



Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee

Regional Fire Authority Planning Meeting

Agenda Date: 1/23/2023
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Title

Regional Fire Authority Planning Meeting

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Discuss items related to Regional Fire Authority Planning.

Report

Issue:

Whether to discuss items related to Regional Fire Authority Planning.

Staff Contact:

Jay Burney, City Manager, 360.753.8740

Presenter(s):

Committee Members

Background and Analysis:

In 2019, the City of Olympia participated with the City of Tumwater and other local Fire agencies in a study to evaluate options for an RFA.

The study looked at opportunities to improve emergency services in the Olympia and Tumwater communities and explored partnership opportunities to provide these services regionally. Findings from this study, which were presented at an elected official's workshop in November 2019, recommended further exploration of a Regional Fire Authority as Olympia and Tumwater share similar risk profiles, histories, and organizational structures, there may be a potential to control costs and improve service delivery, it would level tax rates across the region, provide greater equity, and leverages individual agency strengths, and minimizes weaknesses.

On May 19, 2021, the City Council authorized an Interlocal Agreement between the City of Olympia and the City of Tumwater which provides the framework for a planning process that looks at the

viability of a Regional Fire Authority between the cities of Olympia and 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.

On December 6, 2022, the Olympia City Council and the Tumwater City Council each passed a joint Resolution to form a Regional Fire Protection Authority and approve an Operations and Finance Plan related thereto, and providing for submission to the voters at the April 25, 2023, Special Election of the Cities of Olympia and Tumwater a ballot proposition to create a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority within the boundaries of the cities of Olympia and Tumwater and approve an Operations and Finance Plan Related thereto.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

An RFA may provide options to improve fire service delivery in the Olympia and Tumwater communities. An RFA planning process will engage both communities in this evaluation.

Options:

1. Discuss items related to Regional Fire Authority Planning.
2. Do not discuss items related to Regional Fire Authority Planning.

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. Imposition of a benefit charge cannot exceed 60% of the Regional Fire Authority's operating budget.

Attachments:

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Meeting Packet