

# King County Fire Protection District No. 27



## 2016 Maintenance and Operations Levy Renewal

### Fact Sheet

**King County Fire Protection District 27 - Fall City is seeking voter approval to renew the Maintenance and Operations Levy at the November 8, 2016 election. The Fire District Board of Commissioners has approved a resolution to submit to the voters of the District a proposition authorizing an excess levy for four years in the amount of \$475,000 per year. The purpose of this levy is to provide the necessary funding to maintain the District's current level of service.**

#### **WHY A RENEWAL OF THE MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS LEVY?**

The Fire District's primary source of funding is its property tax levies which provide 93% of the District's current revenue. In 2013, the voters approved a three-year Maintenance and Operations levy to stabilize revenues that had been greatly reduced by the recession and Sammamish annexation. While subsequent assessments on property values have increased, the Fire District's total assessed valuation has declined 22% or \$298 million dollars since 2009.

The economic forecast by the King County Assessor's Office is also predicting slower growth locally, between 1% and 3% percent, each year, over the next four years. Even with increases to assessed valuations, legislation limits the tax collection of fire districts to 101% of the previous year. The result is a funding system that is dependent upon regular ballot measures to the voters.

The District's expenditures are expected to exceed revenues by an average of \$467,000 each year for the next four years. The Maintenance and Operations levy provides the additional funds needed to maintain the District's current service level. It also preserves our special operations programs, provides the necessary training for the safety of our firefighters, and ensures long term funding for the replacement of the District's aging fleet. The current Maintenance and Operations levy will expire at the end of this year.

#### **MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS LEVY DETAILS:**

- 4 Year Levy Period - Collection in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020
- Amount requested - \$475,000 per year for four years.
- How much will it cost - \$44.75 each year or an additional \$3.73 per month for every \$100,000 of assessed valuation.

► Senior and Disabled Citizens who qualify for property tax relief are exempt from this levy.

#### **HOW DOES FIRE DISTRICT 27 COMPARE?**

##### **2016 Operating Cost per Fire Station:**

Fall City Fire District 27 - \$1.94 million  
Eastside Fire & Rescue - \$2.53 million  
Snoqualmie Fire & Rescue - \$2.55 million  
Duvall Fire District 45 - \$3.44 million \*

\*four-five person minimum staffing

#### **FIRE DISTRICT 27 REVENUE SOURCES:**

District's Regular Property Tax – 73%  
Current Maintenance and Operations Levy – 20%  
King County EMS Funds – 5%  
Other; Fees, Grants, Donations – 2%

This levy is intended to maintain our current level of service. It is the District's intent not to unduly burden its citizens by collecting more than needed.

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### **HOW THE LEVY FUNDS WILL BE USED?**

The Maintenance and Operations Levy will provide the additional revenue needed to pay the costs of salaries, equipment and facilities necessary to maintain the following level of service:

- The Fire District will maintain its current career staffing level of ten career firefighters. There are three career firefighters assigned to each of three shifts. One additional firefighter is employed to increase the District's career staffing during daytime hours.
- The Fire District has a Volunteer E-shift program which augments the District's service level by providing one - two additional volunteer firefighters with our career staff at night from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- With this level of service the District in 2015 provided three-person staffing 99% percent of the time 24/7 and four-person staffing 49% percent of the time.
- Three-person minimum staffing is considered the industry standard used in our region. It is the District's goal to continue providing this level of service for the safety of our firefighters. Nationally NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) recommends four-person staffing on engine companies.
- The Fire District will maintain the training of our special operations program which includes swift water rescue, technical rescue, and wildland firefighting. Due to flooding and river rescues in our area and the ongoing risk of wildfires it is important to sustain these programs at the local level for a quicker response.
- The Fire District will continue its Volunteer E-shift program at night from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. The District's volunteers provide a cost savings and help raise our standard for service delivery.
- Maintenance of emergency vehicles (Aid Units, Fire Engines, Water Tender, and Marine Rescue Units).
- The District will continue funding for its long-term vehicle replacement program, thereby eliminating additional financing costs in the future.

In addition the levy funds would pay for:

- Increased training costs; state laws have recently mandated additional training regulations for firefighters.
- Increased cost for protective gear and equipment; state laws have mandated new regulations on the service life of protective equipment.

### **WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN:**

- The Fire District has not increased its career firefighting staffing of ten since 2009.
- The District has collaborated with neighboring agencies in an effort to streamline training and share costs where efficiencies can be made.
- The District has made a substantial effort to operate lean and efficient and within the limits of its revenue sources. During the last three-year Maintenance and Operations levy period, for 2015 and 2016 the full authorized levy was not taken, the Board of Commissioners only levied what was needed for those years.

### **CONTINGENCY PLAN – IF LEVY FAILS:**

Without passage of the Maintenance and Operations levy or otherwise finding a means to restore some or all of the lost revenue, the following would need to occur to balance the budget:

- Three-person minimum staffing levels would likely decrease down to two-person minimum staffing.
- Only essential Firefighting and Medical EMS training will be approved; it will become necessary to eliminate our special operations capabilities which include swift water rescue, technical rescue, and wildland firefighting.
- The District will be unable to transport to local hospitals or would explore charging a transport fee.
- Building maintenance would be deferred, resulting in increased costs for the future.
- The District's vehicle replacement program would not be funded resulting in additional financing costs.
- Delaying vehicle replacement; vehicle maintenance cost would increase.
- Firefighter layoffs may occur.