Key Policy Questions
What’s Happening
Financing City Fire Services
Contracting/Interlocal Agreements
Regional Fire Authority
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Key Policy Questions

- What is the City’s goal for making a change in who provides the fire services?
- Does the City want to give up control and responsibility to another organization for the services it currently provides?
- Will service levels change, and can the other jurisdiction maintain the service objectives that the City currently has?
Key Policy Questions (continued)

- What is the most cost effective method for providing fire services?
- Is the current method for providing and funding fire services sustainable?
- If the City does not have to pay for fire services, will there be additional funding available for other services?
- What alternative provides the most benefit and least cost for the taxpayer? The City?
- Are the potential savings to the residents sufficient to warrant making a change, and if not what are the alternatives for maintaining and improving the City’s fire services?
What’s Happening?

- Key Question: Does the city need to operate, fund, and control its own fire department to provide fire and emergency medical services to the community?
- For some cities the answer is no
- What are the factors for this decision?
  - Financial
  - Flexibility
  - Control
Key Factors

- **Financial**
  - During tight times it's difficult to reduce the fire department’s costs
  - Costs are increasing faster than revenues
  - Other alternatives might reduce costs and free up funds for other services

- **Flexibility**
  - Fire departments are traditionally staffed for fighting fires even though most of the calls today are emergency medical calls
  - Innovations in providing services are difficult to make
Key Factors

Control

♦ One of the few services that has state mandated performance measures
♦ RCW 35.103.030 requires written policy
  ▪ Services that the fire department is required to provide
  ▪ The basic organizational structure of the fire department
  ▪ The expected number of fire department employees
  ▪ Functions that fire department employees are expected to perform
  ▪ Response Time Objectives at 90%
  ▪ Annual Evaluation
  ▪ Annexations – transfer of employees

♦ National Standards (NFPA)
Fire Department Alternatives

- Keep your Fire Department
- Contract/Interlocal Agreement (ILA)
- Form a Regional Fire Authority
- Annex into a Fire District
Financing the City Fire Department

- General Fund
- EMS Levy (6 year, 10 year, or permanent Levy)
- Ambulance Transport and Fire Prevention Fees
- Ambulance Utility (RCW 35.21.766)
- Levy Lid Lifts
Contracting/Interlocal Agreements

- Type of Partner
  - City to City
  - City to Fire District
  - City to Regional Fire Authority
  - Combination of all
Contracting/ILA Considerations

- Do the elected officials of the partner(s) share the same values and perspectives as our elected officials?
- Does the agreement provide the City with an equal say in how the services are funded and provided?
- Will the City officials be satisfied if they are not in control?
- Can the City specify the types of services it wants and the performance levels?
- What type of labor issues will the City encounter if it wants to move to this model?
- How much money will the City save?
- What liabilities might the City incur if it enters into or ends the contract?
Key Contracting/ILA Agreement Issues

■ What services does the City want provided?
  ◆ Fire and EMS
  ◆ Fire Prevention
    • Fire Code enforcement (Construction & Other Codes)
    • Education
  ◆ Fleet and Facility Maintenance and Reserves

■ How should we pay for services?
  ◆ Cost based plus overhead
    • Stations & staffing
    • Incidents
  ◆ Property tax equivalent
  ◆ Combination
  ◆ Does the City contribution subsidize the partner?
Regional Fire Authority (RFA)

- Hybrid Contract/ILA and Fire District Annexation
- Setting up a Regional Fire Authority (RCW 52.26)
  - Establish a planning committee consisting of three elected officials from each jurisdiction
  - Develop and adopt a regional fire authority fire protection plan
  - Recommend revenue sources (e.g. Primarily property tax and fire benefit charge)
  - Each jurisdiction must approve sending the plan to the ballot
  - Majority vote is needed if revenue is only property tax; 60% if benefit charge is included
Regional Fire Authority Plan

- Governance
- Design
- Financing
- Facilities and operations
- Requires public input
Annexation into a Fire District

- City Council adopts an ordinance stating its intent to join a fire district
- The fire district commissioners need to concur and then the legislative authority of the county is notified
- County places measure on ballot
- Majority vote needed
- Property taxes and benefit charges are the primary revenue sources
## Issues Summary

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Key Tax and Revenue Issues

- What will be the impact on the jurisdictions and their taxpayers for contracting, an RFA, or an annexation?
  - Will one jurisdiction be subsidizing another?
- Will the taxpayer be paying more or less for the services than before?
- If a City has savings because it has annexed into a district or joined an RFA, what happens to the available funding if no equivalent property tax reduction is necessary? Should the change be tax neutral?
Key Cost Analysis Issues

- Salaries and Benefits
  - Staff Reductions?
  - Differences in Pay & Benefits
  - Accrued Vacation & Sick
  - LEOFF 1 costs
  - Different labor negotiation comparisons
- City Indirect Costs/District Administrative Support
- EMS Billing
- Fleet, Equipment, and Facility Maintenance
- Fleet and Equipment Replacement
- Dispatch
- Information Technology
- Facilities and Equipment Ownership and Transfers
- Debt Service
Questions