



Eugene-Springfield Fire Governance Review Panel

MEETING 5 SUMMARY

MEETING DETAILS

Date: Thursday, April 28, 2022
Time: 2:30-4:30pm
Location: Zoom Webinar & In-Person (Lane Council of Governments, Buford Room)

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Governance Review Panel Attendees:

Kori Rodley, *Springfield City Councilor*
Steve Moe, *Springfield City Councilor*
Michael Clark, *Eugene City Councilor*

Randy Groves, *Eugene City Councilor*
Nancy Newton, *Springfield City Manager*
Sarah Medary, *Eugene City Manager*

Staff Attendees:

Kristie Hammitt, *Eugene Assistant City Manager*
Niel Laudati, *Springfield Assistant City Manager*
Scott Cockrum, *Interim ESF Fire Chief*

Kelsey Hunter, *ESF Executive Assistant*
Brenda Wilson, *LCOG Executive Director*
Rachel Dorfman, *LCOG Assistant Planner*
Kelly Clarke, *LCOG Transportation Planner*

In-Person Attendees:

John Follett, *ESF Administrative Services Manager*
Merrill Harrison, *Deputy Fire Marshal*
Mike Caven, *ESF Deputy Chief of Operations*

Kris Siewert, *Union President IAFF 851*
Roy Emery, *Fire Marshall*
Amber Fossen, *Springfield Public Information Officer*



MEETING SUMMARY

1. Welcome & Introductions

Brenda Wilson, LCOG Executive Director, provided welcoming remarks and took attendance.

2. Eugene-Springfield Fire Governance Options (part 2)

Presenter: Brenda Wilson

Ms. Wilson presented a series of slides that provided a summary—including high-level legal, process, and financial considerations—of the final three of six options available for ESF's evolution in its Functional Consolidation: 1) Special District, 2) Regional Fire Authority, 3) termination of the current Functional Consolidation agreement. The slides and governance options fact sheets were provided to Panel members in the meeting materials and are also available on the project website.

Feedback from the Panelists on each option presented is summarized below and will be presented as a SWOT analysis once all options have been presented.

Special District:

- *Cities would give up governance*
- *Most complicated of processes, many points where it could get derailed.*
- *Looking at maintaining fire and EMS (which are essential services) in the long-term, during recessions and downturns, if you are an independent district, you assume 100% of the cuts. But sometimes as part of a city you're not taking a completely proportional share of the reduction.*
- *Timing, hardest sell for Springfield Council, because there are always concerns about tax compression; and feels drastic. Ideas of who has control and who doesn't. Would have to go to voters, seems like heavy lift.*
- *Springfield citizens paying assessment for fire. How will this look for voters? In Springfield 1/3 of budget, lots of money. Offset by 5-year local option levy, and most of this is going to police services.*
- *Likelihood of costing taxpayer less is low. People think City council is in charge of Fire Department. Public expectations not aligned with governance structure. Lack of authority is a major weakness. Prefer to find a way to solve the problems we face without Special District, but would not stand in the way and fight if this is the only way to solve this problem.*



- *Even though hard sell for voters, people can see where those tax dollars are going. More transparent having it broken out like this vs. when you're lumping it into property taxes.*
- *Anything that will make for a more equitable service is good.*
- *How is area going to grow? How are we setting ourselves to provide services and funding for the services. Right now, we're piecing funding together in different ways, whereas Special District sets up future to figure out funding on its own vs. being dependent on different municipalities.*
- *The solution is more of a hybrid model where Councilors from each city are part of governance structure. An independent board separate from elected Councilors is not appealing.*
- *People want to know how much will they be paying for Fire Department and how much less they will be paying with the city. May feel Special District/any option is more palatable if overall cost is less.*
- *Can get more granular in leadership with Special District. Board of Directors are much better informed in the delivery and scope of services.*
- *Not the only way to solve the problems, but could be supported under the right circumstances. Have reservations with complexity but have seen these work well. People love Tualatin Valley Fire District and how it is serving them. More efficiencies economically.*
- *Whatever form of governance, need to make sure it is adequate to serve the community. Most Special Districts have very good relationships with the cities they protect. Whole list of pros. Challenge of getting there with a lot of steps.*
- *Chief Cockrum explained that in 2003 and 2004, the cities' budgets were expected to be in a difficult spot within 10 years because of public safety costs. The Functional Consolidation in 2010-12 helped to mitigate that for a period of time, and now we're back to where we were in 2003-04.*
- *Ms. Wilson added that in 2003, Springfield determined it was in their best interest to annex to a Special District, but the Boundary Commission denied it. Understanding was that it would work best if other entities, including Eugene, joined it.*
- *Cost savings of Functional Consolidation have already been met and taken advantage of.*
- *Public loves Willamalane and City has good relationship with Willamalane.*
- *Ms. Wilson stated that in order for a Special District or for any option to be successful, the City will need to give up that revenue/share of the budget, which is a pro and a con.*

Regional Fire Authority:

- *RFAs work well given less need to coordinate amongst entities and they also have representation from these entities.*
- *Support for model that would allow ESF to transition to IGE as a way to get immediate relief in the short-term while working toward larger option of RFA.*
- *RFA sounds more reasonable and workable than a Special District. More appealing.*



- *Chief Cockrum clarified that the biggest difference between an ORS 190 organization and RFA is ability to tax. An ORS 190 organization cannot tax and RFA can. Funding for an ORS 190 organization comes from city budgets.*
- *ESF operates under a ORS 190 agreement today (so do Lane Council of Governments and Metropolitan Wastewater Management Commission). ESF operating under a ORS 190 agreement that is not a new legal entity (vs. a 190 that would allow ESF to become an IGE).*
- *Weakness of RFA is lack of budgetary oversight. Concern is budgetary and losing funding authority. Even with elected Board Members, not the same as Council member because of public perception.*
- *What is purpose of municipality/city? The reality vs. the story. What people are expecting and think they are getting. People think their taxes pay for everything, but we know this is not true. However we move forward, people need to be aware of that.*
- *Under RFA, may make it easier for that service to go after more fees during difficult times. Fees would have no impact under compression.*
- *City of Springfield started the budget process last night and the Finance Director gave a summary of compression and funding issues. Oregon is unique in taxation structure. Less able to diversify.*

Termination of the current Functional Consolidation agreement:

- *Takes care of administrative issues.*
- *Not for it. Feels like going backward. We share this region, and we need to have a fire district that represents that.*
- *We will go back to having these same issues that were reasons for the Functional Consolidation in the first place (apparatus, efficiencies, operations, training). Would lose the interoperability. Started before Great Recession to provide better services. Cost savings became a big piece during/after recession.*
- *Not in favor of seeing ESF split but this option keeps concerns about Special District from happening and this is a benefit to people of Eugene. Without fire department, what is the purpose of a city? It is such a big part of city government, once you start shaving this off, what is left?*
- *A positive is that it provides clarity, forces us to repopulate those positions. Hate idea of going backward. If this is the desired option, how is it moving forward and not backward?*
- *Appreciate comments about clarity. Both cities would build up great departments but in 10, 15, 20 years would be in same place. How do you provide the best service with the most educated leadership? How can we build this to the next governance level?*
- *This would be a PR nightmare.*
- *People want to compare the two cities due to proximity. We feel this a little more in Springfield. Lots of education about Springfield budgets, constraints, FTE. We are a thin organization. Everyone working a job and a half. Fairly certain a split would have a large cost implication to Springfield and would have to manage expectations. Stronger together with the two cities.*



Benefits from that. Appreciate the relationship with Eugene. Would have to have an honest conversation about level of funding, continue on 5-year option levy which creates uncertainty, and may have to talk about different service level and/or call response time.

- *Chief Cockrum explained that one challenge that could arise if the districts split was if the cities chose to have different levels of service. How would the Fire Department respond to that? Both cities are going to have budget implications over the next five years and Fire Department costs are going to go up. What are options that allow for long-term sustainability?*
- *Cost implications across budgets.*

3. IAFF 851

Presenter: Kris Siewert

Kris Siewert, Union President for IAFF 851 stated that ESF is treading water and that a long-term vision is needed as well as clear direction for what to do to get there. Mr. Siewert emphasized that what is needed is a final decision about where ESF is going.

4. Roundtable Discussion

Ms. Wilson asked if there are any options that are not on the table for Panel members. Responses included:

- *IGE is a start*
- *IGE is a step in the right direction. Why not talk with legislative officials about an RFA? Timing is short but long session is coming up. We should get going on it. Fix what is going on, see what we can do under the ORS 190 agreement, look long term at RFA.*
- *Explore different ways we may use ORS 190 agreement tool. Keep RFA option out there. What would some of those pieces look like applied locally. Like to take Special District off the table if others feel the same.*
- *In answer to a question about whether to the financial consultant is looking at a narrowed list of options providing high-level information for each option, Chief Cockrum stated that the work will be phased so that we can inform them what we want. Phase 1 = what is the Functional Consolidation costing us now and into the future? And also look at each city going forward to see how those pieces align. Chief Cockrum intends to talk with City Managers and Assistant City Managers to see what they want for next phase.*
- *Important part is to control for all the variables, including inflation and known costs. Helpful to compare apples to apples.*
- *Costs are an important part of decision-making.*
- *Ms. Wilson stated that the financial consultant is costing out where we are and where we will be in the future if we don't do anything.*



- *This process needs to set up our region for success by considering growth and future of funding.*
- *Genesis of the merger was originally better service.*

5. Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Ms. Wilson stated that the following will be presented for discussion at Meeting 6: a table summarizing the strengths of each option; financial information from Moss Adams; and a summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for each option heard to date. Ms. Wilson reiterated that what she heard from the Panel is that all options should remain under consideration for comparison purposes rather than narrowing the list at this stage. The Governance Review Panel will discuss how we will move this to a recommendation based on the strengths of each option and the available financial information.

Upcoming Meetings:

Meeting 6 – May 12 (tentative)