

## **CENTRAL WHIDBEY ISLAND FIRE & RESCUE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



Date: February 22, 2017  
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#### **Central Whidbey Island Fire & Rescue reduces bond amount**

COUPEVILLE, WASH. – The Board of Fire Commissioners for Central Whidbey Island Fire & Rescue have reduced the size and scope of a potential bond measure to renovate facilities and replace apparatus. The proposed bond was originally presented in the fire district’s long range financial plan and 2017 budget. Fire Chief Ed Hartin says that the Board of Fire Commissioners wanted to reduce the impact on the taxpayers while addressing the emergency needs of the community.

“We still need the three engines to protect our insurance rating,” said Chief Ed Hartin. “However, we’re planning on renovating just one station at this time.”

The fire district has completed both a Capital Projects and a Facilities Plans available on its web site at <http://www.cwfire.org/bond>. The documents identify aging apparatus that needs replacement, as well as renovations to the four fire stations serving the district.

Fire engines impact the agency’s ranking with the Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau, the premier source of property underwriting and rating information for the insurance industry. Engines past their usable life, or inadequate apparatus to respond to calls can cause homeowner insurance premiums to rise.

In addition to apparatus, adequate facilities are important to the fire district’s insurance rating, but more importantly, community and firefighter safety. The fire district had hoped to make improvements to at least two stations. However, the Board of Fire Commissioners determined one station plus the three engines was a reasonable amount to request from the community.

The fire district plans to replace three fire engines approaching the end of their 25-year life cycle, and renovate Station 53 on Race Road. Renovations will add space for maintaining apparatus, larger engine bays, and sleeping quarters in the main building to help firefighters respond to calls faster.

It is common for fire districts to fund capital projects with bonds. Replacing apparatus and renovating stations are significant investments that cannot be funded from operating revenue. Bond rates are favorable at the moment, and Central Whidbey Island Fire and Rescue is considering a November 2017 election. There will be an extensive public process this spring to take community input about the proposal.

At current market rates, the bond would cost \$0.22 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, or approximately \$5.50 per month (\$66 per year) for the owner of a \$300,000 home. The bond would last for 20 years and includes \$1,959,000 for the three engines, and \$5,417,000 for station renovations and improvements.

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*Since 1928 residents of central Whidbey Island have volunteered their time and financial support to provide emergency services for the community. Today Central Whidbey Island Fire and Rescue provides 24-hour emergency response to nearly 10,000 people with a combination of volunteer, part-time, and full-time personnel. We are currently debt-free, operate under a balanced budget, and have passed all financial and accountability audits with the state. For more information, visit [www.cwfire.org](http://www.cwfire.org).*