

NORTH KITSAP FIRE & RESCUE

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Proud to serve the communities of Hansville, Kingston, Indianola, Miller Bay and Suquamish

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NKF&R FUNDING MEASURE HEADED TO NOVEMBER BALLOT

Proposal replaces vital funding by restoring fire levy rate; maintains levels of service with support for day-to-day operations and capital needs

(KINGSTON, Wash.) – Officials at North Kitsap Fire & Rescue (NKF&R) announced today that the district is putting a measure on the November general election ballot to replace funding from an expiring special levy and maintain levels of service by returning the fire levy rate to its previously-approved level of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Passage of the measure will also provide resources to rebuild the district's outdated Suquamish station, replace some aging apparatus and add additional firefighter positions. As required by Washington state law, the district is seeking community members to serve on the committees that will write "pro" and "con" statements on the measure for the local voters' pamphlet.

NKF&R's Suquamish fire station is the district's oldest. It was originally built in the middle of the last century and, unlike the district's three other staffed stations, wasn't designed to withstand an earthquake or meet other modern safety standards. Its replacement will ensure reliable response to the community by providing firefighters with a safer and healthier work environment. With average ambulance transport distances of 35 miles round-trip, NKF&R's medic and aid cars rack up miles quickly. The district needs to order one new ambulance as soon as possible, and will re chassis three others over the next few years. Also over the next few years, NKF&R plans to create three additional firefighter positions to help guarantee consistent staffing while reducing expensive overtime costs.

The proposed measure would allow the district to collect \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property valuation in 2023. Voter-approved citizen initiatives have imposed caps on property tax increases so fire district levy rates have decreased as assessed property valuations have increased. Proposed measures like NKF&R's give voters more control over fire district funding, determining what level of service can be offered. In 2022, NKF&R is collecting about \$0.97 per \$1,000 on its fire levy. Its special maintenance and operations levy ends after this year. Because this voter-approved measure is expiring and increasing assessed valuations are causing other levy rates to fall, it's estimated that restoration of the fire levy rate to \$1.50 will result in a total fire tax rate in 2023 that's just \$0.11 per \$1,000 higher than in 2022.

The Kitsap County Assessor estimates that the 2022 median assessed valuation of a home in NKF&R's district is \$453,910. In 2023, the median assessed valuation is expected to rise to \$550,840. Restoration of the fire levy would cost the owner of the median home about \$230 (or \$19 per month) in 2023, the measure's first year. In the measure's remaining five years and to ensure that the district can accomplish its stated goals as prices rise, the fire levy would be limited to annual increases of 1% or the rate of the consumer price index, not to exceed 6%. The effects on individual taxpayers will vary with increases or decreases to each property's assessed valuation. Interested parties can contact the district for information on impacts to their specific tax bill.

By state law, fire protection districts are limited in their revenue sources. The district receives no on-going federal, state or county funding; NKF&R gets 77% of its operating funds through property taxes. Across Kitsap County, fire and emergency medical taxes average about 16% of each property tax bill.

To ensure that the public has all of the information needed to make a decision on the proposal, NKF&R is hosting a series of public meetings. The most current list of those events as well as many other resources will be available on the district's web site at www.nkfr.org.

Members of the pro and con committees must be appointed by August 2. Individuals interested in volunteering for either committee are encouraged to contact District Secretary Katie Patti via phone at (360)860-8120 or via email at patti@nkfr.org.

NKF&R serves the communities of Hansville, Kingston, Miller Bay, Indianola and Suquamish across a 46 square mile area. A board of five commissioners, elected at large, oversees the district. That body meets on the second and fourth Mondays of every month at 7 p.m. in NKF&R's headquarters fire station (26642 Miller Bay Road NE) and online. The district's 2021 expense budget was \$10.2 million. In 2021, crews responded to 3,360 incidents from four staffed fire stations. About two-thirds of all calls were for emergency medical services.