

MINUTES

Joint Elected Officials
Eugene and Springfield City Councils
Springfield Library Meeting Room—Springfield City Hall
525 5th Street—Springfield, Oregon

July 21, 2009
Noon

PRESENT:

Eugene City Council: Mayor Kitty Piercy, Betty Taylor, Jennifer Solomon, George Poling, Andrea Ortiz, Mike Clark, Alan Zelenka, George Brown.

Springfield City Council: Dave Ralston, Christine Lundberg, Fred Simmons, Hillary Wylie, Terri Leezer.

ABSENT:

Eugene City Council: Chris Pryor.

Springfield City Council: Mayor Sid Leiken and Joe Pishioneri.

REPORT FROM EMERGENCY SERVICES CONSULTING INTERNATIONAL

Councilor Dave Ralston called the special meeting of the Springfield City Council to order. Springfield City Manager Gino Grimaldi called the role.

Her Honor Mayor Kitty Piercy called the special meeting of the Eugene City Council to order and noted a quorum of Eugene councilors was present.

Eugene Fire Chief Randy Groves introduced the topic. He said that the two councils would hear a report on the findings of a cooperative services study performed by Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI). He said that he and Chief Murphy believed the recommendations of ESCI were the next logical step for the two cities to take, based upon the success of the three-battalion interagency response system. Chief Groves endorsed the ESCI recommendations. He indicated that no action was expected of the two bodies at this time, and a follow-up meeting would be scheduled for early fall.

Springfield Fire Chief Dennis Murphy provided some background on ESCI and introduced its representatives, Senior Vice President Bruce Caldwell, Senior Consultant Conrad Christensen, and Director of Financial Services Martin Goughnour. He indicated they would provide information about a regional fire and emergency medical services (EMS) system. Chief Murphy clarified that the data years in the PowerPoint presentation were different for each jurisdiction and more current information for Eugene would be available later in the year.

Ms. Ortiz arrived.

The consultants provided the elected officials with a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the results of the Cooperative Effort Feasibility Study and the consultant's range of recommendations. The presentation

highlighted the preferred option, which was an intergovernmental agreement between the Springfield and Eugene fire departments, and suggested implementation steps. The preferred option was seen as an intermediary step for a vision of a single fire agency via annexation to a fire district, with a preference for those districts that already had a relationship with the two departments. Copies of the study and the presentation were provided to the elected officials.

Ms. Leezer and Mr. Zelenka arrived during the presentation.

Mr. Goughnour invited questions.

Ms. Ortiz commended the study as thorough and commended the chiefs for the work they do. She was pleased to hear the consultant's third-party affirmation of the good job the chiefs did. She indicated she would have more questions later when the Eugene council met, and thanked the consultants for their time.

Ms. Taylor noted that the distance that firefighters might have to travel was not mentioned as a basis for cost. Mr. Goughnour confirmed that factor was not included. He said that typically, departments establish station locations and equipment requirements based on an urban/suburban or rural level of service and then establish a service level and response time for that area on the basis of the population served and the risk involved. Ms. Taylor posited a situation where one community had a more concentrated population and one community had more sprawl. She suggested that sprawl would add to the expense of providing services, and asked if that would be considered. Mr. Goughnour said that population density could be a factor. He said if a community's population was very dense, that would likely result in a higher number of calls and the community would need more resources in terms of equipment and personnel to match that. That required a depth of resources so that when resources were out, backup resources were available.

Mr. Caldwell said that demographics and human activity were other factors to consider. He suggested that a high concentration of people that required many EMS calls would be an area of concern. In terms of human activity, he cited Autzen Stadium on a Saturday afternoon and said that it represented a risky situation. Each city had its own variable and it would be difficult to pick them apart given that they were also a region.

Mr. Clark said he had been struck by the fact that both departments, compared to the median, had fewer employees and resources. He said he was impressed by both departments. Regarding the potential of the savings from a merger or district, he noted the \$850,000 savings in administration and support services cited in the study, and asked the savings to be realized on the 30 interim steps. Mr. Goughnour did not think he could estimate those savings. He pointed out there were some intrinsic values, such as the logistics involved in implementing a step; for example, in some cases, a captain might have to do some purchasing and the question was, did that take a unit out of service? Could the cities achieve efficiencies through joint purchases? He said there was a cost-avoidance factor to consider as well. Mr. Clark said he was looking for comparative figures that helped him evaluate the options available and whether there were substantial savings to be found; for example, in individual intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) with other districts or other cooperative agreements without the need to merge departments. Mr. Goughnour said that there were not savings to the individual organizations.

Mr. Poling thanked the consultants for their report. He looked forward to more discussion. Mr. Poling believed that the councilors were likely aware of the information presented at some level but it needed to be brought out for that "ah ha" moment. He commended the dedication of the two chiefs and their entire staffs. He thought the leadership the chiefs brought would lead to a bright future. He was concerned about the "deal breakers" mentioned in the report and said that the elected officials would have to pay attention to those to make the recommendation work. He did not want to forget about the concerns of the Lane

Rural Fire Protection District. Mr. Poling liked the direction the process was going and wanted to move forward.

Mr. Goughnour suggested the elected officials take an opportunity to make a significant change given the confluence of events that did not come along very often, including the retirement of Chief Murphy.

Ms. Lundberg agreed that events had created an opportunity for what might otherwise be an impossible scenario. She recalled that Springfield had looked at the formation of a new fire district in a different context. She agreed that the other local districts needed to be taken into consideration and should be part of the discussion. As the two communities went forward, she thought that the elected officials needed to remember that the creation of a new taxing district could be a major stumbling block if not well-executed. She suggested the elected officials take a considered approach to the formation of a special district because she thought there would be public resistance from the voting public to what appeared to merely be a shift of dollars from one taxing entity to another.

Ms. Lundberg commended the work done by the two chiefs. She wanted more information about the dollar implications of a department merger. Mr. Caldwell attributed the interim steps recommended by ESCI to the need for more information about the financial impact of the merger and to inform the public and address its reaction.

Mr. Ralston clarified with the consultants how they arrived at the tax rates and response times mentioned in the study.


Mr. Ralston thought the two approaches available to the cities were an IGA and annexation to a fire district. He was concerned about the governance aspect of the issue and for that reason was not interested in forming a new fire district with its own governing board. He wanted more information. Mr. Goughnour noted the existing models that included councilors as members of the board of directors. Mr. Caldwell pointed out the IGA model would involve no change of governance.

Mayor Piercy thought the councilors had a great deal to think about. She said the departments were ready to move forward, but the question was whether the community was ready to. She suggested the councils think about what an ideal world would look like and take a positive approach toward the question.

Mr. Ralston adjourned the special meeting of the Springfield City Council at 1:35 p.m.

Mayor Piercy adjourned the special meeting of the Eugene City Council at 1:35 p.m.

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)



Sidney W. Leiken
Mayor

Attest:



Amy Sowa
City Recorder