



Eugene-Springfield Fire Governance Review Panel

SWOT Analysis of Comments

PURPOSE

Project staff have sought feedback on the status of the Eugene-Springfield Functional Consolidation throughout February and March 2022 from the Governance Review Panel members, elected officials, and staff. This document provides a summary of major takeaways from this feedback, a report of the feedback received, as well as a high-level Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the Functional Consolidation.

MAJOR TAKEAWAYS

The following Major Takeaway themes have emerged:

Governance Considerations

It is important that we not keep patching the merger together but really evaluate what is a sustainable structure moving forward for the next 30 years; fair and equitable voice for all stakeholders; staying up-to-date on options; Councils set fire policy; need a strategic plan and long term sustainability; cities should have fire departments.

Operational Considerations

ESF currently has a complicated governance structure with two budgets, pay and benefits for employees, technology, etc.; ESF is so dependent on everything working the right way, but it is precarious with all of the complexities; services are streamlined and efficient with a structure that can take us into the future; need to simplify the system and structure; chief can't be the mediator between the two cities.

Financial Considerations

Stakeholders are committed to being transparent about the financial implications of all options analyzed and being efficient with public dollars; ESF is not currently benefitting from economies of scale due to supply chain issues; each city is not contributing equal share.

Political Climate

ESF is functioning as well as it is currently because the two city managers and councils have a positive working relationship—this has not always been the case and may not always be the case; we should be aware of the current alignments and differences of opinion between the jurisdictions and their councils; some people may think a district was promised.



Staffing Challenges

Employees are seeking more clarity and direction; some employees do not have confidence about the future of the department(s); employee recruitment and retention is a challenge; Employees need to have equity, feel a part of a team; service needs to be sustainable.

FEEDBACK RECORD

The following is a record of the feedback received through the end of March 2022.

- What is the cost to taxpayers per firefighter per year?
- How are staff and folks who put their lives on the line experiencing this? How are neighbors experiencing it? Important lens to look at this equitably.
- What are the “rubs” created by the fact that the cities do things differently that create challenges we need to overcome? At the end, we can make good decisions about governance models that will address problems best/most efficiently. Make people and employees safer in doing the job by being more coordinated.
- This has been a team effort from day one with vision to provide better service while controlling costs. Believe finishing this is the right thing to do/right direction. No one right answer but hopeful we will be diligent and thoughtful in this process.
- 2020 fires scary for this community. Hope we can achieve clarity and certainty for this group.
- Governance Review Panel members noted that, prior to functional consolidation, the fire department experienced issues as separate departments (e.g. the fire departments both carried hose adapters because the hoses did not connect); requested more information about response reliability; and expressed interest in learning more about the current challenges and stress points.
- Most of the information so far about the nature of the issue is information we already had although some of the details are new. A lot of information not presented yet will go into decision-making, e.g. laws around what some of the options look like. Roundtable portions of this will be more important once we get to that information.
- Helpful to go over how the organization operates to give a base understanding. Level of detail was good – learned some new things. Agree that as we get deeper into this, information we will get will be what we need to make decisions. Hard to make those decisions without knowing how the system works.
- We should be asking these hard questions now. The merger was originally successful because there was alignment on how to make it happen between the two Chiefs at the time. It is currently working thanks to the positive relationships between the City managers and Councils.



- Questions will arise and be dependent upon the financial information, options, and risks/benefits presented.
- Discussions of authentic and long-term efficiencies gained and/or lost will be important to understand.
- Public's perception of current fire service levels is positive. Most people likely believe that the merger was a good thing that has already happened and is complete.
- Most compelling reasons to change current governance structure include: finalization of shared operations; cost and savings; more efficient and less strained administration and labor relations; financial efficiencies; need for single reporting and single budget.
- Concerns around creating a new governance structure include: that it will take a long time; ensuring citizens that the Cities are aware of their concerns and that they want good service; transparency of where the money is being spent; that the Chief needs to be hired/chosen by both cities; that the employee experience needs to be positive; that there is parity between the cities; that there is flexibility and growth in specialization; that the cities need to have oversight of services; and that there needs to be continual operational efficiencies gained and maintained.
- Concerns about the process include: territorial and adversarial; that one city should not make the decision; that the process could take decades; that it should not end up with a foregone conclusion; that egos will be challenging; that it doesn't get bogged down in how we got here – no finger pointing, no pre-conceived notions; that the decision needs to be thoughtful, thinking about unintended consequences without moving too fast to just get it done.
- Some challenges for the fire department best practice governance discussion include: differences of opinion regarding the Special District option; financial controls, address ambulance service; no Special District – compression and distance between taxing authority and electeds, people won't know who to talk to; no Special District – revenue streams siloed and voters would be unhappy because cities should provide essential services; perceptions may not be grounded in fact.
- What success could look like: moving forward and building structures for the future; everyone is satisfied with outcome; service is functioning at its best and employees have what they need/are taken care of; need to land on a decision, but need an offramp if it isn't going well; there needs to be clear guidance for both cities and they need clarity on roles and responsibilities; and employees know the future of the Department.
- Potential barriers to success include: people are messy, need to lay groundwork; some have different ideas on governance; both communities see it differently; fear of unknown; trust issues between cities; can't be a political issue – need to do what's right for the community and the department(s).



SWOT ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats—or SWOT—Analysis, helps organizations to assess what is working well and what needs improvement. **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** are internal, or things within an organization’s control (such as facilities and internal operations). **Opportunities** and **Threats** are typically external things an organization does not control, but which may affect it positively or negatively (such as changes in laws or natural disasters). A SWOT Analysis is also commonly referred to as an Environmental Scan.

The following SWOT Analysis incorporates key themes derived from Governance Review Panel discussions in the first three meetings and other feedback from elected officials and staff throughout February and March 2022.



<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team effort/vision to provide better service while controlling costs • Functional Consolidation solved some issues of separate departments • Original success of merger due to alignment of Chiefs at the time; current alignment/positive relationship between Councils and City Managers • Services are streamlined and efficient with a structure that can take us into the future • Stakeholders are committed to transparency and efficiency with public dollars 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clarity/certainty/direction • ESF dependent on everything working the right way (precarious) • Persistent issues relating to current Functional Consolidation • Administration, human resources and operations are strained, complex • Employees do not have confidence about future Department(s) • Need to simplify system and structure (two budgets, employee pay and benefits, technology, etc.) • Employees have different structures, benefits, etc. • Difficulty recruiting and retaining staff • ESF is not benefitting from economies of scale • Employees need to have equity and feel part of a team
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make good/thoughtful decision about governance that addresses problems efficiently without moving too fast to just get it done • Make people and employees safer by being more coordinated • Evaluate what is a sustainable structure moving forward for next 30 years • Ask hard questions now • Discussion of authentic and long-term efficiencies • Greater understanding of financial information, legal analysis, risks/benefits of each option for decision making • Keep fairness and equity (staff, community members) in mind • Cost savings and operational efficiencies gained • Single reporting structure and single budget • Give employees more confidence about future Department(s) • Take care of employees/give employees what they need • Parity between cities • See ourselves as one large metro area • Strategic plan and long-term sustainability • Everyone satisfied with the outcome • Service that functions at its best • Clear guidance for cities, more clarity on roles and responsibilities • Vision for the department(s) 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply chain issues preventing economies of scale • How ESF operates is precarious due to complexities • Differences of opinions between the jurisdictions and their councils (success depends on alignments) • Public perception – believe that merger is complete • This process could take decades • Cities have different definitions of level of service and service expectations, see this process differently, trust issues • Territorial and adversarial • Egos • Getting bogged down in how we got here, finger pointing, pre-conceived notions • Opposing views/different ideas on Governance • Perceptions may not be grounded in facts • Can't be a political issue – need to do what's right for the community and Department(s) • If it's too expensive and one city can't afford it services to the public may be impacted in the future • Some people may think a district was promised in the past