

## **Minutes: Community Advisory Committee, January 11, 2021 (Via Zoom)**

**Minutes:** The minutes from the last meeting, in January 2020, and from this meeting, will be presented at our March 2021 meeting for approval.

**Emergency Management Campus (New HQ) Update:** Chief Bakken provided an update on the new headquarters building by providing some historical perspective. We have been in the current station since 1971, when the District was 36 sq miles, call volume was 200 calls per year and when there wasn't a need to accommodate living quarters for firefighters. We now have substantially outgrown the physical space, the Fire Authority covers 132 sq miles, call volume is 2400 per year, and we have a larger combination career/volunteer crew, a resident firefighter program and a significant need to house firefighters and residents during shifts. The new station will be 18,900 sq feet, will house eight vehicles rather than four, will contain more beds for firefighters and will contain state-of-the-art technology for safety.

There has been continuing population growth in the North Mason area and much more growth is projected in the next several years. The new headquarters fire station is expected to be part of an emergency management campus, with law enforcement housed in the old fire station and space allocated also for the Department of Emergency Management. The Sheriff's Office and Fire Authority will be able to share equipment.

The idea of an emergency management campus was taken to the voters who approved a \$10 million bond by 65%. The RFA recently achieved a credit rating of AA- which will save taxpayers over one million dollars.

The RFA has adopted a Design-build approach, with contractors, architects and owners working as a team. Chief Bakken indicated the RFA wants the community to feel pride in the new building and find it both beautiful and reasonable. Via Zoom, he showed meeting participants the site plan and the floor design, discussing elements of each. The RFA next will be submitting a permit package and will go through the Special Use Permitting process. Chief Bakken expects at the end of February to be breaking ground with the potential for the building to be completed at the end of 2021.

In response to a question of whether the building is prefab, Chief Bakken indicated no, it is a stick and masonry build. Answering another question, Chief Bakken indicated the resident living on the property next door to the current station, which the RFA has purchased, will remain, with convenient access to her home.

**COVID-19 Update:** Early during the pandemic, members of the RFA realized we were dealing with a public information issue as well as a public health issue. During the firsts months, people were not calling 911 even when they had emergency health issues because they were concerned that medical transport would not be safe or that they didn't want to over-burden the health care system. The RFA has worked to provide accurate information to the public—that transports are safe and that the health care system here has capacity—so those issues have been resolved.

Over the long course of the pandemic, first responders, like other health care workers have become tired. We are trying to be sensitive to this by offering appropriate time off and providing mental health support to all staff. First responders are receiving the first dose of the vaccine and some are receiving the second dose. During this time, all COVID safety protocols for use of PPE are in effect, regardless of whether crews have been vaccinated. In response to a question, Chief Bakken indicated he believed older adults in the community would be eligible for the vaccine soon.

**Transfer to St. Michaels:** On Dec. 14, 2020, 180 patients were moved successfully to the new hospital in Silverdale. From an EMS response standpoint, the distance to the new St. Michaels Hospital is a little further, but the time difference in arriving there is negligible. One CAC

member remarked that a Kitsap Sun article reported that staff at the hospital were feeling stressed and burned out.

**Tahuya Station:** The RFA produced a Zoom grand opening video celebrating the completion of the new apparatus bay. Landscaping is being completed. The RFA will be determining how to approach Phase 2. It was mentioned that citizens are hopeful about an effort to get a reader-board sign put up.

**Future CAC Meetings:** At our next CAC Zoom meeting, Monday March 8, we will discuss how often CAC members want to be meeting, whether it will be by Zoom beyond March, or in-person or a combination of formats. There are advantages and drawbacks to each type of format.