



Emergency Medical Services
EMS Oversight Board Meeting
800 Chestnut Street
Online Meeting
February 9th, 2022 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM

MINUTES

Board Members:

Satpal Sidhu, *Whatcom County Executive*

Hall Walker, *Citizen Representative*

Michael Lilliquist, *Whatcom County
Council*

Rob Roy Graham, *County Fire Commission
Association*

Seth Fleetwood, *Mayor of Bellingham*

Rick Kowsky, *Citizen at Large (Cascade
Ambulance)*

Dr. Rob Rush, MD, *Medical Community
Representative*

Scott Korthius, *Small Cities Mayor*

Tyler Byrd, *Whatcom County Council*

Also Present:

Mike Hilley, *WCEMS Manager*

Scott Ryckman, *Bellingham Fire Department*

Jeremy Morton, *WCEMS*

Bill Hewett, *Bellingham Fire Department*

Mel Blankers, *Whatcom Fire District 1*

Marianne Caldwell, *Whatcom County Finance*

Katie Poole, *WCEMS*

Steven Cohen, *WCEMS*

Dr. Marvin Wayne, *MPD, WCEMS*

WELCOME & APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 8TH, 2021 MINUTES:

Motion made to approve the September 8th, 2021 Minutes approved by Scott Korthuis, seconded by Rick Kowsky. Motion unanimously approved.

BUDGET UPDATE:

Marianne Caldwell gave the group an update on the budget as of January 27th, 2022.

Caldwell presented the latest spreadsheet representing the “near year-end” of numbers looking at the projected end fund balance of \$22.3 mil at the end of 2021 as they close out 2021 expenditures. The projected end fund balance in 2022 will be \$21.6 mil. There are some outstanding expenditures that haven’t been charged yet. Paramedic school still has outstanding bills in 2022. 2021 obligations will move to 2022 where some of those projects were not accomplished in 2021. This includes the purchase of a new Paramedic Unit vehicle, station upgrades for Station 75 and several contracts related to BFD and the hiring of laterals, and the onboarding costs for up to 8 Firefighter/Paramedics.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD REPORT:

Hilley presented the TAB report. Levy planning began in early 2020, part of the committee process included the potential for a 2022 BLS allocation reimbursement. Conversations identified stresses on the fire departments during the last few years, and these conversations eventually led to the development of an equitable allocation formula for BLS allocation. The largest increase of BLS call volume increased from 2020-2021. The finance committee sent a favorable recommendation to consider this formula.

Rob Roy Graham spoke about the effects he has seen due to increased BLS call volume. Discussion ensues about the increasing lack of volunteers to staff stations. Mayor Korthuis agrees that BLS is a more difficult situation to address in rural areas of the county, and questions how money will be spent in the future to address these concerns. Executive Sidhu concludes that this is not a one-time issue, it is systemic and will continue in the future.

Hilley introduces a motion from the TAB, for the EOB to consider a \$5 million BLS allocation. Walker conveys the importance of creating a sustainable path for BLS allocation, and the closeness of the last levy when it came to the voting. He also questions how the State Bill 1310

has influenced the increase in BLS calls. Korthius also speaks about what a sustainable budget would look like for the future.

Rick Kowsky makes a motion for the board to fund the \$5 million for BLS support and to fund the Stryker Power Load for the districts who have not installed it and for reimbursement for districts who have installed it. Rob Roy Graham seconds the motion.

Lilliquist asks for clarification around the meaning of the motion, specifically relating to the power load system. Kowsky explained the importance of the power load system, and Rush agreed with Kowsky on the importance of this equipment. Korthuis asks about the PowerLoad system cost, which is around \$25,000 per unit, for 56 units. Mike recommends having the Stryker Load System as a separate motion, in order to move forward with that piece.

Korthius asks Fleetwood how he plans to spend the BLS allocation funds, due to the city of Bellingham receiving more funds based on the BLS allocation formula. Hewett responds for Mayor Fleetwood, explaining the impact that COVID19 has made on maintaining personnel, and increasing fuel prices. Korthius asks about the district's pre-determined plans for the allocation. Blankers responds by describing the Whatcom County District 1 plans for the funding. He speaks on behalf of the county chiefs, when he says that there should be some BLS funding included in the next levy, but they understand the main focus of the levy should be on ALS. He agrees with Mayor Korthius that there should be a representation of the district's spending intentions.

Executive Sidhu asked for clarification around the second part of the motion, pertaining to the number of units needed. Hilley clarifies that there would be 56 units, at \$25,000 per unit. Executive Sidhu asks for a vote on the motion. Six members vote yes, one board member voted no, and one member abstained. The motion passes.

LEVY REPORT OVERVIEW:

A significant portion of the levy is in draft form. More work is needed for the ALS/BLS committee and the Levy-planning group. In the future, some of the language needs to be refined and another EOB meeting to review it should be scheduled.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Recording Link: <https://youtu.be/Mm1K1ZVwEv8>