

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Snohomish County Fire District No. 19 Silvana, 21 Arlington Rural, and 22 Getchell consider reorganizing as one new government entity also known as a Regional Fire Authority.

On May 31st 2016, Fire Commissioners from Snohomish County Fire Districts 19, 21, and 22 held a public meeting to discuss the possibility of joining forces as regional partners in an effort to operate more efficiently, and sustain existing service levels.

Cost to provide Fire, Emergency Medical, and Technical Rescue Services continue to increase at a rate much higher than the fire districts ability to levy taxes. This is due in part to Washington initiative 747 approved by the voters limiting property tax increases to no more than 1% per year without voter approval.

Unfortunately, the cost to provide these essential services continue to rise far more than 1% per year creating a significant financial burden for fire districts.

To help offset this financial burden many government entities are restructuring, sharing resources, and looking at ways to provide service from a regional approach.

The proposed new regional fire authority would generate its revenue through a property tax rate that is consistent between all three fire districts. Currently all three fire districts collect different tax rates.

In the fire authority DRAFT Plan, fire district fire taxes would be discontinued after a regional fire authority plan and tax rate is approved by a majority of the

proposed fire authority voters. What's not going to occur is a tax collection of the existing fire districts fire tax, and a new regional fire authority tax simultaneously. There is no plan to double dip our citizens with the existing plan.

In the proposed plan existing personnel will all take on similar responsibilities they currently have. Some restructuring will occur in a deliberate effort to operate more efficiently, strengthen our existing programs through benefiting from individual members unique skill sets, and reducing duplication of existing staff assignments.

If this plan is approved by the voters of the combined proposed regional fire authority area, the same people that currently serve you will continue to serve you. The biggest change will be in the form of more refined responsibilities that are more global in scope in an effort to operate more efficiently as a region.

The Fire Authority Planning Committee made up of three Fire Commissioners from each of the three fire districts will continue to meet throughout the rest of the year in an effort to provide our combined citizenry a final draft that may go before the voters in February 2017.

Informational meetings and an opportunity for citizens to provide their input into the proposed regional fire plan will likely take place this fall. Those dates and locations will be disseminated through a press release to our local media outlets as well as advertised on each fire districts web page.

Fire Authority planning Meetings are open to the public and the next meeting is scheduled for July 29th 7:00pm at the Arlington Rural Fire Station 12131 228th Street NE Arlington.