

INTRODUCTION DATE: June 21, 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 \$.~~295199295~~ 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 will 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

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

WHEREAS, supporting the EMS Levy, as a primary funding mechanism for countywide EMS, is key to advancing Whatcom County's diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities; and

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

WHEREAS, in order to assure the continued provision of services, it is both necessary and appropriate to renew the regular property tax of \$ ~~295,199,295~~ or less per \$1000 of assessed valuation be levied as provided for in this ordinance;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF WHATCOM COUNTY DOES ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

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

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

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

Section 4. Levy Rate. The proposed levy rate submitted to the voters shall be \$~~295,199,295~~ or less per \$1000 of assessed valuation each year, for six consecutive years, beginning in 2023. The collections of the taxes will begin in 2023. Taxes will be based on the previous year's assessment.

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

Section 6. Call for Election. A ballot measure for a proposition authorizing the levy described herein shall be submitted to the qualified voters of Whatcom County at the general election to be held on November 3, 2022. The Whatcom County Auditor is hereby authorized, directed, and empowered to cause notices of this ordinance and such election in accordance with the state constitution and general law and to submit to the registered voters of the County, at the special county election, the proposition hereinafter set forth. Furthermore, the County Executive is hereby authorized and requested to initiate the appropriate action necessary to ensure a proposition in substantially the following form shall be submitted to the voters of Whatcom County:

Whatcom County, Washington

Proposition _____: Regular Property Tax
Levy for Emergency Medical Services

The Whatcom County Council passed Ordinance 2023-_____ concerning the renewed funding for the countywide Emergency Medical Services system. Will Whatcom County will be authorized to continue to impose a regular property tax levy of \$0.~~295,199,295~~ or less per thousand dollars of assessed valuation for each of the six consecutive years, with collection beginning in 2023, for the continued provision of emergency medical services?

Yes _____

No _____

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

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

Whatcom County Council
Whatcom County, Washington

Attest:

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

Adopted this _____ day of _____ 2023

Approval as to form:

Whatcom County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney