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FLASH POINT

Newsletter

Spring 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

By H.L. "Rusty" Palmer, Fire Chief

The New Year started with a big windstorm, which kept us on our toes. The storm hit home to all of us why additional emergency personnel are needed. Overall, call volumes have increased 12 percent since 2014. That may not seem like a lot, but we have lost 30 percent of our volunteers since the last recession, and we rely on volunteers to respond to an average of 2,600 calls a year.

We recently completed a Strategic Plan to address these challenges. Adding personnel and replacing aging apparatus are two priorities that not only will reduce response times, but also improve our community's insurance rating.

To fund these improvements, the Board of Fire Commissioners is considering a resolution to place a fire levy lid lift on the August 4 Primary Election ballot. The lid lift would be 30 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, or approximately \$10 per month for the owner of a \$400,000 home. That meeting will take place on March 12, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. at 5579 Bayview Road in Langley. We invite you to take part in these discussions and learn more.

If approved by voters, revenue would be used to hire up to eight full-time firefighters who are cross-trained to provide emergency medical service, as well. (Eighty percent of our calls are EMS-related.) A small portion of the lid lift would be used to replace apparatus. Our goal is to pay cash for these capital purchases instead of financing, which costs taxpayers more due to interest payments.

If you are unable to attend, we still hope to hear from you. I can be reached at 360-321-1533 or chief@swfe.org. Thank you.



SLIP-N-FALL PREVENTION

According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than one-third of adults over 65 years of age fall each year. Falls can lead to hip fractures and traumatic brain injuries – and they are mostly preventable. In the service area of South Whidbey Fire/EMS, falls account for significantly increasing the number of EMS calls. Here are a few tips to reduce the risk of a fall:

- Remove hazards in the home such as electrical cords, loose rugs, and papers from walkways and wear sensible shoes with nonskid soles that properly fit.
- Use non-slip mats and a shower seat in the bathroom and install grab bars.
- Stay fit! If you're able stay active with gentle exercise such as walking, yoga, or water aerobics it can help improve strength, coordination, flexibility, and balance.
- Lighten up! Make sure you have adequate light and place night lights in your bedroom, bathroom and hallways. Turn lights on before going up or down stairs.
- Use assistive devices such as a walker or cane to keep you steady, if needed.

South Whidbey Fire/EMS

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NEW FIRE COMMISSIONER JOINS THE TEAM

Mike Noblet begins a six-year term as a Fire Commissioner for South Whidbey Fire/EMS. He replaces retiring Commissioner Kenon Simmons whose term expired in 2019 after 38 years of service with the department.

"I have big shoes to fill, and I welcome the opportunity," said Noblet. "I will work to assure that the district secures the required number of firefighters, EMTs, the equipment they need, and the support staff necessary to see it that all runs smoothly."

A former mayor of Bothell, Noblet has extensive experience in public service. He offers fluency with emergency preparedness from applied training in CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), expertise with local governance from serving eight years on the Bothell City Council, and general knowledge of the public sector as holder of a Master of Public Administration from the University of Houston.

While with the City of Bothell, he promoted the complete rewrite of the city's emergency preparedness plan, and

helped facilitate construction of a state-of-the-art police station and emergency command center.



(L to R) Commissioner Mike Noblet is welcomed by retiring Commissioner Simmons.

He and his wife Karen moved to Whidbey Island in 2004. He owns a business where he coaches first-time candidates who contemplate running for public office and continues serving them by managing their campaigns. He was inspired himself to run for Fire Commissioner in 2019, and is excited to serve the local community. A warm welcome to Commissioner Noblet!

At the time of publishing, South Whidbey Fire/EMS is in the process of appointing a new fire commissioner to fill the position vacated by Adrienne Hawley. It is anticipated that a new fire commissioner will be selected by March 2020 and they will serve until the 2021 general election.