

TO: Members of Kittitas County Fire District #7  
FROM: KCFD #7 Fire Commissioners  
RE: Changes coming to Fire District 7

Fellow members,

As you all know, it is the duty of the Fire Commissioners to govern the Fire District on behalf of the taxpayers and voters within our Fire District. It is not our task to handle the day to day operations which is a task assigned to the Fire Chief who is responsible to us. Some years ago, the Fire Commissioners sought to seek professionalism of our fire services by hiring staff that bring experience from other fire departments. In an effort to economize with taxpayer dollars, the decision was made to hire a part-time Chief and two retired part-time Assistant Chiefs. Over a period of time, the Commissioners have become worried about the attrition rate and a number of internal issues within the Department, as well as our ability to sustain the Department economically as the Safer Grant funding ultimately wanes to nothing. For these reasons, we contracted with an experienced consultant who has been assessing our department and begun providing us with input and suggested guidance.

It has become evident that our part-time staff does not have adequate time to effectively deal with the myriad of different issues before us. While collectively they possess a great deal of knowledge, we feel that it is incumbent on us to make change in our organizational structure in order to deal with the many complex issues before us. For these reasons, the Commissioners have chosen to reset the department by changing our organization's structure to provide for one full-time Fire Chief and one full-time Assistant Chief. We will be notifying Snoqualmie Pass Fire District of our intention not to continue with our contract for our Fire Chief services and will give them the 90 day notice required in our contract. In that same time-frame, we will be making a budget amendment to defund the part-time positions so that we can combine them to hire a new full-time Assistant Chief.

We also have before us, a looming financial situation that requires us to ask the voters if they will be willing to sustain our grant-funded paid firefighters. We hope to have this on the November ballot and the voters will determine whether we continue on the current path or whether we return to an all-volunteer fire department. The paid positions are simply not financially sustainable without a significant tax increase.

Because we cannot be certain of the ballot outcome, we anticipate hiring an interim Chief when our contract for Chief Wiseman's services concludes. The interim Chief will serve while we survey you, our members, for your input on what we will be looking for from a new full-time Chief and Assistant Chief. We will then embark on a hiring process once we know the outcome of the ballot in November. We will not pursue the actual recruitment process until we know whether we will continue to have paid firefighters or revert to all-volunteer status. This makes a difference in what talents and experience we will be looking for in our new full-time leadership. Our hope is to have qualified candidates competing for the positions by January and hired by February. Please understand that these time frames are estimates but they give us a timeline to follow.

So what does this mean for the rest of us? We are about to undergo some significant changes in the coming 6 months. We desperately need for all members of this organization to pull together in order to continue delivering emergency services to our community while we continue with this reorganization. We promise to engage as many members as we can in the processes that will be coming at us. Please know that we do not make these decisions in a vacuum and do not take them lightly. It is our deep

concern about our Fire Department and the citizens we serve that compels us to make these changes as our prior efforts have not been successful. We will be seeking meetings with our officers, volunteers, and paid staff to seek the many and varied opinions and suggestions we know you will provide. Obviously, it is not possible to make everyone happy all the time, but we do care about hearing from everyone who is willing to share their thinking with us with the exclusive goal of creating the best possible fire department for our district citizens. This likely means spirited debate and conversations and the decisions will ultimately be based on what is best for our citizens, community and members.

We sincerely hope you will join us in good faith, and support this effort to provide the highest level of fire and emergency services that the citizens ask us to provide. It will not be easy, but we are sure that we will come out of it stronger and better than before.

Sincerely,



Bob Cernick, Commissioner, Board Chair



Bill Dickinson, Commissioner, Board Vice-Chair



Calvin Beedle, Commissioner

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