

Bellingham

Fire Department

Chief William R. Miller

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bellingham Fire Department Shares Information on Proposed Budget Override to Fund Increased Department Staffing

BELLINGHAM -- Chief William Miller issues the within press release to provide information about the proposed override of Proposition 2 1/2 to fund increased staffing for the Bellingham Fire Department.

Voters are being asked to consider a \$750,000 override on Tuesday, June 4, to add six paramedics to the department to meet the Town's increasing request for services.

The Bellingham Fire Department is an all-hazards fire rescue agency providing emergency medical, fire suppression, technical rescue and hazard mitigation through fire prevention and community risk reduction efforts.

The Fire Department operates from two active stations, at 1 Wrentham Road (Station 1) and 28 Blackstone Road (Station 2 - Headquarters), providing service to residents, businesses, and visitors across 19 square miles.

Bellingham's population has grown from 14,877 in 1990 to more than 17,500 in 2023. Call for service growth has averaged 4.95 percent per year from 2013-

present. This trend indicates calls for service will grow from 3,100 in 2023 to almost 4,000 calls in 2028, or from 8.5 calls per day to 10.8 calls per day.

Mutual aid requests from the department have increased significantly from 2013-2023 with a 38% increase in call volume, 56% of which calls have relied on mutual aid from neighboring towns. Use of mutual aid, an essential component of local emergency services, can result in a delayed response as the aid is coming from a neighboring community. Further, such reliance on mutual aid demonstrates that the Bellingham Fire Department is struggling to meet its obligations to the community as currently staffed.

The Department seeks to increase staffing to allow a dedicated paramedic ambulance with two paramedics per shift to operate out of the Blackstone Street Station. This additional staffing would enable the Fire Department to concurrently staff two fire suppression units.

The Department hopes to increase staffing to allow a dedicated paramedic ambulance to operate out of the Blackstone Street Station. Staffing should be such that the town has, in the near future, the ability to staff one dedicated paramedic-level ambulance with two paramedics per shift. This would enable the Fire Department to concurrently staff two fire suppression units.

The impact of the override is projected to increase taxes to \$76.44 per year (or \$19.11 per quarter) for the owner of a median single-family home valued at \$424,679.

The Bellingham Fire Department shares the following answers to Frequently Asked Questions:

What is a Proposition 2 ½ Override?

Proposition 2 1/2 is a state law that caps the amount of money each community can increase property taxes each year. Voters at Town Meeting and at an election must be asked permission to permanently increase that cap.

Why is the Town of Bellingham seeking an override?

The Town of Bellingham is seeking an override of Proposition 2 1/2 to fund the addition of six paramedics for the Bellingham Fire Department.

Why is this important for the Bellingham Fire Department?

Increased staffing will allow for a dedicated ALS ambulance from the Blackstone Street station.

This would enable the department to staff one dedicated paramedic-level ambulance with two paramedics per shift and concurrently one three-person staffed engine out of the Blackstone Street station and one crossed-staffed ambulance/engine out of the South station.

What does a "YES" vote mean?

A "YES" vote approves the tax increase to hire six additional paramedics to staff shifts.

What does a "NO" vote mean?

A "NO" vote means that the Department will maintain current staffing levels. As call volume continues to increase, it is likely that the Department will need to rely more heavily on mutual aid, ultimately resulting in delayed response times.

How does this impact Bellingham residents?

Mutual aid requests from the Fire Department have increased significantly from 2013-2023 with a 38% increase in call volume, 56% of which have relied on mutual aid to combat that increase.

This data shows the number of times per year that the Fire Department has been unable to provide emergency services in response to a call for service and having to rely on mutual aid, thus resulting in a delayed response as the unit is coming from a neighboring community.

For any further questions, please contact Chief Miller at 508-657-2735.

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A message from the Bellingham Fire Department

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