

Complaint#1 of 2

Respondent Name
City of Olympia
Complainant Name
Arthur West
Complaint Description
<p>Arthur West reported via the portal (Fri, 7 Apr 2023 at 1:26 AM)</p> <p>Recently, the City of Olympia sent out a flyer using regarding the Regional Fire Authority ballot measure Proposition No 1. On the very top of page 1, of a 4 page front and back flyer, in relatively small print, are the words “For Information Only... Not intended to support or oppose the ballot proposition”.</p> <p>The flyer as it is clearly intended to promote the ballot measure, despite its statement that it is “for information purposes only”. My concerns are based on three issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) It is an inappropriate expenditure of public funds (i.e. taxpayers’ funds) as it is clearly designed to be promotional,2) It is quite likely a violation of state law, and remarkably similar to a recent violation by the City of Olympia,3) The City has previously been found to have violated the FCPA in a similar manner. https://www.theolympian.com/news/local/article244470337.html <p>The flyer, adorned with photos of (only) firefighters is designed clearly to elicit support. The text on the flyer isn’t informational as much as it is promotional. The four main text boxes are entitled “ Stabilize funding...”, “Meet the needs...”, “Maintain a healthy workforce”, and “Increase service efficiencies”, and are conspicuously similar to statements made by the proponents from the beginning. While opponents of the Proposition do argue those points, they also point out that these cherry picked points are, at best, deceptively minimalist and specifically do not address those points which are considered possible reasons to vote against the Proposition.</p> <p>That is not informational to voters. That is merely repeating that which the proponents pay for to influence voters to support their measure. Again, them doing so is fine and an acceptable part of the process. Using public money to do so by the City is neither.</p>
What impact does the alleged violation(s) have on the public?
<p>Recently, the City of Olympia sent out a flyer regarding the Regional Fire Authority ballot measure Proposition No 1. On the very top of page 1, of a 4 page front and back flyer, in relatively small print, are the words “For Information Only... Not intended to support or oppose the ballot proposition”.</p> <p>The flyer as it is clearly intended to promote the ballot measure, despite its statement that it is “for information purposes only”. My concerns are based on three issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) It is an inappropriate expenditure of public funds (i.e. taxpayers’ funds) as it is clearly designed to be promotional,2) It is quite likely a violation of state law, and remarkably similar to a recent violation by the City of Olympia,3) The City has previously been found to have violated the FCPA in a similar manner. https://www.theolympian.com/news/local/article244470337.html <p>The flyer, adorned with photos of (only) firefighters is designed clearly to elicit support. The text on the flyer isn’t informational as much as it is promotional. The four main text boxes are entitled “ Stabilize funding...”, “Meet the needs...”, “Maintain a healthy workforce”, and “Increase service efficiencies”, and are conspicuously similar to statements made by the proponents from the beginning. While opponents of the Proposition do argue those points, they also point out that these cherry picked points are, at best, deceptively minimalist and specifically do not address those points which are considered possible reasons to vote against the Proposition.</p>

That is not informational to voters. That is merely repeating that which the proponents pay for to influence voters to support their measure. Again, them doing so is fine and an acceptable part of the process. Using public money to do so by the City is neither.

List of attached evidence or contact information where evidence may be found

City of Olympia, Jay Burney, City Manager, Susan Grisham, Assistant to the City Manager Debbie Sullivan, Assistant City Manager - Strategic Initiatives Rich Hoey, Interim Assistant City Manager - Community Vitality Kellie Purce Braseth, Strategic Communications Director

List of potential witnesses

Jay Burney, City Manager, Susan Grisham, Assistant to the City Manager Debbie Sullivan, Assistant City Manager - Strategic Initiatives Rich Hoey, Interim Assistant City Manager - Community Vitality Kellie Purce Braseth, Strategic Communications Director

Certification (Complainant)

I certify (or declare) under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that information provided with this complaint is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Ballot Language Proposition No. 1

The City of Olympia and City of Tumwater adopted a Joint Resolution concerning formation of a regional fire authority and its Plan.

If approved, this proposition would form the Olympia Tumwater Fire Authority and adopt the Plan to provide fire protection and emergency medical services. The Authority will be funded by property tax (not to exceed \$1.00 per \$1,000 of assessed value) and a six-year benefit charge (not to exceed 60% of the Authority's operating budget). This funding would reduce Olympia's and Tumwater's property tax capacity by the tax rate collected by the Authority.

Should this proposition to form the Olympia Tumwater Fire Authority and its Plan be approved?

☐ Yes
☐ No



Regional Fire Authority Benefits

Stabilize funding using dedicated sources

As both cities balance limited budgets across multiple public priorities, funding levels to support the growing demands on our fire agencies are becoming strained at an unsustainable rate.

The Fire Authority would rely on multiple, dedicated funding streams, pooled regionally to support current and future demands for fire and emergency medical services.

Meet the Needs of Growing Communities

Call volumes currently exceed capacity for both agencies. The Regional Fire Authority would provide a framework for better response to the demand for services and increased call volume from our growing communities.

Both Olympia and Tumwater agencies are falling short of the target of responding to calls within 6-7 minutes, 90 percent of the time.

- Olympia response time: 7-9 minutes, 90 percent of the time.
- Tumwater response time: 9+ minutes, 90 percent of the time.

Maintain a Healthy Workforce

Fire and emergency responders are under greater stress and working longer hours with increased demand for services, growing call volumes, and insufficient staffing.

- Post-traumatic stress injury is recognized as an employment-related condition affecting firefighters in our communities.

Increase Service Efficiencies

The Regional Fire Authority would bring enhanced and consistent regionalized services, including:

- A CARES unit to respond to non-urgent situations that don't require a traditional EMS response.
- New transport services to reduce the time to get patients to local hospitals and put fire and EMS



Regional Fire Authority Proposition No. 1

Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

Fire and emergency medical services are among the most critical services provided to the community. The demand for service is outstripping the resources of the cities' fire departments and is putting pressure on our ability to continue to provide quality fire and emergency medical services. A Regional Fire Authority would fully consolidate the two separate fire departments, regionalize fire and emergency medical services and resources, and provide dedicated funding to maintain and enhance fire and emergency medical services for the Authority's service area.

What is a Fire Authority?

A Fire Authority is an independent special purpose district, established by voters, that provides fire and emergency medical services by consolidating operations while retaining local control. The creation of a Fire Authority is authorized by state law (RCW Chapter 52.26). Fire Authorities have become a common way of ensuring funding and provision of fire and emergency medical services in Washington State.

Why a Fire Authority?

The collaborative partnership and shared responsibility of a Fire Authority could provide more effective fire protection and emergency medical services than the two cities can provide, acting separately.

How will the Fire Authority be governed?

The Fire Authority would initially be governed by a Board of Commissioners comprised of City Councilmembers from both cities. Over five years, the Board would reduce the number of Councilmembers and increase the number of Commissioners elected from the Tumwater and Olympia communities. Ultimately, the Board would consist of five directly elected members and one Councilmember from each city.

How is the Fire Authority funded?

The Fire Authority would rely on four funding sources: a Property Tax Levy of up to \$1.00/\$1,000 Assessed Value (current property tax shifted from Olympia and Tumwater, reducing the cities' property tax capacity by the tax rate collected by the Fire Authority); an annual Fire Benefit Charge; a share of countywide EMS Levy revenues; and contract revenue, fees for services, and grants.

What is a Fire Benefit Charge?

A fire benefit charge is a fee based on a national standard that considers the size of the buildings on a property and the firefighting resources required to protect those buildings.

Eligible low-income seniors and disabled persons would typically receive the same percentage discounts on their FBC as they currently do for property taxes.

How do I pay my Fire Benefit Charge?

The fee is paid the same way you pay your property taxes—either directly to the County Treasurer twice a year or through your mortgage payment escrow.

What is my estimated Fire Benefit Charge?

You can get an estimate of the Fire Benefit Charge for your property using an online calculator on the Olympia Tumwater Fire Authority webpage: OlympiaTumwaterRFA.com

Can I count on the same level of service?

Yes. The Fire Authority will preserve and enhance service levels.

What happens to the firefighters and staff in the two cities—will they still provide service to my community?

Yes. If voters approve the Olympia Tumwater Fire Authority, firefighters and other fire agency staff from Olympia and Tumwater will become employees of the Fire Authority.



City of Olympia
PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507-1967

Special Election April 25, 2023





City of Olympia
PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507-1967

Special Election April 25, 2023

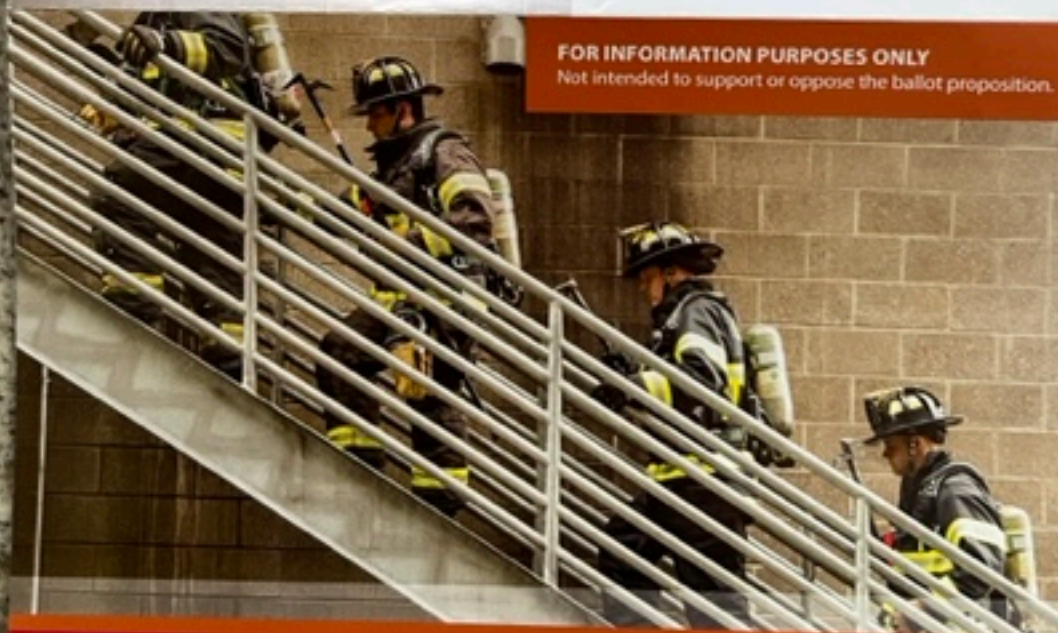
STANDARD
US POSTAGE
PAID
OLYMPIA, WA
PERMIT #107



00011881**1**31*****ECRWSS**C-026
RESIDENT
3515 VICTORIA CT SE
OLYMPIA WA 98501 7028

FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

Not intended to support or oppose the ballot proposition.



Regional Fire Authority Ballot Proposition No. 1
Fact Sheet

Stabilize funding using dedicated sources

As both cities balance limited budgets across multiple public priorities, funding levels to support the growing demands on our fire agencies are becoming strained at an unsustainable rate.

The Fire Authority would rely on multiple, dedicated funding streams, pooled regionally to support current and future demands for fire and emergency medical services.

Meet the Needs of Growing Communities

Call volumes currently exceed capacity for both agencies. The Regional Fire Authority would provide a framework for better response to the demand for services and increased call volume from our growing communities.

Both Olympia and Tumwater agencies are falling short of the target of responding to calls within 6-7 minutes, 90 percent of the time.

- Olympia response time: 7-9 minutes, 90 percent of the time.
- Tumwater response time: 9+ minutes, 90 percent of the time.

Maintain a Healthy Workforce

Fire and emergency responders are under greater stress and working longer hours with increased demand for services, growing call volumes, and insufficient staffing.

- Post-traumatic stress injury is recognized as an employment-related condition affecting firefighters in our communities.
- The Fire Authority would support expanded mental health resources for firefighters.

Increase Service Efficiencies

The Regional Fire Authority would bring enhanced and consistent regionalized services, including:

- A CARES unit to respond to non-urgent situations that don't require a traditional EMS response.
- New transport services to reduce the time to get patients to local hospitals and put fire and EMS crews back in service more quickly.
- Enhanced public education efforts related to community risk reduction, health and safety.
- Standardized training tactics and response times, which may improve the fire rating and reduce fire insurance costs.



Regional Fire Authority Ballot Proposition No. 1 | April 25, 2023





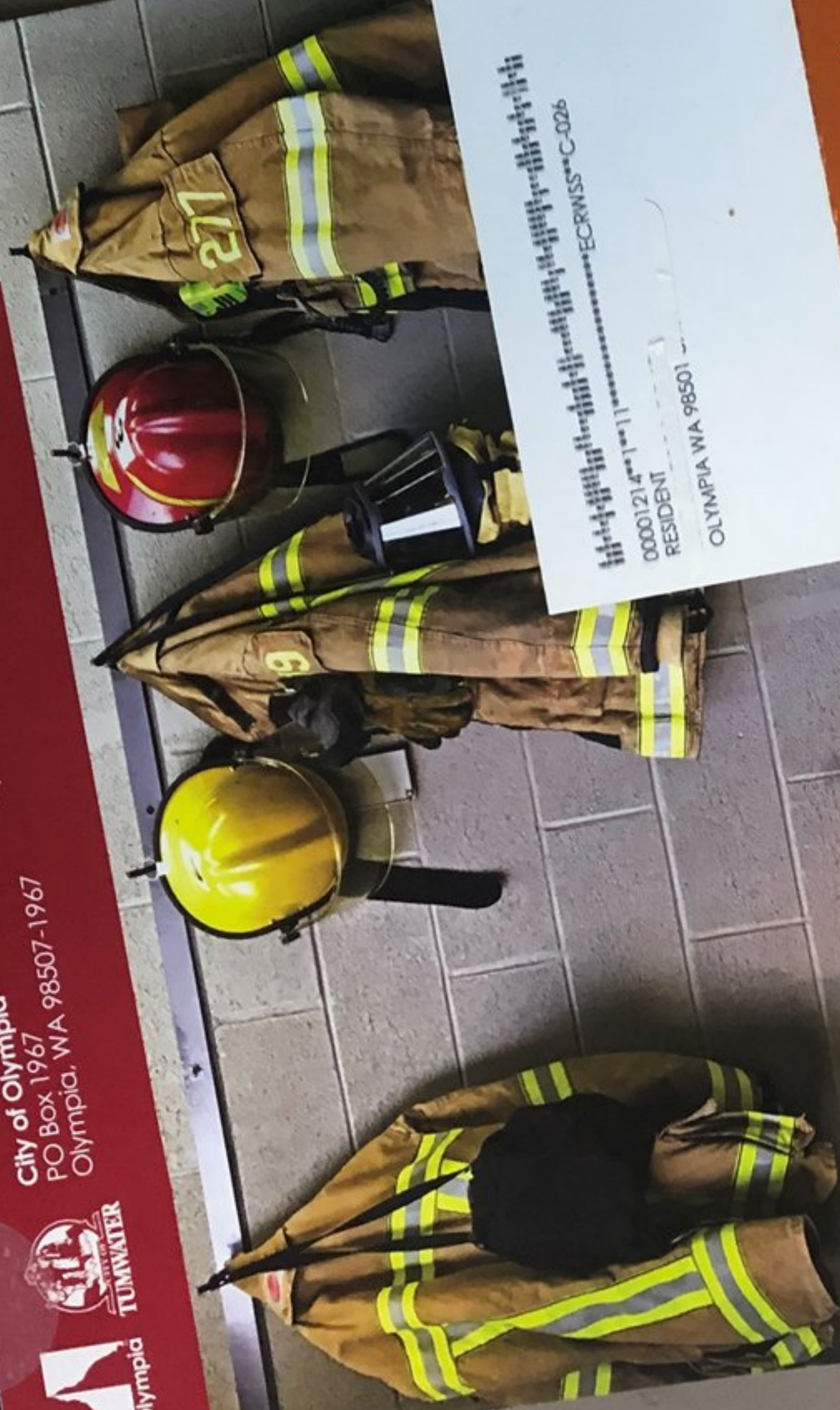
City of Olympia

PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507-1967



Special Election April 25, 2023

STANDARD
US POSTAGE
PAID
OLYMPIA, WA
PERMIT #107



00001214**1**11
RESIDENT
OLYMPIA WA 98501

FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY
Not intended to support or oppose the ballot proposition.



Regional Fire Authority
Fact Sheet

Ballot Proposition No. 1