

## **Tukwila's Fire Exploratory Committee**

### **STATUS AND NEXT STEPS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

#### ***What is the Fire Exploratory Committee?***

The 2014 Fire Exploratory Committee (FEC) was tasked to research, evaluate and recommend options for providing fire and life safety services in Tukwila. After considering all available service delivery options and potential partnership opportunities, the Committee recommended the City further explore the feasibility of annexing to the Kent Regional Fire Authority (RFA). A similar evaluation process conducted in 2010 also resulted in a recommendation that the City jointly explore consolidation with the Kent RFA, but discussions between the City and Kent RFA were put on hold due to Kent RFA's focus at that time on negotiations with the City of SeaTac.

The FEC reflects the City's adopted strategic plan goal to be "a high performing and effective organization" and the specific objective of "advancing Tukwila's interests through participation in regional partnerships."

#### ***What is a Regional Fire Authority (RFA)?***

An RFA is an entity authorized by State law to allow the voters of an area to consider fire service consolidation and regionalization of services. This is done through the creation of a special purpose district, a municipal corporation with independent taxing authority to levy a Fire Benefit Charge.

#### ***Is the City looking to get out of providing fire services?***

Although it has not yet made any decisions, the City is looking at options because the cost of providing fire service to the community is high. As costs increase, cities must either reallocate existing funds or identify a new source of revenue to maintain or improve existing levels of service. Tukwila is exploring whether such consolidation can be good for our residents, businesses and guests, as well as the long term financial health of the City.

#### ***Why combine services?***

Many communities regionally and nationally have pursued regional consolidation strategies as a cost-effective way to deliver high-quality fire protection and emergency medical services through combined resources. Though the cost of maintaining and improving fire protection and emergency medical services has increased substantially, and consolidation of services can result in lowered costs due to economies of scale obtained by reducing duplication of facilities, leadership, equipment and other expenses within close geographical areas.

#### ***Why the Kent Regional Fire Authority?***

The City of Tukwila and its Fire Department already enjoy a highly successful relationship due to participation in the South King County Regional Training Consortium, administered by the Kent RFA. In operation since 2010, the Kent RFA has cleared many of the early organizational challenges associated

with the creation of a new governmental entity. The Kent RFA is regionally respected for its successes, leadership, and experience.

***Is there an alternative?***

If joining the Kent RFA proves to be unfeasible or lacks community support, the City has no contractual obligation or commitment to continue down that path and will maintain the status quo. However, should future consolidation or partnership opportunities become available, the City will again review and analyze each one to determine if it is an option in the best interests of the community.

***What action has the City Council taken?***

On Monday, September 15, the Tukwila City Council unanimously voted to further explore annexing into the Kent RFA. The Council further directed the administration to negotiate with the Kent RFA to provide administrative and fire chief services to the City of Tukwila Fire Department during the exploratory process. These were votes to move the process forward, but no final decision has been made.

***What happens next?***

To commence discussions with the Kent RFA, the City Council directed the formation of a steering committee comprised of representatives from City administration, Council, the Kent RFA and the community. This committee will further explore the financial and asset ramifications of a potential merger, as well as identify and execute a public outreach effort. In addition, a second committee will begin initial negotiations with the Kent RFA to reach agreement on administrative and fire chief services.

***Would this increase my taxes?***

It is too early in this process to accurately determine any tax implications for anyone.

***How do I get involved?***

The Committee was tasked with implementing a broad public outreach effort on this issue, with a process to ensure all stakeholders can be heard. For information about input opportunities, or for specific questions and comments, email [FireCommittee@TukwilaWA.gov](mailto:FireCommittee@TukwilaWA.gov).