



MESSAGE FROM CHIEF BERG

As our community continues to grow, so do our needs. The majority of our emergency calls are aid calls, but the amount of our fire calls are also up. Structure fires can take a significant amount of time. From putting out the fire, to clean up and overhaul to back at the station cleaning and putting equipment back in order. Thankfully for us (and our community), we have had a new burst of energy with new people the last couple of years that continue to make a daily difference. In the middle of the night, we used to have 6 volunteers and now we might get 12. Not all aid calls require this much manpower; however, you never know what you will need.

Let me explain what happens after you call 911 for a medical emergency. I think it is important for everyone to know the process:

You call 911, which is a dispatch center located on College Way. Then, the dispatcher sends a notification to the volunteer's phones, and it also sends an alarm to their pagers. The volunteer then sends a notification, through the phone app, that they are responding before driving to the closest station (that they live by). (Volunteers also reply if they are unavailable). We quickly know how many firefighters and EMTs will be responding and what type of equipment will be responding. Normally, our volunteers arrive first at your address but not always. When we arrive for a medical call, we render aid to the best of our trained abilities until the Medic unit arrives from one of the cities (Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley or Burlington.) We assist in the loading of the patient. If needed for a critical patient, we will drive the medic unit to the hospital and one of our volunteers will pick us up after the transport.

Big Lake Fire has an average response time of 11.41 minutes. If the call comes in the middle of the night, the volunteer has to get out bed, possibly thaw their windshield, get to the station, get the apparatus and get to your house. With a known CPR call we do allow our closest volunteers, that are your neighbors, to respond directly to your address so that you have the best chance of survival. Most volunteers carry some type of medical bag in their personal vehicle with the items they may need.

Big Lake Fire will be on the ballot on April 23rd, to once again ask for a levy increase. This increase is desperately needed so please vote. We ask that you contact us directly with any of your questions. We can be reached at 360-422-5391 or by email information@biglakefire.org.

Skagit County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) will also be on the ballot on April 23rd. This renewal levy pays for paramedics, EMTs, fuel, medical supplies and equipment, etc. The funds from this levy do not go to Big Lake Fire directly.

I am thankful for our many great volunteers that put all of our emergencies before their daily life. We could not do it without them.

It is an honor to be your Fire Chief in this great community.

Sincerely, Chief Berg



POSTCARD FEEDBACK

Many thanks to those that returned the postcard replying if they would support a levy or a bond. The options that were presented were:

Levy Lid Lift – In 2001, initiative 747 was passed that limited the amount any tax jurisdiction (with a population of less than 10,000) can increase its regular property tax levy by 1%. To increase our levy by more than 1%, the voters need to approve. Levy lid lifts can generate revenue for any purpose. For passage, a levy lid lift requires a simple majority (50% plus one).

Bond – A bond is a voter approved action that increases property tax collection but only allows for the tax collection to be used for a specific capital purchase over a specified amount of time.

The commissioners know there are many capital purchases that are overdue and want to take the correct action to get voter approval to purchase these capital purchases. They also realize money is tight for many. Inflation has hit many of our households but it has also reached the fire department. A new fire engine in 2019 cost just over \$500,000 (which we couldn't even afford then). The cost for that same fire engine now is close to \$850,000. With our current budget of \$347,000 there is no way the fire district can keep operating at its current level and replace the capital equipment that is needed (ex. radios, bunker gear, SCBA bottles, etc.).

The tally for the postcards were 137 for levy and 65 for bond.

With those numbers, the commissioners voted to place a levy lid lift on the ballot for the April 23rd special election at their meeting on February 22nd. They discussed the absolute minimum amount they needed to be able to purchase the capital purchases as well as operating at its current level. As a way for the board to be cohesive, all three compromised on the number they were willing to support. The number that was unanimously voted on was to increase the levy by .19 cents.

Please visit our website www.biglakefire.org if you'd like to see how that .19 cents will affect your property taxes. Example: A \$500,000 home would cost an additional \$95 a year or \$8 a month.

For those who wish to understand the tax process more, we encourage you to come to our "Meet the Assessor Coffee and Donut Hour on April 6th at 8:30 a.m.



PINNING CEREMONY

On December 30th, 2023 we had a ceremony to pin our new firefighters, new EMTs, new officers and new commissioners.

Your newest firefighters include: Adam McIntyre, Kraig Ekstein, Jon Nilsen, Nathan Hudock and Tové Schweizer. These individuals trained an additional 200 hours over the last couple of months to earn this certification!

Your newest EMT's include: Tové Schweizer, Israel Villalon and Michael Bejar. These individuals also trained an additional 200 hours over the last couple of months to earn this certification!

Three firefighters were promoted to an officer position: Ryan Berg, Joe Fleming and Erica Martin were pinned new Lieutenants.

We also pinned two of our new commissioners: Herold J. Hudson and Michelle Pidduck.

Congratulations to all of these individuals!

CPR CLASS

Commissioner Pidduck will be offering a CPR class on Saturday, March 2nd. If you would like to attend, please email secretary@biglakefire.org or send us a message on Facebook. This class is to learn CPR but is not a certification class.

PANCAKE FEED

The Big Lake Firefighter's Auxiliary will be hosting their annual pancake feed on Saturday, March 23rd 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. A shout out to Mr. T's Café who will once again be sponsoring! We will also be having a raffle for various items. If you would like to donate items towards the raffle, please contact the District Secretary at 360-422-5391 or secretary@biglakefire.org.

RETIRED COMMISSIONERS

Bruce Thomson stepped into the role of Big Lake Commissioner in July 2004. In his 19 years of service to Big Lake Fire and our community, he played a critical role in many projects including getting our new station approved by the voters, getting it built and purchasing our last fire engine which was in 2006. He was very budget oriented and a stickler with the finances. He was also very appreciative of the firefighters that give up so much of their time to help those in need. You could always find him helping out at all of our fundraisers, including cooking pancakes at the pancake feed, collecting money on the 3rd of July and just doing anything that needed to be done.

Mike Gubrud served our firefighters and Big Lake community for close to 8 years! He became a fire commissioner because he wanted to help out his community even though he didn't know much about the fire business but his business knowledge and commitment to the community was instrumental in keeping our fire department running smoothly and also keeping your insurance rating down. Mike was in the insurance business so he always had a line on a wrecked vehicle that we could use to sharpen our skills in auto extrication. You could also find him helping out at various fundraisers for the fire department including, organizing the "Smoke on the Water" fundraiser as well as going door to door collecting for the 3rd of July fireworks before he was a commissioner.

We are truly grateful for the many years of service from Bruce and Mike and they will be missed tremendously.



Bruce Thomson



Mike Gubrud

NEW COMMISSIONERS

Your new fire commissioners have been very busy in their first days in office. They have been educating themselves on their new positions including the finances, our inventory and what our equipment needs are. They have also been getting to know the volunteer firefighters.

Herold J. Hudson is the Commissioner Chair for 2024. Last fall he attended a commissioner conference in Marysville to learn all the ins and outs of being a fire commissioner. Commissioner Hudson brings a wealth of knowledge to his position at the fire district. In his “day” job, he is the Command Executive Officer for the 364th Expeditionary sustainment Command with the U.S. Army. He is responsible for running the headquarters and implementing, funding, supporting, sustaining and improving readiness and training of 4,380 Army Reserve Soldiers in 48 units across 24 facilities in 7 states. He oversees 21 headquarters staff and 350 full time employees across the command to ensure they are integrated, synchronized, resourced and focused both on future planning and daily execution of \$42 million in support of four subordinate brigades. He has a bachelor of science in accounting, a master of education in instructional technology and a master of strategic studies. He has lived in the Big Lake community for 30 years with his wife and where he raised his four children.

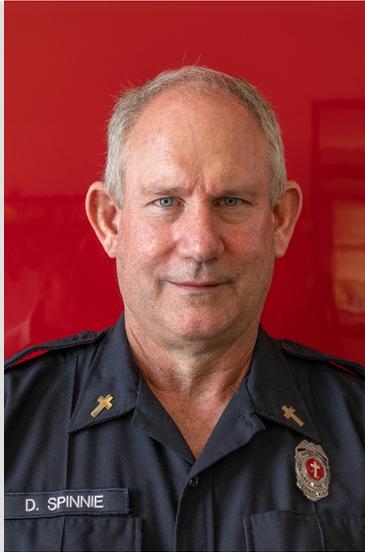
Michelle Pidduck became a Commissioner in December of 2023. She moved to Big Lake 3 years ago with her husband and 2 daughters from Shoreline, Washington. When she heard there was an opening for a commissioner of Big Lake Fire, she knew she wanted to be able to contribute to our amazing fire department. She is currently a professional fire firefighter for King County Fire District 4 in Shoreline. The last couple of years, she has been the Public Information and Education Officer in addition to her role as a firefighter. At Big Lake Fire she has taken over our Facebook page to better advise the public of the needs of our fire department, to help educate the public about keeping safe, and to just keep Big Lake better informed about what’s going on at your fire department. She will also be offering CPR and First Aid classes

throughout the year.

Christopher Anderson was elected to the Big Lake Fire commissioner position effective January 1st, 2024. He is a lifetime resident of Big Lake. A couple years ago he was also elected commissioner for Big Lake Sewer. He enjoys being on the lake, camping, traveling, and spending time with friends/family. He looks forward to serving the Big Lake community and supporting the volunteers in his new role as Big Lake Fire Department commissioner. He believes his fresh ideas and approach will be an asset to the department, expand community support, and bring positive changes. He looks forward to collaborating with Fire Chief Berg and the newly appointed commissioners.



Commissioner Hudson and Commissioner Pidduck at the Pinning Ceremony.



FIREFIGHTER SPOTLIGHT

Dennis Spinnie is the pastor of the Big Lake Church of the Nazarene. He has been a volunteer firefighter with Big Lake Fire for over 20 years. Not only is he a firefighter, he is also our chaplain. He is the one who always stays late in the event any of our community members need someone to talk with. He is always the one who stays with the family members when they lose a loved one to help with arrangements. He is always the one that is available to all of our volunteer firefighters when they just need to talk. He carries a lot on his shoulders to help all of us. He is a tremendous asset to not only our fire department but also our community. He is the one in charge of fire safety day at the fire station during Fire Safety Week and he also volunteers weekly at our elementary school among the many other selfless things he does for the community.

TAX ASSESSOR

The Big Lake Fire Department Auxiliary will be sponsoring "Meet the Assessor Coffee and Donut Hour" with the Skagit County Assessor on Saturday, April 6th at 8:30 a.m. Please bring your tax questions for him to answer.



PUMP OPERATIONS

Twelve of your volunteer firefighters spent the weekend of February 3rd and 4th learning pump operations. In order to be a driver of a fire engine, our firefighters must take this training along with a series of drives, rodeo course and written testing. We strive to have some of the safest drivers on the road in these heavy vehicles.

2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 2nd – CPR Class 9am, Big Lake Fire Station One

March 23rd – Pancake Feed and Open House 8am to 11am, Big Lake Fire Station One

April 6th – Meet with Danny Hagan, Skagit County Assessor 8:30 am, Big Lake Fire Station One

April 23rd – Election Day

May ? – Garage Sale (Date to be decided)

July 3rd – Fireworks

September 11th – 9/11 Remembrance Parade

December ? - Christmas Parade and Food Drive - Date To Be Decided

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