

Special Meeting Minutes  
Spokane Regional Emergency Communications Governing Board  
May 24, 2024

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chief Cody Rohrbach called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The following Board members were in attendance:

Board Members

Chief Cody Rohrbach – Spokane County Fire District 3 (Chair)  
Chief Brad Richmond – Airway Heights Police Department (Vice Chair)  
Sheriff John Nowels – Spokane County Sheriff's Department  
Chief Dave Ellis – Spokane Valley Police Department  
Assistant Chief Tom Williams – Spokane Fire Department  
Chief Frank Soto, Jr. – Spokane Valley Fire Department  
Assistant Chief Howard Johnson – Spokane County Fire District 4  
Scott Simmons – Spokane County  
Maggie Yates – City of Spokane  
Gayne Sears – Citizen Representative

Staff

Lori Markham, Executive Director  
Kim Arredondo, Deputy Director  
Dusty Patrick, Technical Services Director  
Brad Kane, Dispatch Operations Manager  
Kelly Conley, Communication and Media Manager

Auxiliary Partners/Guests

Nathan Jeffries, SCFD9  
Brian Werst, WBM  
Jeff Galloway, WBM  
Zach Bond, SVFD  
Angela Golden, SVFD  
John Guarisco, SVFD Commissioner  
Patrick Burch, SVFD Fire Commissioner  
John Hohman, Spokane Valley

**2. Closed Session**

No closed session.

**3. Discussion and Possible Action Item**

a. Request for Extension for City of Spokane Decision

Cody Rohrbach stated the Board received a letter from the City of Spokane which everyone on the Board should have had a chance to read and that he has been in discussion with Commissioner Kuney who has set up a meeting with the City of Spokane and electeds and would like to schedule regular meetings during the three month extension they are asking for. Commissioner Kuney also wanted input from the Board on who from the SREC side will attend those meetings, if the extension is granted. John Nowels explained that though it was decided to draw a hard line, the letter indicates the City is having serious considerations on getting clarification, including the items they stated in the letter that they clearly don't understand. John added the letter did not articulate what could have been articulated to help get the SREC Board to a yes, but he believes the intent is there. John stated he met with others involved in those meeting and believes there truly is a will by the City to understand SREC's fee structures and

there is genuine confusion surrounding user fees and revenues collected. John stated he feels this is a good opportunity to show exactly how we are managing SREC and how we have been very fiscally responsible. John furthered he understands the ninety days is not ideal but if we can demonstrate to the City that they are better in than out, then it will be better for the region. John stated he did not appreciate the political swipe at the SREC Board or SREC that was reflected in the letter. Scott Simmons echoed John's comments about misunderstandings surrounding user fees, structure and finances, and believes the three-month extension gives time to bring clarity to those misconceptions. Scott added that the comment of the City being double charged for user fees means all the jurisdictions are paying double and we know very well that is not the case. This allows more opportunity to be specific on how operations are funded and 1/10<sup>th</sup> monies used and prioritized. Scott reminded the Board that SREC has had several years of State Audits that have come back with high marks and clean reports showing that SREC is operating fiscally responsibly and these three months will hopefully allow time for others to see that as well. Howard Johnson echoed John and Scott's comments but asked if we allow the extension does that mean SREC has to prepare two budgets again or delay the budget and user fee numbers going out to agencies. Howard stated we've been down this road before, how do we ensure we aren't doing this again three months from now. John stated that based on discussions with Commissioner Kuney and others the items that need to be discussed will be discussed and doesn't believe the discussions will go beyond the ninety days. John added he doesn't believe anyone, on both sides, has the will to go beyond that.

Gayne Sears stated she was under the impression there has been communication back and forth between the City and SREC over the last several years of information and questions relating to these very questions and asked, if that is accurate, is there already work that has been done to alleviate these misconceptions, so the same work isn't being redone. Lori Markham explained that yes that information has been provided, but the issue is that information has been provided over the last five years and each time it is asked for there is new data to collect in order to provide it and as each day passes more business is conducted and therefore more data to be collected. John added that some of the misunderstanding goes back to what the original 1/10<sup>th</sup> encompassed and how that has changed over the years, there is a real lack of knowledge on how it was funded, supposed to be funded and how it is used now. John believes that will be a lot of the groundwork during the meetings to get everyone on the same page, what is collected, how it is spent, what the intent behind it was; that historical knowledge will clarify the misconceptions. Cody agreed with John and furthered that the lack of continuity over time and changes in administrations and at different levels in personnel, leads to a redundancy in information provided and has been a challenge. Scott stated that Commissioner Kuney's willingness to dive into operations and finances at a deeper level shows good intent and wanting to come alongside and support SREC and demonstrate what is being done for the twenty agencies that are a part of SREC.

Brad Richmond stated he did not want to lose focus on the great service SREC provides to the community and twenty member agencies. Brad added that each month the Board sees report on the phenomenal job SREC is doing, the times for hands to chest, etc. Brad reiterated SREC's focus remains on service to the public, first responders, and the member agencies and doesn't want SREC to be distracted by these other things, their focus needs to remain on service and the Board needs to support that. Frank Soto, Jr. agreed with Brad and stated that the letter was clearly not about citizen safety. Frank asked if the letter had three parts to its request; the three-month extension to analyze financial models, CAD cost schedule and governance structure. Frank furthered that the letter is asking for a three-month extension to complete a financial analysis, but at the bottom of the fourth paragraph it states that based on their financial analysis SREC

could eliminate user fees and still achieve a balanced budget. Frank wanted to know what analysis had been done then, is it a new analysis. Maggie Yates clarified that the City has looked at what they have access to now and that is their initial analysis, but they not only have to look at SREC but also what the requirements would be if the City decided to be all out. Maggie added there are still questions if the decision was to join SREC and those answers would help refine the initial analysis that has already been done. Maggie furthered that she appreciates Commissioner Kuney's willingness to help facilitate the process to get that additional information and appreciates the Board's consideration of the request today. Frank asked if the City was aware of SREC's plans to build a new communications facility since the letter essentially accuses SREC of hoarding money. Maggie clarified that the City is aware but has questions around financing options for the building and what the building will actually cost and a detailed plan for the construction of the facility. Frank explained those questions/concerns were not stated in the letter, just the accusation of hoarding money. Maggie added that she believes that's not what the letter stated, but rather there are outstanding questions and appreciates the extra time to better understand what the City is looking at in terms of the financial and governance pieces of the model. Frank added that the letter reads as if the City would like SREC to finance them completely and asks why the City believes SREC should be paying for everything. Maggie explained the City is trying to understand what the tax revenue is paying for and what can be covered by the tax revenue versus the user fees and whether that is the best model for the City's residents and taxpayers. John stated that most likely one of the first topics of discussion with the finance people will be why that perception is there. John agrees with Frank that the letter seems to allege monies are used in a certain way and is inaccurate; having regular meetings with the electeds and finance personnel have helped John feel more comfortable with the ninety-day extension. John furthered that he agreed that the wording of the letter did not indicate a willingness to talk and negotiate and showed a lack of understanding. John explained there is an agreement to have regular meetings to iron out the finances so everyone understands it the same way. Cody agreed there are a lot of inaccuracies and misunderstanding in the letter but is optimistic there is an opportunity to clarify those misconceptions and reiterated that the letter could have been more productive under a different tone. John believes that if there ever came a political situation where the Board had to defend how the funds have been used that has been entrusted to SREC and the Board, that we are positioned exceptionally well to defend that both operationally and fiscally and doesn't worry about that.

John Nowels motioned to approve the ninety-day extension requested by the City to collect information, negotiate with Commissioners, find facts and come to a decision point for the City to join SREC or not. Brad Richmond seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried. Cody added the Board needs to respond in writing and would like the Board to approve the Executive Committee to draft the response letter and send to the City. Scott motioned to authorize the Executive Committee to craft a letter in response to the Mayor's letter, outside of a public meeting. John Nowels seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Cody stated that the letter asked for the SREC Board to make a recommendation to the BoCC (Board of County Commissioners) on the composition of the SREC Board and asked the Board if they wanted to discuss that today or table it to discuss over the next three months. John stated that he believes the Board needs more time to take into consideration and have those discussions. Cody explained the Executive Committee can craft the letter to include that the Board will use the next ninety days to have those discussions. Gayne asked if the Executive Committee would be deciding who would be attending these regular meetings with the City and electeds. Cody stated that the Executive Committee can work on who should attend those meetings with input from the group. Howard agreed that decision should be left with the Executive Committee. The group agreed to leave the decision with the Executive Committee.

**4. Adjourn**

Adjourned at 9:24 a.m.



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Board Member  
Governing Board



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Board Member  
Governing Board