



# CITY OF WOODLAND

## FIRE ♦ RESCUE ♦ EMS

ALSO PROUDLY SERVING CLARK COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2

October 24, 2011

TO: District Board Members and Staff  
Woodland Public Schools, WA

FROM: MICHAEL J. JACKSON

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON POSSIBLE CHANGES TO FIRE PROTECTION AND  
EMERGENCY SERVICES IN THE CITY OF WOODLAND

### Summary

Following an invitation to participate, the City of Woodland has recently taken part in a study to determine the feasibility of forming a Regional Fire Authority (RFA) with neighboring agencies in Clark County. From this study and the fact gathering process, the City of Woodland is giving consideration to the long-term formation of an RFA and the possibility of contracting out Fire and Emergency Services prior to the formation of an RFA. As part of the current budget process in the City, the cost and benefits of these potential changes to emergency services are being evaluated and considered for action as early as 2012.

### Background

#### **Fire Department Overview**

The Woodland Fire Department continues to provide service with substantial value and economy to the City of Woodland. Our projected cost for 2011 is approximately \$105 per capita, including the Clark County FD #2 budget and population. With 35 Volunteers, 4 interns, and 6 full-time employees, the Woodland Fire Department will provide more than 40,000 on-duty work and training hours in 2011 with a net cost of all pay, compensation, benefits, and uniforms of approximately \$15.00 per hour worked. Assuming a full-time work schedule is 2,080 hours per year, the Woodland Fire Department will provide on-duty work hours equivalent to more than 19 full-time employees.

Our current staffing model works fairly well, most of the time. Unfortunately, our current model has created challenges in sustaining a safe, consistent, and reliable response. With significant reliance on our interns to fill our staffing needs, we are usually able to provide at least 2 responders, most of the time. This staff is

**WOODLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT, 100 DAVIDSON AVE., P. O. Box 9, WOODLAND, WA 98674  
VOICE: 360-225-7076 FAX: 360-225-1201**

augmented by volunteer members that respond from the station (on shift) or home. Having the minimal staff to provide some level of 24 hour coverage, has allowed us to decrease our average response time significantly. Unfortunately, we still encounter many situations when we do not have enough responders to operate safely or efficiently.

The services provided by the Woodland Fire Department are continuing to be taxed by increases in call volume. Additionally, the needs are becoming more complex with continued commercial and industrial growth and development.

### **Current Status and Concerns (why we need to seek alternatives):**

- 9.8% increase in emergency call volume this year from same period last year (January 1 – October 9). Approximately a 20% increase in call volume since 2008. Continued increase in call volume is anticipated for the foreseeable future.
- Paid / dedicated staffing of 1 responder at all times. (although we usually have some volunteer response, we have been left with a single responder on several occasions during 2011)
- Over-reliance on inexperienced interns with very limited training to fill roles of full-time responders along with single career firefighter on duty. This creates issues for both safety and effectiveness in response.
- Availability and scheduling of intern members often leaves gaps with only the single full-time responder available to respond.
- With the inexperience and need for training of interns and new volunteers, the single on-duty responder is burdened with significant supervisory and mentoring responsibility that can distract them from focusing on the response.
- Increased demand with call volume, training, and economic strain negatively affect the availability of our dedicated volunteers.
- With continued increase in service demand, anticipated economic climate, and continued challenges facing volunteerism, our ability to meet the critical needs of the community in the future are in Jeopardy.
- Currently we are a small organization with very limited depth of staff, resulting in significant strain and overtime costs to cover accrued time off and illnesses.

### **Comparison with Our Neighbors of Similar Size and Complexity**

The Woodland Fire Department currently has a higher call volume, lower budget, and fewer staff on station than La Center, Ridgefield, Kalama, or Castle Rock.

**Anticipated Benefits of Contract for Service**  
**(why we are considering a contract for service):**

- Improved and Safer Responder Coverage.
  - Guarantee of 2 responders on duty in Woodland at all times. (1 currently)
  - Additional response and staffing still provided by volunteers and interns.
  - Additional position to be filled by an existing pool of qualified part-time employees.
- Improved EMS (Emergency Medical Services)
  - Some ALS/Paramedic Coverage from Fire Department in Woodland. (the District operates paramedic services, and current staffing would provide ALS coverage in Woodland some of time and allow for increasing this service in the future)
  - Improvements to EMS would be easier to implement with an organization that is already licensed for ALS service.
  - Ability to ensure and leverage consistent ambulance service improves with a larger organization in a larger area that is served by Clark County EMS District #2.
- Increased Depth of Resources.
  - Much larger pool of resources within one organization that is available for simultaneous calls, structure fires and other significant responses requiring multiple resources.
  - Constant staffing needs for vacations, sick days, time off etc. is much more manageable and less susceptible to failure with a large pool of on and off-duty responders in a larger organization.
  - Drastic and crippling impacts on staffing from basic injuries and illnesses are much less likely and more manageable with a larger diverse workforce.
- Increased Efficiency of Resources
  - Large pool of resources in one organization operating under the same policy, procedure, training, communication, and leadership.
- Improved Training
  - Larger pool of experienced responders to provide training for new and current responders.
  - Direct access to better facilities and resources for training.
  - Larger organization allows for dedicated staff to manage and deliver required training and exercises.

- Improved Coverage with more Diverse Resources.
  - Direct access within the organization for specialized resources and training. (water rescue, specialized rescue, responder rehab, experienced command and control leadership)
- Increased Opportunities for Volunteers.
  - Improved, diverse, and specialized training opportunities.
  - Possibility for flexibility in scheduling and improved training availability to volunteer members.
  - Opportunities for experience with more professionals and more locations.
  - More diverse opportunities for volunteer leadership and participation.
- Decreased Administrative Burden on City Staff.
  - Virtually 100% of Fire Department administrative functions would be shifted to Clark County Fire and Rescue that has the resources and capacity to absorb the workload.
- Increased Administrative Capacity for Planning and Better Management.
  - Larger organization allows for more specialization and dedicated time from staff to plan and manage more efficiently and effectively.
  - The depth and diversity of management and supervision leads to a better span of control, safer operations, and more consistent oversight.
- Improved Economies of Scale for Purchasing and General Operations.
  - Larger, coordinated, and combined purchasing provides leverage for better pricing.
- More Stable and Predictable Funding / Expense for Public Safety.
  - Proposed rate for contract and RFA is fixed and predictable for budgeting in the City and the Fire Department.
  - Funding from a larger service area is consistent and equitable to a larger area and more citizens who will receive consistent and equitable service.
  - The broader area provides more diverse and stable funding for Fire and Emergency Services. Negative financial impacts are easier to manage and create less drastic impact when spread over a larger service and funding area.
- Possible Property Insurance Savings from Improved Public Protection Classification.
  - Impacted by staffing, depth of resources, and decreased reliance on mutual aid.
- Increased Ability to Manage Future Reduction in Revenues due to Property Devaluations.
- Improved Emergency Service Communications Through the CRESA Communications Network / System.
- Decreased Demand on City Network and IT Services.
  - All records management and IT needs for Fire and Emergency Service would be handled by Clark County Fire and Rescue and migrated off of the City Network.