



Key Peninsula Fire Department
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Levy headed to November ballot for Key Peninsula Fire voters

Eight full-time fire fighter positions would improve emergency response

At its June 26th meeting, the Board of the Key Peninsula Fire Department unanimously passed a resolution to place a levy on the November ballot to fund eight full-time fire fighter positions. The levy would help the fire department improve response times and ensure enough fire fighters are available for emergencies. Currently, the department relies on volunteer fire fighters and mutual aid, which can add 20 minutes or more to response times.

“We have worked hard to communicate with the public about the challenge in getting enough fire fighters to the scene,” said Sheila Hunt, Chairwoman of the Key Peninsula Board of Fire Commissioners. “We’re doing the best we can, but that’s not going to be good enough if it’s your home on fire.”

Three fires in April and May highlighted the challenges facing the fire department. While no lives were lost, one fire fighter was hospitalized for heat exhaustion and dehydration. Two family pets perished, and two structures were considered complete losses. In addition, the department recently announced that it is down two more positions since two fire fighters have been placed on medical leave.

“Most people think we provide a fast response, but we don’t,” said Fire Chief Tom Lique. “Losing two more fire fighter positions just makes our jobs harder.”

The National Fire Protection Association says that fire districts the size of the Key Peninsula Fire Department should be able to respond to a fire or emergency medical call within five minutes 90% of the time. Because of staffing shortages, the department failed to meet this basic standard 85% of the time for fires and almost 92% of the time for medical calls in 2011. In addition, the Key Peninsula Fire Department has the fifth highest property loss record for fires in Pierce County because of its inability to provide an adequate response.

If approved by voters in November, the levy would help the fire department provide a full-time response to fires, and reduce response times for medical calls. It would cost the owner of a \$225,000 home an additional \$ 7.70 per month (approximately 41 cents per \$1,000 based on 2012 assessed valuations) and last for four years. All levy funds would go toward salaries, training, and safety equipment for the fire fighters– not for overhead or administration. Chief Lique says that better response times are the key to saving lives and property, as well as reducing homeowner insurance premiums, medical and ambulance fees.

The Key Peninsula Fire Department serves 17,000 people over 65 square miles. For more information about the department, visit www.keypeninsulafire.org.

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