

King County Fire District 41

Commissioners Jim Lloyd, Chair, Richard Krogh, Toby Nixon

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Public process extended for proposed new Finn Hill fire station

Fire District Commissioners respond to residents' call for more time to consider proposal

King County Fire District 41 Commissioners have begun setting up a structure to extend the public process and still preserve the option of a new fire station for Finn Hill residents. The action is in response to requests for a more thorough public process that would extend beyond the June 1 annexation of the area by the City of Kirkland and the fire district being dissolved. The commissioners are negotiating an interlocal agreement with Kirkland that ensures the change in governance will not harm the ability of current Fire District 41 property owners to build a new station.

A new strategically located fire station is needed to provide timely fire and emergency medical response times to the largest possible area of Finn Hill, because the current two-station configuration is too costly and neither station is well located to serve the entire area. Because of reductions in tax revenues, Station 24 is no longer staffed during the day by career firefighters and is only staffed at night by volunteers for emergency medical responses. Station 25 was built almost 50 years ago, when the area was mostly rural, and is too far south for its crews to meet the goals for timely responses.

Fire District Commissioners are following through on the financing for the proposed station. The district has set aside reserves and plans to use proceeds from the sale of the two existing stations to help pay for the new station; however, debt will need to be issued to finance construction. As a result, a small, time-limited levy on properties in the current fire district will continue in order to build the new station. The levy would end when the debt is paid off. While the levy for the new fire station would continue after annexation, total property taxes will decrease as a result of annexation.

Commissioners are continuing to review potential properties in the area where a fire station would best improve response to fires and medical emergencies like heart attacks. A 1.8 acre parcel in King County's Big Finn Hill Park at 138th NE and Juanita Drive is currently under consideration. The fire district has a draft agreement with King County Parks for the site in return for park amenities.

Preliminary review shows the park site will accommodate a one-story station and cost an estimated \$1 million less than a site at Finn Hill Jr. High School that is also being considered. Construction costs at the Jr. High site were estimated at \$4.5 million and wetlands and steep slopes would require a two story station. A one-story fire station is preferred because it allows fire fighters to reach their trucks faster, and they suffer fewer injuries than in two-story fire stations.

Other potential sites will also be considered, including some that were excluded due to cost prior to the recent decline in land prices.