

Northshore Fire/Shoreline Fire Department RFA

Frequently Asked Questions

(Please also refer to the backgrounds and need statement for more information.)

1. When will the RFA ballot measure go to voters?
 - a. We are planning on the February 11, 2025 special election. Measure needs to be submitted to King County by December 13, 2024.

2. When will the RFA go into effect?
 - a. Soon after the vote is certified, likely around March 1, 2025. However, the full blending of taxing authority and fire benefit charge (FBC) authorization will not occur until January 1, 2026.

3. Who will vote on the RFA?
 - a. Voters from both fire districts (Kenmore, Lake Forest Park, and Shoreline) will vote on the formation of RFA and the revenue sources (property tax levy and fire benefit charge “FBC”). Even though both The Northshore Fire Department (NFD) and Shoreline Fire Department (SFD) have existing FBCs, establishing a RFA with a FBC requires a super-majority of 60% plus one vote. Adding new jurisdictions to the RFA and any future re-authorization of the FBC will only require a majority, 50% plus one vote.

4. Will this require validation of the vote, or at least a 40% turnout from the last general election?
 - a. No, the RFA measure does not require validation.

5. What will the governance of the new RFA be?
 - a. The RFA Plan will propose that the two existing Fire Commissioner Boards initially constitute the RFA Governing Board. This will join both fire district boards of 5 each into a RFA Board of 10. This will ensure that there is geographical representation from each of the two existing fire districts, which was important to both Boards. These 10 members will be able to change the size of the Board in the future, if they so desire, by a majority vote of the Board.

6. Why combine in a RFA?
 - a. Formally combining the two fire departments will improve efficiencies logistically, operationally, and fiscally. Merging the two districts together was also considered, but a RFA was decided to be a better option, even though more complicated, primarily because of the governance issue as identified in question #5. Efficiencies will also lead to better levels of service over time. Please refer to the background and needs statement as well.

7. What will be the name of the new RFA?
 - a. Since both the NFD and SFD have already combined personnel, operations, etc. and all NFD personnel became SFD employees, it has been decided to keep the Shoreline Fire

Department name for now. In the event other jurisdictions, such as the City of Bothell, vote to join the RFA in the future then a renaming and rebranding of the RFA would likely be needed. The Boards both recognized that it would not be good to rebrand now and then rebrand again if another jurisdiction joins the RFA.

8. What will this cost the taxpayers in the NFD? SFD?

- a. A rough analysis of what a combined RFA budget would look like in 2024 dollars has been completed. This is a snapshot of merging budgets and accounts into one. It includes a few assumptions as we do not have all the data yet, and won't for some time.

Currently, the new RFA equivalent levy (property tax rate plus FBC) rate is estimated to be about \$1.116 to balance the budget. Depending on reserve funds and other decisions that still need to be made, that rate may decrease to about \$1.056. Both of these rates are less than current NFD and SFD rates. This is primarily a result of NFD's decision to increase revenues in 2024 to catch up on capital projects in 2024-2026.

We will be able to better estimate true impacts when we go through a full budget process, with better information regarding assessed values, and an understanding of how CPI will affect wages and benefits.

RFA – Rough estimate at \$1.116, but could be lower depending on assumptions.

NFD – Current equivalent rate (fire levy tax and FBC) is about \$1.13, so some savings.

SFD – Current equivalent rate (fire levy tax and FBC) is about \$1.27, more savings.

9. When will we know a better estimate of costs?

- a. The CPI that drives our labor costs will be published in late July. Assessed values for 2024 should be established in early to middle of November. 2024 budgets for both the NFD and SFD will be completed by November 30. Once the budgets are completed then a better accounting of the true RFA impacts will be better estimated.

10. Will the public have an opportunity to provide input to the fire district boards?

- a. Absolutely. It is important to not only get the information out, but to also receive input and perspective. We have RFA planning meetings typically on the third Monday of each month at 5 pm, alternating between the headquarters of NFD and SFD. They can be attended in person or virtually, check the website for details. The next meetings are:
July 15 – NFD Headquarters
Aug 19 – SFD Headquarters
Meetings beyond these dates have not been confirmed as yet

11. If I cannot attend a meeting, how else can I get information or ask questions?

- a. Please e-mail Fire Chief Matt Cowan at:

mcowan@shorelinefire.com

The Chief will collect any questions that are being asked and add to this FAQ by either expanding on one of the answers above or creating an additional question and answer.