



## WHATCOM COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #4

4142 Britton Loop Rd | Bellingham, WA | 98226

[www.wcf4.com](http://www.wcf4.com)

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: May 11, 2023  
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#### **Board of Fire Commissioners passes fire levy lid lift resolution**

*Proposal will appear on the August 1, 2023, primary election ballot*

Bellingham, Wash. – Whatcom County Fire District 4 Board of Fire Commissioners passed a resolution to place a fire levy lid lift on the August 1, 2023, primary election ballot. The lid lift would maintain 24-hour staffing at the Britton Loop Road fire station.

Whatcom 4 contracts with North Whatcom Fire & Rescue (NWFR) for emergency services. The contract requires Whatcom 4 to pay 25 percent of NWFR's operating costs. Whatcom 4 does not collect enough revenue to meet the terms of the contract, and the contract is set to expire on December 31, 2023. The contract cannot be renewed at the current levy rate.

“It’s important for our community to understand our financial challenges,” Fire Chief Jason Van Der Veen said. “We have looked at all options, including forming a standalone department, and a contract with NWFR continues to be the lowest cost provider for Whatcom 4.”

Since 2019, call volumes have increased by 63 percent. More calls mean higher costs to provide service and Whatcom 4 does not collect enough revenue to pay for the service it provides. This is due to the district’s low fire levy rate and annexations by the city of Bellingham, both of which reduce Whatcom 4 revenue.

If approved by voters, the lid lift would change the fire levy rate from \$0.63 to \$0.99 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The \$0.36 lid lift would cost the owner of a \$550,000 home an additional \$16.50 per month or \$198 per year.

The lid lift would maintain 24-hour staffing at Station 12 on Britton Loop Road. It would also pay for long-deferred station repairs and replace a fire engine that is past its usable life and starting to break down more frequently.

If the lid lift fails, the station would no longer be staffed 24 hours a day and residents would have to rely on mutual aid, which could increase response times up to 30 minutes or more. More expensive options include forming a standalone fire department or contracting with the city of Bellingham at a levy rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000.

More information can be found at [www.wcf4.com](http://www.wcf4.com) or [nwfrs.net](http://nwfrs.net).

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*Whatcom County Fire District 4 (Whatcom 4) provides fire and emergency medical service (EMS) to 10,000 people over 40 square miles in the communities of Van Wyck, East Smith Road and Northshore. Whatcom 4 contracts with North Whatcom Fire & Rescue for emergency services. The contract provides a higher level of emergency service for Whatcom 4 residents at less cost than a standalone fire department.*

