



GIG HARBOR FIRE & MEDIC ONE

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Gig Harbor Fire & Medic One to Introduce Draft Capital Facilities Plan

Public invited to learn more and comment

[Gig Harbor, Wash.] – Gig Harbor Fire & Medic One will introduce its draft Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) to the community at two upcoming meetings. The CFP identifies capital projects, such as stations, apparatus and equipment, that need completing to improve emergency services for the Gig Harbor community.

The draft CFP will be presented during the Board of Fire Commissioners meeting on Tuesday, November 9, 2021 at 5 p.m. The Board will meet to adopt the plan with changes on Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at 5 p.m. The public is encouraged to attend these meetings to learn more.

The virtual meetings can be accessed through the Fire District's website at www.gigharborfire.org/commissioners-meetings. Community members who are unable to attend are encouraged to send comments to Fire Chief Dennis Doan at DDoan@gigharborfire.org.

The Gig Harbor community has grown by more than 16% since 2010. Call volumes have increased 50% in the same time period.

“Planning for emergency services is a critical part of what we do,” said Fire Chief Dennis Doan. “This plan has identified two key areas in need of improvement: public safety and firefighter health and safety.”

Many of the Fire District's stations are more than 30 years old, and do not meet current ADA or seismic standards. The structures lack living quarters to accommodate current and projected staffing levels, and a diverse work force. The inability to adequately staff these stations can make response times longer to 911 calls.

The Fire District also has no facility for regular live fire trainings. This means firefighters may only train on live fire once every three years and must leave the area to perfect these life and property-saving skills.

“This is a real concern for public safety,” said Fire Chief Doan. “We don't want the first time a firefighter fights fire to be on your home. These are skills that need to be regularly practiced and perfected to improve the outcome for our community.”

Firefighter health and safety is also an issue. Cancer is known to be a leading cause of death among firefighters. Some stations lack decontamination areas to remove soot, hydrocarbons and smoke from firefighting gear, which are known carcinogens. Adding specialized areas also means emergency personnel can decontaminate medical equipment after emergency medical service calls.

Daily operations at Gig Harbor Fire & Medic One are funded by two levies for fire and emergency medical service. Capital needs (such as stations, apparatus and some equipment) are usually funded by voter-approved bonds, which some of these projects will require.

“Saving lives and property depends on three things equally,” said Fire Chief Doan. “Adequate facilities, modern apparatus and equipment, and enough emergency personnel to respond. The CFP is a blueprint to show what we need to do for the first two. We will address staffing issues in a Standards of Cover report in the near future, as well.”

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Pierce County Fire Protection District No. 5 (known as Gig Harbor Fire & Medic One) provides fire and life safety services to 53,000 people over 54 square miles. The Fire District responded to a high of 6,685 calls in 2019 – a 50% increase compared to 10 years ago. Through community support, Gig Harbor Fire & Medic One has built one of the most advanced emergency response systems in Pierce County with highly-trained personnel and rescue programs.