



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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North County Fire & EMS Considers Levy Lid Lift Resolution

Public Invited to Attend and Comment

Stanwood, Wash. – Higher call volumes have the Board of Fire Commissioners for North County Regional Fire Authority (North County Fire & EMS) considering a fire levy lid lift. Voters would have the final say in restoring funding for emergency services to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, an amount they approved in 2008.

Two public hearings are planned to take community input on the issue. Both meetings will be at 4:00 p.m. on June 12 and 26 at Station 99, 8117 – 267th Street NW, Stanwood, WA 98292.

North County Fire & EMS recently completed a Strategic Plan to respond to rising call volumes. Call volumes have increased 37 percent in the past five years due to growth and an aging population. Higher call volumes mean added costs for equipment, fuel, maintenance, and medical supplies. It also requires additional staffing and apparatus to maintain emergency response times and service levels for the community.

While call volumes have increased 37 percent, the Fire Authority is limited to a one percent revenue increase per year by law. Fire Chief John Cermak says that revenue is not keeping up with the demand for service.

“We operate under a balanced budget, make cuts where needed and apply for grants” said Chief Cermak. “However, the one percent increase isn’t even keeping up with inflation, which is almost three percent for our area.”

In 2008 voters approved a fire levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Over time, levy rates fall as property values rise to limit the Fire Authority to roughly the same amount of revenue per year. The current fire levy has fallen to \$1.36 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

If approved by voters, the 14-cent lid lift would last for six years and cost the owner of a \$350,000 home an additional \$4.08 per month (\$49 per year). Funding would be used to hire six emergency personnel and supporting apparatus to respond to higher call volumes. If the Board of Fire Commissioners approves the resolution, voters could see the fire levy lid lift on the November 6 General Election ballot.

The Fire Authority’s Strategic Plan calls for additional staffing to maintain response times and service levels. It also identifies key capital projects for the agency, such as apparatus that is needed to respond to calls.

“We’re in front of these issues before they become a problem, which was the point of the strategic planning process,” said Chief Cermak. “We look forward to hearing from our community about our plans to maintain service levels as our population grows, ages and requires more emergency care.”

Community members who are unable to make a meeting are encouraged to contact Chief John Cermak with questions or comments at (425) 789-8036 or jcermak@northcountyfireems.com. All input is welcome and becomes part of the public record.

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North County Regional Fire Authority, known as “North County Fire & EMS,” provides fire suppression and emergency medical service to 25,000 people over 110 square miles, including the City of Stanwood. More than 70 emergency personnel respond to approximately 4,200 calls per year. North County Fire & EMS is debt-free, operates under a balanced budget and has passed all its independent audits by the State. More information about the Fire Authority can be found at www.northcountyfireems.com.