

Olympia Tumwater RFA Planning Committee

Governance Update for City Councils

June 21, 2022

Tonight's Discussion

- Legal requirements & options for RFA governance
- RFA Planning Committee plan for developing governance recommendations
- Governance in other RFAs
- Set of potential governance options proposed by RFA Planning Committee

The RFA Planning Committee seeks input on proposed options; no final action this evening

RFA Governance: Legal Requirements and Options

- The RFA must have a governing Board of Commissioners
- The role of the Board is like the role of the City Council
 - Adopts budget, authorizes # of FTEs, adopts policies, hires CEO
- The RFA Plan must propose the Board structure, composition
- Statute provides great flexibility in structuring the Board

RFA Governance: Legal Requirements & Options

An RFA Governance Board can be comprised of:

1. Elected officials from member agencies
2. Persons directly elected **At-Large** by the voters of the RFA
3. Persons directly elected by **District** by the voters of the RF
4. A **mix** of any or all of the above

More Legal Requirements & Options

- There is no legal limitation on the size of the Board, but there is a practical limit.
- The **initial board** must be comprised of **elected officials from member agencies**. It can transition to a different structure over time if desired.
- The earliest transition point is the first election cycle after the RFA is created.
 - August 1, 2023: RFA created
 - August/November 2025: first election cycle (*same odd-year schedule as for City elected officials*)
 - The initial “all-City elected official” board must be in place through at least December 31, 2025. (2 years, 5 months).

RFA Governance: Positions

Districted positions:

- Districts must be relatively equal in population, consider community and geographic boundaries.
- If there are any districts, the entire RFA must be districted, not just one city.
- In the primary, only those voters living in the district vote; in the general election, all RFA voters vote--choosing from among the top-two vote-getters in the primary.

At-Large positions:

- Elected by voters of entire RFA.
- All voters can participate in the primary and general elections.

Population (2022 OFM Est.)

*Olympia is approx.
2.2 times larger in
population*

*Olympia 55,960
(2021 OFM Est.)*

*Tumwater 25,360
(2021 OFM Est.)*

RFA Governance: Terms of Office

- Terms of office for directly elected Board members cannot exceed **6 years.**
- Terms must be staggered (not all end at the same time).
- **The RFA Board can change the governance board structure on its own** in the future, at any time, unless this authority is otherwise restricted in the RFA Plan.

RFA Planning Committee Process on Governance (as presented in April)

Step 1: Agree on guiding values and principles

Secured support from City Councils at April 19 presentation

Step 2: Develop a small number (3-5) of options

Tonight: Review these options with City Councils, get input

Step 3: Select a preferred option

Review this with City Councils for concurrence

Proposed Statement of Shared Values and Principles to Guide Development of Plan

*Not presented in
order of priority*

Our Values Include:

1. Ensuring operations meet or exceed current service levels in terms of their ability to support a safe and healthy community.
2. Providing a safe, supportive and professional environment for our first responders.
3. **Participatory Governance.** Jurisdictions which are part of the RFA should have a meaningful voice in the operating decisions of the RFA. The RFA Board should seek to make decisions by consensus whenever possible.
4. **Pro-Active Oversight, Planning and Continuous Improvement.** We are committed to planning for the future and proactively identifying and addressing the needs of our communities, identifying and implementing ways to better meet those needs.
5. **Promoting interagency collaboration, communication and strong working relationships.** The RFA will act in the collective best interests of all its public safety partners, not just those served by the RFA.
6. **Making data-driven decisions.** The RFA should take strategic action based on the facts after a thorough and objective analysis of the issues.
7. **Being an effective and efficient steward of public funds.**
8. **Affordable and sustainable financial model.** The RFA should implement an affordable and sustainable financial model that can facilitate consistent service levels over time as the community served continues to grow.
9. **Strong engagement with our local communities.** The RFA should be a positive and engaged member of the communities it serves with pro-active outreach to the public.
10. **Honoring the history and identify of the Olympia and Tumwater Fire Departments while we build the culture for the new fire agency.**



Cities of Olympia and Tumwater



Proposed Statement of Values & Principles

Our Operating Principles Include:

- A. The RFA Board will be committed to the success of the RFA and will be engaged in actively learning and understanding the work of the agency.
- B. We will strive to operate nimbly, with the ability to make decisions and respond quickly when necessary.
- C. We seek to understand and address the unique needs of the communities we serve. We strive to address these needs equitably in all operating and financial decisions.
- D. We work to attract, develop and retain high quality staff.
- E. We will ensure all City Fire Department staff in good standing at the time of annexation are offered at least equivalent positions within the RFA.
- F. We strive to employ rigorous quality assurance and reporting practices.
- G. We manage agency budgets to control or reduce costs.
- H. We seek to limit spikes in budgets from year to year, by use of planning capital investments over time, developing reserves and other means.
- I. We commit to being transparent, accessible and responsive to our customer agencies and the public.
- J. In contracting to provide services to other agencies, we are mindful of our own costs of service: communities within the RFA boundaries should not incur additional costs from these external service contracts.

*Not presented in
order of priority*

How have other RFAs structured their governance boards?

Most have revised their governance structures over time. Some examples of governance structures (6 of 13 RFAs in the state):

Puget Sound RFA & Renton RFA	Southeast Thurston RFA	West Thurston RFA	South Snohomish County RFA	Marysville RFA
3 elected officials from each member agency (2), plus 1 nonvoting member for each contract agency	3 districts, 2 members elected directly from each district (total of 6 board members)	3 elected officials from each member agency (2, for total of 6 board members)	5 districted positions + 2 at-large positions	4 City Council members + 2 of 3 commissioners from member Fire Agency, one nonvoting.

RFA Planning Committee Recommendations

- **The RFA Planning Committee recommends that the governance structure transition over time, i.e., the RFA Plan should include both**
 - An **Initial Board** of all City elected officials as required, and
 - A **different structure** for the ongoing Governance Board after 2025.
- **Rationale:**
 - Allow for some directly-elected representation that can be solely dedicated to the RFA – rather than serving on both a City Council and the RFA Board.
 - Retain a connection to the member Cities.
 - Consider approaches that enable all RFA voters to vote for most of the RFA board members—not just those in the City in which they live.

Recommended Initial Board Structure (2023-2025)

■ **Recommendation: 6 City Councilmembers, 3 appointed from each City.**

■ **Options Considered:**

- 4 members, 2 from each City
- 5 members, 3 from Olympia, 2 from Tumwater
- 6 members, 3 from each City

Question for Council:
Any concerns with this approach?

■ **Rationale:**

- Mirrors current RFA Planning Committee structure which is working well
- Maximizes equity in start-up of the new RFA agency as a true partnership
- Maximizes input from each City without involving a quorum of each City Council

Ongoing Board Structure Options (2026 +)

Several options considered by Committee; other options possible

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
# of seats	5	6	7	7	7	7
Appointed by Olympia	1	3	2	1	1	2
Appointed by Tumwater	1	3	2	1	1	2
Directly elected – At-Large			3	5		
Directly elected – by District	3				5	3
Voting	Each Board member has 1 vote					
Other	Staggering of terms/initial term for each Board seat TBD – goal is to minimize turnover required at each election.					

RFA Planning Committee Considerations

- Districts versus At-Large:
 - Districts may not exactly match city boundaries.
 - Example: 3 Districts would likely mean 2 districts include most/all of Olympia and 1 district includes most/all of Tumwater
 - District Benefits: geographic distribution of representatives ensured
 - District Challenges: Districts may be too small to ensure strong candidate pool; potential focus on district area at expense of overall agency
 - At Large Benefits: Represent entirety of RFA area
 - At-Large Challenges: All representatives could come from small part of RFA
- Union leaders strongly want to ensure board members with sufficient time and expertise to dedicate to the oversight of the new agency.
- The start-up board will be a major time commitment, ongoing board less so, but still significant.

Committee recommends 7-member Board; Seeks Council input on other details

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
# Of seats	5	6	7	7	7	7
Appointed by Olympia	1	3	2	1	1	2
Appointed by Tumwater	1	3	2	1	1	2
Directly elected – At- large			3	5		
Directly elected – by District	3				5	3
Voting	Each Board member has 1 vote					
Other	Staggering of terms/initial term for each Board member under discussion – want to minimize turnover required at each election.					

Rationale for 7-members:
functional size, large enough to support subcommittees, odd number to avoid tie votes

Questions for Council:

- Any concerns with 7-member board size?
- Preferences on Districts *versus* At-Large seats (or having both)?
- Thoughts about ongoing Council representation on Board?
- Other?

Next Steps

RFA Planning Committee will return with:

- A final recommendation on governance, based on Councils' input
- Recommendations re: the transition details between the initial and ongoing boards, initial terms of each seat to achieve staggered terms
- Anticipated discussion of finances in July



Thank You!

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