or required

1. Subject to subsection (2) of this section, a regional fire protection service authority may, by resolution of its board, provide for civil service for its employees in the same manner, with the same powers, and with the same force and effect as provided by chapter 41.08 RCW for cities, towns, and municipalities, including restrictions against the discharge of an employee because of residence outside the limits of the regional fire protection service authority.
2. If an agreement is reached to provide for civil service under RCW 52.26.100(6), the regional fire protection service authority shall establish such a system as is required by the agreement.

RCW 52.26.290

Annexation of territory

Territory that is annexed to a participating jurisdiction is annexed to the authority as of the effective date of the annexation. The statutes regarding transfer of assets and employees do not apply to the participating jurisdictions in the annexation.

RCW 52.26.900

Captions not law - 2004 c 129

Captions used in this act are not any part of the law.

RCW 52.26.901

Severability - 2004 c 129

If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.

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Fire Authority Development Process

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Fire Authority Development Process

The first step in the process to determine if the regional fire authority (RFA) is right for you is to ask the following questions:

- Are we considering an RFA for the benefit of our citizens?
- Are we considering an RFA to gain efficiencies for the benefit of our citizens?
- Are we considering an RFA to improve the overall level of service, standards of cover, and enhance services for the benefit of our citizens?

If the answer to these simple questions is **yes**, then an RFA might be a strong consideration for your department. However, if you are considering an RFA simply to try to save money, or due to a funding issue; or, if you are considering an RFA to eliminate issues between fire departments (such as issues between cities and fire districts), then the RFA probably is not the answer for you. The RFA should only be used if it can be determined that combining fire departments, or subsets of fire departments, can truly benefit the citizens that are being served. If it is not about the citizens, then don't do it. If it is...proceed forward!!!

For those not familiar with the term RFA, or the concept, a regional fire protection authority (RFA) is a municipal corporation in Washington and a separate taxing district. Its boundaries are coextensive with those of the two or more fire protection jurisdictions (e.g. a fire district or districts and/or a city) that want to cooperate and form such an authority. The entity is created by a vote of the people. An RFA operates pursuant to a Plan, which is formulated by a Planning Committee and approved by the voters in the service area. The statute (Title 52) outlines broadly how the plan is formulated, what agencies to coordinate with and consult, and includes public input requirements. There is a detailed statutory provision dealing with the authorization of the RFA to establish a system of ambulance service, requiring procedures to ensure that the system does not compete with existing private

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ambulance services, unless first there is a finding of inadequacy of service. There have been similar “inadequacy” and “non-compete” provisions in city and county laws for many years. However, those provisions do not exist for fire districts, as they can lawfully establish ambulance services that compete with private ambulance services without running afoul of any law (or proving inadequacy), including the antitrust laws.

In the Plan, the RFA’s recommended sources of revenue should also be set forth, to include tax levies and benefit charges, if any. However, if the plan calls for imposition of any benefit charges or levying of any taxes that would need 60% voter approval, then the ballot measure to approve the Plan and create the RFA needs 60% voter approval. Otherwise, the measure needs only majority approval by the voters.

Therefore, if the decision is made by two (2) or more adjacent/contiguous fire department organizations that wish to explore the potential of combining their services for the benefit of their citizens, then the first step is to establish a Planning Committee. The Planning Committee, as stated previously, is responsible to develop the “Plan” for the RFA, which is the single most important component of the RFA as it establishes how the RFA will operate; how the RFA will be funded; and how the RFA will be governed and managed. Here are some key points related to the “Planning Committee”:

- Each governing body of the fire protection jurisdictions looking into the RFA shall appoint three (3) elected officials to the RFA Planning Committee. This can be a mix of Fire District Commissioners, City Council Members and Tribal Leaders depending upon the RFA being considered.

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- The RFA Planning Committee may elect officers and adopt rules and procedures at its first meeting. These should then be agreed upon in writing.
- The Planning Committee may dissolve itself at any time by a majority vote of the total membership of the Planning Committee. This would occur if the research into the RFA shows that the RFA is not the method of choice for the participating agencies.
- Any participating fire protection jurisdiction may withdraw upon thirty (30) calendar days written notice to the other jurisdictions.

The RFA Plan, developed by the Planning Committee (or by subcommittees as assigned by the Planning Committee) provides for the design, financing and development of fire protection and emergency services in the proposed RFA. The Plan:

- Shall create opportunities for public input in the development of the plan. This can be handled through public hearings, public meetings, and other such venues.
- Shall consider transport issues related to use of private ambulance companies, or potential transport by the RFA itself.
- May include land use planning and input from surrounding cities and districts.
- Shall deliver the final approved Plan to all of the governing bodies to initiate an election. The Plan, agreed upon by the Planning Committee, still requires the approval of the governing bodies of each entity in order to place the RFA on the ballot (i.e. individual City Councils and Fire District Commissioner Boards still have to approve the RFA Plan for it to move forward).
- If the RFA Plan is placed on the ballot, yet not approved through an election by citizens in the affected areas, the RFA Planning Committee may modify the Plan for resubmission to the voters.

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- If the RFA Plan fails three (3) times the RFA Planning Committee is dissolved (in other words, three (3) strikes and you're out!!!).

Funding for the RFA may include any tax or benefit charge that is available to a fire district:

- Fire levy (collection up to \$1.50 per \$1000 of assessed valuation, including the authority to run multi-year lid lifts).
- EMS levy
- Excess levy
- Benefit Charge
- Bonds for Capital Purchases

All funding mechanisms require a super majority (60% or greater), except the \$1.50/1000 of AV fire levy (ad valorem property taxes). The funding mechanism for the RFA is built directly into the RFA Plan. Thus, when the RFA is eventually placed before the voters at an agreed upon election, if the RFA Plan includes a funding mechanism that requires a simple majority (ad valorem taxes at up to \$1.50 per \$1000 of A/V) then the approval of the RFA Plan by the voters requires a simple majority (50% plus 1 voter). If the RFA Plan includes a funding mechanism that requires a super majority (60% or greater, such as via the Benefit Charge) then the approval of the RFA Plan by the voters requires a super majority.

The governing bodies of the fire protection jurisdictions may certify the Plan to the ballot once they receive the RFA Plan from the Planning Committee. The governing bodies of the fire protection jurisdictions draft a single ballot measure that both approves the formation of the authority (RFA), and approves the plan itself. Authorities may negotiate interlocal agreements necessary to implement the plan. The electorate is the citizens voting within the boundaries of the proposed regional fire protection service authority. In other words, all citizens in the proposed RFA who are registered to

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vote have the authority to vote on the RFA. It is the TOTAL of all who vote that determine the outcome of the RFA (in other words, the RFA does not need to pass in each individual jurisdiction...it is the combined vote from all participating jurisdictions which determines passage or failure). The RFA is liable for its proportionate share of the costs of the election if it passes. If it fails, each original governing entity must share the costs of the election based upon the formulas utilized for elections based on the number of registered voters in each area.

If the RFA passes at the ballot, the RFA is formed on the next January 1st or July 1st after voter approval. The county where the RFA has formed shall publish a notice declaring the RFA formed within 15 days of the certification of the election. Any challenge on the procedure or the formation of the RFA must take place within 30 days of the certification of the election to the County Prosecuting Attorney and Attorney General.

A key point to keep in mind is that due to the operations within each County around the State, if an RFA election takes place after August 1st of a given year, then the RFA will not be able to collect ad valorem taxes or issue benefit service charges in the upcoming year (i.e. if the ballot measure passes in mid-August or November of 2007, the RFA can not begin to collect funds as a municipal organization until January of 2009...not 2008). This is due to the fact that for County Finance and the Assessor's Office, August 1st is the cut off date for any entity to be formally in place for the collection of property taxation or benefit service charges in the following year. This key component must be kept in mind during the Planning Committee process as it might require that the RFA operate in its first year under contractual agreements with the old governance bodies (i.e. contracts with the Cities or Fire Districts) to collect funds and distribute these funds back to the RFA for its operations. Then, the following year, the RFA can operate as outlined under Title 52 for revenue. The statute provides that RFA Plans shall be reviewed, and updated as necessary, by the governing body, every ten years.

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Most of the typical list of powers usually provided to fire districts or cities are included for the RFA within Title 52, plus a sort of “catchall” provision saying the board may exercise powers and perform duties the board determines necessary to carry out the purposes, functions and projects of the authority in accordance with Title 52, if one of the fire protection jurisdictions is a fire district, or other statutes identified in the plan, if none are fire districts. Property rights and eminent domain powers would be “transferred” from the former fire districts and/or cities to the RFA. This makes it rather plain that a participating city or fire district is “out of business” completely, at least with respect to fire and EMS, when an RFA is created. All funds, assets, and personnel of the participating jurisdictions must be transferred over to the RFA. Detailed statutory changes make it clear that employees get transferred, with at least equal compensation to what they enjoyed at the time of transfer, no change in benefits, promotional opportunities, or probationary periods. If any of the participating jurisdictions had a civil service system, as city firefighters do (and a few fire districts, such as Lakewood) then the law requires that to be negotiated per RCW 41.56. Existing collective bargaining agreements must be honored until they expire, or have been modified or renegotiated by the RFA and the new Union(s).

The RFA can incur indebtedness and issue municipal bonds, up to three-fourths of one percent of the taxable property within the boundaries and not to exceed twenty years. Also, general obligation bonds are allowed to be issued, but not to exceed 1 ½ percent of the value of taxable property.

Frequently Asked Questions

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is an RFA?

An RFA is an abbreviation for Regional Fire Authority, which is the common term for what the state law refers to as a Regional Fire Protection Services Authority. The RFA law is a legal process to allow the voters of that area to consider fire service consolidation and regionalization of services to produce service efficiencies. The RFA encourages Fire Districts and Municipal Fire Departments to consider consolidation by treating both entities equally.

Where can I learn more about the law that allows the RFA?

Recent changes to state law now allow the process of forming an RFA, RCW 52.26 see [RFA RCWs](#) for the actual law.

Why combine services?

The purpose of the Regional Fire Authority is to provide the citizens with the best level of fire protection and emergency medical services with through combined resources. The cost of maintaining and improving fire protection and emergency medical services has increased substantially. Combining services may provide the most cost-effective service for our citizens through economies of scale, macro-service delivery strategies, removing duplication and erasing borders.

How big can an RFA be?

Basically, as big as you want it to be. As an example, the new Kitsap RFA with Bremerton Fire Department, Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue and South Kitsap Fire and Rescue would serve approximately 200,000 citizens, 300 square miles, \$16 billion in assessed value, operating budget of \$40 million, 200 career Firefighters/EMT and Paramedics and 100 active volunteers and support service personnel. The vision dictates that this new RFA must demonstrate value for the citizens now and into the future. Other current RFA's include Valley Regional Fire Authority (VRFA), which combined the cities of Auburn, Algona and Pacific, and Riverside RFA which combined Lewis County Fire Protection District #12 and the city of Centralia. Both of these RFAs are working very well within their plan and vision.

What is the Vision Statement for the Kitsap RFA?

The vision of the RFA is: *Provide the highest quality emergency fire and EMS service for our citizens with the available resources. The Strategy is: To develop a consolidation work plan and determine if it provides net efficiencies in fire and EMS service delivery between Bremerton Fire Department, Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue, and South Kitsap Fire and Rescue.*

How is the RFA set up?

The law allows the establishment of a RFA Planning Committee to explore the process of regionalization. The Planning Committee then creates the RFA Steering Committee to provide the information necessary for the Planning Committee to make sound decisions to the creation of the RFA. The ultimate authority for the creation of the RFA rests with the voters when the RFA Planning Committee forwards its recommendations and a ballot measure is placed before the voters.

Who are the members of the committees?

The members of the RFA Planning Committee for any planning process include three (3) members from each participating agency. Thus, if you were looking to combine two (2) cities and two (2) fire

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districts, the Planning Committee would be comprised of twelve (12) members (6- City Council members representing the 2 cities, and 6- Commissioners representing the 2 fire districts).

When and where are the meetings held?

The RFA Planning Committee establishes meetings on a regular basis at an established time and location (which can rotate as deemed proper by the Planning Committee). The purpose of these meetings is to gather information for the development of the Plan. These should be open public meetings to allow for public input, as well as their education on the RFA concept.

How the work is accomplished and is there a time line?

The process of developing the RFA work plan will be for the Steering Committee to develop strategic statements for all of the project task items and once approved by the Planning Committee, then organize the work and produce a recommendation in a timely manner for consideration by the Planning Committee.

How will the RFA be funded?

The funding options for the Regional Fire Authority are the same as those available for the Fire Districts. Those options include property tax funded fire levies, EMS levies, bonds, excess levies. Benefit service charges are considered a fee for service and are permitted in lieu of the last fifty cents of property tax funded fire levy revenue. Finally, non-tax revenue, such as transport fees, contracts and other assessments are available as possible funding sources. Any funding mechanism must be approved by the voters by the same majority that the fire district measures required.

When the RFA is approved by the voters, what happens to existing career and volunteer personnel?

All personnel (career and volunteer) from all involved agencies would be transferred to the new department and retain their status through new agreements. Some member's assignments may change to support emergency service delivery improvements. The key to a successful transition is to involve Labor early in the process, and ensure that wages, hours and working conditions are negotiated as per RCW 41.56.

Is it mandatory for the Labor Unions to combine when an RFA is formed which covers two or more organized labor groups?

No it is not. However, it is strongly suggested that Labor be involved from the beginning when contemplating and developing an RFA. Their input and support will be extremely important in the successful implementation of an RFA. Additionally, it is strongly suggested to work together with Labor under the auspices of RCW 41.56 related to collective bargaining to ensure that all members are handled fairly with regards to wages, hours and working conditions. While different labor groups may work under different collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) for a short period of time during the inception of an RFA, it is strongly suggested that a new CBA be fairly negotiated and implemented by both parties as soon as is practical.

Does the law allow additional fire districts or municipalities to join the RFA after it has been formed? Can two or more RFA's join together or merge?

No. Under current law, there is nothing which allows for any additional entities (fire districts or municipalities) to formally join an RFA, except under a contract for service or contractual consolidation. RFAs are not currently allowed per legal statute to merge or annex areas, or have cities annex into them once the RFA has been formed.

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When a City annexes into a Fire District, the City's property tax levy capacity increases from \$3.375 per \$1000 of assessed valuation to \$3.60 per \$1000 of assessed valuation, less the amount the Fire District collects (either \$1.50 or \$1.00) and any funds collected by a Library District (up to \$0.50). Does the same thing happen when a City becomes part of an RFA?

No. The statute does not allow for the same benefit to a City annexing into a Fire District (the increase in property tax levy availability) as when a City becomes part of an RFA.

What is the impact of LEOFF 1 liabilities on parties considering formation of a Regional Fire Authority (RFA)?

The obligation for LEOFF 1 liabilities (especially for retired members) would succeed to the surviving entity just as if that new entity had incurred the obligation in the first place (much like a "successor employer" succeeding to the obligations of its predecessor under collective bargaining agreements). This is true whether the combination were a fire district merger or formation of an RFA. The surviving entity (an RFA in this circumstance) would be responsible for all LEOFF 1 liability previously incurred by the former fire agencies (i.e. former fire districts or municipalities now involved with the RFA).

Can the governing body members of a regional fire authority (RFA) formed under chapter 52.26 RCW be compensated for their services under the existing laws, much like fire district commissioners are compensated under RCW 52.14.010?

The answer is yes. While not expressly stated within RCW 52.26, the opinion of Legal Counsel is that Governing Bodies may indeed be compensated for their attendance at meetings much like that of Fire District Commissioners. This provision should be addressed within the RFA Plan. Under the authority of the Plan, and applicable statutes, the governing body should adopt its governing rules and policies. One of those rules or policies could include a rule or policy establishing the compensation policy of the RFA for board services. It makes most sense for the compensation policy to be in accord with the language of RCW 52.14.010, which currently provides compensation of \$90 per day or portion thereof, whenever a board holds a meeting or a member otherwise provides authorized services.

Implementation Matrix

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Implementation Matrix

- I. Each Governing Body interested must make the decision to research the possibility of an RFA with contiguous/adjacent neighboring fire departments. This can be a full fire organization RFA, or a subset (i.e. Training RFA, Special Operations RFA, etc.).
- II. The Governing Bodies send letters to each other indicating their desire to study the possibility of forming an RFA.
- III. The Governing Bodies must appoint three (3) members each to form a “Planning Committee” (i.e. 3-each elected officials from any involved Fire District or Municipal/City Department).
- IV. The Planning Committee meets and establishes their rules of operation.
 - Frequency of meetings
 - Chair of Planning Committee (if desired)
 - Use of subcommittees
 - Time frame for final report
- V. The Planning Committee must identify the following:
 - The vision of the RFA.
 - The services to be provided by the RFA.
 - What the Governing Body of the RFA will be composed of (this is left totally up to the Planning Committee as to membership (i.e. a mix of City Council members, Fire District Commissioners, or citizens elected or appointed at large); the number of members on the new Governing Body (the statute is silent on this, so it is totally up to the Planning Committee); and length of time each member will serve on the new governing board.

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- The funding mechanism to be utilized by the RFA (i.e. ad valorem taxes, benefit charges, excess levy, EMS Levy, etc.).
 - The level of service/standards of cover to be utilized by the RFA.
 - The makeup of the Administrative Team.
 - The extent that Labor will be involved in the planning process (it is strongly suggested they be intimately involved throughout the process).
 - The methodology to determine how different Labor groups will be combined within the RFA, potentially under a newly negotiated collective bargaining agreement (CBA), or under old CBAs for a short period of time until a new CBA can be negotiated.
- VI. The Planning Committee finalizes the RFA Plan and adopts it by majority of the Committee.
- VII. The RFA Plan is sent to the individual Governing Bodies. Each Governing Body must approve the Plan for the RFA to continue forward.
- VIII. Once approved by the Governing Bodies, the Planning Committee develops ballot language to place the RFA before the voters in all areas affected by the RFA.
- IX. The individual Governing Bodies must approve the ballot language and then must place it on the same ballot within their individual jurisdictions.
- X. If the RFA Plan includes a funding mechanism for ad valorem property taxes (up to \$1.50 per \$1000 of A/V), then a simple majority (50% plus 1) is required for passage. If the RFA Plan includes an excess levy or benefit charge for operations, then a 60% super majority is required (plus a 40% validation requirement if the excess levy is utilized for funding).
- XI. If the RFA Plan is passed by the electorate, then the RFA goes into effect on the following January 1st or July 1st following the election (NOTE: the RFA Plan does not need to pass in all individual areas, the vote is a combined total of all voting).

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XII. If the RFA Plan fails at the ballot box, then the RFA Plan is returned to the Planning Committee for further action. This action can include:

- Retooling of the Plan for possible resubmission to the electorate.
- Placing the same Plan before the electorate at a later date after additional public outreach.
- Deciding that the RFA is simply not the thing to do at this time.

The RFA Plan can be voted on three (3) times before the Planning Committee has to formally be dissolved.

XIII. The RFA begins operation on January 1st or July 1st following the election. If the RFA vote takes place after August 1st of a given year, then the RFA can not legally collect ad valorem taxes or a benefit charge until the year following the formation of the RFA. If the election is held prior to August 1st, then the RFA can collect taxes and/or the benefit charge the upcoming year. In situations wherein taxes or the benefit charge can not be collected, the RFA should contract back with the original participating jurisdictions (i.e. cities and fire districts) to have them collect funds and distribute them to the RFA via a contractual agreement for the first year of the RFA. Thereafter, the RFA will collect revenues on its own.

Sample Resolutions and Other Miscellaneous Information

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Agreement to Cover Time Period between Election and RFAs Ability to Collect Revenues

INTERLOCAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT FOR FINANCING OF REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY DURING 2008

THIS AGREEMENT is made by and between the City of Centralia (hereinafter "City") and Lewis County Fire Protection District No. 12 (hereinafter "District"), both of which are municipal corporations in the State of Washington, pursuant to RCW 39.34.030, a part of the Interlocal Cooperation Act, for the purpose of providing secure financing for the Regional Fire Protection Authority (hereinafter "RFPSA"), which will serve both jurisdictions' service areas.

WHEREAS, for a period of time the City and the District have operated as one consolidated fire department pursuant to Chapter 39.34 of the Revised Code of Washington; and

WHEREAS, the consolidation of the two fire departments has been successful; and

WHEREAS, therefore the governing bodies of both municipal corporations have deemed it to be in the best interest of both jurisdictions to form an RFPSA, effective January 1, 2008, under the authority of Chapter 52.26 of the Revised Code of Washington, and the parties placed such a ballot proposition before the appropriate voters in the November 2007 general election which was approved; and

WHEREAS, the voter approved proposition included a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Plan that contemplated financing the RFPSA in 2008 through, in part, a regular property tax levy approved by the governing body of the RFPSA, to be collected in 2008; and

WHEREAS, these parties have now learned that such an RFPSA would be unable to levy such a tax to be collected in 2008, due to the provisions of RCW 84.09.030, which would have required such an RFPSA to be formed no later than October 1, 2007, in order to levy such a 2007 regular property tax, to be collected in 2008; and

WHEREAS, these parties desire to provide secure property tax funding for the RFPSA to provide service commencing on January 1, 2008.

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS NOW HEREBY AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Plan. The parties are committed to implementation of the Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Plan and to formation of the RFPSA as proposed which shall commence service effective January 1, 2008.

Section 2. Interim Financing. In as much as the RFPSA will require secure property tax funding commencing on January 1, 2008, the parties recognize that it is imperative to provide the RFPSA with interim financing until such time as the RFPSA begins to receive property tax revenue in 2009, resulting from a levy imposed by the governing body of the RFPSA. The primary purpose of this agreement is to provide that interim financing.

Section 3. 2007 District Taxes. The parties agree that all District property taxes levied in 2007, that are collected in 2008, or thereafter, shall be paid to the RFPSA, or to its benefit, as soon after collection as feasible, but no later than July 10, 2008 for collections received through June 30, 2008

Regional Fire Authority Implementation Guide

and no later than January 10, 2009 for collections received through December 31, 2008. All other property tax revenues or receipts of the District, including delinquent taxes, shall be and remain the property of the District. All District property tax collections during 2008 shall be transferred to the RFPFA in recognition that the District has budget authority for 2007 taxes collected during 2008 and the District taxing authority for tax levies will be with the RFPFA for 2008 for said taxes collected in 2009. All other property tax revenues or receipts of the District, including delinquent taxes, shall be and remain the property of the District.

Section 4. 2007 City Taxes. The parties agree that all City property taxes levied in 2007, pursuant to any emergency medical services (EMS) levy imposed pursuant to RCW 84.52.069, that are collected in 2008, or thereafter, shall be paid to the RFPFA, or to its benefit, within 5 working days after receipt from Lewis County. Additionally, the City agrees that, with respect to the regular property taxes levied in 2007 by the City which is hereby defined to mean, and limited to \$1.50 per thousand of assessed valuation of property within the City of Centralia, that are collected in 2008, or thereafter, shall be paid to the RFPFA, or to its benefit, within 5 working days after receipt from Lewis County. All other property tax revenues or receipts of the City, including delinquent taxes, shall be and remain the property of the City. All City fire property tax collections during 2008 shall be transferred to the RFPFA in recognition that the City has budget authority for 2007 taxes collected during 2008 and the City taxing authority for tax levies will be with the RFPFA for 2008 for said taxes collected in 2009.

Section 5. EMS Levy Receipts. The RFPFA agrees to comply with City of Centralia Ordinance 2076, where 15% of the EMS Levy collected is required to be set aside for the sole purpose of the purchasing of EMS capital equipment.

Section 6. Loan. In addition, the City and the District agree that, during at least the first five months of 2008, there will be insufficient property tax revenues transferred to the RFPFA pursuant to the provisions of Sections 3 and 4 of this agreement for the RFPFA to operate the joint fire department for the citizens and residents of the City and the District. Therefore, the parties agree, if necessary, to jointly make, or arrange for, through all short-term borrowing means available to these municipal corporations, or otherwise in accordance with law, a loan to the RFPFA to provide sufficient funds to operate the RFPFA until such property tax revenue can be made available to the RFPFA in 2008. Such loaned funds will be repaid to the respective parties by the RFPFA as agreed upon.

Section 7. Filing. A copy of this interlocal agreement shall be filed with the financial agents for both parties and with the county auditor.

Section 8. Prior Agreements. All provisions of prior interlocal agreements between these parties shall remain in full force and effect, unless they conflict directly with any provision hereof.

Section 9. Notices. All notices, requests, demands, and other communications required by this agreement shall be in writing and shall be deemed to have been given at the time of delivery if personally delivered or at the time of mailing if mailed by first class, postage prepaid and addressed to the party at its address as stated in this agreement or at such address as any party may designate at any time in writing.

Section 10. Severability. If any provision of this agreement or its application is held invalid, then the remainder of the agreement or the application of the remainder of the agreement shall not be affected.

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Section 11. Waiver. No waiver of any provision of this agreement shall be valid unless it is in writing and signed by the person or party against whom charged.

Section 12. Applicable Law. This agreement shall be subject to and governed by the laws of the State of Washington and any applicable federal laws.

Section 13. Modification. This agreement represents the entire agreement between the parties. No change, termination, or attempted waiver of any of the provisions of this agreement shall be binding on either of the parties unless executed in writing by authorized representatives of each of the parties. This agreement shall not be modified or otherwise affected by the course of dealing between the parties.

Section 14. Third Party Beneficiary. This agreement is entered into for the benefit of the parties to this agreement only and shall confer no benefits, express or implied, on any third persons or parties, except for the Regional Fire Protection Service Authority.

Section 15. Dispute Resolution. The parties may resolve any dispute arising from this agreement through any dispute resolution process, including but not limited to mediation and arbitration, provided that the parties may pursue any other remedies available to them, including those available at law or in equity.

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LEWIS COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION
DISTRICT 12

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

ADDRESS: _____

ATTEST:

District Secretary

THE CITY OF CENTRALIA

City Manager

ADDRESS: _____

ATTEST:

City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

City Attorney

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**Resolution for Ballot Measure creating RFA with Centralia and Lewis
County #12**

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY CENTRALIA,
WASHINGTON, STATING THE CITY COUNCIL'S SUPPORT FOR THE
PROPOSITION ON THE NOVEMBER 6, 2007, BALLOT WHICH, IF
APPROVED, WOULD CREATE AND ESTABLISH A REGIONAL FIRE
PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY, ENCOMPASSING THE AREA
OF THE CITY OF CENTRALIA AND LEWIS COUNTY FIRE
PROTECTION DISTRICT #12**

WHEREAS, over the past few years, local municipalities have experienced increased demands for fire and emergency medical services; and

WHEREAS, the result of these demands create a challenging task to provide an adequate level of municipal services for its citizens; and

WHEREAS, this consolidation of resources, through the establishment of a regional fire protection service authority, provides a mechanism for the participating agencies to maximize their abilities to provide fire protection services; and

WHEREAS, state law was recently amended to increase the advantages of municipalities and other governmental entities to join together to form a regional fire protection service authority, whereby their services would be consolidated and the participating jurisdictions would benefit from increased efficiencies; and

WHEREAS, in order to provide the most effective fire protection services, the City of Centralia and Lewis County Fire Protection District #12 established the Joint Board on Fire and Life Safety, which authorized the establishment of a Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee to evaluate regional fire protection needs and the parameters of the Regional Fire Protection Service Authority (the "Authority"); and

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WHEREAS, the Regional Fire Protection Authority Planning Committee developed its Plan for the “Authority”, copies of which are on file with the City Clerk for the City of Centralia and Board Secretary for Lewis County Fire Protection District #12; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with said Plan and with chapter 52.26 RCW, it is appropriate to place before the voters of the proposed “Authority” a proposition for the creation of the Regional Fire Protection Service Authority and the approval of the Plan, all in accordance with state law; and

WHEREAS, it is the City Council’s position to endorse and support that ballot measure expressed at a meeting at which members of the public are given opportunity to voice opposing views pursuant to RCW 42.17.130; and

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CENTRALIA, WASHINGTON, HEREBY RESOLVES as follows:

Section 1. FINDINGS AND DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSITION.

The City Council of the City of Centralia, Washington, hereby finds that it is in the best interests of the City to submit to the qualified electors of the City, at the general election to be held on November 6, 2007, a proposition regarding the creation of the Regional Fire Protection Service Authority (the “Authority”), pursuant to chapter 52.26 RCW, and the approval of the Plan for the Authority. If approved by the voters in accordance with RCW 52.26.060, this proposition would: (1) create a regional fire protection service authority (the “Authority”), as defined in RCW 52.26.020, whose boundaries are coextensive with Lewis County Fire Protection District #12; and (2) approve the “Plan” prepared by the Regional Fire Protection Authority Planning Committee. The governing body of the “Authority” shall have such rights to modify the details of the “Plan” from time to time as provided by law and the provisions of the “Plan”.

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Section 2. BALLOT TITLE AND PROPOSITION

The Director of Records and Elections of Lewis County, Washington, as ex officio supervisor

of t	PROPOSITION _____	ral
elec	Lewis County, Washington	
prej	CREATION OF REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES AUTHORITY	CW
29A	The Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Planning Committee has submitted to the City of Centralia and Lewis County Fire Protection District #12 a Regional Fire Service Protection Authority Plan to create and fund a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority under RCW 52.26. If this Plan is approved, it will create a regional authority for fire protection and emergency medical services funded by a regular property tax, not to exceed \$1.50 per one thousand dollars of assessed value, and an existing City of Centralia Emergency Medical Services levy.	
Sec		
For		
RCW	Should the Plan for a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority be approved?	m the
Dir	YES..... <input type="checkbox"/>	
	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Sec		

The City Clerk, or his/her designee, is hereby authorized and directed, no later than August 14, 2007, to provide the County Auditor a certified copy of this resolution and to perform such other duties as are necessary or required by law to the end that the proposition described in this resolution appear on the ballot at the November 6, 2007 election. All actions taken prior to the effective date of this resolution and in furtherance of this objective are hereby ratified and confirmed.

Section 5. IMPLEMENTATION

The City Manager is authorized to implement such administrative procedures as may be necessary to carry out the directives of this legislation, including modifying the text of the "Plan" and the text of the Ballot Measure and any other text, language and/or descriptions relative thereto.

Section 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

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ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Centralia, Washington and executed by its Mayor at a regularly scheduled meeting thereof this ____ day of _____, 2007.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

City Attorney

**Final Approved Ballot Language for Creation of Centralia/Lewis #12
Regional Fire Authority**

PROPOSITION _____

Lewis County, Washington

**APPROVAL OF PLAN FOR CREATION OF REGIONAL FIRE
PROTECTION SERVICES AUTHORITY**

The Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Planning Committee has submitted to the City of Centralia and Lewis County Fire Protection District #12 a Regional Fire Service Protection Authority Plan to create and fund a Regional Fire Protection Service

Authority under RCW 52.26. If this Plan is approved, it will create a regional authority for fire protection and emergency medical services funded in 2008 by a regular property tax, not to exceed \$1.50 per one thousand dollars of assessed value, and an existing City of Centralia Emergency Medical Services levy.

Should the Plan for a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority be approved?

YES

NO

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Kitsap Regional Fire Authority Vision

Provide the highest quality emergency fire and EMS service for our citizens with the available resources

Strategy:

To develop a consolidation work plan and determine if it provides net efficiencies in fire and EMS service delivery between Bremerton Fire Department, Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue, and South Kitsap Fire and Rescue.

REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PLANNING COMMITTEE

RULES & OPERATING PROCEDURES

RULE 1 - MEETINGS

1. **Regular Meetings:** The Planning Committee shall schedule to meet regularly on the first and third Tuesday from 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. at the Kitsap Readiness Center. The Chair may cancel a meeting if there is no business to come before the Planning Committee. When only one (1) meeting is required in the month, the first Tuesday shall be utilized as the regular meeting day when practical.
2. **Quorum:** A quorum of the Planning Committee is a simple majority of member agencies. Each representative of a member agency who is present at the meeting shall be entitled to cast one (1) vote. However, no vote/action shall be taken by the Planning Committee unless at least two (2) members from each participating jurisdiction are present at a meeting. Actions shall be affirmed by a majority vote.
3. **Open Public Meetings Act:** All meetings shall be conducted in conformity with the Open Public Meetings Act (RCW 42.30).
4. **Appearance of Fairness/Conflict of Interest:** In all its dealings, the Committee and its individual members shall be governed by RCW 42.36 (Appearance of Fairness Doctrine); RCW 42.20 (Misconduct of Public Officers) and RCW 42.52 (Ethics in Public Service)

RULE 2 - RESIDING OFFICER DUTIES

1. **Conduct of Meeting:** The presiding officer at all meetings of the Planning Committee will be the Chair of the Planning Committee, or in the absence of the Chair, the First Vice Chair or in the absence of the First Vice-Chair, the Second Vice-Chair, shall conduct the business and deliberations of the Planning Committee under these rules.

The Chair shall:

- a. Preserve order and decorum at the Planning Committee at all times;
- b. Observe and enforce all rules adopted by the Planning Committee;
- c. Decide all questions on order, in accordance with these rules, subject to a challenge;

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- d. Recognize members of the Committee in the order in which they request the floor;
 - e. The presiding officer, as a member of the Committee, shall have only those rights, and shall be governed in all matters and issues by the same rules and restrictions as other Committee Members.
2. **Other Committees:** The Chair shall make committee assignments, subject to approval of the Planning Committee. To the degree possible, assignments will be consistent with special skills, interests and time constraints
3. **Chair and Vice Chairs:** The Chair, First Vice-Chair and Second Vice-Chair shall be elected for a one-year term (January thru December) by a majority of the Committee Members at the start of the first meeting of each year, or at such time as necessary due to a vacancy.
4. **Executive Committee:** The Chair and Vice-Chairs shall serve as the Executive Committee for the Planning Committee and is authorized to act on behalf of the Planning Committee in between meetings only as authorized by the Planning Committee.

RULE 3 - REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETINGS - ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. **Regular Committee Meeting Agenda's:** The Committee Meeting shall meet at the Kitsap Readiness Center, unless a different location is so designated, at such other day and time as designated by the Planning Committee.

The Planning Committee Meeting agenda shall consist of the following items with the sequence to be determined by the Committee Chair:

- a. Call to Order
- b. Approval of the Minutes
- c. General Business
- d. Committee Member Reports
- e. Citizen Comments
- f. Other business

RULE 4 - DEBATES

1. **Interruption:** No member, including the Committee Chair, shall interrupt or argue with any other member while such member has the floor, except as otherwise provided in these rules.
2. **Courtesy:** All speakers, including Committee members, during comments, discussion or debate of any issue, shall address their comments to the Chair with courtesy and proper deportment. Comments shall not contain personalities, derogatory remarks or insinuations toward any member of the Committee, Staff and Public, but shall be confined to facts that are germane and relevant to the issue.
3. **Transgression:** Upon transgression of these rules, the Chair shall call such person to order, in which case that person shall be silent except to continue in order. If the Chair transgresses these rules, or fails to call a transgressor to order, any other member of the Committee may, under a point of order, call the transgressor to order.

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4. Challenge to Ruling: Any member of the Committee shall have the right to challenge any action or ruling of the Chair, or member, as the case may be, in which case the decision of the majority of the members of the Committee present, including the Committee Chair shall govern.

RULE 5 - PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Procedure Guide: Robert's Rules of Order shall be used as a guide to govern the conduct of business of the Planning Committee.

RULE 6 - MISCELLANEOUS

1. Dissolution: The Planning Committee may dissolve itself at any time by a majority vote of the total membership of the Planning Committee. Any participating fire protection jurisdiction may withdraw upon thirty (30) calendar days' written notice to the other jurisdictions. RCW 52.26.030

2. Amendments to Rules & Procedures: The Planning Committee may make amendments to these rules with approval of the Planning Committee.

3. Prepare Minutes: Subsequent to each meeting, an individual shall be assigned to prepare brief and concise minutes of all Committee meetings and submit the same to the Committee for approval. Such minutes shall contain an accurate accounting of official Committee business.

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Kitsap RFA Work Plan

Timelines

	Start:	Finalize:
A-D	October 2007	December 2007 (Completed)
E	December 2007	May 2008
F	May 2008	January 2009
G	January 2009	November 2009
H	November 2009	
I	January 2010	

Total Time: 26 Months

Process for forming the RFA work plan

A. RFA Steering Committee (RFASC) established

- Fire Chiefs recommend five members from their jurisdiction
- RFAPC approves the make-up of the RFASC
- Chair and Vice-Chair for the RFASC are elected by RFASC members
- RFAPC approves the Chair and Vice-Chair
- Secretary for the RFASC is appointed by RFASC Chair
- RFAPC approves the appointment of the Secretary
- RFASC rules, process and purpose are established by RFASC
- RFAPC approves the RFASC rules
- RFASC Meeting Times and dates are set by the RFASC

B. Vision Development

- RFAPC provides the RFASC with elements of their vision
- RFASC establishes a consensus draft vision statement
- RFAPC formally adopts the vision statement and considers joint resolution

C. Communications Plan Developed

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- RFASC develops internal and external communications plan
- RFAPC approves internal and external communications plan
- RFASC implements internal and external communications plan

D. Financial Plan for Work Plan Development

- RFASC develops financial plan
- RFAPC approves financial plan
- RFASC manages financial plan

E. Project Task List process established

1. RFASC develops project task list for work plan
2. RFAPC approves project task list for work plan
3. RFASC establishes strategic statement for each category
4. RFAPC approves strategic statement for each category
5. RFASC establishes sub-committee and lead for each Project Task
6. RFAPC approves sub-committee and lead for each Project Task
7. RFASC establishes timelines for each Project Task sub-committee
8. RFAPC approves timelines for each Project Task sub-committee

F. Work plan finalized

- RFASC compiles comprehensive report on RFA Work Plan
- RFAPC considers approval of comprehensive report on RFA Work Plan
- RFAPC considers joint resolution to approve RFA work plan by all elected boards

G. Election Plan Developed

- RFASC develops comprehensive election information plan
- RFAPC considers approval of comprehensive election information plan
- RFASC implements approved election information plan

H. Election Held

I. Kitsap RFA Plan Implemented

Approved Project Tasks Items (Per E2 above)

1. Name of the New Organization
2. Governing Board
3. Revenue and Expenses

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4. Legal Considerations
5. ORG Chart
 - a. Operations
 - b. Admin
 - c. Fire Prevention
 - d. Training
 - e. EMS
 - f. Clerical support
 - g. Facilities, Vehicles and Supply
 - h. Financial
 - i. Human Resources
 - j. Planning/Accreditation
6. Volunteer Members
7. Collective Bargaining Agreements
8. Standard of Response Coverage
 - a. Strategic staffing plan
 - b. Strategic facilities plan
 - c. Strategic services plan
9. Future Expansion of the RFA
10. Information/ Election Strategy

Kitsap Regional Fire Authority Communications Plan

Prepared For:

Kitsap RFA Planning Committee

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Purpose of this Document

Texts on organizational communications tend to first examine basics concepts such as "communications", "sender", "receivers", "encoders", etc. They go on to examine aspects of communications, e.g., downward, upward, body, verbal, written, formal and informal, interpersonal and group, etc. Some texts include various means to analyze effectiveness of communications. Some writers include public relations and media relations in organizational communications.

This document is geared to provide practical suggestions for fire service leaders and managers to ensure sufficient communications within their departments and with external stakeholders. Public relations and media relations are outside the range of this document. Communications is one of those topics that tend to leave people feeling somewhat confused or sometimes bored. People get confused because communications is such a broad topic and it seems to somehow relate to everything. People who get bored assume that they've been communicating since childhood so why bring up the topic of communications. Consequently, it may be most useful in this document to start with common pitfalls in communications and then provide a range of items that can be used to enhance communications.

Note that many organizations take a deliberate, formal approach to ensuring sound communications, (both internal and external) by developing a communications plan.

Common Causes of Problems in Internal Communications

1. **If I know it, then everyone must know it.**
Perhaps the most common communications problem is managements' (leaders' and managers') assumption that because they are aware of some piece of information, than everyone else is, too. Usually staff isn't aware unless management makes a deliberate attempt to carefully convey information.

2. **We hate bureaucracy -- we're "lean and mean."**
When organizations are just getting started, their leaders can often prize themselves on not being

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burdened with what seems as bureaucratic overhead, that is, as extensive written policies and procedures. Writing something down can be seen as a sign of bureaucracy and to be avoided. As the organization grows, it needs more communications and feedback to remain healthy, but this communication isn't valued. As a result, increasing confusion ensues -- unless management matures and realizes the need for increased, reliable communications.

3. I told everyone, or some people, or ...?

Another frequent problem is managements' not really valuing communications or assuming that it just happens. So they're not aware of what they told to whom -- even when they intended for everyone to know the information.

4. Did you hear what I meant for you to hear?

With today's increasingly diverse workforce, it's easy to believe you've conveyed information to someone, but you aren't aware that they interpreted you differently than you intended. Unfortunately, you won't be aware of this problem until a major problem or issue arises out of the confusion.

5. Our problems are too big to have to listen to each other!

Particularly when personnel are tired or under stress, it's easy to do what's urgent rather than what's important. So people misunderstand others' points or understand their intentions. This problem usually gets discovered too late, too.

6. So what's to talk about?

Lastly, communications problems can arise when inexperienced management interprets its job to be solving problems and if they're aren't any problems/crises, then there's nothing that needs to be communicated.

7. There's data and there's information.

As organizations grow, their management tends to focus on matters of efficiency. They often generate systems that produce substantial amount of data -- raw information that doesn't seem to really be important.

8. If I need your opinion, I'll tell it to you.

Lastly, communication problems can arise when management simply sees no value whatsoever in communicating with subordinates, believing subordinates should shut up and do their jobs.

Key Principles to Effective Internal Organizational Communications

1. Unless management comprehends and fully supports the premise that organizations must have high degrees of communications (like people needing lots of water), the organization will remain stilted. Too often, management learns the need for communication by having to respond to the lack of it.
2. Effective internal communications start with effective skills in communications, including basic skills in listening, speaking, questioning and sharing feedback. These can developed with some concerted review and practice. Perhaps the most important outcome from these skills is conveying that you value hearing from others and their hearing from you.
3. Sound meeting management skills go a long way toward ensuring effective communications, too.

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4. A key ingredient to developing effective communications in any organization is each person taking responsibility to assert when they don't understand a communication or to suggest when and how someone could communicate more effectively.

Basic Structures/Policies to Support Effective Internal Communications

This communication can be looked at as communications downward and upward.

Downward Communications:

1. Ensure every employee receives a copy of the strategic plan, which includes the organization's mission, vision, values statement, strategic goals and strategies about how those goals will be reached.
2. Ensure every employee receives an employee handbook that contains all up-to-date personnel policies.
3. Develop a basic set of procedures for how routine tasks are conducted and include them in standard operating manual.
4. Ensure every employee has a copy of their job description and the organization chart.
5. Regularly hold management meetings (at least every two weeks), even if there's nothing pressing to report. If you hold meetings only when you believe there's something to report, then communications will occur only when you have something to say -- communications will be one way and the organization will suffer. Have meetings anyway, if only to establish and affirm the communication that things are of a status where there's not immediate problems.
6. Hold full staff meetings every month to report how the organization is doing, major accomplishments, concerns, announcements about staff, etc.
7. Leaders and managers should have face-to-face contact with employees at least once a week. Even if the organization is over 20 employees (large for a nonprofit), management should stroll by once in a while.
8. Regularly hold meetings to celebrate major accomplishments. This helps employees perceive what's important, gives them a sense of direction and fulfillment, and let's them know that leadership is on top of things.
9. Ensure all employees receive yearly performance reviews, including their goals for the year, updated job descriptions, accomplishments, needs for improvement, and plans to help the employee accomplish the improvements. If the nonprofit has sufficient resources (a realistic concern), develop a career plan with the employee, too.

Upward Communications:

1. Ensure all employees give regular status reports to their supervisors. Include a section for what they did last week, will do next week and any actions/issues to address.

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2. Ensure all supervisors meet one-on-one at least once a month with their employees to discuss how its' going, hear any current concerns from the employee, etc. Even if the meeting is chit-chat, it cultivates an important relationship between supervisor and employee.
3. Use management and staff meetings to solicit feedback. Ask how it's going. Do a round table approach to hear from each person.
4. Act on feedback from others. Write it down. Get back to it -- if only to say you can't do anything about the reported problem or suggestion, etc.
5. Respect the "grapevine." It's probably one of the most prevalent and reliable forms of communications. Major "movements" in the organization usually first appear when employees feel it safe to venture their feelings or opinions to peers.

Supervisor and Employee Communications

Supervision is often considered to include designing the job, hiring someone to fill the job, training them, delegating to them, guiding them via performance reviews, helping them develop their career, noting performance issues, and firing them, if needed. Obviously small nonprofits may not be able to afford full attention to all of these activities.

However, there are several basic and regular activities which provide a solid foundation for effective supervision. These basics ensure that everyone is working together -- as important, that staff feel they are working together -- towards a common cause.

Ironically, these basics are usually the first activities that stop when an organization is in a crisis. Consequently, an organization development specialist, when "diagnosing" an organization, often first looks to see if these basics are underway. The following activities should be conducted by the new employer's supervisor.

1. **Have all employees provide weekly written status reports to their supervisors.**
Include what tasks were done last week, what tasks are planned next week, any pending issues and date the report. These reports may seem a tedious task, but they're precious in ensuring that employee and their supervisor have mutual understanding of what is going on, and the reports come in very handy for planning purposes. They also make otherwise harried staff and managers stand back and reflect on what they're doing.
2. **Hold monthly meetings with all staff together.**
Review the overall condition of the organization and review recent successes. Consider conducting "in service" training where employees take turns describing their roles to the rest of the staff. For clarity, focus and morale, be sure to use agendas and ensure follow-up minutes. Consider bringing in a client to tell their story of how the organization helped them. These meetings go a long way toward building a feeling of teamwork among staff.
3. **Hold weekly or biweekly meetings with all staff together if the organization is small (e.g., under 10 people); otherwise, with all managers together.**
Have these meetings even if there is not a specific problem to solve -- just make them shorter. (Holding meetings only when there are problems to solve cultivates a crisis-oriented environment where managers believe their only job is to solve problems.) Use these meetings for each person to briefly give an overview of what they are doing that week. Facilitate the meetings to support

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exchange of ideas and questions. Again, for clarity, focus and morale, be sure to use agendas, take minutes and ensure follow-up minutes. Have each person bring their calendar to ensure scheduling of future meetings accommodates each person's calendar.

4. **Have supervisors meet with their direct reports in one-on-one meetings every month.** This ultimately produces more efficient time management and supervision. Review overall status of work activities, hear how it's going with both the supervisor and the employee, exchange feedback and questions about current programs and services, and discuss career planning, etc. Consider these meetings as interim meetings between the more formal, yearly performance review meetings.

Develop a Basic Communications Plan

Whether planning your internal or external communications efforts, it helps a great deal to develop a communications plan, either informally or formally. For example, consider:

1. What key messages do you want to convey?
2. To what key stakeholders do you want to convey the key messages?
3. What's the best approach to reach each key stakeholder, including who/how should the message be conveyed?
4. How will you know if you're reaching these stakeholders or not?

Communication Objectives

1. All Audiences
2. Internal Audiences: All Members of CKFR, BFD and SKFR
3. Internal Audiences: Targeted Leadership
4. Combined Communications: Web sites
5. External Communications: Stakeholders
6. External Communications: Public/Media
7. Internal Member Support

What the Regional Fire Authority (RFA) Planning Committee must communicate:

The RFA must communicate about the status, details and decisions regarding the development of the RFA work plan. The RFA must communicate the following:

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- The process for developing the work plan.
- The progress made in developing the work plan.
- The details of the work plan before decisions are made.
- The funding issues regarding the implementation of the RFA work plan.
- The net benefits of implementing the RFA work plan.

The communication program must also include education and awareness for key areas identified by this plan and the RFA Planning Committee.

All audiences

- Communicate key meeting dates.
- Communicate what the law requires.
- Communicate issues being considered by the RFA Planning Committee and Steering Committee.
- Communicate decisions made by the RFA Planning Committee.
- Communicate benefits and risks of the RFA work plan.

Internal audiences

- Communicate all Planning and Steering Committee Meetings - Dates/Times/Places.
- Communicate policies, procedures and key issues that may impact staff.
- Educate staff on the process of developing an RFA work plan.
- Educate staff on the strategic objectives of each project task within the RFA work plan.

External audiences

- Communicate all RFA Planning Committee Meeting Dates/Times/Places with general public.
- Communicate all RFA Steering Committee Meeting Dates/Times/Places with neighboring Fire Departments.
- Communicate key issues and decisions that may impact the general public.

Key Essentials

Key Messages: Key messages will be developed by the RFA Planning and Steering committee.

Truthfulness: One of the paramount principles of communication will be accurately reporting past events to earn future trust.

Responsibility: Each jurisdiction's Fire Chief is responsible to disseminate information and inform their internal and external publics.

Consistency: To maintain a consistent message, staff from the three participating jurisdictions will receive assignments to develop joint press releases that will be delivered by the local fire chief.

Frequency: Communication will occur proactively rather than waiting for problems to arise and then communicating. This will require regular communications.

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Requirements: The RFA is required by law to follow certain rules as defined in state statute. All communications shall comply with the spirit of these rules and laws.

Expectations: All fire department leaders must ensure our citizens and members receive timely, relevant and reliable information regarding the RFA work plan.

Communication Milestones

Monthly Reports on Progress to the Executive Board of the KCFCA
Monthly Reports on Progress to the general KCFCA meetings
Monthly Reports on Progress to the Kitsap County Fire Commissioners
Monthly Reports on Progress to the Executive Board of the KCFCA
Weekly updates for SKFR members
Quarterly updates for WFC
Developed Joint Public Meeting Notice for First RFA Planning Committee Meeting
Developed Joint Press Releases Announcing First RFA Planning Committee Meeting

Target Audiences

Identified internal target audiences include:

- BFD, CKFR, SKFR Elected Officials
- BFD, CKFR, SKFR Chiefs
- BFD, CKFR, SKFR Labor leaders
- CKFR, SKFR Volunteer Leaders
- BFD, CKFR, SKFR Officers/Managers
- BFD, CKFR, SKFR uniform members
- BFD, CKFR, SKFR non-uniform members
- CKFR, SKFR Volunteer Members

Identified external target audiences include:

- Neighboring Fire District Leaders
- Harrison Hospital
- Olympic Ambulance
- Local Healthcare providers
- Business Community
- Community Leaders/Clubs
- Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council
- Kitsap Elected Officials (any outside of the three (3) fire departments)
- General Public/Media
- WFC
- WFCA
- WSCFF
- WSFF
- Kitsap DEM
- Kitsap CenCom
- KCSO, POPD and BPD leadership
- Kitsap Fire Commissioners Association

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Communication Process

Methods:

The primary methods used to disseminate information and/or educate:

Electronic communication:

This includes but is not limited to such communication vehicles as targeted emails, web sites, newsletter, internal mail lists, Chiefs updates, labor newsletters, volunteer newsletters, surveys, weekly Friday updates, and other means of rapid information dissemination. The key hub for Kitsap RFA is the web site at <http://kitsaprfpa.org>. This web site will provide access to all local fire department web sites including the labor and volunteer web sites. The web site will have a general access for everyone to see and a members section for the RFA Planning Committee and Steering Committee members. All public documents, presentations, calendar of events, e-mail addresses and other associated information will be on the web site.

Printed communication

This includes printed or copied documents as needed to fulfill the communications objectives. These include talking points, fact sheets, program newsletters, news releases, newsletter articles for partner and association newsletter, progress reports, brochures, training materials, booklets and other items as necessary.

Verbal communication

This includes speaking engagements, presentations, and formal training classes in a variety of forms including classroom style, videotaped, videoconferencing and computer based training and computer conference style education. Meetings may include executive level briefings, team briefings, office or unit staff meetings, customer meetings, partner meetings, provider meetings and stakeholder briefings. This can also include word of mouth from members to citizens.

Visual communication

Often this will include materials to be used in presentations, speaking, or training. These include PowerPoints, videotapes, and other visual charts, graphs, posters and pictures.

Communications Strategies

Kitsap RFA communication strategies will be multi-faceted and carried out using a variety of communication methods. Key strategies include:

- **Information Only:** Determine if the communication is “information only.” Once determined, that will drive the types of communication methods needed – relying more on utilizing the traditional electronic communications channels (Email, email newsletters, weekly updates, etc.).
- **Seeking Feedback:** Determine if the communication is seeking feedback. If so, the means of communicating that information is more complex and should involve actively engaging staff either

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through a conversation, meeting, task, class or activity. This is to ensure that the information exchange is effective.

- **Managers as Key Communicators:** Rely on management and member leader groups at all levels to help communicate key messages and receive feedback. It will be critical to be strategic on who, how, and how often these managers will be used to help carry messages. Too much repetition of this method will lead to dilution of messages; whereas no use of managers at various levels will not allow necessary buy-in.
- **Video Conferencing and BKAT**
- **Getting Staff's Attention:** Rely on various staff meetings to help communicate critical issues and decisions. In order to get staff's attention on major changes, they need to hear it from their own managers in their own meetings. Likewise the community needs to hear from their Fire Chief not a staff support person or other jurisdictions Fire Chief. Support staff plays a key role for the Fire Chiefs by developing the desired communication.

Communication Tactics

1. Information and Awareness – All Audiences

A. Information

- Meet with peers and customers on a regularly scheduled basis.
- Frequency: Monthly
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs
- Track questions and follow up issues.
- Frequency: As identified by the Steering and Planning Committee
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

B. Develop Fact Sheets on Critical Issues

- Develop fact sheets to be used with external audiences on critical issues. These will be developed on an as needed basis.
- Frequency: As identified by the Steering and Planning Committee
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

C. Feedback

- Review and make suggestions for improvements to key issues in the work plan as defined:
 - ◆ Anything that will end up on the Public area of the web site
 - ◆ Press Releases
 - ◆ Internal / External Surveys
 - ◆ Key Presentation materials
 - ◆ Anything representing an official position of the Kitsap RFA Planning Committee

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- Frequency: Monthly
- Responsibility: Kitsap RFA Planning and Steering Committee Chairs

2. Internal communications: All BFD, CKFR and SKFR Members

A. Kitsap RFA Chairs message

At the Kitsap RFA Chairs discretion, include information that reinforces the importance of the RFA work plan and what it means to citizens and members of the three jurisdictions. Help them understand how it affects them.

- Frequency: Quarterly
- Responsibility: Kitsap RFA Planning and Steering Committee Chairs

B. Kitsap RFA Steering Committee Chairs message

- Periodic updates to the members of the three fire departments. Prepared by the Chair and but disseminated by the local the fire chief.
- Frequency: Weekly
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs and Steering Committee Chair

C. Fire Department News letters

- Periodic articles provided to members of the three fire departments (electronic employee newsletter) on featured RFA activities.
- Frequency: Depending on existing publication/circulation times
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

D. Member Feedback loop

- Maintain and publicize a member feedback loop where questions can be posed and answered through regular email messages, web site or other means. Track questions/answers.
- Frequency: On -Going
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

3. Internal communications: Targeted Managers/Staff/Committees

A. Manager Meetings

- Meet as needed with managers or department-wide committees to share important information. Identify issues that they need to communicate. Send critical reminders and info to managers pertaining to RFA issues on an as needed basis.
- Frequency: On-going
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs
- Communication tactics

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4. Combined communications: (Internal and External Use) – Web site

A. Overall use of Kitsap RFA Web site

- This should be the hub of all Kitsap RFA communications. Continue to make site more robust, weekly postings.
- Frequency: Ongoing
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

B. Other RFA-related documents

- Post other RFA related documents that are public documents including those from various sections, projects and initiatives.
- Frequency: On-going
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs
- Communication tactics

5. External Communications: Stakeholders

A. Stakeholder presentations

- Present RFA updates in formal meetings of organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary and others. Determine stakeholder groups applicable, build schedule.
- Frequency: Ongoing
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

B. Communication with other fire agencies

- Identify a point of contact for other fire agencies on RFA issues. Share successes on a regular basis; also good way to determine barometer on new ideas, approaches.
- Frequency: Monthly
- Responsibility: Fire Chiefs and Steering Committee Chair

C. Statewide Conference Participation

- Participate in statewide conferences, symposiums, and summits. Communicate successes and failures.
- Frequency: Ongoing
- Responsibility: Kitsap RFA Planning and Steering Committee Chair

6. External communications: Public/media

A. RFA-related news releases

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- Work with support staff to develop message as directed by the Kitsap RFA Planning Committee Chair.
- Frequency: Ongoing
- Responsibility: Kitsap RFA Planning and Steering Committee Chairs

B. RFA fact sheets

- Create fact sheets on issues or decisions as needed for use with the public and/or news media.
- Frequency: Ongoing
- Responsibility: Kitsap RFA Planning and Steering Committee Chairs

C. Media Response

Be available to respond to media inquiries relating to RFA as needed. All members of each participating department and the members of the Kitsap RFA Planning and Steering Committees agree that a central point of contact for the media is necessary. The point of contact will be the Kitsap RFA Steering Committee Chair in consultation with the Kitsap RFA Planning Committee Chair and the other local Fire Chiefs.

- Frequency: Ongoing
- Responsibility: Kitsap RFA Steering Committee Chair

D. Legislative/elected official response

- Be available to respond to legislative and elected official inquiries relating to RFA as needed.
- Frequency: On-going
- Responsibility: Kitsap RFA Planning Committee Chair in consultation with the Kitsap RFA Steering Committee Chair and the local fire chiefs.

Kitsap County Steering Committees Work Product

Project task item 1 - Name for the RFA

12-18-08 Planning Committee authorizes Steering Committee to develop draft strategic statement and sub-committee for PTI 1

1-7-08 Steering Committee develops strategic statement for the task:

The name of the Regional Fire Authority shall:

- Provide a new identity for the three jurisdictions that allows for future expansion without a name change
- Represent and be recognizable from a geographic reference
- Have a high-level of support from the members who will serve in the new organization

Creates the sub-committee:

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Chair: Rick O'Rourke

Members: George Roller, Todd Thorson, Scott Bosch

1-15-08 Planning Committee approves strategic statement and sub-committee
Sub-committee launches work

1-22-08 Sub-Committee updates Steering Committee on plan implementation

2-12-08 Sub-committee makes recommendations to the steering committee on top three
names

Steering committee picks a name based on the recommendation from the sub-
committee and forwards that to the Steering Committee

2-19-08 Steering Committee Chair presents findings and recommendation of the
Steering Committee to the Planning Committee

Planning Committee approves a name for the RFA

Assignment Complete, sub-committee discharged

Overview:

The Steering Committee considered the strategic statement and the elements of each
issue carefully. The following is a summary report that explains our recommendations.

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Strategic Direction for Project Task 2:

The Governing Board of West Sound Fire and Rescue shall:

- Efficiently represent the citizens of the RFA
- Be sized to represent the area served
- Set policy that serves the vision of the RFA
- Comply with all applicable laws
- Provide a transition plan

Summary of Steering Committee Recommendations:

1. Five (5) member Governance Board.
2. Governing Board is a permanent elected board for the sole purpose of governing West Sound Fire and Rescue, a municipal corporation.
3. Six (6) year staggered terms office. The terms for CKFR and SKFR Fire Commissioner Position terms remain the same.
4. All positions on the Governing Board are at-large positions.
5. Five members from each jurisdiction comprise the fifteen member transition Governing Board. The attrition from 15 to 5 will follow the process that is in state law for fire commissioner boards when fire districts merge. The Board member positions from Bremerton will replicate those found in the two (2) Fire Districts and the Mayor and Council determine how those positions are filled. (See example below)

Washington State Fire Commissioner Board Sizes

Department	Population Served	Sq. Miles	Board Size
<i>Eastside Fire & Rescue</i>	100,000	200	5
<i>Central Pierce</i>	145,000	72	5
<i>South King</i>	150,000	40	6*

Current Departments in Washington State	
315 Districts	3 board members
33 Districts	5 board members

* Merged a 5 and 3 member Board in 2005, goal board will be 5

Attrition from 15 to 5 member Board

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
SKFR1	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z						

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SKFR2	Y	Y	Y	Y								
SKFR3	X	X										
SKFR4	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z						
SKFR5	Y	Y	Y	Y								
CKFR1	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z						
CKFR2	Y	Y	Y	Y								
CKFR3	X	X										
CKFR4	Y	Y	Y	Y								
CKFR5	X	X										
BFD	X	X										
BFD	Y	Y	Y	Y								
BFD	Y	Y	Y	Y								
BFD	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z						
BFD	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z						
WSFR			X	X	X	X	X	X				
WSFR					Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
WSFR					Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
WSFR							Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z
WSFR							Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z

Project task item 3 – Funding and Finances for the RFA

12-18-08 Planning Committee authorizes Steering Committee to develop draft strategic statement and sub-committee for PTI 3

1-7-08 Steering Committee develops strategic statement for the task:

The Financial plan for the Regional Fire Authority shall:

- Consider all revenues and expenses to fund the RFA
- Provide equitable or improved levels of emergency service delivery
- Project long term funding to support strategic staffing and capital improvement plans
- Demonstrate financial efficiencies in service delivery Illustrate and minimize the financial transition from three jurisdictions into one, while providing for future flexibility.

Creates the sub-committee:

Chair: Wayne Senter

Members: Al Duke, Ken Burdette, Jim Civilla, Gordon Walgren, Jeff Faucett, Laura Lyon, Bill Cushman

1-15-08 Planning Committee approves strategic statement and sub-committee

Sub-committee launches work

Pursue professional assistance from COB Finance and Bill Cushman

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ID questions that require answer prior to financial work

Sub-committee makes update to the steering committee on project status.

Steering Committee Chair updates the Planning Committee on project status

Sub- Committee makes final recommendation to the Steering Committee

Steering Committee develops their recommendation

Steering Committee makes recommendation to the Planning Committee no later than January 2009.

Project Task Item 6 – Volunteer Organization for the RFA

2-19-08 Planning Committee authorizes Steering Committee to develop draft strategic statement and sub-committee for PTI 6

2-26-08 Steering Committee develops strategic statement for the task:

The RFA Volunteer Sub Committee shall:

- Determine the most appropriate role for the volunteers now and in the future.
- Identify involvement in community activities.
- Develop Chain of Command.
- Consider transition into one association
- Serve the vision of the RFA
- Develop a recruitment and retention program.
- Develop minimum activity requirements.
- Develop various concepts for an incentive/Length Of Service Award Programs (LOSAP).

Creates the sub-committee:

Chair: Scott Hartley

Members: Joe Guseman (SK), Mike Smith (SK), Ed Scholfield (CK), Alan White (CK), ? (CK)

3-4-08 Planning Committee receives update on this task

3-11-08 Sub-committee makes recommendation to the steering committee for strategic statement and committee members.

3-18-08 Steering Committee Chair and Sub-Committee Chair give recommendation to the Planning Committee.

3-25-08 Sub-committee updates Steering Committee each meeting.

4-1-08 Steering Committee updates Planning Committee each meeting

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- 8-12-08 Sub-Committee makes recommendation to the Steering Committee and they form a joint recommendation.
- 8-19-08 Steering Committee and Sub-Committee make recommendation to the Planning Committee.

Project task item 7 – Collective Bargaining Agreements for WSFR

- 2-19-08 Planning Committee authorizes Steering Committee to develop draft strategic statement and sub-committee for PTI 7
- 2-26-08 Steering Committee develops strategic statement for the task:

The WSFR labor group representatives shall:

- Consider how each existing CBA would be combined
- Consider how many bargaining units there should be (there are now 5)
- Consider the total cost of compensation before and after the transition
- Serve the vision of the RFA
- Consider the legal process of implementing the recommendations
- Consider CBA durations
- Identify potential increases in costs and savings for the future
- Consider unaffiliated members and their peer bargaining unit members

Creates the sub-committee:

Chair: Rob Ashmore

Members: Ron Powers, Tim Salters, George Roller, Todd Thorson, Rick O'Rourke, Mark Johnson and Steve Wright.

- 3-4-08 Planning Committee approves strategic statement and sub-committee Chair/make-up. Sub-committee launches work, meets and recommends to Steering Committee on items within the strategic statement
- 3-11-08 (and each meeting until recommendation is reached) Sub-committee makes update to the steering committee using strategic statement as reference
- 3-18-08 (and each meeting until approval is made) Steering Committee Chair and Sub-Committee Chair updates the Planning Committee on project status
- 8-26-08 (tentative) Sub-committee makes recommendation to Steering Committee on items within the strategic statement. Steering Committee decides on their recommendation to the Planning Committee.
- 9-2-08 (tentative) Steering Committee makes recommendation, seeks decision from Planning Committee

Project Task Item 8

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The RFA Standard of Response Coverage shall:

Review all current strategic plans of the three fire agencies

Combine all current strategic plans of the agencies for comparison

Develop a strategic plan for the fire authority to include:

- Long range staffing plan
- Long range facilities plan
- Strategic services plan
- Standard of Response
- Develop planning with the idea that we will become an accredited agency through Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE)
- Identify Service Level Efficiencies

Timeline for completion of this project will be January 1, 2009

Committee members will be Chief Ken Burdette, Monika Carberry, Asst. Chief Jay Lovato, Chief Wayne Senter, DC Dan Olson, BC Steve Wright, Chief Al Duke, BFD ?????, BFD ????.

Project task item 9 – Future Expansion of WSFR

4-15-08 Planning Committee authorizes Steering Committee to develop draft strategic statement and sub-committee for PTI 9

4-29-08 Steering Committee develops strategic statement for the task:

Future Expansion of WSFR shall:

- Allow flexibility for the WSFR governing board
- Encourage future expansion when it is in the best interest of WSFR mission and the agency requesting annexation
- Consider the different ways annexation from surrounding fire jurisdictions may occur
- Consider how labor contracts will be integrated
- Make the annexation process as simple as possible
- Ensure that the annexation process complies with state law

Creates the sub-committee:

Co-Chairs: Mark Johnson, Ron Powers

Members: Jim Shields, Dan Smith, Hank Teran, David Bailey, Rick Lagrandeur

Note: Other agencies like Mason 2, Gig Harbor, Jefferson will be invited to attend and provide input at the sub-committee meetings.

5-6-08 Planning Committee approves strategic statement and sub-committee

Sub-committee launches work

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Sub-committee makes updates to the steering committee until task is complete

Steering Committee Chair updates the Planning Committee on project status

10-14-08 Sub-committee makes recommendation to Steering Committee on future expansion plan.

10-21-08 Steering Committee makes recommendation, seeks decision from Planning Committee

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Sample Ballot Language/Valley Regional Fire Authority

CITY OF AUBURN, ALGONA AND PACIFIC

PROPOSITION NO. 1

CREATION OF REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY

The Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Planning Committee has submitted to the Cities of Auburn, Algona and Pacific a Regional Fire Service Plan to create a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority under chapter 52.26 RCW. If this measure is approved, it would approve the Plan to create a regional authority for fire protection and emergency services funded with fire benefit charges (not more than 60% of operating budget) and property taxes (not more than \$1.50/\$1,000 assessed value). The maximum City property tax rate would be reduced by the tax rate collected by the Authority. Fire benefit charges would be authorized for 2008 through 2013, during which time the Authority's maximum property tax would be reduced to \$1.00/\$1,000.

Should the Plan for a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority be approved?

YES

NO

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

In recent years, many cities have seen decreasing revenues while simultaneously seeing increasing service demands, particularly police and fire services. State law provides some options that could help local governments fund these necessary services. One such option is a regional fire protection services authority, whereby several cities consolidate their fire departments to provide services more cost effectively. Regional fire protection services authorities are distinct municipal entities with operations overseen by a governing board made up of representatives of the participating entities. These authorities have separate funding sources; real property taxes and benefit charges. The participating jurisdictions, in turn, see a reduction of their taxing authority. However, because most jurisdictions fund their fire departments with more than just the property tax dollars that would go to a regional fire protection services authority, creating such an authority could free up funds to pay for police and other services.

The cities of Algona, Auburn and Pacific have joined together to develop a plan to be submitted to their voters. If approved, this would create a regional fire protection services authority with equal representation for each city, funded with fire benefit charges (up to 60% of operating budget) and/or property taxes (limited at \$1.50/\$1,000 assessed value). The rate limit on city property tax rates would be reduced by the tax rate collected by the authority. Fire benefit charges would be authorized for 2008 through 2013, during which time the rate limit on the authority's property taxes would be reduced from \$1.50/\$1,000 down to \$1.00/\$1,000.

Sample Ballot Language from North County Regional Fire Authority

(Snohomish County)

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3/5/07

Snohomish County FPD #14

Snohomish County FPD #18

PROPOSITION NO. 1

CREATION OF REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY

The Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Planning Committee has submitted to the Snohomish County Fire Protection Districts 14 and 18, a Regional Fire Service Plan to create a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority under chapter 52.26 RCW. If this measure is approved, it would approve the Plan to create a regional authority for fire protection and emergency services funded with current taxing rates (not more than \$1.50/\$1,000 assessed value). This Authority would begin on 1/1/08.

Should the Plan for a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority be approved?

YES

NO

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

In recent years, many cities and Fire Districts have seen decreasing revenues while simultaneously seeing increasing service demands, particularly police and fire services. State law provides some options that could help local governments fund these necessary services. One such option is a regional fire protection services authority, whereby several cities consolidate their fire departments to provide services more cost effectively. Regional fire protection services authorities are distinct municipal entities with operations overseen by a governing board made up of representatives of the participating entities.

Fire Districts 14 and 18 have joined together to develop a plan to be submitted to their voters. If approved, this would create a regional fire protection services authority with equal representation for each District funded with current property taxes (limited at \$1.50/\$1,000 assessed value) and revenues. This proposal uses only existing property taxes and revenues.

Statement For

Statement Against

Approving Proposition One will consolidate the fire and medical response services for Snohomish County Fire Dist 14 and Snohomish County Fire Dist 18. This is a common sense approach to keeping costs down by combining equipment and staff while maintaining the level of service we have grown to expect.

Using existing property taxes and revenue is a fair way to fund a Regional Fire Authority.

Having lived in the Bryant, Warm Beach and Freeborn area for many years, we have enjoyed the benefits of good fire and medical response. Please vote yes with us to keep our cities and families well protected.

NO STATEMENT SUBMITTED.

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STATEMENT PREPARED BY: Citizen, Citizen,
and Citizen

Complete Text of Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 4091 revised

A RESOLUTION of Fire Districts 14 and 18, providing for the submission to the qualified electors of Districts 14 and 18, at an election to be held on May 15, 2007, of a proposition regarding the creation of the Valley Regional Fire Protection Service Authority coextensive with the boundaries of Fire Districts 14 and 18 and the approval of a regional fire protection service authority plan; appointing persons to serve on the committees to draft the voter pamphlet statements for and against; and providing for other matters properly related thereto, with contingencies

WHEREAS, over the past few years, local municipalities have faced constraints that have resulted in decreasing tax revenues and increasing demand for services; and

WHEREAS, these constraints have increased the challenges facing fire districts in providing the municipal services upon which their citizens depend; and

WHEREAS, recent changes in the law have created opportunities that could help fire districts meet their needs of providing municipal services by consolidating among various participating municipalities the resources relegated to fire protection; and

WHEREAS, this consolidation of resources, through the establishment of a regional fire protection service authority, provides a way for the participating municipalities to maximize their abilities to provide and fire protection services and emergency medical services.

WHEREAS, in order to provide the most effective fire protection service for Districts 14 and 18 their Commissioners will create the establishment of a Regional Fire Protection Authority Planning Committee to evaluate Regional Fire Protection needs and the parameters of the Regional Fire Protection Authority; and

WHEREAS, the Regional Fire Protection Authority Planning Committee ("RFA Committee") developed its plan ("RFA Plan") for the Valley Regional Fire Protection Authority, copies of which plan are on file with the District Secretary of both District 14 and 18; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with said plan and with chapter 52.26 RCW, it is appropriate to place before the voters of the proposed Regional Fire Protection Authority a proposition calling for the creation of the North County Fire and EMS Regional Fire Protection Authority and the approval of the Plan, all in accordance with state law; and

WHEREAS, the Fire District 14 and 18 heretofore passed its initial Resolution No. _____, on _____, 2007, based on the plan that included both fire districts 14 and 18.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COMMISSIONERS OF DISTRICT 14 AND 18 HEREBY RESOLVES as follows:

Section 1. FINDINGS AND DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSITION.

The Board of Commissioners for Districts 14 and 18, hereby finds that it is in the best interests of the Fire Districts to submit to the qualified electors of the County, at the election to be held on May 15, 2007, a proposition regarding the creation of the North County Fire and EMS Regional Fire Protection Authority (the "Authority"), pursuant to chapter 52.26 RCW, and the approval of the Plan for the Authority. If approved by the voters in accordance with RCW 52.26.060, this proposition would: (1) create a regional fire protection service authority, as defined in RCW 52.26.020, whose boundaries are coextensive with Fire Districts 14 and 18; and (2) approve the RFA Plan prepared by the RFA Committee and available from the District Secretary of either District 14 or 18. The governing body of the RFA shall have such rights to modify the details of the RFA Plan from time to time as provided by law and the provisions of the RFA Plan; PROVIDED, the Authority shall be formed with boundaries coextensive with those of the two participating Districts. No further action of the

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Planning Committee shall be required to complete the amendments described herein.

Section 2. BALLOT TITLE AND PROPOSITION

The Director of Records and Elections of Snohomish County, Washington, and the County Auditor (together, the "County Auditors"), as ex officio supervisor of elections in each County, are each hereby requested to submit to the qualified electors of the City, at the election to be held on May 15, 2007, a proposition in the following form, which has been prepared by the County Prosecutor Attorney pursuant to RCW (29A.36.071)?:

PROPOSITION #1
Districts 14 and 18
**CREATION OF REGIONAL FIRE
PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY**

The Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Planning Committee has submitted to Districts 14 and 18, a Regional Fire Service Plan to create a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority under chapter 52.26 RCW. If this measure is approved, it would approve the Plan to create a regional authority for fire protection and emergency services funded with current taxing rates (not more than \$1.50/\$1,000 assessed value). This Authority would begin on 1/1/08.

Should the Plan for a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority be approved?

YES ?
NO ?

For purposes of receiving notice of any matters related to the ballot title, as provided in RCW 29A.36.080?, the Board of Commissioners, hereby designates the Fire Chief as the individual to whom the Director of Elections shall provide such notice.

Section 3. APPOINTMENT OF VOTER PAMPHLET COMMITTEES

The Board of Commissioners proposes and appoints the following persons to serve on the committees to draft the statements for and against the above described proposition as may be published in the applicable Voter's Pamphlet and/or other appropriate voter information:

Statement for:

1. _____, Citizen
2. _____, Citizen
3. _____, Citizen

Statement Against:

1. _____, Citizen
2. _____, Citizen
3. _____, Citizen

(At this time, no citizens have expressed an interest in preparing a statement in opposition to the proposition.)

Section 4. COPIES FILED WITH THE Snohomish COUNTY AUDITOR.

The Board of Commissioners, or their designee, is hereby authorized and directed, no later than March 23, 2007, to provide the County Auditor a certified copy of this resolution and to perform such other duties as are necessary or required by law to the end that the proposition described in this resolution appear on the ballot at the May 15, 2007 election. All actions taken prior to the effective date of this resolution and in furtherance of this objective are hereby ratified and confirmed.

Section 5. IMPLEMENTATION.

The Boards and their designee is authorized to implement such administrative procedures as may be necessary to carry out the directives of this legislation, including modifying the text of the RFA Plan and the text of the Ballot Measure and any other text, language and/or descriptions relative thereto, to serve on the committees to

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draft the statements for and against the above described proposition as may be published in the applicable Voter's Pamphlet and/or other appropriate voter information.

Section 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Resolution shall be in full force and effect upon passage and signatures hereon.

PASSED by the Board of Commissioners this _____ day of _____, 2007.

District 14

District 18

_____, Commissioner

_____, Commissioner

_____, Commissioner
