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PROPOSED BY: _____
INTRODUCTION DATE: JULY 12, 2022

ORDINANCE NO. _____

PROVIDING FOR SUBMISSION TO THE QUALIFIED VOTERS OF WHATCOM COUNTY A PROPOSITION RENEWING THE LEVY OF A REGULAR PROPERTY TAX EACH YEAR FOR SIX YEARS, COLLECTION BEGINNING IN 2023, AT A RATE OF \$.295 OR LESS PER \$1000 OF ASSESSED VALUATION TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES, IN THE GENERAL ELECTION TO BE HELD NOVEMBER 3, 2022

WHEREAS, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is a complex, coordinated response and Emergency Medical Care system, that requires people and agencies to perform an essential role as part of a coordinated, tiered, and seamless system of integrated emergency medical care; and

WHEREAS, fire districts, departments and agencies provide first responder services and Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance service and the Bellingham Fire Department and Whatcom Fire District #7 provide Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulance service; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County's EMS system has evolved over 48 years, and has transitioned into a tiered level of services supported by the countywide EMS Levy; and

WHEREAS, the countywide Emergency Medical System serves all of Whatcom County including Bellingham, Ferndale, Lynden, Blaine, Everson, Nooksack, and Sumas; and

WHEREAS, the EMS system responds to a broad range of people who will benefit from responders reflecting the diverse communities of Whatcom County; and

WHEREAS, Emergency Medical Services are essential and necessary for the protection and health and life of Whatcom County residents, and stable funding through the countywide Levy is a practical solution to continue providing EMS services at the current level as described in the 2023 to 2028 EMS Levy Strategic Plan in order to sustain the system into the future and to meet increased demands for service.

WHEREAS, the EMS system also includes regional support programs and services that provide administration, medical oversight and direction, citizen and emergency personnel training, planning, public education, and other support programs and services; and

WHEREAS, investing in programs and services to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, including training and dedicated personnel to improve and track progress on recruitment and retention, hiring practices, and a workplace culture of inclusion may enhance EMS service delivery and better assist those in need; and

WHEREAS, The EMS Levy Planning Committee confirmed by the Emergency Medical Services Oversight Board (EOB) recommended a funding strategy and levy rate that will support and sustain the countywide EMS system; and

1
2 **WHEREAS**, the state legislature, through RCW 84.52.069, has recognized the needs
3 and concerns described above, and has provided the mechanism for achieving a stable
4 funding source for the provision of such Emergency Medical Services through a voter
5 approved levy, and
6

7 **WHEREAS**, supporting the EMS Levy, as a primary funding mechanism for
8 countywide EMS, is key to advancing Whatcom County’s diversity, equity, and inclusion
9 priorities; and
10

11 **WHEREAS**, The EMS Levy Planning Committee and EMS Oversight Board
12 recommends the continuation/renewal of the countywide EMS Levy to provide a stable
13 funding source that will sustain the system for the next 6 years; and
14

15 **WHEREAS**, in order to assure the continued provision of services, it is both
16 necessary and appropriate to renew the regular property tax levy of \$.295 or less per \$1000
17 of assessed valuation as provided for in this ordinance;
18

19 **NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF WHATCOM COUNTY DOES ORDAIN AS**
20 **FOLLOWS:**
21

22 **Section 1. Approval of cities over 50,000 population.** Pursuant to RCW 84.52.069,
23 approval to place this county-wide levy proposal on the ballot has been obtained from the
24 legislative body of the City of Bellingham through Resolutions 2022- __. The City of
25 Bellingham is presently the only city in Whatcom County having a population over 50,000.
26

27 **Section 2. Deposit of levy proceeds and eligible expenditures.** All levy proceeds shall
28 be deposited into the County Emergency Medical Services Fund. If approved by the
29 qualified electors of the County, all levy proceeds authorized in the ordinance shall be used
30 only for the provision of emergency medical services, including related personnel costs,
31 training for such personnel and related equipment, supplies, vehicles, and structures needed
32 for the provision of emergency medical services, and as may otherwise be provided under
33 RCW 84.52.043. Where permissible by law, personnel costs and training should also include
34 essential diversity, equity and inclusion components of recruitment, hiring, retention, and
35 training of personnel.
36

37 **Section 3. Type of Levy.** Pursuant to the authorization in RCW 84.52.069, this levy is a
38 regular property tax levy on all taxable property located in Whatcom County and is in
39 addition to the statutory tax rate limit of RCW 84.52.043.
40

41 **Section 4. Levy Rate.** The proposed levy rate submitted to the voters shall be \$.295 or
42 less per \$1000 of assessed valuation each year, for six consecutive years, beginning in
43 2023. The collections of the taxes will begin in 2023. Taxes will be based on the previous
44 year’s assessment.
45

46 **Section 5. Ratification by the Electorate.** The proposal for this levy shall be submitted to
47 and approved by the voters in accordance with RCW 84.52.069.
48

49 **Section 6. Call for Election.** A ballot measure for a proposition authorizing the levy
50 described herein shall be submitted to the qualified voters of Whatcom County at the
51 general election to be held on November 3, 2022. The Whatcom County Auditor is hereby
52 authorized, directed, and empowered to cause notices of this ordinance and such election in
53 accordance with the state constitution and general law and to submit to the registered

1 voters of the County, at the special county election, the proposition hereinafter set forth.
2 Furthermore, the County Executive is hereby authorized and requested to initiate the
3 appropriate action necessary to ensure a proposition in substantially the following form shall
4 be submitted to the voters of Whatcom County:

5
6 Whatcom County, Washington

7
8 Proposition _____: Regular Property Tax
9 Levy for Emergency Medical Services

10
11 The Whatcom County Council passed Ordinance 2022-_____ concerning the
12 renewed funding for the countywide Emergency Medical Services system. Will Whatcom
13 County be authorized to continue to impose a regular property tax levy of \$0.295 or less per
14 thousand dollars of assessed valuation for each of the six consecutive years, with collection
15 beginning in 2023, for the continued provision of emergency medical services?

16
17 Yes _____
18 No _____
19

20 **Section 7. Authorization for Interlocal Agreements.** The County Executive is hereby
21 authorized and requested to negotiate interlocal agreements: 1) with the City of Bellingham
22 and Fire District #7 for EMS services consistent with the recommendations of the EMS Levy
23 Planning Committee and the EMS Oversight Board; 2) and Whatcom County Fire Districts
24 where levy collections provide fire agencies with limited BLS funding consistent with RCW
25 84.52.069 relating to the provision of emergency medical services over the length of time
26 the levy is imposed.
27

28 **Section 8. Severability.** If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person
29 or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the application of the
30 provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.
31

32 **ADOPTED** this ____ day of _____, 2022.
33
34

35
36 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

37
38 _____
39 Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

Todd Donovan, Council Chair

40
41
42
43 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

44
45 */s/ Karen Frakes (approved via phone 7/25/22) / JL*

46 Karen Frakes
47 Civil Deputy Prosecutor

Satpal Sidhu,
County Executive

48
49
50 () Approved () Denied

51
52 Date Signed: _____
53

