

# **SOUTH KITSAP FIRE AND RESCUE COMMUNITY BUDGET REVIEW COMMITTEE**

NOVEMBER 7, 2005

**TO:** Dusty Wiley, Fire Commission Chair  
Wayne Senter, Fire Chief

**FROM:** The Community Budget Review Committee

**Subject:** Review of the 2006-2007 proposed budget for South Kitsap Fire and Rescue

## **Introduction**

South Kitsap Fire and Rescue (SKFR) organized a new process in their budget development to include a Community Budget Review Committee (CBRC). This fifteen member committee was comprised of various community members, citizens, and business owners from within the boundaries of SKFR's response area. The committee met on October 3rd, 17th, and 31<sup>st</sup> for approximately 3 hours each night. These meetings were held at SKFR's headquarters located at 1974 Fircrest Drive SE, Port Orchard, WA and were open to the public.

SKFR gave the CBRC information about how the district operates and what goals and standards impact their budget. This included an examination of the current standards, procedures, and practices SKFR utilizes in delivery of its emergency service to the citizens.

The CBRC members would then comment on two areas:

1. Make strategic recommendations on how to improve SKFR's budgeting process and its ability to efficiently deliver emergency services to the citizens.
2. Make specific recommendations on how to maximize the CBRC process.

## **Strategic Budget Recommendations:**

1. The Citizens Budget Review Committee totally supports a conservative budget approach, but feel South Kitsap Fire and Rescue should revise its revenue forecasts to more accurately reflect a budget based on historical averages and a reasonable inflationary increase. Included in these forecasts should be a “new construction” factor for both the regular and EMS levies.
2. SKFR should continue to review necessary facility maintenance and repair needs and implement those needs required to protect the capital investment and ensure the facilities are safe and functional for emergency response.
3. SKFR should consider establishing a capital replacement fund based on the vehicle replacement plan for all emergency vehicles and attempt to adequately fund that plan each year.
4. The district should maintain a dialogue with, and seek cooperation with appropriate agencies and personnel to help keep the Manchester Fuel Depot fire station operating as it compliments service to the citizens of Manchester. SKFR should also continue to look for efficiencies in emergency service delivery options in areas such as Rocky Point and Tri-Lakes.
5. SKFR should develop a long range staffing plan that results in incremental progress toward compliance with national staffing standards and CFAI recommendations. This plan should identify the stations that will change from unstaffed to staffed and the expected improvement in response times.
6. The SKFR should develop a program to better inform the citizens of the impact of staffing levels. This program should be presented at the various community groups and service clubs in the area and by other means necessary to inform the citizens. These presentations should emphasize the cross-training of FF/EMT personnel as an indication of the district’s commitment to provide the most qualified people in response to an emergency.
7. The District must take a hard look at urban growth areas vs. rural areas within the County. Response times and staffing levels need to reflect the Growth Management Act’s goals for South Kitsap County. This should also include comparisons with other similarly situated districts to illustrate the district’s competence with its peers.
8. We strongly recommend the district research various avenues of cost saving/sharing, i.e. joining with other like kind agencies to reduce health insurance premium costs.

9. The CBRC recognizes the SKFR made some organization changes that resulted in 4 support positions being eliminated in order to increase emergency response staffing. SKFR should continue to look for these types of efficiencies including reorganizing volunteers so they can provide meaningful support to the career firefighters.
10. Continue to look for efficiencies of operations in regards to the Regional Training Facility use.
11. Consider a change of job title and emphasis from Firefighter/EMT to EMT/Firefighter in light of the proportion of medical vs. fire responses made annually.

### **Recommendations for future CBRC Processes:**

1. Be sure you are prepared with a budget, including forecasts for future years that has been reviewed and is in a final form before the first meeting.
2. All staff presentations should relate to line items on the budget so CBRC members have a reference point during the discussion.
3. A written explanation of the various line items on the budget would be useful to the CBRC members – much like what was given to us at the second meeting. This should be given to the potential CBRC members before the first meeting to allow them to have a better chance to understand the budget.
4. Consideration should be given to the future of the CBRC with some specific organizational structure. Included in this should be consideration of how many members should make up this committee and should there be a new committee chosen every year or should there be term limits on various members each year so you have some members carrying over year to year, but also get some new citizens involved each year. If there are to be some new members each year, rather than a full slate of new members, it might be helpful to have a beginning class to explain your budget to the new members.
5. Consideration should be given as to what each member of the CBRC can do to help with public awareness.
6. There should be minutes taken at each meeting and passed out to the members before the following meeting.
7. Provide a brief written pamphlet educating new members about the nature of the district's goals, staffing, facilities, response times, capital items structure and repair and maintenance history. Give this to prospective new members before the first meeting.
8. Provide written and graphic comparisons with similar fire districts, in the county and from other areas of the state. Show how SKFR compares in service delivery and value compared to like organizations.

## **Conclusion**

The most critical issue facing SKFR and the citizens served by SKFR is staffing necessary to maintain a reasonable emergency response time. The CBRC wants to recognize the SKFR has demonstrated through recent organizational changes, they are very proactive in providing the best emergency response time with the resources provided. The “Recommendations” included in this document are given as suggestions to help SKFR continue their proactive approach.

We congratulate the SKFR Board of Fire Commissioners and the Fire Chief for actively seeking input and recommendations from the citizens it serves. We recommend continuing to engage the public in their budget development in future years.

The CBRC would also like to thank the Chief and his staff for providing us with all information requested and allowing us to have a very open dialogue about any and all topics.

### **Committee Members**

Jim Civilla, Chairman  
Jim Avery  
Dennis Goss  
Mark Grimm  
David Hedger  
Robert Husted  
Steve Hutchins  
Tamra Ingwaldson  
Chris Matzen  
Marty Mobley  
Tye Moore  
Tom Myers  
Gerald Preuss  
Sally Santana  
Wayne Tripp