



## City Council

### Public Hearing to Consider Formation of a Regional Fire Protection Authority and Approval of a Plan for Its Governance, Operation, and Financing, Including a Fire Benefit Charge

**Agenda Date:** 12/6/2022  
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#### Title

Public Hearing to Consider Formation of a Regional Fire Protection Authority and Approval of a Plan for Its Governance, Operation, and Financing, Including a Fire Benefit Charge

#### Recommended Action

##### Committee Recommendation:

The Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee recommends the formation of a Regional Fire Authority and approval of a Plan for its governance, operations and financing to the Olympia City Council and the Tumwater City Council.

##### City Manager Recommendation:

Conduct a public hearing to accept testimony on the formation of a regional fire protection authority and approval of a Plan for its governance, operation, and financing, including a fire benefit charge.

#### Report

##### Issue:

Whether to conduct a public hearing on the formation of a regional fire protection authority and approval of a Plan for its governance, operation, and financing, including a fire benefit charge.

##### Staff Contact:

Jay Burney, City Manager, 360.753.8447

##### Presenter(s):

Jay Burney, City Manager  
Todd Carson, Interim Fire Chief

##### Background and Analysis:

In 2019, the City of Olympia ("Olympia") participated with the City of Tumwater ("Tumwater") and other local fire agencies in a study to evaluate options for a Regional Fire Authority ("RFA"). Findings from the study recommended further exploration of an RFA, as Olympia and Tumwater share similar

risk profiles, histories, and organizational structures and there may be a potential to control costs, improve service delivery, level tax rates across the region, provide greater equity, and leverage individual agency strengths and minimize weaknesses through the formation of an RFA.

On May 19, 2021, Olympia and Tumwater (the “Cities”) entered into an interlocal agreement to study whether to form an RFA. Subsequently, the Cities formed the Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee (“Planning Committee”) to review the creation of an RFA and associated service delivery and financing plan to provide fire protection and emergency medical services within the boundaries of the City of Olympia and the City of Tumwater.

The Planning Committee first met on August 16, 2021. On November 14, 2022, the Planning Committee conducted a public hearing on formation of the Authority and the Plan. Following the public hearing, upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Planning Committee moved to recommend the formation of the Authority and its Plan to the Olympia City Council and Tumwater City Council. Copies of the Plan were made available from the administrative offices of the City of Olympia and the City of Tumwater City Clerk.

The Cities are authorized to form a regional fire protection service authority by Chapter 52.26 RCW, which requires that in order to create a regional fire protection service authority, the formation of the Authority and its Plan must be approved by the voters of the area affected by the Plan.

Therefore, in accordance with the Plan and state law, a ballot proposition on whether or not the Olympia Tumwater Fire Authority should be formed and funded by existing property tax levy and a new six-year benefit charge, and the approval or rejection of the Plan for its governance, operation, and financing, must be submitted to the voters of Olympia and Tumwater.

Per State law, any action taken by the Council to support or oppose a ballot proposition must be done at an open public meeting with an opportunity for anyone to comment prior to Council action.

**Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):**

A collaborative partnership and shared responsibility among local and regional governments and the private sector is better able to provide for an effective fire protection and emergency medical system than the Cities acting separately can provide. The delivery of core emergency services and timely development of significant projects can best be achieved through the use of stable funding options provided for by state law for regional fire protection and emergency medical services.

**Options:**

1. Conduct a public hearing to receive testimony on the formation of a regional fire protection authority and the Plan for its governance, operations, and financing related thereto, including imposition of a fire benefit charge.
2. Do not conduct a public hearing.
3. Conduct a public hearing at another time.

**Financial Impact:**

If voters approve the formation of the RFA, the City will lose \$1.00 of its current year (2024) levy rate per \$1,000 Assessed Valuation as well as a \$1.00 reduction off the City’s maximum statutory rate. The estimated impact on City revenue from Property Tax collections in 2024 is a reduction of \$13,005,000. At the same time, if the voters approve the RFA, the City’s General Fund net expenses

related to Fire activities would reduce by an estimated \$13,490,000, resulting in an estimated favorable variance to the City of \$485,000. The reduction of the \$1.00 on the City's levy rate is a shift from the City to the RFA. As this is a shift, there is no change in the tax burden on property owners within the City.

**Attachments:**

Presentation

Regional Fire Authority Plan