



CAMANO ISLAND FIRE & RESCUE

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

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AUGUST 18TH ELECTION WILL DETERMINE LEVEL OF EMERGENCY SERVICE ON CAMANO ISLAND

Fire and EMS Levy Renewal Measures Placed On Primary Election Ballot

Camano Island Fire and Rescue will be placing two levy measures before voters in the August 18th Primary Election. The Fire Department receives 70% of its revenue from property taxes via two separate levies; Emergency Medical Services and Fire. The EMS Levy is set to expire at the end of 2009 and must be renewed to provide uninterrupted paramedic and ambulance services on the Island. Passage of the Fire Levy will enable the fire district to meet increased demands for service, keep pace with rising expenses, and decrease response times to emergency incidents. The EMS Levy renewal will return it to the previous rate approved by voters in 2003. Resetting the Fire Levy will bring that rate to within \$0.05 of what the voters approved in 2004.

“Under state law, revenue from property tax levies cannot increase more than 1% per year, plus new construction, regardless of an increase in assessed values. This cap causes levy rates to decrease every year. As a result, the Fire District is required to return to the residents to renew their levies in order to avoid reducing services,” advises District Fire Chief Mike Ganz. The EMS levy, which was last approved by voters in 2003 at a rate of \$0.50 per \$1000 of assessed valuation (AV), is currently at \$0.31. Similarly, the Fire Levy Rate has decreased from \$1.25 per \$1,000 AV approved by voters in 2004 to \$0.84. The EMS and Fire Levy renewals will be placed on the August 18th Ballot at 0.50 and \$1.20 respectively.

The EMS levy is a 6-year levy and must be renewed in order to stay in effect. “This levy represents approximately 20% of Fire District Funding,” said Assistant Chief Levon Yengoyan. “Without a renewal of the EMS Levy, these funds will go away at the end of 2009.” Failure to renew the levies would result in lay offs of up to one third of the District’s uniformed and staff personnel. The Fire levy is a “permanent” levy. However, due to the 1% revenue cap, the Fire District must return to voters to “Lift the Lid” on the levy in order to keep up with rising costs. “Over the last 5 years we have seen annual increases in our expenses such as fuel (14%), health care (7%), and personal protective equipment (8%) that outpace the 1% increase in revenue we receive every year,” added Assistant Chief Yengoyan.

If both levies are renewed, the District’s goal will be to hire 10-12 additional firefighters to provide 24 hour a day staffing at the new Madrona station being constructed this summer. A significant portion of the Island’s population resides in the Northwest part of the island. Staffing the Madrona station full time will allow for a quicker response to incidents in that area as well as help reduce response times Island-wide. “Bond funds are used for facilities and apparatus. The levies are what puts people in the seats and fuel in the trucks,” concludes Chief Ganz

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For more information about the fire district’s levies, operations, or to schedule a meeting with Fire Chief Mike Ganz, please call the administration office at 360-629-3008.