



FIRE-EMS CONSOLIDATION WORKING GROUP (CWG)

Official Meeting Minutes

January 26, 2022

Full video record of minutes is available online at www.jeffco.net

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Dustin Miller at 5:33 p.m. on Wednesday, January 26, 2022 at Jefferson County Fire District 1, 765 SE 5th Street in Madras, Oregon.

II. Roll Call of Members

Members: (13 Members present; Quorum reached)

P	Rick Allen, Co-Chair	P	Bob Buckner
P	Dustin Miller, Co-Chair	P	Mat Felton
P	Janet Brown, Exec Comm	P	Mack Gardner
P	Mark Carman, Exec Comm	P	Gretchen Schlie [for Jake Schwab]
P	Jeff Rasmussen, Exec Comm	P	Kim Stout
P	Mike Ahern	P	Susan Stovall
P	Devon Bowen		

Others:

Ben Ochs (Meeting Facilitator); Lysa Vattimo (Meeting Recorder).

Guests:

In person: Bob Keefer (SDAO); Kasey Skaar (JCFD1); Mike Lepin (JCEMS); Fire Chief Jeff Blake; Marc Heckathorn (Jefferson County Sheriff).

On Zoom: George Dunkel (SDAO); Kirk; Joe Parrott; Hilario Diaz; Nancy Diaz; David Ris.

III. Old Business

A. Approval of January 5, 2022 Minutes

MOTION: To approve the meeting minutes from the January 5th meeting.

MOVED: Mark Carman

SECONDED: Janet Brown

AYES: Members Allen, Bowen, Buckner, Felton, Gardner, Miller, Schlie, Stout, and Stovall

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: Members Rasmussen and Ahern were not present for the motion.

PASSED: Unanimously, 11/0

IV. Review Summary Results of Interviews with Staff and Volunteers

Bob Keefer, SDAO shared summary results from interviews with staff and volunteers from both the fire department and EMS agency (see January 26, 2022 meeting packet). Performing these interviews provided staff and volunteers an opportunity to express their concerns and feelings about the consolidation. What SDAO discovered is that staff and

volunteers are excited, understanding about the process and looking forward to the future. They were a great group of people to interview and it was time well spent. The number one priority for leaders is going to be communication. Clear, consistent communication not only with the community but with staff and volunteers.

Mr. Keefer interviewed eight staff (four from each agency) and one group of volunteers. The group was very honest and upfront with each other. He reviewed some of the responses to the interview questions with the Committee. (The full memorandum is included in the January 26, 2022 meeting packet.)

Q1. What are the greatest benefits from combining agencies?

Agency/Community: Consistency and continuity in service delivery are important to the success.

Q2. What concerns you about the merger (personal, agencies and community)?

1. **Volunteers:** There was a lot of passion expressed around the volunteers and how they are connected to the community and their support of this community over the years.
2. **Expectations:** Can the expectations really be met (e.g., 24/7 coverage in Culver, etc.). Communicating with staff on data collection, planning, etc., will be important.
3. **Combining Cultures:** People want to make it happen; combining cultures and operational expectations will be important for a smooth consolidation.

Q3. From your perspective, what does a successful merger look like?

Improved response time with consistent quality care and service. Better serve the public with benchmarks and measurables. A combined district with adequate facilities, equipment and staffing. It was recognized that this might take awhile, but it's something that can be measured.

Q4. If you were king or queen for the day, what is the one most important thing you would do to make this successful?

Build trust with the people involved and with the community.

Q5. Working within a team, how can you as an individual help make it successful?

Be patient. There are a lot of steps involved; a lot of people involved; it's complicated; show grace. Work together and focus on the benefits to the community.

V. Update on Combined Agency Service Delivery Plan

Incoming Fire Chief Jeff Blake stated that he has been meeting regularly with Chiefs Lepin and Skaar to develop ideas at a high level (definitely not in the weeds at this point). He shared a first attempt at an organizational chart (see Attachment A). In the model they have been working on, some staff would be 24/7, others would stay on day shift. He noted that a lot of training will be needed to reach this model. On the org chart he noted that the Fire Marshal position is vacant right now but it has been identified as a need in the community.

He shared that the high volume of EMS transfers is a threat to the EMS side of the business. In 2021, JCEMS provided 819 transfers, which equates to an average of 2.2/day or 68.25/month. This rendered them out-of-service for our community 6.5 hours every day. This threat is occurring all over Central Oregon. He is involved with Central Oregon Fire Chiefs who are uniting together to address this issue and having discussions with St. Charles.

As of July 1, 2022, he stated that there will be a medic at the Madras fire station and Captains will be on 24 hour shifts. Because they don't have all the data yet, they will not be able to commit to the high-level, 24-hour coverage in Culver. Units will have to be moved around the district based on call volume data. It's impossible to predict emergency calls and transfers, but volume is not going to go down. Handling the first calls are not a problem, it's handling the second and third calls. Scheduling non-emergent transfers is an idea that can be discussed to help districts better manage resources.

Bob Buckner encouraged Chief Blake to include Chief Colfels from Lake Chinook Fire & Rescue in this process as their area continues to grow.

Mack Gardner asked if there is a financial detriment to EMS transfers over and above deployment issues.

Chief Blake responded that 65% of EMS transfers are non-emergent and there is a significant loss of revenue on those. While it is a service to the community, it is being done at a significant loss, both financially and at a reduction in emergency response resources.

He went on to share some of the other things the three Chiefs have been evaluating with regard to a consolidation (training, work schedules, building space, etc.). The Fire District has an agreement with the Bureau of Land Management for space in the Madras station, so beginning July 1st, they will need to be moved (potentially to the EMS station). It's important to the two consolidating agencies that they have their crews together so they can begin training, getting to know each other, and begin building the new culture. One idea they are considering is combining the Admin staff together at the Fire District in March. They've also discussed starting daily Fire-EMS training beginning in March-April to a) establish baselines; and b) provide every shift the opportunity to train together. They recognize there is value in the possibility of mixing a firefighter and single-role EMT on an ambulance. Another opportunity they are reviewing is merging their two radio frequencies into one while maintaining both channels so one can be used for high-risk incidents and the other can be used for their dispatch or routine calls. This will improve communications and safety.

They've also been reviewing the budget and how they can equalize salaries over the long-term; if there's cost savings by combining insurances; payroll; how the actual processes will function since they will be functioning as a consolidated department, but not fully consolidated, etc. They are also applying for SAFER grant to gain additional staffing and improve staffing rotations. Because they are working towards reducing redundancies with this consolidation, that should benefit their chances for the grant.

They are also working on improving their student program. They increased tuition reimbursement, got a vehicle donated for the students to drive back and forth to school in Bend, and increased the students' shift responsibilities and expectations. Some of the students will be moving their living quarters out of the Madras station and into the Tracy house. They're looking to add six more students.

March 3, 2022 from 3:30 – 6:30 pm there will be an Open House at the Fire Station in partnership with JCEMS to swear in the new Fire Chief and answer questions about the proposed consolidation.

Chief Skaar stated that he feels very good about the progress that's being made.

VI. Discuss Public Communication on Combining Agencies

Ben Ochs stated that it's very important to get ahead of informing the public. An external communication sub-group will be led by Susan Stovall, Janet Brown, Mack Gardner and Rick Allen in conjunction with Chief Blake. A separate sub-group led by Chiefs Blake, Skaar and Lepin will formulate internal communication. It's important that the message(s) be consistent between the sub-groups, on websites, etc. They can be adjusted to the individual groups without changing the fundamental messages. It's important to be aware of incorrect messages getting out so they can be corrected. Frequency and quantity of messaging is important (not too much, not too little). Messaging should begin soon.

- Who do we want to reach?
 - Stakeholders (City/County/Unincorporated Area governing agencies; Medical Community; Rural areas; school boards).
- What do we want to achieve by communicating?
 - Educate them so they don't make things up themselves
 - Reassure them that this will benefit them (reduce fear and worry)
 - Make them aware of what is happening and the timeline
 - Gain credibility by being transparent
 - Build Interest/Support/Excitement (rally)
- What we are going to do in order to achieve it?
 - Press releases; social media; community group meetings; mailers; association meetings (Latino, Seniors, etc.); websites; flyers; Chamber newsletter; Fire station open houses.
- How will we gauge/evaluate our success?
 - Formal process is unnecessary

Mack Gardner asked if there would be designated spokespeople.

Ben Ochs and Rick Allen responded that Chiefs will be speaking for their departments and the Chairs will be speaking for this group; but there are people on this committee who represent groups, areas, committees, etc., who will be equipped to be spokespeople for their areas. With the materials developed, everyone should be able to answer the fundamentals and lead people to resources.

VII. Additional Comments or Announcements

Susan Stovall asked if there will be a new logo.

Chief Blake responded that the group has been mindful of respecting history and what the public wants. It's important to note there are costs associated with putting new logos on vehicles, uniforms, etc. There will be a right time to do that in the future.

Rick Allen asked if there is a legal process for consolidating equipment, assets, etc.

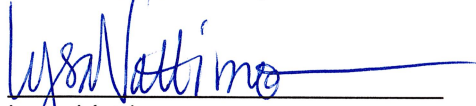
George Dunkel responded that those legal issues will be included in the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). The draft IGA will be presented to the Executive Committee, then to Legal. He reminded the committee that both entities will still exist on July 1st when the functional consolidation is formed.

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for February 23rd at 5:30 at Jefferson County Fire District 1. There will be an Executive Committee meeting on February 9th at 3:00 pm at the County Annex.

VIII. Adjourn

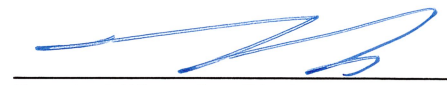
Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:



Lysa Vattimo

Reviewed By:



Dustin Miller, Co-Chair

ATTACHMENT A – DRAFT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

July, 2022
 Jefferson County Fire and Rescue
 Organizational Chart

