

**Western Lane Ambulance District
Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue
Western Lane Fire and EMS Authority
2625 Highway 101 North, Florence, OR 97439**

Joint Special Meeting Minutes, August 13, 2020, 5:00 p.m.
The Zoom recording will be posted on SVFR & WLAD Websites

SVFR BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Directors Ron Green, Ned Hickson, Alan Burns, Jim Palisi, Sam Spayd

WLAD BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Directors Cindy Russell, John Murphey, Rick Yecny, Larry Farnsworth, Mike Webb

WLFEA BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Directors John Murphey, Sam Spayd, Jim Palisi, Cindy Russell

STAFF PRESENT: Chief Schick, Chief House, Dina McClure

Chief Schick called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Roll Call established quorums.

Discuss Opportunities and Concerns Regarding Consolidation/ Merger

Chief Schick reviewed the reason for the workshop on August 6th and shared an overview for this session. Chief House will share input gathered from SVFR, WLAD and WLFEA staff in the form of a SWOC analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Concerns). The purpose of this meeting is for discussion purposes only and no action from the board is planned.

Review of Staff Comments (a copy of S.W.O.C. Feedback From SVFR, WLAD, and WLFEA Staff are attached to these minutes).

Strengths: Chief House reviewed staff opinions. Director Palisi has used SWOC's before and shared his experience with Cal Fire. Director Webb said WLAD's tax base is too low, they need to create a new taxing district and directors have been discussing a merger for many years. Director Farnsworth asked if the PERS contribution would increase. There was lengthy discussion about the pros and cons of cross training personnel. Chief House said there are many staffing models available.

Weaknesses: Chief House reviewed staff opinions. Director Farnsworth asked about the skill sets for training a medic to a firefighter and how to keep skills at high levels. House said they have that training now and many districts hire medics who then train for fire. There was discussion about state level certifications and wages. Director Green commented that cost is important but service is more important. Chief Schick said they would not consider doing this if service is not at a high level.

Opportunities: Chief House reviewed staff opinions. Director Green said this is a good opportunity for one company, one mission, one culture. Director Spayd asked about renewing WLAD's local option levy. Chief House said the goal is to eliminate the five-year levy and go to a fixed rate.

Concerns: Chief House reviewed staff opinions. Director Farnsworth was curious why staff was concerned with advancement. Director Green asked why staff mentioned lack of trust and transparency. Chief Schick said some comments might be related to ongoing labor negotiations. Director Webb asked what happens if a medic does

not want to train for fire? Chief said cross training would be optional and no one would lose their job. Director Green said there might be incentive because it pays more.

Review of Timeline: (a copy of the Potential Timeline is attached to these minutes)
Chief Schick shared three phases of a potential merger/consolidation timeline.

Board of Directors Feedback: Director Farnsworth encouraged public feedback to determine the community's comfort level and wants staff to create a budget five years out with a tax levy to support it. Director Murphey stressed the importance of establishing a united front because if employees don't "buy in", there is no sense moving forward. Director Hickson said if word gets out, it gives the impression we are doing it. Director Burns said discussing it in a public meeting may create rumors so the board needs to make a decision. Director Green emphasized the importance of doing a feasibility study. Director Webb asked if the consolidated district would be a "fire" district and if so, they would need to address the impact of losing the status of having a "health" district.

The directors concluded that this was an informative session and there needs to be good communication to ensure no impact to the high level of service to the community.

Chief Schick said he would work on a plan.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Dina McClure
Recording Secretary

S.W.O.C. Feedback From SVFR, WLAD, and WLFEA Staff

The relationship between WLAD and SVFR has progressed from the initial IGA in which WLAD paid half of the salaries of the Fire Chief and Office Manager for which they received administrative oversight to the current situation with the formation of the Western Lane Fire and EMS Authority. With the former agreement WLAD had minimal input as to the duties or performance of the personnel they were paying for. Within the Authority WLAD now has an equal voice into the roles of the Administrative staff including the Fire and EMS Chief, Operations Chief, Office Manager, and office staff. The next logical step along this path would be to consider a complete merger of the two agencies who provide emergency services to western Lane County.

Strengths – Would a functional consolidation / merger of the two Districts provide any synergistic benefits? Could a functional consolidation / merger lead to an enhanced delivery of emergency services?

Cohesion, better resource management. Good now however more opportunity for training and interoperability. Shift cohesion with similar shift of A, B, and C.

Quality of care for districts, familiarity with each other operations, providing patient care. Varying levels of EMS/FF able to perform tasks.

Additional staffing, more providers. More people into the mix to complete jobs.

Crossed trained staffing, more firefighters, cross knowledge of jobs between each other, awareness. Being able to assist with each other on scenes. Diversity of ALS throughout system, running with a Paramedic on engine/rescue.

Binding Arbitration, no strike

Tiered response, Common industry response models

One agency, one budget, one board, consolidation simplifies, less room mistakes

Dependable staffing models

PERS increase for EMS personnel, earlier retirement

Strengthen ASA and financial consolidation of all districts into one

More dual role interests versus single role interest.

Quicker response times for patient contact and property conservation.

Realigning agency structure.

Weaknesses – Would a functional consolidation / merger of the two Districts diminish our abilities to provide service? Would one of the functional consolidation / merging agencies diminish in role or structure?

Decrease level of service, less higher-level medics versus lower level of care. EMS 2 paramedics versus Paramedic / EMT. "Critical care medics". Sharing resources could decrease level of service until more dual role providers are trained.

No plan, model, or ideas from administration how the functional consolidation would look. (daily staffing model)

Higher cost due to unorganized IGA and WLFEA. Higher cost with merger. Cost expenses with 3 districts and managing 3 districts. Cost of upgrading to new logo on apparatus, clothing, etc.

More cross trained employees do not solve gap of surge volumes.

Leadership, little bit of everything, more present, more support. Speaking up for us. Common support.

numerous leaders over short duration and if continued, could be detriment. Span of control, many models to look at.

Loss of identity, loss of EMS or Fire centric only, loss of volunteer identity. Proud of name/logo. Our identity is our actions.

Diminish agencies structure PM/FF, EMT/FF versus PM/FF, PM/FF

Patient safety

Training cost for dual role: More money, higher level training versus inbred. Impact to training budget. Impact increase training for employees. Loss of training at the gain of training to another perspective job assignment
Teamwork cohesion, learning to work with each other in all job responsibilities. Adaptability.

Opportunities – Would a functional consolidation / merger of the two Districts create opportunities for increased service levels? Would a functional consolidation / merger of the two Districts create advancement opportunities for employees or volunteers? Would a functional consolidation / merger of the two Districts provide a better level of service upriver?

Advancement opportunities, varying levels with dual role that employee could train to. Succession and development will create opportunities.

Increased cross training. Beneficial, cooperatively working

Level of service, depending on staffing model. Medic on an Engine or outlying station

Leadership / succession

Financial – one budget, one structure

Eliminating 5-year operational levy—new tax base.

Response models- low frequency – high risk, high frequency—low risk

Upriver – many see no benefit. With consolidation, WFLFA could have resources responding to outlying areas until those departments respond.

Concerns/challenges – What about a functional consolidation / merger of these agencies is a concern for you? What do you think the major challenges facing a functional consolidation / merger would be?

Who pays for what and who? WFLFA under one? Consolidate, maximizing inventory?

Cross training staff to dual role fire/EMS / training, some single resource, cost. What about those that do not want to be dual role providers, training for those that want to be dual role?

Volunteer association, will this still be available?

Personnel push back. Plan, organize, eliminate the unknown, working that direction to prove it could work down in the future.

Board buy off. Uncertainty of board views of consolidation. Board Directors changing positions. Lack of support for employees.

Organizational chart, chain of command?

Scheduling / Staffing models.

Private ambulance company taking over ASA. Losing ambulance to private down the line. Concern if consolidate, private company taking over ASA.

Administration benefits versus staff benefits. All under same WFLFA benefits versus independent districts.

Duration of time to make benefits same.

Operation Chief balancing time between districts.

Loss of identity / new identity

Marketing (functional consolidation) merger to community.

Losing financial support for high quality medical response; repurposing and becoming more fire centric. (Patient care / patient safety)

Lack of trust. Administration lack of transparency. A lot of unknowns, transparency, more feedback

Crew resource management: staffing models, single role versus dual role, decrease in level of care

Lack of a venue for personnel to give objective opinions on subjects. Zoom meetings, association dinners, more employee meetings.

Cohesion between districts

Dispatch

Potential Timeline

- 1) Enhanced sharing of personnel/resources (1-2 years)
 - a. WLAD, SVFR, and WLFEA continue to exist as they are
 - i. 3 budgets/3 audits/3 Boards
 - b. Establish joint organizational chart, specify chain of command
 - c. Establish joint Policy Manual (Lexipol)
 - d. Prepare for WLAD Levy renewal (May/November 2021)
 - e. Develop and approve a joint strategic plan
 - i. WLFEA goals
 - ii. SVFR or WLAD specific goals
 - f. Cross Training of line personnel
 - i. Fire training for EMS personnel
 - ii. EMS training for Fire personnel
 - g. Facility analysis to determine what is needed to allow staffing of stations 1, 4, and 10 with Fire/EMS personnel
 - h. Combine Collective Bargaining Agreements (non-economic issues)
 - i. Board review and approval to move forward with a Functional Consolidation

- 2) Functional Consolidation (2-3 years)
 - a. All WLAD and SVFR employees/volunteers move to WLFEA
 - b. WLAD and SVFR Districts continue to exist although they have no employees
 - i. Board of Directors for each agency still exist
 - ii. "1" budget (WLFEA) / 3 audits
 - iii. Revenue still comes from SVFR and WLAD taxing Districts
 - c. One Collective Bargaining Agreement
 - d. Begin mixed staffing of personnel
 - i. e.g., ALS Fire Engine
 - e. All firefighter qualified employees on 7(k) exempt schedules, EMS only personnel remain on 40-hour work week.
 - f. Remodel of stations 1, 4, and 10 to allow 24/7 staffing of Fire/EMS crews
 - g. Unify training division with one training Division Chief
 - h. Possible WLAD levy renewal depending on timeline progress (2026)
 - i. Board review and approval to move forward with a Merger
 - j. Begin public awareness campaign if there is a desire to move to Step 3

- 3) Merger
 - a. Dissolve Fire District (must be voter approved)
 - b. Dissolve Health District (must be voter approved)
 - c. Establish Fire/EMS District (WLFEA) with new permanent levy rate (must be voter approved)
 - i. At a current combined levy amount of \$2.3117 (SVFR \$1.5419 + WLAD \$0.7698) or other levy rate established by Board and approved by voters
 1. WLAD Operating levy goes away
 - ii. Establish tax zones (ORS 478.155, 478.480)
 1. Current residents within SVFR District boundary will pay \$2.3117 or higher (\$1.5419 + \$0.7698)
 2. Mapleton and SHDW would only pay for ALS service, \$0.7698 or higher