

Whatcom County Council 7-26-22

EMS Levy

BLS Money Issue

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 SUBMITTED BY: Todd Lagerwey
 COUNCIL MEETING
 COMMITTEE
 EXHIBIT: A

The EMS Levy is seeking funding in a convoluted and unfair manner. It is seeking to subsidize some fire districts at the expense of others. It is doing this through an unpublished "formula" that utilizes a BLS Response Load calculation that creates a massive subsidy for one fire district, and it just so happens that that is the fire district with the only representative on the EMS Levy Pro Statement Committee.

The 2023-2028 EMS Levy, is basically purchasing support from the response agencies, in much the same way it did by using the Whatcom County EMS Fund #130 reserves. It is doing this through providing BLS money, of \$1.5 million per year, in a manner that is not reflective of the agencies constituents contributions to the Whatcom County EMS Fund #130, either through the levy or through the sales taxes paid.

The below tables shows the information provided to you by the EMS Levy Committee. It is not all inclusive as it does not compare the agencies contributions to its receipts.

Table D: Amount Received

Agency Name	Amount \$
Acme Fire District 16	\$ 8,985.40
Bellingham Fire Dept	\$ 542,367.89
District 4	\$ 56,314.46
District 8	\$ 63,834.08
Everson Fire District 1	\$ 56,794.50
Glacier District 19	\$ 2,907.86
Lynden Fire Department	\$ 111,226.02
North Whatcom Fire and Rescue	\$ 209,387.68
Point Roberts Fire District 5	\$ 9,261.20
South Bay District 18	\$ 14,380.49
South Whatcom Fire Authority	\$ 87,980.94
Whatcom County Fire District 11	\$ 15,420.79
Whatcom County Fire District 14	\$ 96,308.80
Whatcom County Fire District 17	\$ 21,344.46
Whatcom County Fire District 7	\$ 203,485.44
Total:	\$ 1,500,000.00

Table B: Valuation 2022

Agency Name	Valuation \$	% of Total
Acme Fire District 16	\$ 213,921,133.00	0.50%
Bellingham Fire Dept	\$ 16,724,290,897.00	39.26%
District 4	\$ 2,102,229,240.00	4.94%
District 8	\$ 996,990,423.00	2.34%
Everson Fire District 1	\$ 1,576,039,310.00	3.70%
Glacier District 19	\$ 301,723,773.00	0.71%
Lynden Fire Department	\$ 2,563,276,903.00	6.02%
North Whatcom Fire and Rescue	\$ 6,439,657,314.00	15.12%
Point Roberts Fire District 5	\$ 749,112,318.00	1.76%
South Bay District 18	\$ 470,021,924.00	1.10%
South Whatcom Fire Authority	\$ 2,896,133,451.00	6.80%
Whatcom County Fire District 11	\$ 379,155,301.00	0.89%
Whatcom County Fire District 14	\$ 782,568,596.00	1.84%
Whatcom County Fire District 17	\$ 422,244,501.00	0.99%
Whatcom County Fire District 7	\$ 5,978,101,735.00	14.03%
Total:	\$ 42,595,466,819.00	100%

By Todd Lagerwey
Private Citizen

Below is a table that compares the percentage of valuation of the fire district, as compared to all of Whatcom County; contrasted with the percentage of the BLS money that is granted to each agency using tax year 2022.

Agency	Assessed Value 2022	% of Whatcom AV	BLS \$	% of BLS \$	% Variance of AV % to BLS \$ %
Acme Fire District 16	\$213,921,133	0.50 %	\$8,985.40	0.60 %	
Bellingham Fire Dept	\$16.724 billion	39.26 %	\$542,367.89	36.16 %	
District 4	\$2,102,229,240	4.94 %	\$56,314.46	3.75 %	
District 8	\$996,990,423	2.34 %	\$63,834.08	4.25 %	+ 81 %
Everson Fire District 1	\$1,576,039,310	3.7 %	\$56,794.50	3.79 %	
Glacier District 19	\$301,723,773	0.71 %	\$2,907.86	.19 %	- 73 %
Lynden Fire	\$ 2,563,276,903	6.02 %	\$111,226.02	7.42 %	
North Whatcom Fire	\$6,439,657,314	15.12 %	\$209,387.68	13.96 %	
Point Roberts Fire D5	\$ 749,112,318	1.76 %	\$ 9,261.20	.62 %	- 65 %
South Bay District 18	\$470,021,924	1.10 %	\$14,380.49	.96 %	
South Whatcom FA	\$2,896,133,451	6.80 %	\$87,980.94	5.9 %	
Lummi Island Fire D11	\$379,155,301	0.89 %	\$15,420.79	1.03 %	
Sumas/Kendall D14	\$782,568,596	1.84 %	\$96,308.80	6.42 %	+ 249 %
Sandy Pt. District 17	\$422,244,501	0.99 %	\$21,344.46	1.42 %	+ 43 %
Ferndale Fire District 7	\$5,978,101,735	14.03 %	\$203,485.44	13.57 %	
Total:	\$42.595 billion	100%	\$1,500,000		

This EMS Levy seems really questionable.

First in the year that the EMS Levy is up for renewal, \$5 million was given out of the reserves. This went to all the fire districts and agencies for BLS services. However, nowhere in the 2016 EMS Levy plan was that method identified as appropriate spending.

This gift by the County Council, in the same year you need their support, came from the reserves Whatcom County will need if the Levy fails.

But there's more "interesting" things about this EMS Levy. The new plan calls for \$1.5 million of BLS money to be given out. The "interesting" part is in who won and who lost in the distribution of the money through an undisclosed formula.

Whatcom County Fire District 14 gets a massive 250% subsidy over the District's Assessed Value from the BLS money. No other fire district even comes close to this level of massive subsidy. Bellingham, Geneva/Sudden Valley, Blaine and Ferndale; which take a modest decrease. The real tragedy is in Fire District 19 and 5, which see a 73% and 65% reduction respectively, over their Assessed Valuation. It's funny or interesting that Whatcom County Fire District 14 got the massive subsidy and the only person to apply to be on the EMS Levy Pro statement committee was Rob Roy Graham, a Fire Commissioner in District 14. I guess if you are securing money for your own organization, you would want to make sure the EMS Levy passes.

But let's not focus on just money. There was that whole DEI debacle. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion language was removed by the EMS Levy Committee on May 05. It could have been funny to watch the awkward silences and long pauses as a committee of privileged white males removed language seeking to ensure racial and sexual equality and equity. But this County Council declared racism a public health crisis. So NO it isn't funny.

After it became public that the DEI language was removed, it was justified by saying that the DEI language conflicted with the collective bargaining agreements and Civil Service Rules. This was used as an excuse, ex post facto, even though no mention of the contracts or Civil Service Rules was mentioned during the EMS Levy Committee meeting where the language was removed. I have looked at the District 7, the North Whatcom Fire and the Bellingham Fire contracts and the Bellingham Civil Service Rules and found no language that would have conflicted with the DEI language that was removed.

Do you know why I couldn't find any language that conflicts in the contracts or civil service rules? Because hiring is a management right. It even says so in the District 7 and North Whatcom Fire Contracts. Bellingham only requires that layoffs be hired before new employees.

If hiring is a management right and it was management that took out the DEI language and it was management that said they couldn't have the DEI language in the Levy plan, because of unsubstantiated reasons, then something doesn't smell right. In fact, I think you all and the Bellingham City Council as well, got lied to. To cover up the actions of a bunch of privileged white males that didn't want to have their hiring statistics looked at by an outside agency that controls their funding. And they used documents that you would never look at or normally have access to, to attempt to justify their actions.