

EMERGENCY FIRE COST COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING

September 29, 2022

In accordance with the provisions of ORS 477.455, a special meeting of the Emergency Fire Cost Committee (EFCC) was held via Zoom Video Conference on Thursday, September 29, 2022.

Committee Members Present *(via Zoom video conference)*

Brennan Garrelts, Chair
Steve Cafferata
Chris Johnson
Erik Lease

Others Present

Nancy Hirsch, EFCC Administrator
Lorna Hobbs, EFCC Finance Coordinator
Samantha Hoffman, Executive Support, ODF
Tim Holschbach, Deputy Chief – Policy & Planning, Fire Protection, ODF
James Short, Deputy Director for Admin Branch, ODF
Matt Thomas, Unit Forester – Toledo, ODF
Jamie Paul, Special Projects, ODF
Todd Scharff, DAS Risk Manager
Neil Miller, ODF
Eric Kranzush, Giustina L&T
Randy Hereford, Starker Forests
Gary Votaw, Meteorologist, ODF
Lindsay Cunningham, Willis Towers Watson
Kyle Williams, OFIC
Ron Graham, Deputy Chief – Operations, Fire Protection, ODF
Kyle Abraham, Deputy Director for Operations, ODF
Kim Titus, Fire Finance, ODF
Jason Miner, Governor's Natural Resource Policy Advisor
TJ Ramos, Assistant to SOA Area Director, ODF
Dennis Lee, Klamath-Lake District Forester, ODF
Carrie Capp, COD Fire/Fuels Planner, ODF
Joe Arbow, Assistant to EOA Area Director, ODF (by phone)

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

Chair Garrelts called the special meeting of the Emergency Fire Cost Committee to order at 1:11 p.m. on Thursday, September 29, 2022. All committee members were present via Zoom video conference and there was a quorum. All meeting materials have been made available to committee members prior to this meeting and will be available to the public following this meeting on the EFCC website.

ITEM 2: STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS *[Decision Item]*

Chair Garrelts provided a brief overview of the strategic investments evaluation process. He noted that committee members submitted about 12 or so questions after their initial review of the proposals. Those questions were then sent to the submitters of the proposals who provided responses which were then distributed back to the committee. Each member then utilized the strategic investment evaluation tool to provide a score relative to each proposal. EFCC Finance Coordinator, Lorna Hobbs, then compiled all the scores and EFCC Administrator Nancy Hirsch reviewed the compiled scores and removed committee member names. She then compiled the average scores for each strategic investment proposal. Today the committee is reviewing the compiled average scores. He then asked the committee for their comments or perspectives.

Steve Cafferata reminded the committee that these are investments, not grants, and the committee is looking at ways to reduce exposure to the Oregon Forestland Protection Fund by making these investments.

Erik Lease appreciated the detail of information provided as it helped create a good baseline for a decision. He also noted that the scoring matrix helped with prioritizing.

Chris Johnson agreed with Erik and added that the process was clear and straightforward this time compared to the past, and he appreciated the responses from ODF staff.

Chair Garrelts mentioned one proposal that was split into two separate proposals for separate evaluations; the Klamath-Lake District guard stations which were split into 1A (Bly guard station) and 1B (Chiloquin guard station) for a total of 9 strategic investment proposals evaluated and scored by the committee. In total, the committee has \$1,523,860 to allocate toward these projects and he recommended allocation of that amount in full and then asked the committee for opposition or discussion.

Erik Lease asked if there was a time period in which the funds are available to make the investments. Nancy responded that from a technical aspect, the OFLPF available dollars for strategic investments have already moved out of the account and is in ODF's account,

AGENDA ITEM #2

so the timeline is open relative to when the committee chooses to allocate based on this evaluation process. Basically, there is really no time limit.

Steve Cafferata concurred with Chair Garrelts in that it is time to put these dollars to work. They have been postponed numerous times already.

Chair Garrelts said it was wise to hold off on some of the fundings to see where the SB 762 monies were allocated. He then mentioned that the differences in the evaluation scores compared to the past, in that there was a wide variety of scores, which created a lot of variability for averages. The committee also looked at how it ranked out among the 9 different proposals to see where there was alignment. Specifically, SI #5 (CFPA microwave build out), and SI #7 (COD grapple dozer) which both ranked as a number one in choice for the committee in the rank choice evaluation. Additionally, SI #5 and SI #7 both had the highest ranking scores which showed good alignment. Chair Garrelts recommended moving those strategic investment proposals forward for the full funding amount requested as well.

Steve noted in the proposal for the CFPA microwave build out (SI #5), it appears to be a different tower location than what was originally submitted. Chair Brennan agreed noting there was a proposed shift in the project, however, the microwave technology was the key component for that proposal, not the location. Erik agreed as that was his recollection as well.

Chair Garrelts then asked Nancy to keep a tally of the total funds to be expended for these proposals. Nancy responded that she and Lorna are already doing this and would be willing to share on the screen after all SI proposals have been discussed and decisions made.

Chair Garrelts then moved on to SI #4 (EOA detection cameras) which ranked out as number two, which also matched the overall average score as number two by the committee. He recommended funding this project as well to the full amount. All committee members agreed and none opposed.

For SI #1B, the Chiloquin guard station, the rank choice also corresponded with the overall average score number three. He recommended funding of this proposal at the full amount requested. All committee members agreed, none opposed. Steve Cafferata mentioned the only difference between the Bly and Chiloquin guard stations was due to the smaller percentage of shared costs on the Bly guard station. Currently, Bly does not have a guard station so fire trucks were parked all summer because there were no employees to staff them due to no housing at the location. Steve reiterated the importance of having a guard station in that country.

Chair Garrelts said his preference, after reviewing the proposals, would be to fund the Bly guard station before Chiloquin because of the scoring metric. The cost share lowered the potential score for Bly but in terms of need and justification provided by the district, there seems to be a greater need for the guard station in Bly. He offered this to the committee for further discussion among the committee and Steve Cafferata proposed funding of both guard stations.

Erik noted that the total amount requested to be allocated to these strategic investment projects is about \$1.66M, which is \$100K short of funding every proposal. This may help to determine which to fund and which not to fund.

Chair Garrelts offered to the committee, instead of going through each of these proposals individually by rank, perhaps the committee could discuss where to come up with \$100K. He asked if committee members would be open to that discussion. He then added it may be a good way to discuss these, if all aligned in deploying the total \$1.5M, if there is a project or group of projects where some money could be pulled back to put toward the priority projects. He reminded the committee that one of the proposed projects on the list was scalable and asked if the committee would like to discuss this option.

Steve Cafferata noted there were a couple of projects to discuss that don't quite meet the philosophy of basic tenants. Specifically, two that he is concerned about; the web license, which is already in operation, seems like it could be a regular district cost rather than something that would be a startup. If that's the case, it doesn't fit one of the basis tenants identified by the committee. He then asked why this cost couldn't be split up among the districts. The other concern he has is with regard to the Toledo facility, which has been going on for years, noting the primary justification was a rebate for money they have put into the OFLPP rather than an investment that would likely have a payback. For full disclosure, Steve mentioned that he owns personal property within the Toledo protection area.

Chair Garrelts provided context for SI #8 (DFPA web license), noting it was initially tested and the full cost was carried by DFPA. This is the first year they're testing that system in other districts, which is where the proposal is coming from – the test running for this year in other districts outside DFPA dispatch. He added that DFPA is paying the license for all other districts. Steve then asked if the money would go to a future year or this year.

Chair Garrelts said it was unclear to him which year DFPA was referring to under the agreement with the company for that license. DFPA's response was that in the first year, all 7 dispatch centers have used the program already but DFPA is still working on cross-district standardization and utilization throughout the area. EFCC funding would give the area one more year to develop and implement the software across all these districts to determine whether FireWeb is the correct program to support across the 7 dispatch centers, meaning this would be future funding for additional beta testing across a wide array of dispatch centers, versus the single dispatch center within DFPA over the last year. Basically, the funding is paying for an additional year of testing. Erik agreed that it was an expansion across a larger area, which is how it satisfied the SI criteria.

Steve Cafferata commented that funding would come out at about \$10K per district, which seems to fit within the district budget better than a guard station, for example. But, if it will help put fires out quicker, it is a good investment. Whether it would go forward with or without it in a district budget is still unclear, however. Steve added that the primary justification for the Toledo proposal, in order to meet the criteria, was that the money invested in OFLPP was equal in one year to assessments for OFLPP amount of money and so the district would like to have it back. Steve wasn't sure it met the criteria of basic tenants and is also wondering about other districts who made it through fire season without a fire, whether they would ask for their contribution to the OFLPP back, because that is not the purpose of the OFLPP.

Chair Garrelts agreed with Steve and mentioned that the proposal was the one project he had the toughest time with, recognizing there was a limited amount of dollars. The request doesn't meet the basic tenants. He proposed reducing the contribution to that project by the needed amount (\$100K) to round out the total strategic investment dollar funding.

Erik supported that proposal as did Chris Johnson. Steve still has concern with whether it's right to invest in a facility that will be built regardless of EFC funding, or if it would be better to put up another camera in EOA, for example. If the objective is to deploy all available funds, the committee needs to determine where else to invest the funds.

Steve added that it wouldn't be bad to keep a small amount available for small projects over the next year. He provided an example with the COD grapple dozer which came out as the #1 project because it's a small amount of money and could easily be paid back in one year. Erik supported that approach as did Chris Johnson. Brennan is still slightly conflicted. Steve offered that it makes more sense to invest in a project that fits within the basic tenants than one that doesn't.

Chair Garrelts then offered to move forward with support for funding all but the Toledo facility proposal at this time and instead holding back the funds to be used for that project for future projects. He added this proposal could also be addressed at the next regular EFCC meeting.

Steve then made a motion to support the strategic investment proposals #1A and #1B, #2, #4, #5, #6, #7, and #8. Erik seconded the motion. All were in favor, none opposed, and the motion was unanimously approved. With that motion, Chair Garrelts asked Nancy to communicate the results to ODF and to request the agency to report out on the current financial status of these projects at the regular quarterly EFCC meetings. He then added that the committee will want to hear success stories out of these investments as well as any issues that have come up and proposed solutions to those issues.

Steve mentioned that in the past, the committee has requested and received photographs showing the progress of some of the projects, which makes it more real for landowners as well as the committee that the funds are being well spent. Chair Garrelts also noted that with the high inflation rate, holding back investment funds is prudent if one of these projects ever needs additional funding to get over hurdles that may come up.

Nancy thanked the committee members and said she will be in communication with the ODF Administrative Branch and Fire Protection Division staff on status/progress reports on the investments. She noted that in the past, the strategic investment allocations have been documented in a letter to the State Forester, which she offered to draft for Chair Garrelt's signature. Finally, based on the motion to approve all 9 strategic investment projects, with the exception of #3, the remaining funds available for strategic investment is \$111,864.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENT / GOOD OF THE ORDER

There being no public comments or further business before the committee, Chair Garrelts adjourned the meeting at 1:46 p.m. The next regular quarterly meeting of the Emergency Fire Cost Committee will be Tuesday, January 3, 2023.

Minutes drafted by: Chrystal Bader
Minutes reviewed by: Nancy Hirsch and Steve Cafferata