

## Memorandum

### WHATCOM COUNTY

Emergency Medical Services  
1500 N. State St. Suite 204  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
[mhilley@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:mhilley@co.whatcom.wa.us)



**Ref: EMS Update on Fire Dispatch Fees and Presentation of the EMS Annual Report to Council**

Michael Hilley, EMS Manager

### **DISPATCH FEES UPDATE**

Whatcom County, along with the cities of Bellingham and Lynden, fund fire dispatch fees countywide from their general fund. These revenues represent about \$740,000 per year in total from the three agencies. The County's share represented \$307,000 in 2024 and an expected \$275,000 in 2025. The EMS levy plan asks for an evaluation of this structure, and in August 2024, the County Council reaffirmed concern regarding this historic practice by asking the County Executive and Whatcom County Fire Chiefs Association to formally re-examine this issue ([AB 2024-523](#)). The County's EMS Administration recently had a first meeting with the Fire Chiefs and the Chiefs suggested for consideration to authorize through a vote of the public 911 tax ("Sales and use tax for emergency communication systems and facilities"). Proceeds from such a tax could also potentially be used to reduce the EMS fund's costs related to dispatch and address the fire dispatch fee concern. Though the Executive has not yet developed a position on this recommendation, the administration wanted to update the council on the proposal. We will continue to explore options, and the next meeting is scheduled for early August 2025.

### **ANNUAL REPORT & LEVY PLAN PROGRESS**

The EMS annual report is complete and ready for distribution. This is a mostly comprehensive look at Levy Performance, System Performance and Service/Programs performance funded by the Levy. The report also breaks down elements of the EMS response to Sudden Cardiac Arrest, Overdose and Trauma.

The EMS manager will provide an overview of the report with an emphasis on call volume and Paramedic Unit performance with comparisons from past years that demonstrates the growth of the EMS system.

The Finance section of the annual report also supplements the Executives Office presentation regarding the End Fund Balance and Reserve Policies developed by the EMS Finance sub-committee.

Respectfully Submitted

Michael Hilley, EMS Manager

