



Whatcom County Fire District #4

PO Box 286

Lynden, WA 98264



www.wcfd4.com



(360) 318-9933

Dear Neighbor,

If you're receiving this letter, your property is in Whatcom County Fire District 4.

Whatcom 4 contracts with North Whatcom Fire & Rescue (NWFR) for emergency services. This contract provides a higher level of emergency service at less cost for our taxpayers than a standalone fire department.

The contract, which was signed in 2011, requires that Whatcom 4 pay 25% of NWFR's operating costs. Due to higher call volumes and costs, Whatcom 4 does not collect enough revenue to pay the contract. This is due to our low fire levy rate and annexations by the city of Bellingham, which reduces our revenue.

The contract expired in 2021 and NWFR has provided two extensions. NWFR has informed us that it cannot continue the contract. In the past, NWFR taxpayers have subsidized our property owners to the tune of \$500,000 a year.

The new Whatcom 4 Board of Fire Commissioners has considered all options. Starting our own fire department is the most expensive. Annexing to the city of Bellingham would cost property owners more in taxes for not only fire/EMS but other city services. We have reached out to other providers to see if they would be open to a contract, but they also are more expensive than the decade old contract with NWFR, which Whatcom 4 can no longer afford.

Whatcom 4 is considering asking residents for a fire levy increase to continue the contract with NWFR. We are scheduling meetings to respond to questions about this public safety issue:

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 at 7 pm — Rome Grange, 2821 Mt. Baker Highway, Bellingham

Saturday, March 25, 2023 at 9 am — Station 12, 4142 Britton Loop, Bellingham

We recognize that this letter may not bring welcome news. All the Whatcom 4 Board of Fire Commissioners have been elected or appointed to their positions within the last three years. NWFR also has a new fire chief. We are committed to fostering open communication and transparency with residents about the inherited situation and, more importantly, what we must do to fix it.

Sincerely,



**Commissioner
Mark Lann**



**Commissioner
Steve Cooley,
Chair**



**Commissioner
Tim Johnson**