

Regular Meeting Minutes
Spokane Regional Emergency Communications Governing Board
September 5, 2019

1. Call to Order and Roll Call 7:30 a.m.

Chief Brian Asmus called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. The following Board members were in attendance:

Board Members

Chief Shawn Arold – Spokane Valley Fire Department
Chief Brian Asmus (Vice Chair) – Liberty Lake Police Department
Cody Rohrbach – Spokane County Fire District 3
Randy Johnson – Spokane County Fire District 4 (via phone)
Chief Mark Werner – Spokane Valley Police Department
Gerry Gemmill – Spokane County

Staff

Lori Markham, Executive Director
Tim Henry, Finance Manager
Bob Schwent, Technical Services Manager
Cherell Yates, Office Manager

Auxiliary Partners / Guests

Assistant Chief Howard Johnson, Spokane County Fire District 4
Tonya Wallace, Spokane County
Tessa Anderson, Spokane County
Laura McAloon, McAloon Law Offices (via phone)

2. Finance Workshop

Tonya Wallace explained the two biggest differences between the model presented last week and previous projections are changes in personnel costs and revenue projections. The largest difference is in the original 2019 projected budget revenue from the 911 excise tax.

A large difference in the personnel costs difference is the 13.5% vacancy rate used in the concept model versus a 4.2% used in the most previous projection. Other differences were in projected benefit costs and the additional costs for y-rating employees. The vacancy rate does effect user fees and operating expenditures. The Board agreed that a 13.5% vacancy rate is reasonable for 2020. Tonya reminded the Board there is roughly a \$500,000 operating reserve and the initial cost of y-rating will even out over the next 2-3 years. Gerry Gemmill reminded the Board that the driving force in forming SREC was for the service levels. Cody Rohrbach concurred with Gerry Gemmill and stated that the highlight is the service level enhancements and the money will even out once we get beyond start up.

Cody Rohrbach explained there are continued discussions with the City of Spokane regarding the CCC (Combined Communications Center) reserve funds which is roughly \$4M. Tonya Wallace clarified that the base used for the original 2019 budget of 911 wireless excise tax was too high, which results in the roughly \$750,000 drop in the 2020 projection. The additional significant difference of roughly \$1M is in the vacancy rate of 13.5% in the first projection versus the 4.25% rate used in last week's presentation. There is also a cost difference of roughly an additional \$500,000 in 2020 for personnel cost versus what was originally projected. This is due to y-rating employees as well as an increase in benefit cost than originally projected. Tonya Wallace added the 2020 budget does not assume COLA adjustments. Gerry Gemmill stressed the importance of being prudent moving forward and controlling labor costs.

Cody Rohrbach stated the process regarding response times will change slowly as processes and training are phased in, which includes technology and personnel. Gerry Gemmill stated the importance of using your current assets to full capacity before making new investments. Bob Schwent reminded the Board that a current radio audit is being done to that end.

Randy Johnson asked if it is wise to build an operating budget based on being understaffed. Additionally, can those additional funds from not being fully staffed be used to build the operational reserves, rather than using user fees to fund the reserves. Tessa Anderson explained that is an option, but recommended to keep the vacancy rate where it is, which will most likely still be underspent. Lori Markham explained the radio salaries are being paid for by the 1/10th tax, following the priorities set for the spending of the 1/10th funds. Tessa Anderson stated radio ancillary services will be billed to agencies, particularly pertaining to Spokane County. The picture will be clearer when the capital improvement plan is presented.

Mark Werner asked what the current vacancies are in Fire Dispatch. Lori Markham explained the goal is to have 18 Fire personnel once the transition from 24-hour shift, to 12-hour shifts is complete, but that will take time. Cody Rohrbach asked what the benefits of moving to 12-hour shifts are. Lori Markham explained the benefit of moving to 12-hour shifts is that SREC employees, once cross trained will have the ability to dispatch and assist with all disciplines, built in overtime will be reduced and it is better for the overall health of the employees. Cody Rohrbach asked what the budget will look like over the next 3-5 years, as vacancy rates go down, y-rating normalizes, and operational reserves are built. Lori Markham explained the benefits of integration and highest levels of service will take time as employees get trained and processes changed, we are just getting started.

Tonya Wallace and Tessa Anderson will bring a finalized budget to the meeting scheduled for Thursday, September 13, 2019 for the Board's approval. If approved the budget will be brought to the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) for the meeting scheduled on Monday, September 23, 2019. Gerry Gemmill recommend Board members be present for the BoCC meeting on September 23rd.

Cody Rohrbach stated he would like to see the user fee calculations and how they are calculated so he is able to explain it to his Board; including the reasoning behind the 45/55 split between Law Enforcement and Fire Services. In the near future he would like to see an explanation of the benefits of 12-hour shifts versus 24-hour shifts.


3. Open/Public Comment

No public comment.

4. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 a.m.

The next Special Governing Board meeting is scheduled for September 13, 2019 at 7:30 a.m.



Board Member
Governing Board



Board Member
Governing Board