

# Proposal for Consolidation of Bremerton Fire Department and South Kitsap Fire and Rescue

December 17, 2009



Arnold's Furniture Fire – July 27, 2009



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b><u>Section</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Cover Letter .....	2
Introduction .....	3
Question #1 Response .....	3
Question #2 Response .....	4
Question #3 Response .....	5
Question #4 Response .....	5
Question #5 Response .....	6
Question #6 Response .....	7
Question #7 Response .....	7
Question #8 Response .....	8
Question #9 Response .....	10
Question #10 Response .....	12
Question #11 Response .....	12
Question #12 Response .....	13
Question #13 Response .....	13
Executive Summary .....	15
 <b><u>Appendix</u></b>	
Appendix A – Invitation Letter from City of Bremerton .....	16
Appendix B – Questions Received from City of Bremerton .....	17
Appendix C – Consolidation Success Factor from ESCi .....	18
Appendix D – 2010 Combined Revenue / Expense Projections .....	19
Appendix E – Needs and Opportunities .....	21
Appendix F – EMS/Fire Efficiencies .....	23
Appendix G – Future Expansion of WSFR .....	27
Appendix H – BFD/SKFR Consolidation Communications Plan.....	28



Commissioners: Dave Gelsleichter • Paul Golnik • Darla Hartley • Gerald Preuss • Dusty Wiley

---

**Fire Chief:** Wayne Senter



December 17, 2009

To: Mayor Patty Lent  
Fire Chief Al Duke  
City of Bremerton

Re: Proposal for Consolidation with SKFR

Dear Mayor Lent and Chief Duke,

Thank you for the opportunity to present this proposal for your review. We share your excitement for creating efficiencies through consolidation. During these hard economic times our citizens demand that we look for new ways to provide the highest level of essential public safety services with the precious resources already provided.

We think the good work that was accomplished through the initial West Sound Fire Rescue regional fire authority planning effort remains valid with this new phased approach. Much of what this proposal offers is a condensed version of that work to synchronize with the new direction.

The greatest challenge we share is increasing the number of response personnel who actually answer emergency fire and EMS calls. Together we can accomplish what independently we could not. Providing our citizens "better service with the same resources" is very much an attainable goal.

It is clear our citizens share a rich culture, vision and collective wisdom here in Kitsap County and we look forward to rolling up our sleeves and creating solutions that serve our shared interests.

Sincerely,

---

Gerald Preuss, Board Vice-Chair

---

Wayne Senter, Fire Chief

This proposal outlines our thoughts in writing regarding a phased approach for the eventual consolidation of three fire agencies within Kitsap County: Bremerton Fire Department, Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue, and South Kitsap Fire and Rescue (SKFR). In order for any consolidation to be effective and efficient, there must be a set of shared values and interests that each agency acknowledges and works collectively to meet as if the others interest were its own. From that perspective, this proposal includes SKFR's interests but does not contain the vital shared interest from the City of Bremerton, which will be added to this information once the city selects SKFR as the initial step in our phased approach. It is our true desire to make the first phase of a consolation successful between the Bremerton Fire Department and South Kitsap Fire and Rescue. If that opportunity does present itself, then the city's interests will be specifically identified and addressed at that time.

To assist the reader, SKFR has taken each question asked in your letter dated November 18<sup>th</sup>, and provided specific measurable responses which were developed by SKFR staff responsible for these areas. All reference examples are in an alpha appendix format in the back of the document. Much of what was developed through the collaborative efforts for the West Sound Fire and Rescue planning committee process remains relative to a phased approach, and rather than starting from scratch, we built upon that good work and tailored it to the phased approach concept. We look forward to meeting with you on the evening of December 17<sup>th</sup> to outline this proposal and to answer any questions you may have regarding this proposal. (See Appendix A & B)

### **Question #1**

- **There are a number of ways two departments can come together. Clearly state your preferred option of bringing the two entities together in a proposal. What is your projected timeline for completion of this project.**

### **SKFR Response:**

There are three methods available for consolidating BFD and SKFR. Each has its advantages and disadvantages and there is a solution that maximizes each option positive and neutralizes each option negative. Other details on the recommended method, such as financing, are addressed in that specific question later in this proposal. The three methods for a fire district and city fire department to consolidate are: Contract for service through an Interlocal Agreement (ILA); Annexation of the BFD into SKFR; and Regional Fire Protection Services Authority (RFA).

The advantage to an ILA, as authorized by RCW 39.34, is that it is quick. It only requires a majority vote of the SKFR Board of Commissioners and the Bremerton City Council. The disadvantages are that the citizens do not have an opportunity to vote on the issue and it is not a permanent solution. During the WSFR planning process all three agencies involved were open about the fact our process to consolidate would include a vote of the public. Consolidation through an ILA alone could be seen as a violation of that promise. The lack of permanency also weakens commitment internally and externally to ensuring the decision is implemented with the spirit in which the elected officials intended. An ILA could end through cancellation with a change in leadership from either agency. It is clear from our past experience that buy-in is critical to manage the change any consolidation effort will produce.

The advantage to Annexation, as authorized by RCW 52.04, is that this method has been used in Kitsap County, most recently by the City of Port Orchard annexing into SKFR, then doing business as Kitsap Fire District #7. Annexation only requires a simple majority of the citizens in each jurisdiction to pass. The disadvantages are that annexation allows no provision for the city to have a formal governance role over their fire and EMS services. Annexation turns that authority over to the existing SKFR Board of Fire Commissioners. Post annexation, citizens from the city, however, may run for positions on the SKFR Board of Fire Commissioners. Another disadvantage is that the citizen vote could

be split with one jurisdiction approving it and the other disapproving it. This could cause some embarrassment and perhaps delay or thwart what is otherwise a very beneficial measure that was not yet understood by one jurisdictions voters.

The advantages of an RFA, as authorized by RCW 52.26, are that it requires both agencies to come to the table on an equitable basis to form the plan and it allows the city to have a formal role of governance over the newly formed RFA. An RFA requires a vote of the citizens within the newly formed jurisdiction. The vote then would be a collective "pass" or "no pass" situation which would not illuminate one jurisdiction over the other should it not pass. The disadvantages to an RFA are that the planning meeting made up of elected officials requires additional meetings. This can pose difficulties for busy schedules in reaching a quorum. The additional RFA planning meetings and the supporting staff required for that process can prove inefficient.

The best option in our mind would be to direct the Fire Chiefs from each jurisdiction to complete a plan for consideration by each respective elected group within the normal course of conducting its business. Once the consolidation plan is acceptable to both jurisdictions, then an RFA Planning Committee would be formed for the purpose of finalizing the consolidation plan and starting the RFA election process. The first year of the plan would include an ILA for funding as a bridge to taxes being assessed in the new service boundary and received by the new RFA. SKFR believes this effort could be ready for a ballot issue as early as November 2010.

## **Question #2**

- **Identify all stakeholder groups in your proposal.**

### **SKFR Response:**

The stakeholders for a consolidation effort would mirror what was constructed for the WSFR stakeholder groups. It is essential this group be representative of both organizations and any future predictable partners that may arise. Our stakeholder groups would include citizens, elected officials, labor groups, administrative personnel, support personnel, volunteer members, and surrounding fire departments.

The elected officials are charged with representing the citizen's interests. To assist in aligning that representation prior to finalizing the consolidation plan, and before the issue is approved to go before the voters, a series of neighborhood meetings, citizen group presentations, and other communications would be employed to actively engage and gather feedback from this important stakeholder group. Citizen feedback received to date from the WSFR project was positive, as long as service efficiencies within the present normal funding levels of each jurisdiction could be demonstrated. During the recent RFA work, without a comprehensive plan to share with the citizens, it under utilized citizen input and critique. An example of this is the lack of participation from this stakeholder group at the WSFR steering committee level. Ultimately, the citizens have the final say at election on their support or lack thereof for the consolidation plan. It's therefore critical that they be engaged in a meaningful fashion at every significant step in the process.

The next primary stakeholder group is labor. Nearly every member of both organizations is part of a represented labor group. Each one of these labor groups has collective bargaining agreements. The vast majority of employees have binding arbitration. Aside from the legal and philosophical reasons to treat our employees with respect and dignity, this arrangement does allow for the labor group to make or break such a consolidation effort. Without their support, a consolidation effort will fail; therefore, they must be at the table in a meaningful way. Currently, the greatest need for both departments is to increase emergency service staffing levels which are represented by the same labor group. Separately

we see two Firefighter Locals, Bremerton IAFF Local 437 and SK IAFF Local 2876. We currently have one SK Chiefs Local 3817, one collective bargaining group for SK support personnel within IAFF Local 2876, and one or two union members with other bargaining groups in the city. These groups also represent the largest part of our annual expenses at approximately 85% for SKFR.

Additional primary stakeholders would include administrative personnel not represented by a labor group, and volunteers from SKFR. Both these groups are critical and have much to offer now and in the future to any substantially career fire department. Neighboring fire departments are secondary stakeholders, with the exception of CKFR. They would have special interest as a potential future stakeholder and are specifically addressed below in response to question 11.

### **Question #3**

- **Are you considering outside assistance such as a facilitator or consultant?**

#### **SKFR Response:**

Leading up to and during the WSFR planning process, the largest expense incurred was for outside consultants. These consultants were used for feasibility studies, benefit service charge studies, legal advice, and other miscellaneous services. The decision to use outside experts was wise to do before committing each organization to spend precious staff time to develop the RFA plan. It was also one of the most criticized actions we took, being characterized as governments' answer to efficiency: to hire a consultant to tell them what they already knew.

It is SKFR's opinion that both BFD and SKFR have exceptional staff fully capable of putting a consolidation plan together without the aid of consultants other than a minimal amount of specific RFA legal advice to supplement existing legal resources in both jurisdictions. In this economic time, now would be the worst time to try and use consultants when it has a strong probability of creating a negative external public relation with the same group we need to influence to approve the consolidation plan.

That having been said, it will be important that we learn from past attempts by carefully looking at areas as defined in the feasibility study as success factors: Command, Communication, Control, and Culture. The most successful effort will be based more on the ability for the two departments to demonstrate cooperation rather than intentions to do so in the future. (See Appendix C)

### **Question #4**

- **Clearly explain the financial model you are proposing in as much detail as possible.**

#### **SKFR Response:**

The financial model SKFR suggests revolves around the premise that initially the money now funded by both agencies separately provides a very good level of fire and EMS services for each of our respective communities. Likewise, if that same level of money was put into one pot, then together, it would continue to provide, at a minimum, the same level of service provided separately. Assuming that operational efficiencies will be a predictable outcome from a consolidation, then the goal of "providing better fire and EMS service with the same resources" will have been met.

The recommended financial model for a BFD and SKFR consolidation is that both the city and the district contribute the current funding levels toward the new consolidated department. The city can reduce some BFD budget line items such as inter-department fund transfers for IT, equipment rental and repair, external professional services, SKIA, ambulance billing, Drop Borders Now, public safety bond, and LEOFF liability. These reductions would be off-set by expenses for FTE's to ensure current service levels. The addition of a half-time mechanic, half-time facility/grounds, half-time IT, and a full-time clerical would be adequate to ensure that goal. The net result is a reduction in the BFD budget and the opportunity to hire an additional three Firefighters as an immediate result of consolidation.

The proposed retirement of the BFD Assistant Fire Chief, Medical Officer, and Training Officer add another opportunity to mesh our needs, hire an assistant to training, and an additional three Firefighters. All of these efficiencies include the continuation of the plan to have the Captains be reclassified as Battalion Chiefs.

Because the city has such a low AV, even with the reductions of the budget mentioned above, after SKFR's fire levy rate of \$1.17 is applied onto the city, there will be more expenses than income. We estimate that amount to be approximately two million. This amount would be paid to the newly formed consolidated fire department not to exceed what is currently being paid in 2010. Once the newly formed fire department passes its joint fire levy funding issue in 2012 that payment would cease. (See Appendix D for details.)

#### **Question #5**

- **Identify the needs of your department and potential opportunities your organization hopes to address with this proposal.**

#### **SKFR Response:**

SKFR's needs remain essentially the same as when we were actively engaged with the WSFR process. Through many meetings with our internal stakeholders we developed seven goals. They will help guide us through the phased approach with a consolidation as well. Those goals are:

- 1) Citizens' interests in emergency fire and medical response needs should be considered first.**
- 2) Find ways to provide better emergency fire and medical service (i.e., through redeployment of existing personnel and funding for additional response personnel).**
- 3) Find efficiencies through economy of scale.**
- 4) Maintain and improve firefighter safety.**
- 5) Some support staff may be re-assigned or reduced through attrition to gain response efficiencies.**
- 6) Resolve with certainty the threat of Bremerton's future annexations into SKFR's response area.**
- 7) Maintain good working structure and relationships between volunteers and career members.**

Potential opportunities for SKFR include improved response times for both initial and full alarm assignments for all priority emergency calls for service. The collective wisdom of BFD with SKFR will produce better ideas and ways to meet our shared vision of improved response services through reliable funding that only goes to fire and EMS delivery services.

Support functions such as prevention, clerical, ambulance billing, IT, maintenance, facilities and grounds are all areas where we can show efficiencies. These efficiencies will go toward additional response personnel who directly deliver emergency services. Our shared focus has been and will continue to be improved response service levels.

SKFR has a long history of investing every dollar into improved operational response through additional Firefighters who actually respond to calls and provide for service. It is our intent to continue this same practice as a newly consolidated fire department. We believe that our past actions are the best indicator of future performance. (See Appendix E for details)

### **Question #6**

- **Identify specific efficiencies within your proposal that will have a positive impact on Fire/EMS delivery for the citizens of our respective jurisdictions.**

#### **SKFR Response:**

An overall guiding principle is to maintain equitable or better service. If the two departments come together into one, each brings with it an established service baseline. This proposal and the efficiencies detailed as a result of consolidation maintain and improve these service level baselines.

A consolidated department will enjoy a number of efficiencies that result from economies of scale, elimination of duplication, and macro-service delivery strategies. Operationally the two departments currently provide an acceptable level of emergency service with respect to industry standards and public expectations.

The two jurisdictions currently have many common practices that will allow operations to function effectively though the initial transition period. The common 24-hour shift schedule, county training manual, ITAC procedures, EMS system with base station hospital, consolidated dispatch center, and strong Chiefs and Labor organizations all contribute to this positive environment.

Specifically, the consolidated fire department will allow for the addition of six additional Firefighters, one half-time mechanic, one half-time facility/grounds, one half-time IT, and one full-time clerical position. The clerical position could be filled by the existing BFD clerical position. The others would most likely be new positions.

As the new organization becomes established, each participating department's operating practices, policies, and procedures will need to be evaluated and combined to serve the new organizations interest. Input from each jurisdiction, labor, and management will be incorporated into the establishment of these new practices. (See Appendix F for details.)

### **Question #7**

- **Describe departmental/cultural similarities and differences between your organization and the Bremerton Fire Department as you see them.**

#### **SKFR Response:**

South Kitsap and Bremerton share a common culture that is driven by where their respective citizens work and live. Most of the economic engine in our respective areas is driven by the shipyard, retired military, and other governmental services. The communities of Bremerton and Port Orchard are connected through the shared community make-up and values of these individuals, entities, and

services. Both are considered solid working class communities where tax resources are precious and commercial development is on the verge of growth.

In SKFR's service area there is more developable land than any other area in Kitsap County. With the new Tacoma Narrows span now in place, that undeveloped land is prime for residential and commercial build out. This creates a tremendous opportunity for increased revenues, balancing the commercial/residential development, and continuing to improve support for critical public safety services.

SKFR and the BFD have many examples where they have demonstrated the ability to work together through contracts, training, administration, and services. Examples of contracts are SKIA, Mutual Aid, Automatic Aid, and Drop Borders Now. These collaborative associations have been very productive and successful. Examples of shared training initiatives are the Moodle program, pump classes, leadership classes, TRT, MCD, EVIP, Kitsap Training Center, JMG, and the JATC program. An example of administrative similarities are our records management system, where working together we save time and money on records and reports. Examples of other similarities include Kitsap Physician Services and shared Fire Prevention services. Operational services are nearly identical, mainly due to the extensive joint training we conduct.

The key to all of these successes is the willingness to be reasonable and work out issues at the lowest level. Any consolidation study or report will point to these successes as indicators for a full consolidation success.

Some examples of where we differ include service area characteristics and department characteristics. SKFR's service area covers a population of 79,723: 127 square miles of urban, sub-urban, and rural communities that produce approximately 9,000 emergency calls for service each year. Our community enjoys a class 4 WSRB fire insurance rating. SKFR is a substantially career combination department with 102 full time members and about 60 volunteers. We have 84 members assigned to 24-hour shift work and 18 assigned to day shift supporting that mission. Even though we share these differences, we have shown we work well together and will continue to do so at a heightened level through consolidation.

### **Question #8**

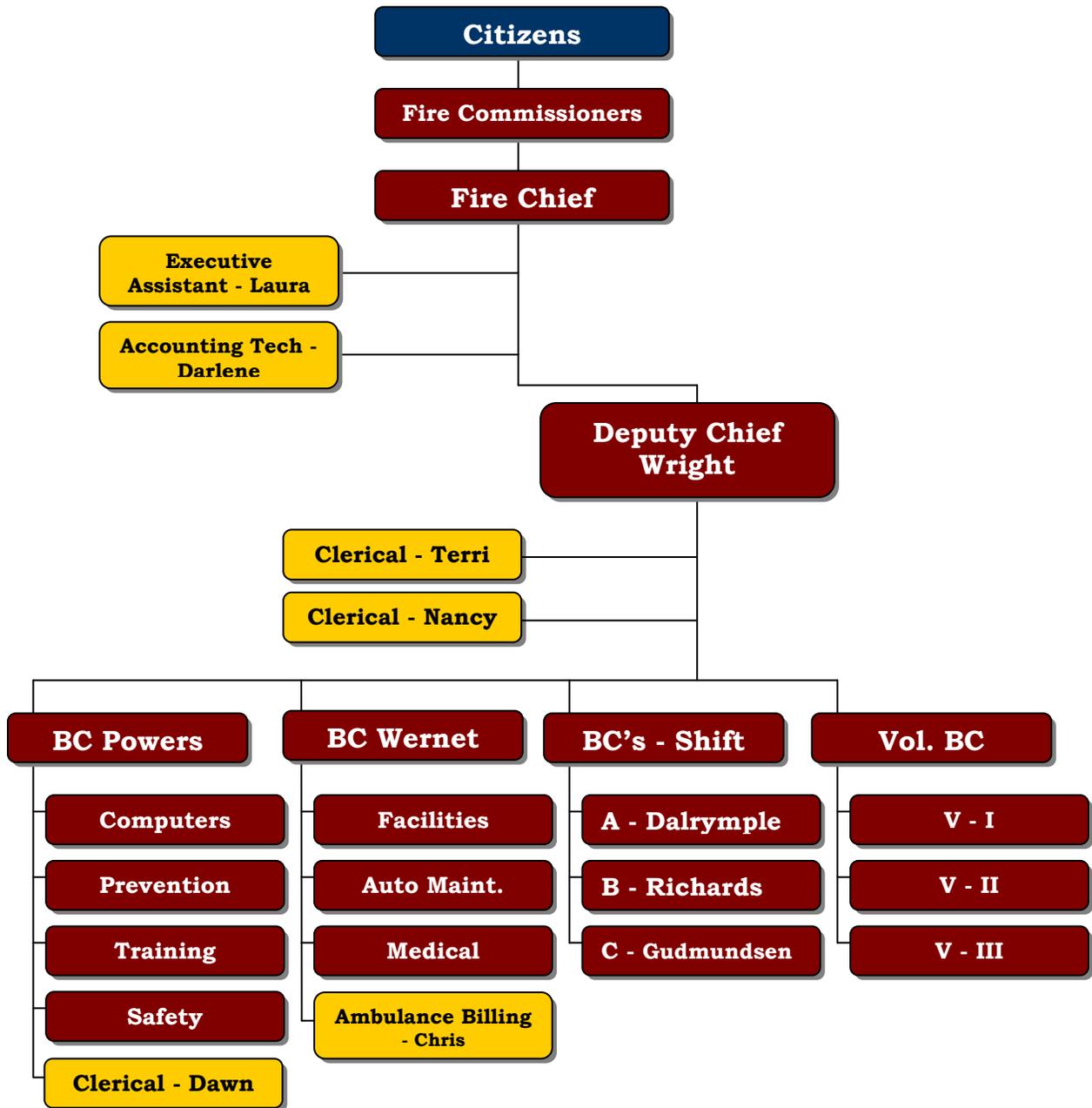
- **From your prospective what would the organizational model look like from year 1 to 5.**

#### **SKFR Response:**

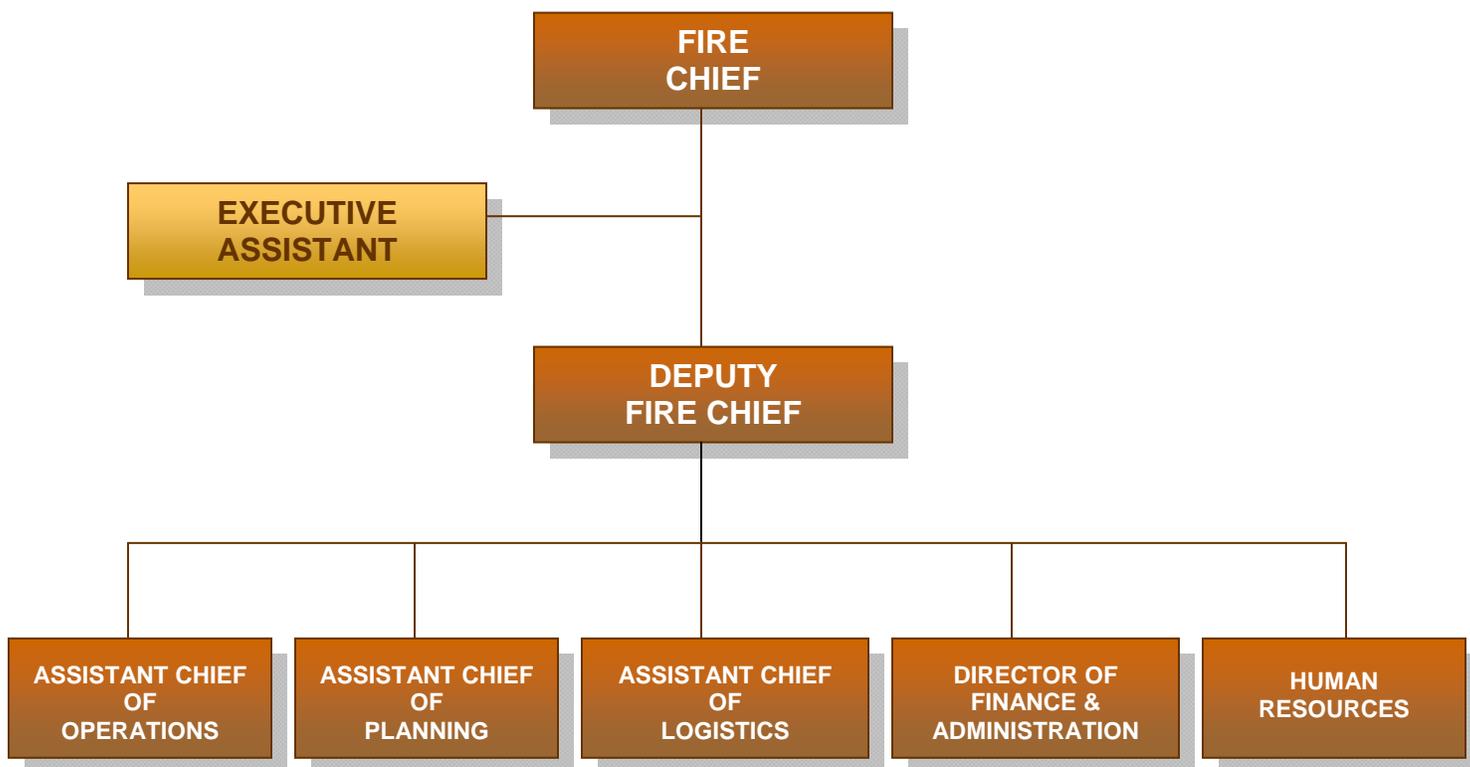
SKFR's organization chart is shown below. Because all three agencies should be consolidated within the next five years, the five-year plan for the consolidated fire department should be similar to that developed by the WSFR planning committee. Our proposed five-year organizational chart is similar to what we collectively agreed through the WSFR planning process and is presented below.

It would be presumptive for SKFR to identify what the transition from two separate organizations through five years might look like. We believe success is dependent on a collaborative effort to design a transitional organization chart. SKFR commits to being reasonable and focused on completing the task in a manner that will rationally gain support from all stakeholders and, ultimately, our citizens through a public election.

South Kitsap Fire and Rescue  
Organizational Chart - 2009



## BFD/SKFR Consolidation Organizational Chart (5-Year Plan)



### Question #9

- Describe your current Labor/Management relationship and outline the proposed Labor/Management arrangement.

#### SKFR Response:

South Kitsap Fire Rescue recognizes that labor relations are a vital and healthy part of its organization. The working relationship fostered with its labor organizations has been a collaborative effort between labor leaders, the administration, and elected commissioners. It is a proactive relationship built on trust, openness, and transparent communication. Meaningful involvement, respect, and a mutual desire to provide a high level of service to its citizens draws this group together. This relationship has been built over many years and is valued as one of the greatest assets the organization possesses.

Management recognizes labor as a major stakeholder, even in those matters that are clearly "management's rights". In addition to the monthly Labor/Management meeting, Labor leaders or their representatives have a seat, voice, and vote, at the table in almost every committee or meeting. These seats include:

- Senior Staff Meeting
- Chief Officer Meeting
- Safety Meeting

- Wellness
- Training Development
- JATC
- Health Care Committee
- Budget Development

This involvement of Labor at all levels has built trust and early communication into the strategic planning process that allows ideas and concerns to be addressed early and effectively. Likewise, it has empowered Labor as a stakeholder to take a responsible role in the decision making process that allows the organization to avoid unnecessary conflicts and grievances.

Evidence of this positive Labor/Management relationship is demonstrated in several ways. First, it occurs through contract negotiations. Since 1990, there have been 12 collective bargaining agreements negotiated between the labor groups and South Kitsap Fire and Rescue. During this time frame, only one was settled in mediation and one in arbitration. Both these cases were based upon defining comparable information only and had no ill affect on the labor management relationship. In fact, since 2000, all collective bargaining agreements have been agreed upon pursuant to a relatively quick and smooth process. The most recent agreement was reached in three short meetings. The Fire Chief, Commissioners, and Labor leaders have worked hard over the years to provide a positive environment in the negotiations process. This type of collaborative and open process has been a result of trust between the Fire Chief, Commissioners, and Labor Leaders.

Another measurement of the success enjoyed by positive Labor Management has been the lack of grievances and unfair labor practices filed by labor against the district. In the past 10 years their have been no grievances and only one ULP filed by the Union which was resolved very early in the process. This is not to say there have not been disagreements or differences in opinions. Rather, the desire by each side to be available for crucial conversations has allowed problems to be solved at the lowest level. Once again, open and transparent communications has been the focus and key to avoiding an escalation of issues.

In addition to the above, the open flow of communication between Labor and Management takes place in several formats. The Fire Chief puts out a weekly update that addresses the latest issues at hand. This update is received by all members and is followed up with a quarterly meeting by the Fire Chief with all duty crews. This is also duplicated by Labor in the form of a monthly update that addresses current issues at hand from the Local's perspective. This is sent to senior staff for their information. All of this is in addition to regularly held monthly Labor/Management meetings.

In a consolidation of Bremerton Fire Department and South Kitsap Fire Rescue, the proposed Labor/Management arrangement should focus on a structure similar to that noted above. Joining two organizations is complex by its nature. Emphasis in the following areas will create the best chance of maintaining a healthy and productive Labor/Management relationship.

- Communication: Labor/Management meetings should most likely increase in frequency to assist in creating a high level of trust between all parties as well as an open flow of information. This would require both Labor and Management to work in an open door concept to help establish productive relationships and understanding of all the new players in leadership positions.
- Participation: Continued participation by Labor in the above committees and meetings would be essential in collaboratively creating the face of the new organization. These meetings would serve not only as a tool in the planning process of the organization, but also as effective communication between varying levels within the organization.

- **Planning:** Strategic planning would be a vital component for a new organization. Labor and Management would have to work together with the elected officials to provide the highest level of service for its citizens with the resources they provide. This is what would drive the long-term sustainability of the organization as a whole.

South Kitsap Fire and Rescue and its Labor groups have enjoyed the fruits of positive Labor / Management seeds planted over the years. The entire organization is committed to fostering continued growth in this area. Communication and building relationships are key to carrying this into the future and into the new organization. While challenges and change management are unavoidable, they can be solved quickly without damaging the relationship when all parties make a collaborative effort using good character. South Kitsap Fire and Rescue looks forward to continuing this process into the future with Bremerton Fire.

### **Question #10**

- **Are you proposing any formal dispute resolution process in the plan?**

#### **SKFR Response:**

SKFR believes a dispute resolution process that solves problems at the lowest level provides advantages to each party. The resolution is generally quick and less expensive and, more importantly, does not seriously elevate the issue into positioning and predictable relationship degradation. In an ILA, our legal advisors generally suggest a clear process be included for resolving issues in lieu of cancellation of the agreement. SKFR advocates use of the Kitsap County Dispute Resolution (KCDR) process to determine disputes that cannot be resolved by the parties.

The RFA plan itself would benefit from describing how differences would be resolved. We would advocate open, honest, and transparent communications as a means to prevent issues from evolving into problems. If the governance board of the RFA included a mix of city and district officials, then that body would be charged with resolving issues. The RFA plan could encourage its board to consider using KCDR as one means to resolving service or administrative issues.

In the formation of the consolidation plan itself, the resolution process should be the internal stakeholders first. If they do not agree, then options with pros and cons identified should be forwarded to the governing boards for final decision. If the boards do not agree, then the issue could be a study session for members from each board to consider and resolve, or it could be deferred to the RFA planning committee for final recommendation to the two full governance boards. At this point, if there was not agreement, an outside third party could be considered to help resolve the issues. Whatever the process, ultimate approval is required by each separate governing body to put the issue before the voting public.

### **Question #11**

- **Consideration should be made to allow for future expansion to include neighboring departments.**

#### **SKFR Response:**

Much in the same way WSFR engaged other departments outside of its primary consolidation effort, a future expansion clause should become a part of the consolidation plan (Appendix G). Specifically, Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue (CKFR) should be identified as a part of the phased approach following a reasonable amount of time after a SKFR and BFD consolidation plan is implemented. Surrounding fire

departments, other than CKFR, would also have a means to engage the new entity if mutual interests for future consolidation are raised. It will be imperative that this process not require the formation of a new RFA planning process unless the governing board at the time elected to do so.

### **Question #12**

- **Explain your communication plan for this proposal.**

#### SKFR Response:

A well respected statesman and scholar of public administration named Cyril Northcote Parkinson once said, "The void created by the failure to communicate is soon filled with poison, drivel, and misrepresentation". This wise observation gives charge to proactively communicate with the understanding that it takes less time and energy to communicate on the front end than to try and correct false information on the back end. This approach also empowers the workforce by creating an environment for its input early in the discussion cycle.

One of the principles for effective communication is truthfulness, which is defined as accurately reporting past events which earns future trust. Communication then becomes the fuel that drives a healthy organizational relationship. There is often "reason" offered why effective communication did not occur, but it seldom stands the test of reason when weighed against the negative results that predictably occur.

SKFR developed the communication plan for WSFR and it was approved unanimously by the WSFR planning committee. The plan was sound, yet there were several failures in implementing that good plan. It must be noted that the best plan not implemented in the spirit in which it was intended simply becomes a good thought. We must actively work to get the correct information out both internally and externally. The proposed communication plan for the SKFR and BFD consolidation effort is attached as Appendix H.

### **Question #13**

- **Anything else you would like us to consider?**

#### SKFR Response:

#### ***Volunteer Services***

SKFR has an active volunteer program which provides support to our substantially career department's operational and support missions. This program is managed by our lead volunteer, Battalion Chief Scott Hartley.

Our support program includes Air Support and Tender response. They respond when requested both inside and out of the district. We have approximately 10 volunteers in the Air Support/Tender program. We also have a Chaplain's Program, Photographers, Home Inspection Program, and Ham Radio Operators.

Our response volunteers are assigned to one of three unstaffed stations and stand-by at home for 1 week and then take 2 weeks off. They respond to all major incidents to support the career fire ground operations. We have approximately 30 suppression volunteers, 8 of which are EMT's.

Our Volunteers maintain an excellent working relationship with our career staff and they co-sponsor many community events and activities with the career staff. Our volunteer leadership works well with all career response members, administration, support, and leadership.

SKFR's Labor/Management/Volunteer relationships work extremely well at all levels. Volunteer leadership is actively involved in meaningful ways in the administration of the department. This happens at our general and senior staff meetings where we have an active role in guiding our district's future.

### ***Annexation***

Annexation of Rocky Point and Navy Yard City has been the topic of discussion for many years. The state law for growth management, the city's desire to annex and the county's desire to allow annexation all create a need to plan for this eventual outcome. SKFR's primary interests include ensuring that EMS and fire services continue to meet and exceed the current levels of service.

The fact that one of SKFR's Fire Commissioners live in Rocky Point causes concern for annexation, in that such a move without consolidation would in fact make this person ineligible for service as a SKFR Fire Commissioner. We believe that the best option would include a consolidation of SKFR and BFD to allow a sound transition in governance and emergency service delivery in the entire service area.

Once SKFR and BFD form a consolidated fire department it does allow consideration for a cooperative effort for such annexation through state law, including a recent law that provides for consideration of service levels, employee protection, and asset transfer.

## Executive Summary

The first phase for consolidation, involving BFD and one of the Districts, is critical to the overall success of the eventual consolidation of three agencies. If the first phase fails or is otherwise protracted from creating a success, then the second phase of this consolidation will most likely fail as well. The greatest predictor of future success is the ability of any two organizations to demonstrate the ability to do business together on discretionary business subjects. Clearly, SKFR and BFD have many collaborative efforts that have been in place and working well for a long time.

Another predictor of success is similarities in culture and labor management relations. SKFR and the BFD members collaborate on-duty and off-duty. Their shared values serve as a catalyst for social and professional development efforts outside of work. Our citizens share similar values and principles and our labor management relationships reflect that same positive and respectful leadership perspective.

Now, and for the immediate future, SKFR is perhaps the strongest it has ever been. Because we have focused on being frugal prior to the economic downturn, we are well positioned for two to three more years before the economy rebounds. During this time, we will continue to experience revenue growth with all of that resource dedicated toward building up emergency response staffing. We have earned our communities trust by keeping funding and service promises and have enjoyed success for funding elections even during a time when most departments were scaling back. A consolidated SKFR and BFD would continue to see those strategies prove successful.

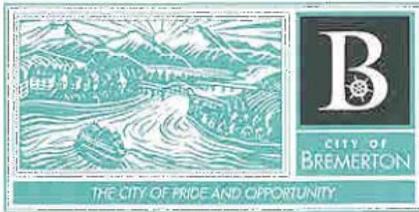
A consolidated SKFR and BFD would enjoy the benefits of accreditation and all of the advantages of federal grants, citizen trust, and business efficiencies that flow from that designation. These efficiencies equate to federal dollars that do not significantly impact local tax payers and build synergy in election support.

The consolidation of SKFR and the BFD will immediately result in additional Firefighters who provide the core service our citizens value the most. We will demonstrate governments' ability to truly provide more with the same resources. This will resonate with our citizens to the point that our relationships with the electorate will improve and provide additional opportunities even outside of our direct fire service delivery.

The Board and staff of SKFR want to thank the City of Bremerton for considering this proposal and we want you to know that we appreciate and respect the important decision before you. We want to stress our commitment of working together to develop the details of consolidation. Lastly, we hope that you will accept this proposal with the spirit in which we intend it to be received.

# Appendix A

## Invitation Letter from City of Bremerton



**BREMERTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
**Allison Duke III, Fire Chief**  
Al.duke@ci.bremerton.wa.us

Tel 360-473-5381  
Fax 360-473-5397  
911 Park Avenue  
Bremerton, WA 98337

November 18, 2009

South Kitsap Fire & Rescue  
1974 Fircrest Drive SE  
Port Orchard, WA 98366

Dear Chief Senter and Fire Commissioners:

On September 15, 2009 the City of Bremerton formally withdrew from the West Sound Fire and Rescue Regional Fire Authority planning effort. This comprehensive process revealed what presently appear to be insurmountable financial, cultural, and other organizational incompatibilities between the three agencies to continue with deliberations. However, with that being said, the City of Bremerton still believes our citizens could better be served by some type of consolidation between local fire service agencies.

The City of Bremerton is committed to continuing to work with one or both of the involved agencies to provide the best option(s) for fire and emergency medical service delivery. We believe that some form of consolidation would promote greater efficiencies in staffing, equipment acquisition, and use, reduction in service overlap and redundancy and overall service delivery enhancements to both the citizens of Bremerton and Kitsap County.

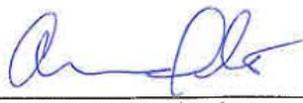
With the objective of consolidation in mind we have prepared a list of questions on the attached page that we request you to prepare responses for discussion at a meeting sometime during the days of December 15, 16 or 17<sup>th</sup>. If any of these dates are convenient for you, please contact Chief Duke to arrange a time. If this week is inconvenient, or if you need more time to compose your responses, please let us know.

If you have any written documents ready prior to the meeting for our review, please have them to Chief Duke by December 11<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions, please contact Chief Duke.

We look forward to working with you, and all previously involved entities, in the future.

Sincerely,

  
Cecil McConnell, Mayor ProTem

  
Allison Duke III, Fire Chief

## **Appendix B**

### **Questions Received from City of Bremerton**

- There are a number of ways two departments can come together. Clearly state your preferred option of bringing the two entities together in a proposal. What is your projected timeline for completion of this project.
- Identify all stakeholder groups in your proposal.
- Are you considering outside assistance such as a facilitator or consultant?
- Clearly explain the financial model you are proposing in as much detail as possible.
- Identify the needs of your department and potential opportunities your organization hopes to address with this proposal.
- Identify specific efficiencies within your proposal that will have a positive impact on Fire/EMS delivery for the citizens of our respective jurisdictions.
- Describe departmental/cultural similarities and differences between your organization and the Bremerton Fire Department as you see them.
- From your prospective what would the organizational model look like from year 1 to 5.
- Describe your current Labor/Management relationship and outline the proposed Labor/Management arrangement.
- Are you proposing any formal dispute resolution process in the plan?
- Consideration should be made to allow for future expansion to include neighboring departments.
- Explain your communication plan for this proposal.
- Anything else you would like us to consider?

## Appendix C

### Consolidation Success Factor from ESCi

#### Command

Undertaking any form of partnership requires effective leadership be demonstrated consistently at all levels. Policymakers and administrators must guide their respective agencies; yet, at the same time, they must cooperate with partner organizations. Differing leadership styles may cause repressed friction at best and open conflict at worst. Problems with sharing control and making decisions sends the wrong message to the members of the organization, which can lead to an unraveling of even the best proposal.

#### Communication

Silence or limited information from leaders to everyone involved *throughout the process* about potential or upcoming partnerships breeds fear, mistrust, and misinformation among affected persons. The leadership of collaborating organizations must agree to communicate actively, consistently, openly, and often with all affected groups. Everyone must be provided the same information at the same time. Most importantly, leaders must demonstrate two-way communication skills by carefully listening to (and acting on) the concerns of all constituents.

#### Control

Frequently, the strategic restructuring process is compared to a marriage. As the saying goes, *“Marriage is when two people become as one; the trouble starts when they try to decide which one.”*<sup>89</sup> As in marriage, strategic restructuring often fails because of organizational or personal ego issues.

The tenets of leadership require that someone be in charge; but in the interest of greater good, some of those in leadership positions must agree to yield power. Some who are used to operating in a position of control may have trouble adjusting to new roles that require more collaboration. Personal sacrifice in the interest of community good may not always win out.

#### Culture

Two schools of thought exist regarding organizational culture. The first camp views culture as implicit in social life, naturally emerging as individuals transform themselves into social groups (tribes, organizations, communities, and nations). The second camp offers that culture is comprised of distinct observable forms (language, use of symbols, customs, methods of problem solving, and design of work settings) that people create and use to confront the broader social environment. This second view is most widely used in the evaluation and management of organizational culture, but the first is no less important when considering bringing two discrete organizations into a closer relationship.

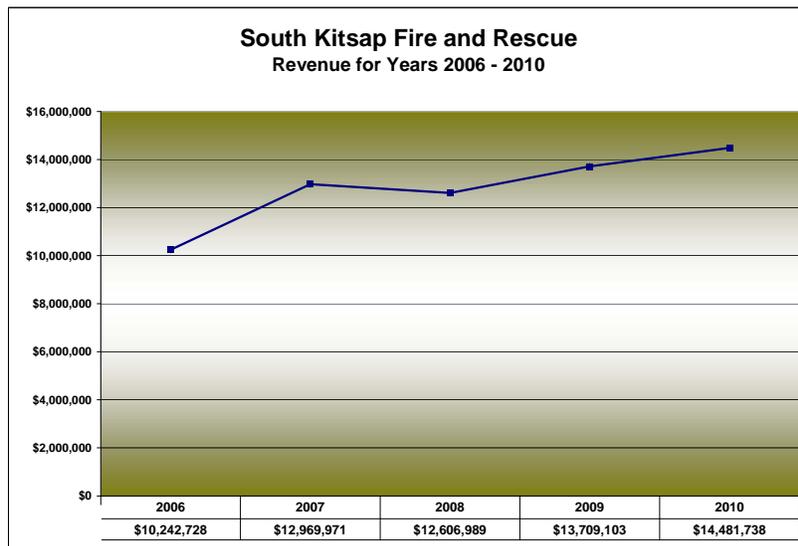
## Appendix D

### 2010 Combined Revenue / Expense Projections

To help understand how the finances might work through consolidation, here is some foundation for the preferred option of an RFA, as we understand it. When a city, which can otherwise collect property taxes up to \$3.375/1000 assessed value (AV) annexes into a fire district, its levy rate increases to \$3.60/1000 AV, less the amount the fire district collects (RCW 52.04.081). Thus, a city can collect up to \$2.60/1000 AV without having to fund a fire department. This annexation math does not apply the same way for an RFA. In an RFA, the lower the fire levy rate, the easier it is on the city residents' property tax burden. The city would have available \$3.375/1000 AV minus what the RFA and other junior taxing districts, like the library district, collect.

The Benefit Service Charge study we jointly funded through the WSFR planning process indicated there were some benefits to considering such a funding mechanism. Since SKFR is well below the \$1.50/1000 AV maximum, does not have a high percentage of commercial properties and has many undeveloped properties, a benefit service charge is not an advantage at this time. Within the next seven years when development occurs in South Kitsap, a benefit charge would balance revenue generation more equitably than property taxes alone and it would retain low property tax collection in the city. Even if the commercial and developed property balance supported it, going for a benefit service charge in this economic climate would likely puncture the delicate balance of funding needs and long term community trust. This option may be preferred as a funding option to consider as early as 2012.

Because SKFR is well below the \$1.50 fire levy maximum, it is positioned very strongly for several more years of AV reductions, which means its increases will continue to average approximately 4% annually. SKFR's fire levy has two prongs. There is a permanent levy and a temporary levy that expires on January 1, 2013. This timing will likely cause the low fire levy to creep up with AV reductions. It is projected that by 2013, the SKFR fire rate will be near \$1.35/1000 AV, well below the \$1.50/1000 AV maximum. The renewal in 2012, for 2013, would allow for consideration of up to a \$.15/1000 increase. SKFR's slow and steady funding strategy has been quite successful over the last few years.



SKFR has an AV of approximately \$7 billion and Bremerton has an approximate assessed value of \$3 billion. SKFR's annual revenue exceeds its annual expenses for 2010 by \$4,454,362. If we apply SKFR's 2010 fire levy rate of \$1.17/1000 AV on the AV of the City of Bremerton and add that with BFD's 2010 funding projections, it results in more expenses than revenue or a funding shortfall of \$2,829,423. If the city reduced its 2010 BFD operating budget by eliminating inter-department fund transfers, retained the LEOFF liability, reduces external professional services, IT services, equipment repair/rental, and retains the public safety bond debt, it would reduce the city's shortfall. The shortfall represents the side payment amount the city would pay to the RFA once formed. This payment would be eliminated upon passage of the funding issue in 2012 for 2013 and would likely reduce with annual revenue increases prior to 2013. The following is an example of revenue and expenses for 2010.

### SKFR

Banked Capacity	\$	586,735
2009 Carryover	\$	3,750,000
2010 Revenue	\$	<u>14,481,738</u>
Total Available Revenue	\$	18,818,473
2010 Total Expense	- \$	<u>14,364,111</u>
2010 Total Available Revenue	\$	4,454,362
2010 AV	\$	7,020,453,879
2010 EMS Levy	\$	3,510,503
2010 Fire Levy	\$	8,104,012
2010 Ambulance Billing	\$	1,865,118
2010 Other Revenue	\$	<u>1,002,105</u>
2010 Total Revenue	\$	14,481,738

### Bremerton Fire Department

2010 Total Revenue	\$	5,314,577
2010 Total Expenses	- \$	<u>8,144,000*</u>
Shortfall	(\$	2,829,423)
2010 AV	\$	2,913,313,759
2010 EMS Levy (@ \$.50)	\$	1,458,000
2010 Fire Levy (@\$1.17)	\$	3,408,577
2010 Ambulance Billing	\$	438,000
2010 Other Revenue	\$	<u>10,000</u>
2010 Total Revenue	\$	5,314,577

\* After deducting the following expenses from the 2010 BFD operating budget, the city would pay to the new consolidated entity that amount that remained as a shortfall.

- A. City Retains LEOFF Liability
- B. City Retains Bond Debt
- C. Deduct all Inter- department fund transfers from 2010 BFD Operating Budget

## **Appendix E**

### **Needs and Opportunities**

Consolidation of BFD and SKFR creates a number of efficiencies that would have a positive impact for both agencies and the citizens they serve. The first advantage is accredited status through the Commission of Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) which is part of the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE).

Through best management practices derived from CFAI, SKFR has developed an effective and efficient organization that directs available funding into operational staffing needs first. Historically, SKFR has limited the amount of resources directed to administrative and support staffing which allows additional resources to be directed to increase response staffing. The basis for accreditation is continual organizational improvement as measured by industry and nationally recognized standards.

CFAI requires specific performance indicators, goals and objectives, strategic planning, risk assessment, and specific emergency service delivery measurements referred to as a Standards of Cover. This process takes time and effort to manage effectively, but the dividends are well worth the effort.

SKFR was the first fire district in Washington to earn accredited status and has retained that status since 2001. In our case, CFAI would extend SKFR's accredited status to the new consolidated agency. That would generate a review of current service levels and the establishment of a new Standards of Cover for the new agency. Concurrently, the development of performance measurements, strategic planning, and goals/objectives would begin.

The consolidation would institutionalize the "Drop Borders Now and SKIA" agreements into a permanent response system. Agreements currently in place between SKFR and the BFD could be "fixed" into common operational practice for the new agency. Service areas currently exist in both jurisdictions that require service delivery from the adjacent agency for the closest and most appropriate response. These agreements have served both agencies and our community's well, by placing service delivery before jurisdictional turf or boundary lines. As one agency, service to all areas within the new jurisdiction would fall under a common response standard. Units dispatched to any event type would be reflected under a common CAD set up.

The consolidation will create a macro scale for staffing and responses for significant and resource intensive events. In their current configurations, both agencies maintain a minimum staffing level that meets the average daily service demands, yet often leaves units stretched, covering other divisions or station areas. Each agency has a fire environment that reflects similar levels of risk in the residential low to moderate risk category. BFD serves a slightly higher concentration of commercial or business type properties. With these similar risk levels comes the need for fire ground critical tasking to provide both safe and effective fire ground operations. Currently, each agency has occasional challenges with daily operations based on unit service demands and resource intensive events. Operationally SKFR and the BFD as a combined resource would be an equalizing effect on the macro scale due to a combination of shared staffing and response units.

On any given day within each organization, line staffing may vary due to employee leave use that is beyond the agency's managerial control. On a larger scale with a combined workforce, current personnel staffing would blend together into a common staffing matrix that would aid in covering these vacancies and maintain minimum staffing levels. When addressing the critical staffing numbers required for safe and effective fire ground operations, this combining of available units operating under

a common CAD system and response plan would also provide broader depth of service to all communities served.

The consolidation will create a single focus funding and governance organization. All of the district funds are directed at EMS and fire services; and in the case of SKFR, these funds are directed toward increasing response personnel. Efficiencies that would benefit a new agency created under a RFA concept would mirror that of SKFR to include single purpose governance and funding. As a stand alone governmental agency with the sole intent of providing fire and emergency medical services to the communities served, funding and agency leadership would have the ability to be focused on agency specific operational needs. This "mission clarity" has proven successful in many applications in both public and private endeavors. The transferring of governance for a major portion of city operations to a stand alone agency would also help lighten the demands on city officials and services while maintaining this critical part of community public safety.

The consolidation will allow the continued development and incorporation of shared systems within both agencies. Several common operations currently exist between both SKFR and BFD. Both agencies use the same records management system through Emergency Reporting System (ERS) which provides a common area of operations and the ability to utilize current reporting programs for data collection and analysis. Both agencies are also leaders in the use and development of the web based training program "Moodle". Future program development and shared efforts in these areas have a tremendous amount of efficient productivity potential in the years ahead.

These are just a few examples of the advantages of consolidation that all share one theme: working smarter to produce efficiencies to continually improve emergency response services. The possibilities are nearly endless when we apply the natural law of synergy toward two agencies working as one.

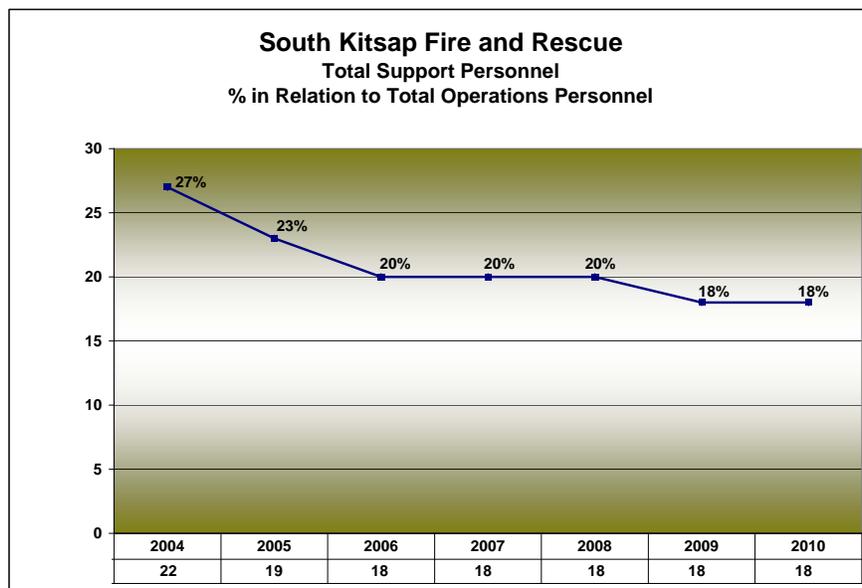
## Appendix F

### EMS/Fire Efficiencies

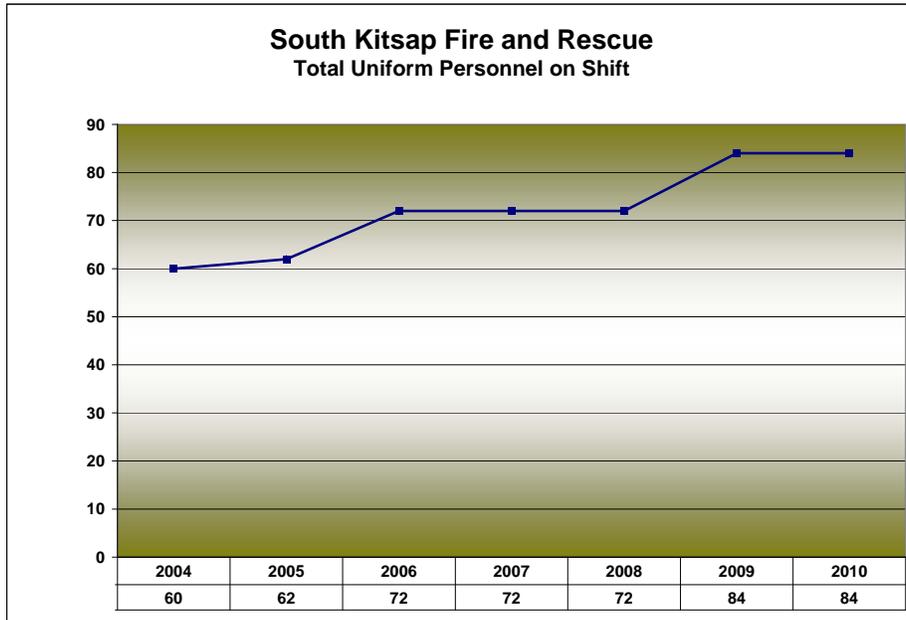
Initial considerations should be directed to the following areas for potential operational efficiencies early within the new organization. We have ranked the following recommendations as high, medium, and low in priority for potential implementation: **high** being considered for the initial start or within the first six months of operation; recommendations at the **medium** level being given study and consideration within the first year or two of operation; and recommendations receiving **low** status being a direction to be studied, considered, and developed as the agency evolves and establishes itself.

- **Ladder Trucks Utilization.** The staffing of aerial apparatus and its regular operational use incorporated into fire ground tactical decisions are a potential efficiency and improvement with consolidation. As the community served continues to grow with light industrial, commercial, and mid-rise construction, the need for aerial apparatus response and incorporation into fire ground practices also grows. SKFR has purchased a Quint aerial apparatus with the assistance of an AFG grant. This apparatus will be in service in early 2010 and is planned to operate as a squad staffed Quint located at station 31. Currently BFD has a similar apparatus located at station 1 operating in a cross staffed configuration. The potential to utilize these two modern aerial apparatus to automatically cover the City of Bremerton and Port Orchard urban centers is an operational concept to consider right away. **(High)**
- **Common Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Criteria.** Currently the two agencies respond in a similar but not identical dispatch configuration through CAD recommendations. Determining response levels and CAD recommendations for the new agency will offer efficiencies. Concepts like closest unit response and critical tasking for fire ground operations should be addressed. Focus must be kept on the strategic goal of maintaining the current levels or improving service to the citizens. **(High)**
- **Drop Borders Now.** The formation of the new agency will end the need for the Drop Borders Now agreement currently in place between SKFR and BFD. Station response areas will need to be studied to assure the closest and proper units are in the CAD system for all areas. The concepts achieved by the Drop Borders Now agreement will become permanent by the creation of the new agency. **(High)**
- **Bremerton Fire Department Captains.** Currently both agencies operate with a command officer supervising each shift. South Kitsap has these supervising officers at the rank of Battalion Chief, with the City of Bremerton filling this position at the Captain rank. With the common work load and supervisory responsibilities, it is recommended the three BFD Captains be reclassified to the rank of Battalion Chief at the start of any consolidation. This would create two response districts within the new consolidated agency. **(High)**
- **Bremerton Fire Department, Suppression Assignment of Support Duties.** South Kitsap has a facilities and fleet division that oversees portions of the department's logistics. These divisions are responsible for central supply, uniforms, turnout gear, and related items as well as vehicle maintenance and repair. The City of Bremerton has managed these department needs through use of the city shop or line personnel overseeing specific areas while on shift or with overtime compensation. Once formed, the new agency should have the existing facilities and fleet divisions expand to include services to the Bremerton personnel. **(High)**

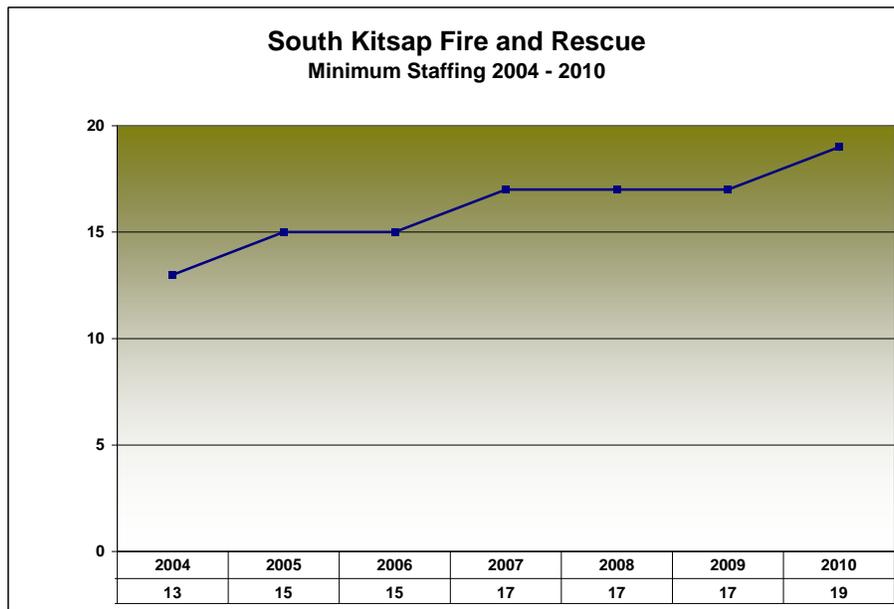
- **Staffing.** Within the Operations Division, several efficiencies are possible at the Administrative level. The administrative duplication of efforts within the Operations, Training, EMS, and Safety areas will likely lead to reassignment of personnel into different positions resulting in more efficient use of time and improved operational performance. Reduction of staff or administrative positions over time will allow redirection of funds to the suppression budget to support service delivery. **(High)**
  - Operations – Currently, two chief officers oversee this area in each department. In a consolidated department, this workload could be managed with one officer.
  - Training/Safety – The current training positions should be reviewed for potential downsizing. An analysis of the types of personnel needed with the Training Division will be needed. We envision that line officers, and possibly FF/PM's, would be beneficial to providing on-going training and program development working under a chief level officer.
  - EMS – Currently, two officers oversee this area in each department. In a consolidated department, this workload could be managed with one officer.
  - Support – The national average of support personnel to operational personnel is 17%. Following reorganization in 2005, SKFR leveled the ratio from 27% to 18% and, as a result, has not lost any efficiency in priority work. Support personnel in a fire department is much like wealth, it never seems like there is enough. As such, it is easy to justify hiring more support personnel, especially since it cost less to hire support positions when compared to a firefighter position. The problem is that this practice is counter productive to what our stakeholders, the citizens, really care about the most – emergency response. Below is a graph of SKFR's history of support staff. In this case, support is defined as all personnel not assigned to 24-hour emergency response shift. The reduction of support personnel allowed resources to hire four additional response personnel. This voluntary move gained traction for support of our subsequent fire levy.



The result of good community relationship building and shifting of support resources has allowed SKFR to continuously grow in the area of its greatest need, operational response. The graph below clearly demonstrates that positive track record which continues at the same pace.



SKFR's sound financial model which allows for a steady growth of additional firefighters being added over the last few years, allows for the guaranteed minimum staffing to have a correlating growth over the last six years.



- Information Technologies (IT).** Currently each agency manages IT in a different manor. The City of Bremerton has the city IT department manage its computers and related hardware, and has a shift suppression member manage the department cellular phone program. South Kitsap has a full time IT tech who reports to an administrative BC as the program manager. With consolidation, we should study work loads and personnel utilization to place this work under one office managed by administrative staff. **(Medium/High)**

- **Medical Transports.** Currently South Kitsap provides both ALS and BLS transports within its jurisdiction. The City of Bremerton provides ALS transports for the city. A study should be conducted to determine the impact of implementing a common transport configuration across the new agency. Considerations will need to address: funding/revenue generation or loss, reliability of units, staffing, apparatus requirements, and the physical and financial impact to the citizens. During the time needed to complete any study, the current utilization of resources could be maintained as is currently provided. This change would not occur without support from labor groups affected. **(Medium)**
- **Technical Rescue.** Currently, all Kitsap County Fire agencies have members involved in the Region 2 Technical Rescue program. These members are intended to be the training and technical liaisons back to their home department and to act as advisors to the incident commanders for incidents in their jurisdiction as the full team responds. In joining the two organizations, the new agency will have a larger pool of these trained rescue personnel to allow the formation of a staffed rescue engine company. Consolidation of these trained rescue team members into a common location with equipment to support both the local and regional response would produce tangible benefits in several areas. **(Medium)**
- **Water Rescue.** The new jurisdiction will have significant Puget Sound shore lines within its boundaries. A marine program that covers both fresh water lakes and salt water areas should be evaluated. With the central location of the Bremerton Marina, consideration should be given to a future program that provides a rescue boat, cross staffed with station 1 crews at this location; with the impacts on staffing and workload being evaluated. Current ice and freshwater rescue programs should also be evaluated and adjusted to cover all areas within the new agency. **(Medium)**
- **Bike Teams.** Currently SKFR maintains a Bicycle Medic Program for use at community events. Once formed, the new agency could expand the team's membership to include interested members from throughout the newly formed department. Utilizing the current team equipment, this service could be expanded to the benefit of all communities covered by the new agency. **(Medium)**
- **Hydrant Maintenance.** Hydrant maintenance is required yearly for fire hydrants within each jurisdiction. Currently each department is managing this issue in a different fashion with varying levels of success. SKFR utilizes duty crews to annually service hydrants and has had good success with the end quality of the product at a relatively low expense of time and materials. The Bremerton Fire Department has delegated or released this detail to the Water Company or AHJ for the water system. This has resulted in a mixed review of quality for the end product in the areas of required records for WSRB ratings, maintenance of the hydrants and road markers, and the annual trimming of brush and grass around the hydrants. Once formed, the new agency could study and develop a summer youth work program similar to programs currently utilized by the county road department. Water companies have a view of hydrants and their obligation to them that is different from that of the fire agencies that utilize them. It will be in the fire agencies' best interest that an effective and cost efficient program be developed for this area of department operations. **(Low)**

## **Appendix G**

### **WSFR Work Plan Section 9 - Future Expansion of WSFR**

The prospective future expansion of West Sound Fire and Rescue shall consider the benefits of service delivery for WSFR and the merging agency. The governing board of WSFR shall have the authority negotiate with a prospective merger organization on all of the elements of a proposed merger. Future mergers shall use the process outlined for fire districts except as otherwise modified by the RFP SA law and this work plan.

*(See full five page committee report in the WSFR draft work plan for details)*

## Appendix H

### BFD/SKFR Consolidation Communications Plan

*The void created by the failure to communicate  
is soon filled with poison, drivel, and  
misrepresentation.*

—C. NORTHCOTE PARKINSON

#### **Purpose of this Document**

This document provides practical suggestions for fire service leaders and managers to ensure sufficient communications within their departments and with external stakeholders.

#### **Goals of the Communication Plan**

- Ensure the elected officials are an active and integral part of the overall Communication Plan.
- Improve communication to and from citizens, businesses, and organizations.
- Improve two-way communication within the two participating jurisdictions.
- Enhance and improve community and media relations.
- Breakdown feelings of “us vs. them” between two participating jurisdictions.
- Increase awareness, interest, and participation of employees in the goals and activities of the consolidation.
- Build organizational pride among employees and positive identification with consolidation.

#### **Develop a Basic Communications Plan**

- What key messages do we want to convey?
- To what key stakeholders do we want to convey the key messages?
- What's the best approach to reach each key stakeholder, including who/how should the message be conveyed?
- How will we know if you're reaching these stakeholders or not?

#### **Communication Objectives**

- All Audiences
- Internal Audiences: All Members of BFD and SKFR
- Internal Audiences: Targeted Leadership
- External Communications: Stakeholders
- External Communications: Public/Media

## What the Consolidation Team must communicate

The team must communicate about the status, details, and decisions regarding the development of the consolidation work plan. The team must communicate the following:

- The process for developing the work plan.
- The progress made in developing the work plan.
- The details of the work plan before decisions are made.
- The funding issues regarding the implementation of the consolidation work plan.
- The net benefits of implementing the consolidation work plan.

## All audiences

- Communicate key meeting dates.
- Communicate what the law requires.
- Communicate issues being considered by the team.
- Communicate decisions made by the team.
- Communicate benefits and risks of the consolidation work plan.

## Internal audiences

- Communicate all consolidation meetings (dates/times/location).
- Communicate policies, procedures, and key issues that may impact staff.
- Educate staff on the process of developing a consolidation work plan.
- Educate staff on the strategic objectives of each project task within the consolidation work plan.

## External audiences

- Communicate all consolidation meetings (dates/times/location) with general public.
- Communicate all consolidation meetings (dates/times/location) with neighboring fire departments.
- Communicate key issues and decisions that may impact the general public.

## Key Essentials

- Key Messages: Key messages will be developed by the consolidation team.
- Truthfulness: One of the paramount principles of communication will be accurately reporting past events to earn future trust.
- Responsibility: Each jurisdiction's fire chief is responsible to disseminate information and inform their internal and external publics.
- Consistency: To maintain a consistent message, staff from the two participating jurisdictions will receive assignments to develop joint press releases that will be delivered by the local fire chief.

- Frequency: Communication will occur proactively rather than waiting for problems to arise and then communicating. This will require regular communications.
- Expectations: All fire department leaders must ensure our citizens and members receive timely, relevant and reliable information regarding the consolidation work plan.

### **Communication Milestones**

- Monthly Reports on Progress to the Executive Board of the KCFCA
- Quarterly Reports on Progress to the general KCFCA meetings
- Monthly Reports on Progress to the Kitsap County Fire Commissioners
- Monthly Reports on Progress to the Executive Board of the KCFCA
- Weekly updates for SKFR and BFD members and workgroup leaders from Fire Chiefs
- Quarterly updates for WFC/WSCFF/WFCA/WSFFA
- Develop Joint Press Releases Announcing Key dates, process and advantages

### **Target Audiences**

Identified internal target audiences include:

- BFD and SKFR Elected Officials
- BFD and SKFR Chiefs
- BFD and SKFR Labor leaders
- SKFR Volunteer Leaders
- BFD and SKFR Officers/Managers/Department heads
- BFD and SKFR uniform members
- BFD and SKFR non-uniform members
- SKFR Volunteer members

Identified external target audiences include:

- CKFR
- Neighboring Fire District Leaders
- Harrison Hospital
- Olympic Ambulance
- Local Healthcare providers
- Business Community
- Community Leaders/Clubs
- Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council
- Kitsap Elected Officials (any outside of the two fire departments)
- General Public/Media
- WFC
- WFCA
- WSCFF
- Kitsap DEM
- Kitsap CenCom

- KCSO, POPD and BPD leadership
- Kitsap Fire Commissioners and Chiefs Association

## Communication Process

- Methods: The primary methods used to disseminate information and/or educate:
- Electronic Communication: This includes but is not limited to such communication vehicles as targeted emails, web sites, newsletter, internal mail lists, Chiefs updates, labor newsletters, volunteer newsletters, surveys, weekly Friday updates, and other means of rapid information dissemination.
- Printed Communication: This includes printed or copied documents as needed to fulfill the communications objectives. These include talking points, fact sheets, program newsletters, news releases, newsletter articles for partner and association newsletter, progress reports, brochures, training materials, booklets, and other items as necessary.
- Verbal Communication: This includes speaking engagements, presentations, and formal training classes in a variety of forms including classroom style, videotaped, videoconferencing and computer based training, and computer conference style education. Meetings may include executive level briefings, team briefings, office or unit staff meetings, customer meetings, partner meetings, provider meetings, and stakeholder briefings. This can also include word of mouth from members to citizens.
- Visual Communication: Often this will include materials to be used in presentations, speaking, or training. These include PowerPoints, videotapes, and other visual charts, graphs, posters, and pictures.

## Communications Strategies

Consolidation communication strategies will be multi-faceted and carried out using a variety of communication methods. Key strategies include:

- Information Only: Determine if the communication is “information only.” Once determined, that will drive the types of communication methods needed – relying more on utilizing the traditional electronic communications channels (email, email newsletters, weekly updates, etc.).
- Seeking Feedback: Determine if the communication is seeking feedback. If so, the means of communicating that information is more complex and should involve actively engaging staff either through a conversation, meeting, task, class, or activity. This is to ensure that the information exchange is effective.
- Managers as Key Communicators: Rely on management and member leader groups at all levels to help communicate key messages and receive feedback. It will be critical to be strategic on who, how, and how often these managers will be used to help carry messages.

- Video Conferencing and BKAT.
- Getting Staff's Attention: Rely on various staff meetings to help communicate critical issues and decisions. In order to get staff's attention on major changes, they need to hear it from their own managers in their own meetings. Likewise the community needs to hear from their Fire Chief, not a staff support person or other jurisdictions Fire Chief. Support staff plays a key role for the Fire Chiefs by developing the desired communication.

## Communication Tactics

### 1. Information and Awareness – All Audiences

#### A. Information

Meet with peers and subordinates on a regularly scheduled basis.

Frequency: Monthly

Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

Track questions and follow up issues.

Frequency: As identified by the Fire Chiefs

Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

#### B. Develop Fact Sheets on Critical Issues

Develop fact sheets to be used with external audiences on critical issues. These will be developed on an as needed basis.

Frequency: As identified by the Fire Chiefs

Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

#### C. Feedback

Review and make suggestions for improvements to key issues in the work plan as defined:

- Press Releases
- Internal / External Surveys
- Key Presentation materials

Frequency: Monthly

Responsibility: Consolidation Communication Team

### 2. Internal communications: All BFD and SKFR Members

#### A. Consolidation Communication Team's message

At the team's discretion, include information that reinforces the importance of the work plan and what it means to citizens and members of the two jurisdictions. Help them understand how it affects them.

Frequency: Monthly

Responsibility: Consolidation Communication Team

#### B. Fire Department News letters

Periodic articles provided to members of the two fire departments (electronic employee newsletter) on featured consolidation activities.

Frequency: Depending on existing publication/circulation times

Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

C. Member Feedback loop

Maintain and publicize a member feedback loop where questions can be posed and answered through regular email messages, web site, or other means. Track questions / answers.

Frequency: On-going

Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

3. Internal communications: Targeted Managers/Staff/Committees

A. Manager Meetings

Meet as needed with managers or department-wide committees to share important information. Identify issues that they need to communicate. Send critical reminders and info to managers pertaining to consolidation issues on an as needed basis.

Frequency: On-going

Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

4. External Communications: Stakeholders

A. Stakeholder presentations

Present consolidation updates in formal meetings of organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, and others. Determine stakeholder groups applicable, build schedule.

Frequency: Dependent on meeting dates

Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

B. Communication with other fire agencies

Identify a point of contact for other fire agencies on consolidation issues. Share successes on a regular basis; also good way to determine barometer on new ideas, approaches. Focus on CKFR more regularly as a phase two consolidation agency by providing their chief and commissioners regular updates on progress especially with their transition language.

Frequency: Monthly

Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

C. Statewide Conference Participation

Participate in statewide conferences, symposiums, and summits. Communicate successes and failures.

Frequency: On-going

Responsibility: Consolidation Communication Team

5. External communications: Public/media

A. Consolidation related news releases

Work with support staff to develop message as directed by the Consolidation Communication Team.

Frequency: Ongoing  
Responsibility: Fire Chiefs or designee

B. Consolidation fact sheets

Create fact sheets on issues or decisions as needed for use with the public and/or news media.

Frequency: On-going  
Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

C. Media Response

Be available to respond to media inquiries relating to consolidation as needed. All members of each participating department and the members of the Consolidation Communication Team agree that a central point of contact for the media is necessary. The point of contact will be the two Fire Chiefs.

Frequency: On-going  
Responsibility: Fire Chiefs

D. Legislative/elected official response

Be available to respond to legislative and elected official inquiries relating to consolidation as needed.

Frequency: On-going  
Responsibility: Fire Chiefs