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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board of Fire Commissioners passes fire levy lid lift resolution

Proposal will appear on the November 7, 2023, general election ballot

The Board of Fire Commissioners for Snohomish County Fire District 17 passed a resolution to place a fire levy lid lift on the November 7, 2023, general election ballot. The lid lift would fund additional firefighters to respond to higher call volumes and replace a fire station built in the early 1900s.

“Calls are up 40 percent since 2020, and now we have the issue with overlapping calls, which are happening more frequently,” Fire Chief Jim Haverfield said. “We require more firefighters and adequate facilities to respond to the growing demand for emergency services.”

The fire department relies on full-time, part-time, and volunteer personnel to respond to calls. Due to the limited availability of part-time personnel and volunteers, full-time firefighters work significant overtime hours, ultimately costing taxpayers more.

The existing fire station built in the early 1900s needs to be replaced. It is vulnerable to failure in the event of an earthquake and doesn’t have enough space for firefighters; modern equipment doesn’t fit in engine bays, and it lacks decontamination facilities for firefighters to wash off carcinogens and medical waste after calls.

If approved by voters, the fire levy lid lift will fund:

- Up to seven firefighters over three years to reduce overtime costs and improve response times
- Construction of a new headquarters fire station
- Replace a fire engine and ambulance over the next six years

In addition to improving response times, these projects will increase service capacity districtwide and be paid for with cash instead of borrowing money, which costs taxpayers more in interest payments.

In 2019, voters approved a fire levy rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Since then, the rate has dropped to \$0.98. The fire department is asking voters for a lid lift of \$0.30 per \$1,000. This

would change the fire levy from \$0.98 to \$1.28 and cost an additional \$10 per month or \$120 per year for the owner of a \$400,000 home (considered average).

More information about the fire levy lid lift can be found at www.gffd17.org. Fire Chief Jim Haverfield also welcomes your questions at 360-691-5553 or jim.haverfield@gffd17.org.

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Snohomish County Fire District 17, known as Granite Falls Fire Department, provides fire suppression and prevention, emergency medical service (EMS) and serves 14,641 people over 50.5 square miles, including the city of Granite Falls. In 2022, the fire department responded to a record-high of 2,800 calls. The fire department is a separate taxing district independent of the county, operates under a balanced budget, and has passed all its independent financial audits.