WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
Regular County Council  
October 7, 2008  

Council Vice-Chair Seth Fleetwood called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.  

Present:  
Barbara Brenner  
Bob Kelly  
Sam Crawford  
Laurie Caskey-Schreiber  
L. Ward Nelson  

Absent:  
Carl Weimer  

FLAG SALUTE  

ANNOUNCEMENTS  

Fleetwood announced there was discussion with Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor Randall Watts regarding pending litigation (AB2008-018) in executive session during the Committee of the Whole meeting.  

SPECIAL PRESENTATION  

1. PRESENTATION TO HAROLD AND JUDY ELDRED AND THE ESSEX FAMILY BY COUNTY EXECUTIVE PETE KREMEN (AB2008-017)  

Pete Kremen, County Executive, stated they've been working on this a long time. He recognizes Parks and Recreation Department Director Mike McFarlane for his efforts to facilitate this land donation on the northwest shore of Lummi Island. He thanked Harold and Judy Eldred for their generosity to the people of Whatcom County. He presented Harold and Judy Eldred and Wes and Ernestine Essex with plaques in appreciation of their generosity and support to Whatcom County.  

Harold Eldred, citizen, stated he purchased the property at an auction at the courthouse 35 years ago. He always intended to give the property back to the County so the public can use this beach. Donating the land makes him happy.  

OPEN SESSION  

The following people spoke:  

Dr. Marvin Wayne, Whatcom Medic One Medical Program Director, stated the Council has a request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344). The State designated the medical program director position with the responsibility to assure that all the citizens in the county receive the highest quality emergency medical care they can provide. He has
done this for 35 years. The system is unique. The City and County are totally integrated from first response, to the emergency medical technician (EMT) team, to the paramedic. The team is one to be proud of.

He is not taking sides on the issues, but is providing functional information. The process of becoming a paramedic requires education, experience, assurance, and reassurance of the care they’re providing. In addition, they must provide compassionate care and be caring. That is the hallmark of the Whatcom EMS system. Education, wherever that takes place, requires that the paramedics must come back so people can be reassured by a written, functional field assessment. They need to play together and work together. They must all be part of one team. He supports an integrated, functional team.

Robert Wilson, International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Local 106 President, stated the Union issue has been solved. The Union arbitrator said Fire District 7 paramedics should be members of Local 106.

He was a nonvoting member on the group that worked on the 2005 emergency medical services (EMS) recommended plan. He supported and signed the plan, because the first priority was to maintain a unified countywide emergency medical service. It provides the most cost-effective method to provide EMS services to the people of the county.

A vote of yes on the request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344) would fracture the system and would create one stand-alone unit. Vote no on the interlocal agreement. Direct the EMS workers to get back together. All come together in a pool of paramedics.

Rich Kittinger, 1117 East Beachview Place, Bellingham, stated he is a Whatcom Medic One paramedic and serves on the IAFF Local 106 Executive Board. He has a concern about effects of a request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344). It would cost more and be a duplication of efforts.

Willy Spalding, 2200 Williams Street, Bellingham, stated they aren’t opposed to having Fire District 7 staff serve as Whatcom Medic One paramedics. All firefighters in the county should be able to work under the umbrella of Whatcom Medic One in a unified system. Request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344).

Patrick Alesse, 4825 Alderson Rd, Birch Bay, submitted a handout on the results of his speed limit survey in Birch Bay (on file). The Birch Bay Steering Committee recommends a speed limit of 25 miles per hour all year. However, other areas such as school zones and the freeways through cities adjust their speed limits.

Regarding the request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344), look at the marginal costs of putting another unit in Bellingham compared with the cost of an initial unit at Fire District 7. Also look at administrative costs that would be added to Fire District
7. Birch Bay residents never had a choice. They had to join Fire District 3. Here, the Fire District wants its own emergency medical unit. The system works well with Bellingham.

Don Payton, Bellingham Fire Department firefighter and paramedic, stated he has worked for the Bellingham Fire District for 24 years. Patient care and service delivery will suffer if the Council approves the request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344). An isolated medic unit will leave the learning curve isolated. Local 106 has worked out a refined system to train and mentor new medics. It would fracture the system, which wouldn’t work as well as a unified system. Don’t vote to use taxpayer dollars to train paramedics outside the system, duplicate what is already in place, and begin the process of isolating medic five.

Dennis Jones, 1487 Sudden Valley, stated the proposed memorandum of agreement with the State Department of Natural Resources for the purpose of preparing an inter-grant exchange and subsequent re-conveyance proposal for a transfer of lands within and adjoining the Lake Whatcom Watershed Reservoir for park purposes pursuant to RCW 79.22.300 (AB2008-074A) is an opportunity for everyone to pool together. People will attack the plan and try to bring it down. This is a rare opportunity from the State. They don’t want to see housing in that area. They want sustainable forestry. He is in favor of the reconveyance.

Bob Busch, Fire District 11 Commissioner and Firefighter, EMS Council Member, and Fire Commissioners Association of Whatcom County President, stated the Council has a request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344). He has the greatest respect for the firefighters of Whatcom County and Local 106, but has a problem with their politics. This started when Bellingham decided to completely pull out of the EMS business in the county. That left the County stranded. It had to come up with a plan fast. They did. He didn’t find out about the conflict with the Union until the levy passed in the election. He’s positive that the Commissioner’s Association and Chief’s Association would have campaigned against this program had they known about this ahead of time. The levy would have lost. He doesn’t know of any paramedic education programs available in Whatcom County at present. Approve the request. They don’t ever want to leave Whatcom County unprotected again.

Dawn Cannizzaro, Whatcom County Emergency Medical Services And Trauma Care Council President, stated she is a registered nurse at St. Joseph Hospital and a Fire District 17 EMT and firefighter. Personally, she supports sending the Fire District 17 crew to Harborview Medical Center and the fifth medic unit at Fire District 7 per the plan. Request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344).

Jerry Martin, Fire District 7 EMS Division Chief, stated he asks for support to send firefighters to paramedic training at Harborview Medical Center. They are working very hard to meet the requirements of the plan. There is no paramedic training in Whatcom County right now to meet the timeline of the plan. Local 3855 has been put on notice that they would not get a fair evaluation for paramedic training in Whatcom County. Seattle was the only option. The University of Washington, Harborview Medical Center, and the Seattle Fire Department have been very gracious in letting them train down there. The King County
Medic One Foundation gifted them $100,000-worth of free paramedic training. Ten months of training takes these firefighters away from their families, yet keeps their obligation to County residents. Fire District 7 is committed to following the EMS plan.

It is insulting that Union and Local 106 politics may interfere with the future patient care in Whatcom County, by stating the fifth unit at Fire District 7 will fracture the system. That isn’t true. The cost of services will be there. It costs about $300,000 per year less to run a medic service system than the City. Their claims about training and equipment and less flexibility are untrue and unfounded. Currently there are 16 fire districts and two municipal fire departments providing basic life support (BLS) service. These are all the backbone of EMS in Whatcom County. Advanced life support (ALS) in Whatcom County includes Bellingham Fire District, Airlift Northwest, and Rural/Metro. Please vote for the request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344).

Gary Russell, Fire District 7 Chief, stated this request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344) is about a contract with one government unit to another. The paramedics are in Seattle being trained and they’re not coming home until the training is complete. They are following a plan embodied by ordinances, resolutions, and a vote of the public. The funding model is presented in that plan. Fire District 7 is stated as the agency to provide the personnel, supervision, and management of that unit. All the agencies and groups can come together to provide an integrated system. That’s what they have today. It won’t be any different. The fifth unit goes everywhere, and is a fifth resource for the system. All the equipment is the same. The training is the only issue, because they’ve been blocked from taking training in Whatcom County because of the Union issue. The difference is that they’ve been able to overcome the issues to keep the plan on track. They won’t have the bloated bureaucracy of the City of Bellingham, which Whatcom Medic One is paying for. He doesn’t attack Bellingham or Medic One for what they charge. They’ve committed to the County. The only people being affected are the employees. Those in the county need to come together and provide for an integrated, unified system. That will happen, regardless. King County has five different departments who provide ALS coverage. The real issue is that county firefighters will only become medics if they are Local 106 members. This is a Union issue. Elected officials, not labor groups, need to make those decisions.

Crawford stated not all councilmembers are present at this meeting tonight. He asked how a potential Council delay for two weeks would affect the training. Russell stated (inaudible). They are committed to pay the bill and complete training. If something falls apart in the future, there isn’t anything they can do. The City’s unified system is really a monopoly. This plan was a fallback and safety net for county citizens. The system will run out of money again in the future. When it does, Fire District 7 will be able to step in and provide ALS coverage.

Colin Lowin, Bellingham, stated he urges the Council to table the vote on the request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344) until all councilmembers are present. Fire District 7 has forced the County Council to make a decision. They are all under pressure because they’ve chosen to take on this fifth medic unit and move it to a Seattle class. A local paramedic class will begin January 2008. Chief
Russell mentioned that King County has five different departments. However, they are working under one system and one administration. Vote against the request if they don’t table it. He is a Bellingham firefighter.

Gary Barr, Lynden Fire Department Chief and Whatcom County Chief’s Association President, stated he urges the Council to pass the request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344). Fire District 7 is not the only one that has tried to put paramedics out there. It has been blessed by the entire county, and the County Chief’s Association. Moving the plan forward was originally approved unanimously. He commends the District Chief for moving forward. From the beginning, the EMS Advisory Board picked Fire District 7 because it had the most available personnel to put through medic school. They encourage the fire district as much as possible. Approve the request.

Linda McShane, 1711 Eagle Ridge Drive, Bellingham, stated she is a county resident. She read a letter she sent to the Bellingham Herald as a letter to the editor. The request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344) needs to get settled for the benefit of the county. Everyone deserves live-saving care, no matter who provides it. She doesn’t understand the situation, and doesn’t care. Settle it for the benefit of county residents.

Ed Henken, 6960 Northwest Road, Ferndale, stated the City of Bellingham was going to pull all Medic One services from the county four years ago. That’s why it became a voter issue. They will have to continue to support District 7 and training county firefighters. If they don’t, they will have to set up a different oversight system that allows the County Council to be part of the oversight system as well as the rural fire districts. Don’t just turn it over to Bellingham to decide on what is prudent for the County. He supports Fire District 7 and the request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344).

Mike Murphy, Fire District 7 Commissioner, stated the Council should honor Whatcom County voters with a vote to approve the request for approval for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Fire District 7 for the provision of paramedic training in the amount of $331,300 (AB2008-344).

CONSENT AGENDA

Nelson moved to approve Consent Agenda items one and two.

(Clerk’s Note: End of tape one, side A.)

Nelson reported for the Finance and Administrative Services Committee.

Motion carried unanimously.

1. REQUEST APPROVAL FOR THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT FOR SERVICES BETWEEN WHATCOM COUNTY AND NORTHWEST HYDRAULIC CONSULTANTS FOR FEMA FLOODPLAIN MAPPING IN THE AMOUNT OF $616,000 (AB2008-345)
2. RESOLUTION TO SET HEARING AND NOTICE OF HEARING TO SELL TAX TITLE PROPERTY BY PUBLIC AUCTION (AB2008-346)

OTHER ITEMS

1. REQUEST APPROVAL FOR THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE TO ENTER INTO AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN WHATCOM COUNTY AND FIRE DISTRICT 7 FOR THE PROVISION OF PARAMEDIC TRAINING IN THE AMOUNT OF $331,300 (AB2008-344)

Nelson reported for the Finance and Administrative Services Committee and moved to approve the agreement.

Crawford asked if they can delay this for two weeks to wait for all councilmembers to be present.

Caskey-Schreiber stated she agrees with Councilmember Crawford. Right now, she would like more consensus. She will not support the expenditure right now. The language put to the voters didn’t say anything about dividing the service or that the service may move to county districts. The Council passed a resolution to put it on the ballot. That resolution indicated that a unified countywide emergency medical service is in the best interest of the people of Whatcom County. Until they get to that point, she would rather delay the decision than have it fail with a vote of 3-3. She asked if they will really win if the Union breaks apart and they won’t work together as they should.

Brenner stated making all these statements isn’t appropriate if they are going to table the issue. She is against delaying the vote. People in this community are scared and have been terrified into thinking that the system will be fractured. It was in the plan. She read the plan. The plan said the unit would be in District 7 in Ferndale. Nothing about the Union came up until afterward. This isn’t a union plan, it’s a public plan. It’s important to move in this direction. She won’t be afraid of District 7’s training if something happens to her. The plan was unified. Everyone said they agreed with it. Now there is an issue about how Fire District 7 can’t do this. The Bellingham Fire Department does a great job. If there is any fracture, it’s not going to come from this request. To change anything in the plan should be put before a vote of the people. She is in favor of the plan as presented.

Fleetwood stated they all need to work together and settle this. He will consider releasing the money to Fire District 7 if the parties agree to sit down, work together on this issue, and negotiate in good faith. If one side nominally wins this evening, the other side will feel like it lost. It will only cause more bad feelings and won’t bring people together. The Council has an opportunity to exert some pressure on both parties to come to the table and negotiate in good faith. The firefighters can go to Harborview and benefit from this money, and then come back to Bellingham and be assimilated in some fashion.

Crawford stated he generally agrees with Councilmember Brenner. However, delaying this won’t harm anything. They will have all councilmembers present to vote.

Kelly stated he has gone back and forth on this issue. He is in favor of delaying the vote. They need to make a policy decision at some point about whether or not the County Council is going to support someone getting trained. At face value, that’s a good thing. He
hoped for and looked for guidance on how this thing should look. He doesn't see that. Work toward a model for the future that everyone can fit into, regardless of this vote.

Fleetwood stated a fundamental dispute is the definition of what constitutes a unified system. That needs to be settled. His one condition is that the parties sit down and settle.

Nelson stated the model is the EMS plan that was put out to the public. They must have a sustainable model. The original problem was not with Local 106. The City of Bellingham said it would not work in the county. That's a scary situation to be in. He is really upset that the County has to get involved in Union issues and territories. He feels obligated and torn. The City of Bellingham and firefighters have done an excellent job and met the challenges. The treatment and care model has to be unified, as does the training. He will support abiding by what the voters voted on and approved.

Caskey-Schreiber stated she concurs with Councilmember Fleetwood. The entities need to work together. She understands the need for a backup provider, but they don't have to compete. She has not spoken to either side in depth. What was on the ballot said nothing about this kind of division.

*Crawford moved* to hold in Council for two weeks.

*Motion carried 5-1 with Brenner opposed.*

2. REPORT ON COMMITTEE DISCUSSION REGARDING AN APPLICATION FILED BY FREEDOM 2000, LLC, TO PROVIDE CURBSIDE RECYCLING IN POINT ROBERTS (THE UTC HAS REQUESTED THAT THE COUNCIL COMMENT ON THE APPLICATION) (AB2008-210A)

*Brenner* reported for the Public Works and Safety Committee and **moved** to send a letter to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission saying the County Council has no objection to moving the application forward.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

3. AMENDMENT TO THE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN WHATCOM COUNTY AND THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM FOR THE PURPOSE OF ANNEXATION OF APPROXIMATELY 265 ACRES IN THE VICINITY OF PACIFIC HIGHWAY AND ALDRICH ROAD (AB2008-347)

*Fleetwood* reported for the Planning and Development Committee and **moved** to approve the amendment.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

4. CONFIRMATION OF THE EXECUTIVE’S APPOINTMENT OF PAUL SCHISSLER TO THE PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (AB2008-348)

*Brenner moved* to confirm the appointment.

*Motion carried unanimously.*
INTRODUCTION ITEMS

Brenner moved to accept the Introduction Items, including the substitute for item one and the first and second substitute for item five.

Motion carried unanimously.

1. ORDINANCE AMENDING WHATCOM COUNTY CODE TITLE 20 TO ESTABLISH DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR THE INSTALLATION OF WIND ENERGY SYSTEMS IN WHATCOM COUNTY (AB2008-270A)

2. ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE WHATCOM COUNTY SIX YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE 2009-2014 PLANNING PERIOD (AB2008-349) (THIS ORDINANCE WILL BE ADOPTED ON THE SAME EVENING AS THE 2009-2010 WHATCOM COUNTY BUDGET)

3. ORDINANCE AMENDING THE 2008 WHATCOM COUNTY BUDGET, ELEVENTH REQUEST, IN THE AMOUNT OF $304,598 (AB2008-350)

4. RESOLUTION TO SELL TAX TITLE PROPERTY BY PUBLIC AUCTION (AB2008-346A) (HEARING TO BE SCHEDULED)

5. ORDINANCE AMENDING WHATCOM COUNTY CODE 2.78, SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AB2008-343) (amended version – pink)

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

REPORTS AND OTHER ITEMS FROM COUNCILMEMBERS

Crawford stated he attended his first State Transportation Improvement Board meeting in Chelan as a board member. Coincidentally, Whatcom County had an application for the improvements on Yew Street Road. It was a contentious vote, but it passed. He commended Public Works Director Frank Abart and Engineering Manager Jim Karcher for well-representing Whatcom County.

Nelson distributed articles on health care access and healthcare costs.

Caskey-Schreiber asked Councilmember Crawford if he has any clout, as a State Transportation Improvement Board member, to get Amtrak up the center of I-5.

Crawford stated he does not.

He asked how they are going to communicate with the Growth Management Coordinating Council (GMCC). For example, the Coordinating Council voted on a population projection. County Councilmembers would like to know about those developments. They are supposed to be reporting back.
Fleetwood stated he would schedule an agenda item on the first Council meeting after the first Wednesday of the month, which is when that council meets, to have a brief full Council update on the (GMCC).

Crawford stated it's important to make sure all the councilmembers know what the GMCC is doing. This is to give staff some direction on a proposal to the County Council. That's when the County Council will deliberate.

Crawford stated there is a Peaceful Valley Water District tour and meeting, hosted by Kendall Watch at 10 a.m. on October 11. Health Department, Planning Department, and Sheriff's Office staff will attend, as will the County Executive.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription

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