

2025 FD8 BUDGET POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ADOPTED 10 DECEMBER 2024

Executive Summary: This document is intended to provide policy guidance for development of the 2025 District Budget. It is based upon the District’s master planning work (Phases I, II and III, 2016-2020 and overall update in 2024) and the proposed 2025 District Goals & Objectives (*Section A-3*) with subsequent review and approval by the Board of Fire Commissioners (Board). Work derived from the master planning and resulting Goals/Objectives is intended to ultimately result in efficient and effective deployment of District resources to meet the demands for fire protection, emergency medical services and related needs in the community.

Background: Since 2013, part of the budget development process has involved the Board and Fire Chief agreeing upon policy direction prior to developing a detailed financial plan. Some key events that have transpired since our last report in 2024 include:

- During the year, staff worked to update each program’s master plan documents. Included in the process were review and updates for Community Communications & Risk Reduction, Facilities & Equipment, Health & Wellness, Incident Readiness & Response and Training & Education. These program master plans were reviewed and approved by the Board at their October meeting.
- As part of the annual review and update of the District five-year plan, the Board approved and adopted the 2024-2028 plan which featured two primary Incident Readiness & Response (IR&R) staffing plan options labeled as “1.5 Firestations” and “2.0 Firestations”. The first option is basically a current status for funding-level for operations, administration and maintenance at the basic property tax levy (\$1.50 mil) with limited and diminishing coverage for the North Olympia Station 8-3; the second option would require a voter-approved excess levy to pay for additional resources to provide full-time coverage at North Olympia Station 8-3.
- At the April 19th regular meeting, the Board adopted resolutions to place a measure on the Primary Election and General Election (if needed) ballot a proposal for a voter approved excess levy to provide funding for resources to implement the “2.0 Firestation” plan. Voters approved the measure on November 5th.
- A May 17th special Board meeting was held to examine a) the District’s volunteer IR&R program funding, b) the merits and impacts of a District BLS ambulance fee-for-service program, c) if and how a third-party assessment could be utilized by the District and d) if and how the District could be a party to a regional fire protection service authority.

These events significantly affect the course of actions and assumptions for the District. The following recommendations reflect these actions and are categorized into six areas.

A. Policy

1. Budget: To ensure long-term solvency, the Board and Staff are evaluating service options and attendant future costs to determine an appropriate budget and revenue strategy for 2025-2029 and beyond. For 2025, it is estimated that the District is eligible to receive \$ 7.24 million in revenue from property tax [*based on currently available data from the Thurston County Assessor*].

2. Priorities: The District adopted the following Mission and Vision statements:

- The **MISSION** of: “[being] committed to serve our community with prompt, consistent and professional fire suppression, basic life support, rescue and prevention/preparedness services.”

- The **VISION** of: “[striving] to meet adopted Target Levels of Service¹ (TLoS) to our community through deployment based on two or more strategically located firestations, staffed round-the-clock with competent responders and equipped with all necessary apparatus and equipment to provide Mission and Value driven services”.
- The **PRIMARY DISTRICT GOAL** is to “provide customer service consistent with our adopted Target Levels of Service”¹. In addition, specific goals and objectives are established annually.

3. 2025 Goals & Objectives:

2025 Goal #1: The District will conduct a review and update of its Incident Readiness & Response (IR&R) policies, procedures and operational guidelines to conform with its *District IR&R Master Plan* (adopted 8 October 2024). The updates will serve to (a) clarify services provided (i.e. emergency medical services, fire suppression, emergency marine-type events, technical rescue services, mobilization and hazardous materials incident response), (b) promote interoperability (operational, training, equipment) and (c) ensure program currency (compliance with rules, monitoring performance, training).

- 1) A review and *prioritization* of current District IR&R policies and procedures will be conducted by Chief LeMay based upon the criticality levels of (a) high risk, low-frequency, non-discretionary time, (b) high risk, low-frequency and (c) “normal” risk by February 2025.
- 2) In the priority order determined in Objective #1 above, Chief LeMay will coordinate a *review and updating* of current IR&R policies and procedures to include input from the Facilities & Equipment, Health & Wellness and Training & Education program managers, by April 2025.
- 3) Chief LeMay will submit the draft updates to Chief VanCamp for review and approval by June 2025.
- 4) Chief VanCamp will submit draft District IR&R *policy modifications* to the Board for their review and approval by July 2025.
- 5) Chief LeMay will be responsible to ensure implementation of the operational changes to District IR&R policies, procedures and operational guidelines no later than November 2025.

2025 Goal #2: The District will review and update its IR&R staffing requirements and implementation process as outlined in its *District Five-Year Master Plan* (to be re-adopted by the Board for 2025) and its *District IR&R Master Plan* (adopted 8 October 2024-- sections “Coordination & Support” and “Staffing”) to address the (a) recruitment, (b) selection, (c) on-boarding, (d) initial training and (e) deployment of both volunteer and career responders into the District IR&R force. The goal is to have 25 volunteer and 28 career responders by the year 2028.

- 1) Chief LeMay will provide a current assessment of volunteer and career IR&R staffing levels and propose changes to these levels to Chief VanCamp by January 2025. The proposal will include a plan and schedule for implementation of a stepped increase of additional personnel in 2025, 2026 and 2027. Further, the proposal must consider financial, logistical and human resource limitations the District may have to adequately accommodate new personnel and resulting promotions.
- 2) Within the financial limits imposed by the 2025 and estimated subsequent District operating budgets, Chief VanCamp will review requested increases in IR&R staffing levels and ensure that sufficient funds are available, by February 2025.
- 3) Chief LeMay will oversee the implementation of hiring and promotional activities commensurate with the plan approved by Chief VanCamp for 2025 events by December 2025.

¹ **Target Levels of Service** (summary): for fire operations, respond within 10 minutes of receiving the alarm with minimum of 4 qualified personnel; emergency medical operations, respond within 8 minutes if receiving the alarm with a minimum of 2 qualified personnel.

4. Community Connections: In 2024, the Board approved an update of the *Community Communications and Risk Reduction Master Plan* which highlights the use of the District website, regular newsletter, firestation reader-boards, sponsorship or participation in community events, interaction with social media, appropriate use of press releases and personal outreach. Most of these methods are coordinated by the District’s Community Outreach Team (COT) under the direction of Secretary Stumpf and is staffed including a specifically assigned career member. Messages sent out include those about accident prevention, fire prevention, disaster preparedness, updates of events and programs, factual information regarding the District Proposition 1, highlights of members’ accomplishments and other relevant information.

4. Community Risk: While the District has not conducted a formal community risk assessment, it has been working with the Thurston County Natural Hazards Mitigation Planning team with the goal to coordinate and include its local issues and interests into the county-wide plan. A significant emergence of the wildfire and wildland-urban interface (W/WUI) fire threat in Thurston County has caused the District to undertake mandatory W/WUI firefighting training for all fire IR&R staff.

Thurston County in 2024-2025 is undergoing a review and update of its Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) which covers natural and man-made hazards that the county could encounter, specifically, measures necessary to assess and prepare for potential impacts, organize appropriate resources, develop concepts for operations, assign responsibilities, determine resource requirements and develop supporting plans and procedures. The District is participating in this process, particularly in the fire and emergency medical response aspects of the planning.

B. Revenue

5. Property tax revenue and Operating Funds (Fund 6680): I recommend that the Board request a property tax levy of \$ 7.24 million in 2025, approximately \$ 2.21 million more than in 2024. The total levy includes the “base” levy and the 2024 voter approved excess levy; the excess levy, to be used for maintenance and operations, is planned through 2028. This figure also depends upon the final total assessed valuation of the District [*based on currently available data from the Thurston County Assessor*]. Booked new construction value from 2024 is \$ 30.16 million. The resulting 2025 levy rate is estimated to be \$ 2.03 per thousand of assessed valuation.

6. Capital Repairs & Replacements Fund (CR&R--Fund 6681): Based upon the *District Facilities & Equipment Master Plan* and the updated CR&R schedule/budget plan, the 2025 schedule/budget will serve as guideline for current capital expenditures. Major facilities and equipment capital expenditures are highlighted in *Section F Capital* below. I recommend that the Board allocated \$ 384 thousand from Fund 6680 into Fund 6681 in 2025.

Staff continue to evaluate maintenance and operations practices for facilities, apparatus and equipment to 1) maximize asset life and mission reliability, 2) analyze optimal asset replacement cycles and 3) establish overall asset values for planning purposes. In 2024, there were still some lingering effects of the 2019-2021 COVID-19 pandemic on the timeliness and availability for purchases and projects, some continued to be delayed significantly due to supply-chain and labor limitations.

7. Reserve Fund (Fund 6683): *District Policy 1-60 “District Funds & Budgets”* provides that the fund “...maintain an approximate level of funding for four-months of general operations...” The District has not needed to draw upon this fund since November 2006. The funds balance entering 2025 are estimated be \$ 1.74 million. In order to maintain a base 33% (of annual expenditures) balance, I recommend that \$ 437 thousand be allocated from Fund 6680 into Fund 6683 in 2025.

8. Capital Facilities Project Fund (Fund 6685): I do not recommend allocating any additional funds to the Capital Facilities Projects Fund in 2025. The estimated beginning balance for the fund (2025) is \$ 82 thousand.

C. Staffing

9. IR&R staffing: The 2017 IR&R staffing master plan provides for “...an appropriate initial fire [and EMS] response resources (Type 1 Pumper staffed with minimum of 2 qualified [responders]) at each firestation...” at both Stations 8-1 (South Bay) and 8-3 (North Olympia). In 2024, the Board approved the updates to the *District Incident Readiness & Response Master Plan* addressing staffing, services, interoperability and program currency.

9a. Resident Responder Program: The resident responder program (to help improve Johnson Point service on an interim basis) continues to be implemented at a measured pace due to limited availability of willing and qualified volunteer responders. The target is for six resident IR&R staff at the site (5501 63rd Ave NE).

9b. IR&R Management: District IR&R officers are responsible for oversight and management of on-duty responders, and act as general counsel for operational policy, procedures and attendant training needs. An on-duty Battalion Chief is the senior representative for emergency operations and provides coordination, command and control for incident response. During the 2021-2024 period, a combination of events have resulted in a transition from predominantly mixed volunteer/career officer staffing to almost entirely career officer staffing.

9c. Daytime IR&R strategy--volunteer staffing: Daytime periods are defined as Monday through Friday, 07:00 to 19:00 (regardless of holiday falling during weekdays). The District will continue efforts for motivating volunteers to staff daytime shifts, however, with the model platoon system, volunteers have also been encouraged to staff 24-hour shifts as they can.

9d. Daytime IR&R strategy--career staffing: The District utilizes three “ platoons” to which all bargaining unit IR&R staff are assigned.

9e. Night/Weekend IR&R staffing: The segregated night/weekend IR&R staffing practices are incorporated into the three platoon 24-hour career IR&R staffing pilot. Volunteer IR&R staff continue to be assigned to one (or more) of the nine shifts as in the past but have increased flexibility to adjust their shifts between 12- and 24-hour schedules and among the three shifts within each platoon (to better accommodate their ability to schedule their availability).

10. Volunteer stipends: The FD8 Volunteer Stipend Rates were last updated in 2024. I recommend that a 3.8 % cost of living adjustment (CPI-U Seattle-Bremerton, June 2023-June 2024) be made in 2025 to the current rates.

11. Career salaries & benefits: Bargaining unit employees’ salaries and benefits are defined under the current Collective Bargaining Agreement.

D. Projects

12a. Station 8-1 Repairs: In January 2024, a fire sprinkler pipe in the ceiling of Secretary Stumpf’s office burst due to abnormally cold weather conditions. The resulting flood damaged areas around her office and the adjacent front lobby and administrative area. Emergency mitigation measure were immediately taken, damage was assessed and a plan for repairs implemented. Ultimately, new carpeting, paint and furniture were required to restore the area “back to normal”. A bulk of the cost for repairs was covered by insurance, while other items included under CR&R planned work.

12b. North Olympia Station 8-3: Since 2018 there has been a desire to develop projects for 1) replacement of the fire protection system storage & pumping, 2) replace the emergency electrical generator, and 3) initial design development for interior remodeling. During the period of 2021-2023, failure of some facility components caused un-planned repairs; some of this was related to the fire protection water supply system. I recommend that funds be re-allocated from the Capital Facilities Budget (Fund 6685) in 2025 to pay for pre-deign, design and permitting for the replacement of the fire protection system storage & pumping equipment and the emergency electrical generator; initial pre-planning for overall remodel will begin in 2024 as well. Construction of the fire protection and electrical upgrades are planned to occur in 2025 or 2026.

12c. Information Technology: In 2024, the District engaged in a comprehensive examination of it information technology (IT) assets and how they served its business and support functions. A project to replace existing incident reporting management information systems was completed with the installation of a program called “First Due”, which consolidated functions previously performed by multiple disparate vendor supplied programs.

13. Deployment strategies: The *Final Report of Phase II Master Planning* (2019) defined eight objectives, five of which have been completed since then. The remaining three include:

- 1) **Ongoing:** implement IR&R staffing improvements to support consistent two-station staffing as per the staffing plan and as resources permit. This was the goal of the District’s 2024 Proposition 1 for voter approval of an excess levy to help pay for additional staff.
- 2) **Ongoing:** actively inform, engage and dialogue with community members regarding the issues related to this Plan through newsletter articles, website postings, formal public meetings, informal local community meetings and other proactive means. This process is addressed in the *District Community Communications and Risk Reduction Master Plan*.
- 3) When the Board of Fire Commissioners determines that a) two-station staffing is consistent and sustainable and b) there is sufficient public support, it will initiate efforts to fund and build a new fire station on the land already acquired (5501 63rd Ave NE) and upgrade the North Olympia station.

E. Operations

14. Training & Education: In 2024, the Board approved the updated *District Training & Education Master Plan* which addresses the delivery and standardization of training for District personnel. It also recommends further development of the District Training Center (3349 South Bay Rd NE). The District Training Officer Chief Clowes supervises three fire service skills trainers and three EMS skill trainers, who provide in-house skills maintenance training to IR&R personnel. The EMS training and education is coordinated with the Thurston County Medic One training office and the Medical Program Director.

A trend experienced since the COVID-19 pandemic is a critical shortage of willing and qualified applicants for new positions (both volunteer and career). The entry level requirements for the same are being adjusted to allow for applicants without prior firefighter training or experience (as had been prevalent in the past) in order to meet the quantity of positions being filled.

I recommend that the District continue to support the Thurston County Fire Chiefs’ Association Training Cooperative format for a county-wide training system. The District will also continue to work closely (at all levels) with Thurston County Medic One to ensure adequate access for initial and ongoing EMT skills training that meets the District’s IR&R staffing mission.

15. Health & Wellness: In 2024, the Board approved the *District Health & Wellness Master Plan* which addresses workplace safety, continuous review and improvement, promotion of a culture of care and support, provides for medical evaluation and surveillance of members' health, supports member behavioral health and wellness, ensures member physical fitness for duty and streamlines member return to duty after an injury or illness. The District also has participated in the Washington Department of Labor & Industries Firefighter Injury & Illness Reduction Program (FIIRE) since its inception in 2021 (with attendant grant funding for needed equipment and training), has active participation in the countywide chaplaincy and peer support programs, and Chief Hall (District Health & Safety Officer) has provided leadership in the countywide Health & Safety Officer Sub-Committee of the Thurston County Fire Chiefs' Association.

16. Contracts and agreements: I recommend we continue to pursue diligent management of contracts with the best terms we can obtain; with increased focus by staff (assigned business functions to career Battalion Chiefs and duties related to Executive Staff) I expect greater service oversight and "value-added" effort for service effectiveness and cost benefit. I recommend that we continue to contract for key services such as IT maintenance, apparatus & vehicle maintenance and other operations & maintenance work of a nature that is not reasonably achievable by in-house staff. Refer also to *Section F-20 Maintenance & Operations* below.

F. Capital

17. Facilities & Equipment: In 2024, the Board approved the update of the *District Facilities & Equipment Master Plan* which addresses the *District Capital Repairs & Replacements Plan and Budget*, apparatus deployment and life-cycle, equipment, CR&R review and updating, standardized specifications for apparatus and equipment, facilities maintenance and operation, and preventative maintenance. Chief McBride serves as program manager with Lieutenant Chiatovich coordinating facilities maintenance & operations and Lieutenant DeGagne coordinating apparatus & equipment operations & operations.

17a. CR&R: the schedule and budget for replacement of facilities assets & components and replacement of apparatus/equipment assets and components are reviewed and updated on an annual basis. The scope of the CR&R covers two staffed firestations, one un-staffed firestation, one District training center, one residence (site of future firestation), apparatus and equipment assigned to each firestation and the attendant support equipment (e.g. information technology & media, training, etc.) needed to perform the District's mission.

17b. Radio System: Since 2016, Thurston County public safety agencies have been planning for a replacement land-mobile radio system known as Thurston County Emergency Radio Network (TCERN). In 2024, the TCERN project (led by TCOMM911) provided and installed new base, mobile and portable radios equipment to the District, replacing the old "VHF" radio equipment. The radio network is being transitioned from the "VHF" network to a new trunked 700 MHz network. One of the new 700 MHz base sites is located at Johnson Point Station 8-2; a shared use agreement has been established between the District and TCOMM911.

17c. Maintenance & Operations: Integration of District asset inventory, maintenance & operational, and capital planning information will continue in 2025. This is important to identify assets that may be costing more in maintenance than they are worth, provide important warnings on impending costly failures, predict future operating and capital costs and allow for better cost benefit analysis for budgeting. District facilities are a primary target of this work with key focus on energy use and costs. Two career Lieutenant positions are established for equipment maintenance & operations and facilities maintenance & operations.

- Apparatus fleet maintenance will continue to be provided by the City of Olympia under contract. The repair facility located next to Lacey Fire District 3 Station 3-4 was remodeled extensively in 2023-2024. They have provided a high-quality service placing our vehicles in an improved state of mission readiness.
- In 2024-2025 (although already on order), a replacement Type 1 engine is scheduled to replace an engine of 1993 vintage.
- Contract maintenance of facilities systems (e.g., HVAC, water treatment, fire protection & security systems, electrical/electronic controls) and exterior vegetation management services are expected to continue to be used. Staff oversight of these services will ensure that their value is beneficial and cost effective. Where practical, contract services that can be handled by in-house staff (i.e., on-duty IR&R personnel, staff assigned functions, etc.) will be evaluated and such contracts be terminated.

18. Stations: Stations 8-1 (South Bay) and 8-3 (North Olympia) have been identified as the primary firestations in the District. Station 8-2 (Johnson Point) has been identified as needed for [interim] coverage staffing with resident responder personnel.

19. Fleet: I recommend the District maintain one certified Type 1 engine (with BLS capability) and one certified Type 2 tender at all three firestations. The District should maintain at least one ambulance-type BLS-EMS aid unit at either of the two primary response firestations (8-1 or 8-3). In 2024, a Type 6 brush truck (Fleet number 3504) was added to the District fleet, which will also act as a BLS-EMS response unit; it is located at Station 8-1. This unit replaced a 2005 pickup (Fleet number 3129) with a skid-mounted pump-tank combination, which was transferred to Station 8-3.

In addition to the above vehicles, I recommend a fleet inventory of a minimum of one back-up Type 1 engine (fully functional), one back-up ambulance-type BLS-EMS aid unit (fully functional), one SUV-type vehicle for the on-duty command officer (“Battalion 8”), one comparably equipped back-up command vehicle and one or more emergency response capable general-use utility vehicles as needed for staff duties.

Fleet #:	Vehicle Description:	Assignment	Life Cycle:	Condition:	Replacement:
3137	2009 Chevrolet Tahoe SUV	<i>(To be retired)</i>			
3500	2019 Ford E-450 Ambulance	Aid Unit (83)	15 years	Good	6 years
3123	2000 Ford E-450 Ambulance	Aid Unit (84 Reserve)	15 years	Poor	(Reserve)
3503	2021 Chevrolet Tahoe SUV	Battalion (8)	15 years	Good	11 years
3138	2010 Chevrolet Tahoe SUV	Battalion (82)	15 years	Fair	1 year
3504	2024 Ford F550 Type 6 Engine	Brush (81)	15 years	New	14 years
3129	2002 Ford E-350 Pick-up	Brush (83)	15 years	Fair	8 years past due
3502	2021 Pierce 1500 gpm Type 1 Pumper	Engine (81)	20 years	Good	16 years
3131	1993 Pierce 1250 gpm Type 1 Pumper	Engine (82)	20 years	Poor	(replacement on order)
3136	2015 Pierce 1250 gpm Type 1 Pumper	Engine (83)	20 years	Good	10 years
3130	1996 Pierce 1250 gpm Type 1 Pumper	Engine (84 Reserve)	20 years	Fair	(Reserve)
3126	2010 KW 2500 gal Type 2 Tender	Tender (81)	25 years	Good	10 years
3135	2005 KW 2500 gal Type 2 Tender	Tender (82)	25 years	Good	5 years
3127	2010 KW 2500 gal Type 2 Tender	Tender (83)	25 years	Good	10 years
3122	2006 Ford F-350 Pick-up	Utility (81)	15 years	Fair	Due for replacement