

**S.E. THURSTON FIRE & EMS
REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY**

**REGIONAL
FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY
PLAN**

May 26, 2009

INTRODUCTION

In the late 1990's Yelm and the surrounding communities began to see steady growth. Increased population and development in urban and rural settings resulted in greater demands on area fire districts; Yelm Fire District #2, which included City of Yelm residents, and Thurston County Fire District #4 (Rainier). The City of Yelm has no city fire department and has been contracting with the Yelm Fire District #2 for the provision of fire and emergency medical services for many years. Fire service and emergency medical services, which were provided by predominately volunteer fire departments, struggled to keep pace with the increase in emergency calls.

Changes in the laws governing firefighter health and safety and increased difficulties in recruitment and retention of qualified volunteers required a more consistent staffing plan. This led to the hiring of three (3) career firefighters by Yelm Fire District #2 in February 2002.

In 2001, Thurston County Fire District #4 (Rainier), contracted with Yelm Fire District #2 to improve emergency response capabilities. The two (2) districts share personnel, equipment, and apparatus as a condition of the contract. This arrangement improved service and administrative efficiency in both districts. The combination of districts is called "S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS" and includes City of Yelm residents regarding emergency responses. Each fire district maintains its own Board of Fire Commissioners, which meet together on a monthly basis. City of Yelm citizens are unable to vote on or participate in fire department issues under this arrangement.

In 2008, the districts signed an Interlocal Agreement. With this agreement the two (2) Boards of Fire Commissioners, Yelm and Rainier, agreed to operate jointly and to pursue the formation of a Regional Fire Protection Authority (RFA) in conjunction with the City of Yelm.

The RFA Planning Committee was established and is comprised of three (3) fire commissioners from Thurston County Fire District #4, three (3) fire commissioners from Yelm Fire District #2, and three (3) appointed Yelm City Council members.

The challenges and needs of all citizens in the S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS area were assessed and addressed by the RFA Planning Committee through a series of meetings. This plan is the result.

REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY NEEDS STATEMENT:

S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS (SET), comprised of TCFPD #4 and Yelm Fire District #2, currently serves approximately 32,000 citizens, including the City of Yelm, in 84 square miles, with 18 career firefighters, 1 Fire Chief, 1 Deputy Chief, 1 Assistant Chief, 15 active volunteers and support service personnel.

Funding sources have not kept pace with the community's needs and special service demands. In order to create a stable, predictable, and equitable situation which allows for SET and the City of Yelm to address the increased demands, the following needs were identified. The need to:

1. Develop a system of shared partnership and responsibility among the local districts and city government;
2. Provide administrative and financial efficiency in a delivery system controlled locally and cooperatively through consolidation of services, equipment, and personnel; and

3. Develop a new authority to address critical fire and emergency services using other funding options, such as, a bond issue and the existing tax structure. A Regional Fire Authority (RFA) would become this new authority.

Formation of the S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS RFA will create a reliable funding situation in which best use of existing resources can be assessed and implemented; strategic and capital facilities planning can be completed; and future staffing, equipment, and training needs can be addressed in order to protect and serve the citizens.

REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY PLAN DEFINITIONS:

*The definitions in this section apply throughout this **RFPSA Plan**, unless the context clearly requires otherwise.*

(1) "**Board**" means the governing body of a regional fire protection service authority.

(2) "**Participating jurisdictions**" means S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS (the consolidated operations of Yelm Fire District #2 and Thurston County Fire Protection District #4 [including the City of Rainer]) and the City of Yelm joining the RFPSA in accordance with RCW 52.26.

(3) "**Regional Fire Protection Service Authority**" or "**RFPSA**" means an organization, an independent taxing authority within the meaning of Article VII, Section 1 of the state Constitution, and a taxing district within the meaning of Article VII, Section 2 of the state Constitution, whose boundaries are coextensive with two or more adjacent fire protection jurisdictions and that has been created by a vote of the people under RCW 52.26 to implement a **Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Plan**.

(4) "**Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Planning Committee**" or "**Planning Committee**" means the advisory committee created under RCW 52.26.030 to create and propose to fire protection jurisdictions a **Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Plan** to design, finance, and develop a regional fire protection and emergency service jurisdiction.

(5) "**Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Plan**" or "**Plan**" means a plan to develop and finance a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority jurisdiction, including, but not limited to, specific capital projects, fire operations and emergency service operations pursuant to RCW 52.26.040(3)(b), and the preservation and maintenance of existing or future facilities and services.

OBJECT I: REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY

FORMATION AUTHORITY

REFERENCE:

1. AUTHORITY to form a **REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY** between S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS and the City of Yelm is authorized by RCW 52.26.

2. Authority and empowerment of the S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS **PLANNING COMMITTEE** is provided by RCW 52.26.030.

3. Appointment and participation on the S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS RFPSA Planning Committee includes the fire commissioners of each respective fire jurisdiction and three appointed City Council members from the City of Yelm in accordance with RCW 52.26.030.

4. Upon successful development and approval of the RFPSA Plan by the RFPSA Planning Committee, the RFPSA Plan shall be brought to each participating fire jurisdiction's governing board and the City of Yelm council for approval and adoption by resolution for placement of the RFPSA Plan on the ballot for approval by the respective voters.

ACTIVITY/OPERATION:

1. No current activity or operation of the S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS Fire Department will change during the planning period of the RFPSA.

2. Should the RFPSA Plan be ratified with a successful vote by the collective electorate of S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS and the City of Yelm, the RFPSA shall be formed on January 1, 2010.

ASSETS/DOCUMENTATION TRANSFERRED:

1. No transfer of current financial assets, property, equipment, documents, contracts, agreements, or records of S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS will occur during the planning period of the RFPSA.

2. The transfer of financial assets, property, equipment, documents, contracts, agreements, and records to the RFPSA from S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS shall occur on January 1, 2010, and be in accordance with the Objectives identified in this RFPSA Plan.

RFPSA PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The *AUTHORITY* portion of the RFPSA Plan is subject to alteration only by a revised RFPSA Plan being re-submitted to the electorate for approval.

OBJECT II: REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY

JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES

REFERENCE:

The authority to define the JURISDICTION of the Regional Fire Protection Service Authority is provided by RCW 52.26.020 (2).

ACTIVITY/OPERATION TRANSFERRED:

1. The jurisdictional boundaries of the RFPSA shall be the current legal boundaries of each participating jurisdiction, which boundaries are depicted on the map attached hereto and marked as Appendix A of this Plan, and shall be transferred on January 1, 2010 upon successful approval by the collective electorate.

2. All annexations by S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS and the City of Yelm after the date of RFPSA formation (January 1, 2010) shall automatically be transferred into the RFPSA in accordance with RCW 52.26.100. The territory added to the RFPSA by annexation to a participating jurisdiction shall be

thereafter subject to the taxation, charges, and bonded indebtedness of the RFPSA in the same means as the RFSPA.

3. For the exclusive purposes of certifying/levying/collecting taxes and/or other fire district revenue that is transferred to RFPSA, and to provide representation to the newly formed RFPSA governance Board, Thurston County Fire District #4 and Yelm Fire District #2 shall continue to exist as a Washington State municipal corporation/government entity until December 31, 2010.

4. It is the intent that Yelm Fire District #2 and Thurston County Fire Protection District #4 will completely cease operations effective January 1, 2011, whether by dissolution or other means. In the absence of legislation to the contrary, the RFPSA shall have the authority to call and fund an election to dissolve the identified fire districts as of January 1, 2011 or later.

RFPSA PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The *JURISDICTION* portion of the RFPSA Plan is subject to alteration only by a revised RFPSA Plan being re-submitted to the electorate for approval.

OBJECT III: REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY

FUNDING

REFERENCE:

1. The authority to provide FUNDING and levy taxes for the RFPSA is provided by RCW 52.26.050, RCW 52.26.140, RCW 52.26.150, RCW 52.26.160, RCW 52.26.170, and RCW 52.26.180.

2. The authority and mechanism for the collection of taxes shall be in accordance with RCW 52.26.200, RCW 52.26.210, RCW 52.26.220, and RCW 52.30.020.

ACTIVITY/OPERATION:

1. Funding for the RFPSA beginning in Fiscal Year 2011 and beyond, unless modified shall be accomplished by an ad valorem property tax. The RFPSA Planning committee has determined a maximum statutory rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation in 2010 is necessary to operate the RFPSA.

2. It is the intent of the RFPSA to seek voter approval in the year 2011 in order to fund the RFPSA with a six (6) year levy rate as follows:

a. A continued levy rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for a one (1) year period, coupled with specified increases in property taxes collected in each of the five consecutive successive years thereafter.

b. This will exceed the 1% limitation of RCW 84.55.010 et seq. and levy the full authorized rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000 assessed valuation for a one (1) year period, coupled with specified increases in property taxes collected in each of the five (5) consecutive successive years thereafter, subject to statutory and constitutional limits, which are otherwise applicable. The limit factor of 106%

shall be used to determine the actual levy rate, subject to the maximum statutory rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation in 2012—2017.

3. To the extent permitted by law, the RFPSA shall contract with agencies and entities exempt from ad valorem taxes in accordance with RCW 52.30.020 and related statutes, provided that this shall not include contracts with, or the need to contract with or otherwise pursue funding from, the participating jurisdictions of S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS and the City of Yelm.

RFPSA PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The *FUNDING* portion of the RFPSA Plan is subject to alteration only by a revised RFPSA Plan being re-submitted to the electorate for approval.

OBJECT IV: REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY

GOVERNANCE

REFERENCE:

The authority to provide GOVERNANCE for the Regional Fire Protection Service Authority is provided by RCW 52.26.080 and RCW 52.26.090.

ACTIVITY/OPERATION:

1. As provided by RCW 52.26.080, the RFPSA Governing Board shall come into existence and authority on January 1, 2010.

2. As provided by RCW 52.26.080, the RFPSA Governing Board shall consist of:

Nine (9) member board as follows: Divide the taxing area into three (3) equal sub-regions by square miles with three positions within each sub-regions (See Appendix A for sub-region boundaries). Voters from the total jurisdictional area vote on all position representatives. During the period January 1, 2010 thru December 31, 2011, the composition of the Governing Board will consist of members of the RFPSA Planning Committee. The City of Yelm may appoint representatives to replace city council committee members during this period of time. Appendix B.

3. There shall be an equal number of members from each represented jurisdiction to sit on the Governance Board. Length of terms shall be six (6) years and will be staggered to prevent complete turn over during any one year.

a. Only a registered voter who resides in a sub-region may be a candidate for, or hold office as, a Commissioner of that sub-region.

b. Voters for the entire RFPSA may vote at any official, scheduled election to elect a candidate for the sub-region.

4. A Commissioner position shall become vacant on the death, resignation, or recall of a Commissioner; absence from three (3) consecutive regular meetings of the Board without being excused by the Board; or for other causes provided by law.

5. Vacancies in office shall be filled at the next November general election, unless the vacancy occurs after the filing declarations of candidacy, in which case, the vacancy shall be filled at the next succeeding November general election. The person elected shall take office upon certification of the results of the election and shall serve the unexpired term of the vacated office. Until a successor has been elected and certified, a majority of the Board shall make a good faith effort to appoint an individual who resides within the sub-region for which the vacancy exists.

6. The RFPSA Governance Board shall adopt governance policies and rules for conducting business for the RFPSA upon formation after January 1, 2010, in accordance with RCW 52.26.080.

7. The RFPSA Governance Board shall adopt bylaws to govern RFPSA affairs upon formation after January 1, 2010, in accordance with RCW 52.26.080.

8. The RFPSA Governance Board shall have all the power and authority granted governing boards under Washington State Law, and shall include the power and authority to make any decisions appropriate for the RFPSA and for issues related to RCW 52.26.

9. Commissioners of the Governing Board may receive compensation in the same manner and under the same conditions as provided by law for Commissioners of a fire protection district organized under Chapter 52 RCW.

10. Ballot measures may be placed on the ballot for a vote by the members of the RFPSA by a majority vote of the members of the Governing Board of the RFPSA.

RFPSA PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The *GOVERNANCE* portion of the RFPSA Plan may be revised by a majority vote of the current sitting RFPSA Governance Board.

OBJECT V: REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

REFERENCE:

The authority for the RFPSA to establish an ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE is provided in RCW 52.26.040.

ACTIVITY/OPERATION:

1. On the day of formation, the RFPSA shall be organized and managed, with leadership provided as shown in Appendix C of this RFPSA Plan.

RFPSA PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The *ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE* portion of the RFPSA Plan may be revised by a majority vote of the current sitting RFPSA Governance Board.

OBJECT VI: REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY

ADMINISTRATIVE / MANAGEMENT / PERSONNEL COMPONENTS

REFERENCE:

The authority for the RFPSA to establish and provide ADMINISTRATIVE / MANAGEMENT / PERSONNEL components is provided in RCW 52.26.040.

ACTIVITY/OPERATION:

1. The RFPSA shall be organized as provided in Appendix C of this RFPSA Plan.
2. The current Executive, Command, and Administrative staff of S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS shall be transferred to the RFPSA to fulfill the duties of those positions outlined in the organizational structure in Appendix C. All current personnel of S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS shall be transferred on the day of formation at their current rank, grade and seniority.
3. All current employee agreements, collective bargaining unit agreements, outstanding labor issues, personal service contracts, and any other contracts or agreements pertaining to work, duties, services, or employment with S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS shall be transferred over with all personnel on the day of formation.
4. A RFPSA Labor/ Management Committee shall be formed for the purposes of providing effective communication and input for the leadership and workforce of the RFPSA into operational and administrative issues. The Labor / Management Committee will develop its own operating guidelines in accordance with the current collective bargaining agreements and those mutually agreed upon guidelines and procedures that enhance the effectiveness of the Committee.
5. The Administrative Staff of the RFPSA shall be the current members S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS. All current administrative and business functions, agreements, documents, operations, and policies and procedures from S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS shall transfer over to the RFPSA unless otherwise noted in this Plan.
6. The RFPSA shall conduct and develop an organizational Strategic Plan to include services, levels of service, and standards of coverage, deployment standards, and customer expectations during the first year of operations (2010).

RFPSA PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The *ADMINISTRATIVE/MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL* portion of the RFPSA Plan may be revised by a majority vote of the current sitting RFPSA Governance Board.

OBJECT VII: REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY

OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY SYSTEMS

REFERENCE:

The authority for the RFPSA to establish and provide OPERATION and DELIVERY SYSTEM components of the RFPSA Plan is provided in RCW 52.26.040.

ACTIVITY/OPERATION:

1. Upon successful approval by the electorate, all current operational and service delivery aspects of S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS shall be transferred over on the day of formation.

2. Current staffing models, standards of coverage, deployments standards, field operations, command staffing, and operational policies and procedures shall be transferred and continued at the current level of service on the day of transfer.

3. As a part of the Organizational Strategic Plan exercise, required by this Plan in 2010, the RFPSA shall review and, if appropriate, adopt new standards of coverage and a deployment plan based on providing service to the combined service area.

4. All current automatic aid and mutual aid agreements, and any other contractual services agreements, documents, or memoranda currently in place with the S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS shall be transferred over on January 1, 2010 to provide continuous, seamless readiness and emergency services coverage.

RFPSA PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The OPERATIONS and DELIVERY SYSTEMS portion of the RFPSA Plan may be revised by a majority vote of the current sitting RFPSA Governance Board.

OBJECT VIII: REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY

ANCILLARY SERVICES

REFERENCE:

1. The authority for the RFPSA to establish and provide ANCILLARY SERVICES components is provided in RCW 52.26.040.

ACTIVITY/OPERATION:

1. The current S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS staff assigned to Support Services, Logistics, Supply, Fleet Maintenance, and Facilities shall be transferred over to fulfill the duties of those services as outlined in the organizational structure in Appendix C.

RFPSA PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The *RFPSA ANCILLARY SERVICES* portion of the RFPSA Plan may be revised by a majority vote of the current sitting RFPSA Governance Board.

OBJECT IX: REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY
PREVENTION / PUBLIC EDUCATION SERVICES

REFERENCE:

1. The authority for the RFPSA to establish and provide FIRE PREVENTION /PUBLIC EDUCATION components is provided in RCW 52.26.040.

ACTIVITY/OPERATION:

1. The RFPSA Prevention/Education duties shall be organized as provided in Appendix C of this RFPSA Plan.
2. Unless otherwise noted in this RFPSA Plan, the transfer of authority and the Fire Prevention and Public Education Services of the RFPSA shall be seamless and shall model the current Fire Prevention and Public Education Services of S.E. Thurston Fire & EMS.
3. The City of Yelm will retain code enforcement authority in accordance with Washington State law for their respective jurisdiction. While the RFPSA will provide all life safety inspections, the code enforcement responsibility shall remain with the City of Yelm.

RFPSA PLAN REVISION DISPOSITION:

The **FIRE PREVENTION/PUBLIC EDUCATION** portion of the RFPSA Plan may be revised by a majority vote of the current sitting RFPSA Governance Board.

APPENDIX A
See Sub-Region Map

APPENDIX B
Commissioner Terms

APPENDIX C
S. E. Thurston RFPSA Organizational Chart