

EDMONDS CIVIC ROUNDTABLE



*Empowering Neighbors Through
Information.*





February 10, 2025

Regional Fire Authority *explained*

Our goal tonight is to provide information and resources that will help citizens make their decisions about the upcoming Regional Fire Authority annexation vote in April.





Regional Fire Authority explained

- What you will hear tonight is just a beginning.
- Just the facts
- It is not meant to convince you to vote one way or another



Regional Fire Authority *explained*

Speakers will address:

A brief historical perspective on emergency services in Edmonds. Larry Fuell

What does a Yes vote for annexation into the Regional Fire Authority mean for us?

What services do we get and general costs to taxpayers? Nicole Gaba

What happens if the measure is voted down? What are the possible implications?

Matt Cox

Regional Fire Authority *explained*

*Historical perspective on Emergency
Services in Edmonds*

Larry Fuell

Historical Overview of Edmonds Fire Department Services

CREATION OF EDMONDS FIRE DEPARTMENT, 1904

| | |
|------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Personnel | 15 (all volunteers) |
| Equipment | A hose cart, a fire hose, a nozzle, and ladder |
| Area | Less than 1 sq . mi. 18.42 sq. mi. (2023)} |
| Population | 1,546 (1908) |



Historical Overview of Edmonds Fire Department Services

EDMONDS FIRE DEPARTMENT IN 2009 (PRIOR TO CONTRACT)

| | |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Personnel | 51 firefighters, 5 admin staff |
| Equipment | 3 fire stations, pumper trucks, ladder trucks, EMS vehicles |
| Area | 18.42 sq. mi. (2023} |
| Population | 39,707 (2010) 42,703 (2023) |

Historical Overview of Edmonds Fire Department Services

EDMONDS FIRE DEPARTMENT IN 2009 (PRIOR TO CONTRACT), cont.

In November 2009, decision to disband the Edmonds Fire Department and enter into a 20-year contract with Fire District 1 (name changed in 2017 to South Snohomish County Fire and Rescue Regional Authority, RFA).

Historical Overview of Edmonds Fire Department Services

2009 CONTRACT FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES – Key Terms

- 20 year duration
- Either party can withdraw
- Transfer of personnel - YES
- Transfer of Fire Stations - NO
- Sale of firefighting equipment – YES
- Cost of the contract the first year was \$6.2 million.

Historical Overview of Edmonds Fire Department Services

DEVELOPMENTS 2010-2023

1/1/2010 Contract takes effect

4/17/2012 First amendment

9/16/2014 City receives bill for \$1.67 million from RFA

1/27/2015 Second Amendment

1/26/2017 Third Amendment

10/1/2017 Snohomish County Fire Protection District No. 1
reorganized into RFA

Historical Overview of Edmonds Fire Department Services

DEVELOPMENTS 2010-2023 , cont.

9/2023 City notified RFA that it intended to study annexation option.
Fitch report

12/16/2023 RFA notifies City it will withdraw from the contract,
effective 12/31/2025.

(a) Annexation into RFA, or

(b) Renegotiation of its contract for services with RFA

Historical Overview of Edmonds Fire Department Services

2024 ACTIONS

April 2024 Fitch report received. 3 options:

1. Annexation
2. Edmonds creates own department
3. Contract with other fire department

June 2024 Council approved a resolution expressing city's intent to begin negotiation with RFA toward eventual annexation.

Sept 2024 Council signaled its intent to retain in 2026 the money that the city has been collecting for fire and emergency services.

Historical Overview of Edmonds Fire Department Services

2024 ACTIONS, cont.

12/10/2024 Council agrees to ask voters whether the city should annex into the South County Fire Regional Fire Authority (RFA) .

12/10/2024 At the same council meeting it was stated

- If Edmonds votes for RFA annexation, fire station 16 and 20 become the property of the RFA
- If Edmonds, later chooses to exit the RFA, the stations revert to the City
- If Edmonds wanted to restart its fire department, it can purchase the rolling stock (fire engines and aid cars) from the RFA at fair market value.

Historical Overview of Edmonds Fire Department Services

COST OF CONTRACTED FIRE AND EM SERVICES TO CITY OF EDMONDS

| YEAR | COST | SOURCE |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| previous attachment | (millions) | |
| 2010 | \$ 6.2 | First year of the agreement |
| 2011 | \$ 6.2 | Levy Committee Presentation to Mayor & Council, 10/3/2011 |
| 2012 | \$ 6.5 | Levy Committee Presentation to Mayor & Council, 10/3/2011 |
| 2013 | \$ 6.7 | Levy Committee Presentation to Mayor & Council, 10/3/2011 |
| 2014 | \$ 7.0 | Levy Committee Presentation to Mayor & Council, 10/3/2011 |
| 2015 | \$ 7.3 | Levy Committee Presentation to Mayor & Council, 10/3/2011 |
| 2016 | \$ 7.5 | Levy Committee Presentation to Mayor & Council, 10/3/2011 |
| 2017 | \$ 7.8 | Levy Committee Presentation to Mayor & Council, 10/3/2011 |
| 2018 | \$ 7.5 | South County Fire, Operating Budget |
| 2019 | \$ 7.7 | South County Fire, Operating Budget |
| 2020 | \$ 8.4 | South County Fire, Operating Budget |
| 2021 | \$ 8.1 | South County Fire, Operating Budget |
| 2022 | \$14.3 | South County Fire, Operating Budget |
| 2023 | \$11.0 | South County Fire, Operating Budget |
| 2024 | \$11.5 | South County Fire, Operating Budget |
| 2025 | \$12.1 | City of Edmonds |

Regional Fire Authority *explained*

*What does a yes vote for annexation into the
Regional Fire Authority mean?*

Nicole Gaba

ANNEXATION INTO THE REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

NICOLE GABA

FEBRUARY 3, 2025

What services do we get?

WHAT DOES A "YES"
VOTE MEAN TO US
AS A CITY &
AS INDIVIDUALS?

OVERVIEW:

- Status Quo
- Some additional RFA services
- Financial Impact to City
- Financial Impact to taxpayers

STATUS QUO REMAINS UNCHANGED UNTIL END OF 2025

By voting for annexation (or not,) our community will continue to receive the fire and EMS services that we do now, at least through the end of 2025 when our current contract ends.

STATUS QUO

CURRENT FIRE & EMS RESPONSE IN EDMONDS

- In 2023, Edmonds recorded 6,147 emergency responses, marking a significant 12% increase between 2019 & 2023.
- Edmonds accounted for 16% of the total responses recorded by the Regional Fire Authority in 2024.
- All Edmonds calls originated from Snohomish County 9-1-1. Services were dispatched through one of our 3 fire stations. These house 3 fire engines, 3-5 Medic Aide Units, and a rescue boat housed at Port of Edmonds.
- Callers get the closest emergency vehicle regardless of jurisdiction. This will not change.

CURRENT FIRE & EMS RESPONSE IN EDMONDS

- Trained fire fighters /EMT /paramedic staff respond to all calls and carry out emergency protocols.
- RFA is responsible for training fire fighter/paramedic and fire fighter/EMT response teams plus coordination with hospitals and transporting.
- As emergency situations become more complex with increased risk, RFA utilizes additional resources like hazmat or technical rescue teams. This will not change.

SOME ADDITIONAL RFA SERVICES WE CURRENTLY RECIEVE

(& will continue to receive through contract or annexation)

MUTUAL AID WITH OTHER DISTRICTS

- . RFA Serves Lynnwood, Brier, Edmonds, Mountlake Terrace and surrounding unincorporated areas.
- . Response times are critical in saving lives and property in emergency situations. Joining into this larger network gives us access to longer-term processes and improvements.
- . Mutual Aid goes beyond the RFA to all neighboring jurisdictions.

BENEFITTING FROM ECONOMIES OF SCALE

- . Leveraging more "buying power" when it comes to purchasing or maintaining equipment (fire trucks, engines, tools, etc).

ACCESS TO MORE FIREFIGHTERS & EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

- . Annexing allows us the services of firefighters and emergency responders who are highly trained and well-compensated.
- . Also get access to trained volunteers who are ready to be deployed to shut down areas, maintain closed streets, reroute people away from danger zones, and attend to other emergencies.

DISASTER RESPONSE SERVICES & HAZMAT RESPONSE SERVICES

- . RFA has a Disaster Response program which has plans to respond to catastrophic emergencies which includes plans for an Emergency Operation Center (EOC).

SERVICES FOR FREQUENT CALLERS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- . RFA has resources like the Community Paramedic Program, grant program (in partnership with Verdant Health), offering support to residents who need frequent assistance like help with food issues, transportation for care, in-home care referrals, and mental and behavioral health services.
- . Access to online and in-person programs like Aging in Place, Disaster Preparedness, Home Fire Safety, & more.
- . For residents in service area, RFA have outreach staff to assist with smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and to evaluate home fall hazards.

ACCESS TO RESERVES

- . RFA being a larger entity serving several cities has access to fiscal reserves.
- . Reserves allows us to have the resources to deploy emergency personnel and equipment in the event of a significant catastrophic emergency.
- . Reserves also allow RFA to maintain stations & equipment that need significant upgrades.

GROWTH PLANNING AND FORESIGHT

- . RFA dedicates resources to track and respond to population growth trends, which informs how to best deploy funds to maintain/prepare for new fire stations or hubs where more growth and residency is anticipated.

ADDITIONAL BENEFIT
WITH A “YES VOTE” TO ANNEXATION

RFA REPRESENTATION

- . "YES" to Annexation Allows Edmonds residents to run for the South County Board of Fire Commissioners and vote on fire/EMS ballot measures.
- . This allows residents accountability and direction for the future of services.
- . Edmonds would become a full partner in the Regional Fire Authority along with other municipalities.

MAINTAINING CURRENT LEVEL OF SERVICE

If we vote YES to annexation, we get to keep status quo plus the added RFA representation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT TO CITY & INDIVIDUALS

IMPACT TO THE CITY

OVERVIEW OF EDMONDS' FINANCES

- Edmonds is experiencing a fiscal crisis with a roughly \$29M budget shortfall.
- If the YES annexation vote passes, the money that has been previously dedicated to fire/EMS coverage will be allocated to other critical City services.
- YES vote would help the City with current budget shortfall issues...but cost to taxpayers will increase.

IMPACT TO THE CITY GOVERNMENT

- All responsibilities for fire/EMS services transfer directly to the RFA, which will directly tax residents and businesses for these services. The city government is relieved of these duties.
- City no longer has obligations to fund fire/EMS contract payments, no obligation to maintain/improve any of the three fire stations, no longer has to fund Fire Fighters, retiree health obligations, etc.
- The current Edmonds city budget is in a fiscal crisis, and the existing costs for fire/EMS of approx. \$12m are exacerbating the problem. If Edmonds were to continue to contract with SCF for fire/EMS services, these costs would escalate to approx. \$19m. A yes vote for RFA annexation relieves the city of this significant expense.

IMPACT TO TAXPAYERS

IMPACT TO TAXPAYERS

- Ensures continuation of fire/EMS coverage equivalent to what residents & businesses now receive.
- Money previously dedicated to fire/EMS coverage can be allocated to other city services
- Taxes for residents and business will increase.

ESTIMATED CHANGE TO TOTAL PROPERTY TAXES - 2025

Average Assessed Value of Home at \$895,700

Current tax: Total City Taxes, both General Property Taxes and EMS Levy = \$895.70

Tax under annexation: Total City Taxes, General Property Taxes, RFA Levy and RFA EMS Levy = \$1,683.92

Benefit Charge for 2500 SF Home = \$78.70

TOTAL. 1,762.62

NET INCREASE = \$866.92

Source: Snohomish County Assessors Annual Report for 2024 with 2025 update.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- City of Edmonds website

<https://www.edmondswa.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=16495016&pageId=20635353>

- South Snohomish County Fire

<https://www.southsnofire.org/Home/Components/News/News/2042/1372>

- Edmonds Civic Roundtable Resource Library

<https://www.edmondscivicroundtable.org/presentation-library>

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

A FEW THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT...

- Feb 22 NW Civic Circle Edmonds Lutheran Church 1:00 p.m.
- Feb 25 Lions Club
- March 4 Rotary of Edmonds
- March 18 Daybreaker Rotary
- Feb-April City of Edmond Townhalls

THANK YOU!

What happens if the Annexation Measure is Voted Down?

Matt Cox

February 10, 2025

What do we know?

and

What do we not know?

What We Know:

- Fire Service and EMS will continue under the currently existing arrangement through the end of 2025
- For 2026, the City of Edmonds and South Snohomish County Fire and Rescue Regional Fire Authority (RFA) have reached a mutual agreement to provide uninterrupted services to the City of Edmonds
- There are options that have been considered for providing Fire and EMS services beyond 2026, but there are no plans in place at this time

Contracting for Services for 2026

- Term of the agreement are for 2026 only
- Service level would be the same as the City would receive under annexation, which is comparable to current service levels
- Cost increase from \$12.1 million annually to somewhere in the vicinity of \$21 million
- Final price tag cannot be determined precisely until property values are assessed in 2025, for 2026 taxes
- There is not currently a stable funding source for this amount

What We Don't Know

- How will the taxpayers of Edmonds pay for Fire Services and EMS under the new contract for 2026?
- How will the City of Edmonds provide Fire Services and EMS beyond 2026?

Paying for the Contract for 2026 Services

- The City of Edmonds would continue to collect EMS tax and General Fund taxes while Transport Fees will no longer be received
- That would still leave a Significant Shortfall (exact numbers are not available at this time, but using today's figures the shortfall is a little over 40% of the total \$21 million figure)
- Filling that shortfall will require additional taxes, significant cuts to services, or alternative revenue sources; or some combination of these

Options for Services after 2026

- Continue to contract services with the RFA
 - There are no commitments in place for Edmonds to continue to receive services through contractual agreement with the RFA beyond 2026
- Create a Partnership with someone else
 - Other cities (e.g., Shoreline)
 - Separate RFA
- Create our own Fire and EMS Department
- Other

Creating Partnerships

- Contracting with another City
 - The example of Shoreline was reviewed by the consultants from Fitch
 - Fitch concluded that the cost of contracting with Shoreline for comparable services would be higher than the cost through Annexation
 - Capital investment by the City of Edmonds would also be required
 - Since the Fitch Report was written, Shoreline has initiated a ballot measure, with Kenmore and Lake Forest Park, to form their own RFA; that ballot measure will be voted on in a special election later this month
- Forming our own RFA
- These partnerships are hypotheticals at this time

Forming Our Own Fire and EMS Department

- This option would provide the highest level of local control
- Operational costs may be higher or lower, depending on the level of service
 - Fitch determined that the operational and personnel cost for comparable service would be similar to the cost within the RFA
- There are also other costs to consider with this option (capital investment and ongoing equipment costs)

Other Options

- The Fitch Report reviewed the option of separating out Fire and EMS Services
 - Fitch determined that this was not a feasible option due to subcontracting prohibitions in collective bargaining agreements for the unions providing these services
 - There is some community interest in further investigation of this option, as (approximately) 85% of service calls are EMS-related
- There may be other ideas for alternative models for providing Fire and EMS Services out there (alternative delivery systems, training models, etc.)
- Other options are speculative

Summary

- If the annexation vote fails, Edmonds will continue to receive the same level of service we have been getting through the end of 2026
- The cost of that service goes up significantly in 2026 and will have to be paid for by the taxpayers of Edmonds
- Beyond 2026 there is uncertainty
- Whether that uncertainty is an opportunity or a threat is for each of us to decide individually



Table Time

Discuss what you heard and formulate questions . . .

History and Edmonds relationship with RFA

What a yes vote means - services and costs

What happens if we vote no and implications



Thank You



Regional Fire Authority *explained*

As we conclude....

Informal Q and A Time:

You are invited to stay and continue your conversations and to ask questions of those who have agreed to be here tonight.



Question and Answer

1. History and Edmonds relationship with RFA
2. What does a yes vote mean/ services and costs.
3. What happens if we vote no and implications.

March 3, 2025

Edmonds Marsh and Estuary; Past present and future



Presenters: Kathleen Sears, Bill Derr

Presenters:

- Kathleen Sears
- Bill Derry
- Greg Ferguson





Our mission



Empower neighbors through
information. Together we make a
difference.

Photo credit: <https://www.edmondswa.gov>

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