

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE:	King County Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy Authorization
DEPARTMENT:	City Manager's Office; Fire Department
PRESENTED BY:	Julie Modrzejewski, Assistant City Manager Marcus Kragness, Fire Chief

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

On April 2, 2007 the City Council was briefed by Fire Chief Marcus Kragness on the proposal to hold a countywide ballot proposition for the November 2007 general election to reauthorize the Medic One/EMS levy, which is due to expire December 31, 2007.

Tonight the Council is holding a public hearing on Resolution No. 257, approving the countywide ballot proposition for funding the Medic One/EMS levy for the period from January 1, 2008 through December 31, 2013. Likewise, the Council is scheduled to take action on Resolution No. 257.

Shoreline's Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is provided by the Shoreline Fire Department, a separate taxing district within the City. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) accounts for the largest number of 911 responses. The EMS division is dedicated to increasing survival and reducing pain and disability from out-of-hospital emergencies. The Fire Department provides two levels of medical care: Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS).

The Technical Stakeholder Committee, made up of elected officials, medical professionals, fire chiefs and King County EMS staff, developed the 2008-2013 King County Emergency Medical Services Strategic Plan, which sets the policy and financial plan directing King County Emergency Medical Services over the next six years. The plan proposes the following:

- Full funding for ALS/Paramedic service -- it is anticipated that three new paramedic units are needed in order to maintain existing levels of service;
- Additional funding for BLS services;
- Continued funding for regional services/programs such as training with a continued emphasis on strategic initiatives; and
- Development of a reserve fund (this is currently the practice; this formalizes it);

The current EMS levy expires at the end of 2007. This plan also proposes an EMS levy for the November 2007 general election, which would reauthorize the existing levy. The Technical Stakeholder Committee has recommended that the levy beginning in 2008 be

set at \$.30 per \$1,000 assessed valuation. The current levy was originally passed at \$.25 per \$1,000, and in 2007 the levy rate is \$.206 per \$1,000 assessed value.

As indicated by RCW 84.52.069 jurisdictions are authorized to levy a property tax for the purpose of providing Emergency Medical Services. Jurisdictions are allowed to impose an additional regular property tax up to \$.50 per \$1,000 assessed value for a period of six (6) years, ten (10) years, or permanently. Alternatively, a combined countywide ballot proposition is allowable. In this scenario, the King County Metropolitan Council and cities with a population over 50,000 must approve the levy proposal prior to placement on the ballot. This is the first Council discussion regarding this proposal. On April 9 the Council will be holding a public hearing, and subsequently, Council is scheduled to take action.

BACKGROUND:

Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Shoreline's Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is provided by the Shoreline Fire Department, a separate taxing district within the city. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) accounts for the largest number of 911 responses. The EMS division is dedicated to increasing survival and reducing pain and disability from out-of-hospital emergencies. The Fire Department provides two levels of medical care: Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS).

Basic Life Support (BLS) is the first tier of response and is provided by Firefighter/Emergency Medication Technicians (EMT) who staff the Fire Suppression and Aid vehicles. EMT's are able to provide initial evaluation, determine the required level of care, treat and transport non-life threatening conditions, and provide CPR and defibrillation when necessary.

Advanced Life Support (ALS) is the second tier of response where the condition is more urgent or complex. The ALS response is provided by Firefighter/Paramedics who primarily staff the Medic Units but when needed can function on the fire apparatus. EMT's and Paramedics provide distinct yet complimentary care. The King County EMS system is designed around a two-tiered system. EMT's are the first response and are dispatched to all requests for assistance. Paramedics are the second tier and are sent along with EMT's to manage life-threatening emergencies.

EMS Levy Authorization

As indicated by RCW 84.52.069 jurisdictions have the authorization to levy a property tax for the purpose of providing Emergency Medical Services. Jurisdictions are allowed to impose an additional regular property tax up to \$.50 per \$1,000 assessed value for a period of six (6) years, ten (10) years, or permanently.

Alternatively, a countywide ballot proposition is allowable. In this scenario, the King County Metropolitan Council and cities with a population over 50,000 must approve the levy proposal prior to placement on the ballot. This includes the Cities of Shoreline, Seattle, Redmond, Bellevue, Kent, Renton, and Federal Way.

In order for the levy to pass a super majority (60%) is required and voter turnout must exceed 40% of the prior general election. The Technical Stakeholder Committee is proposing that the ballot proposition be placed on the November 2007 general election to establish the EMS levy for 2008-2013.

The countywide EMS levy first appeared on the ballot in 1979 at a \$.25 per \$1,000 assessed value for a six-year period. Over the years, the tax rate has ranged from \$.25 to \$.29 per \$1,000 assessed value and is typically for a six-year period. It has usually been placed on a general election and has passed with a ~70% approval.

The City Council has a history of supporting the countywide ballot proposition for funding EMS services. In 1997 the Council adopted a resolution for the February 1998 election, and in 2001 the Council approved the ballot proposition by motion. The most recent election, which was in the 2001 general election passed at \$.25 per \$1,000 assessed value.

The EMS levy is subject to the same 1% annual increase as the City's regular property tax levy. As a result the levy rate in the ensuing years will change as a result of changes in assessed valuation. That is why the levy that was approved in 2001 started at \$.25 per \$1,000 assessed valuation is at \$.20 in 2007.

Since the EMS levy is a six year levy, the amount of revenue generated during the first couple of years is greater than the anticipated expenditures for those years, but the revenue generated in the later years is actually less than the anticipated expenditures in later years. This being the case, the excess revenues generated in the first couple of years is set-aside to be used in the later years of the levy. It is also important to recognize that since the current 2007 levy rate (\$.206/\$1,000) is the sixth year of the current levy authorization, the increase to the proposed \$.30/\$1,000 seems large. Even though this is the case, the levy rate will decline during the remaining five years of the levy as a result of the 1% levy limitation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Approximately 90% of the Fire Department's budget is supported by property tax revenue, coming from a fire suppression levy. Of the Fire Department's \$10 million budget, approximately \$2 million per year funds Basic Life Support. Of this \$2 million, approximately \$400,000 is funded by the countywide EMS levy. The remaining \$1.6 million is funded from the Fire Department's General Fund. If approved at \$.30 per \$1,000 assessed value, it would provide approximately \$580,000 to the Department for BLS services. The additional BLS funding would allow the Department to continue the 12 hour staffing of a BLS Aid unit at station 65, located at NE 155th next to I-5. The countywide levy is needed to continue to fund this important life safety service.

In addition, King County Emergency Medical Services oversees the regional levy and administers a contract with the Shoreline Fire Department to provide Advance Life Support services. This contract is funded entirely by the countywide EMS levy, approximately \$3.8 million for 2007. The cities served by the Department's ALS program via the contract include Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, Kenmore and Bothell.

Passage of the levy would allow for the ALS unit located in Lake Forest Park to convert from a 12 hour unit to a 24 hour unit. Likewise, this unit serves the east side of Shoreline.

If the City of Shoreline were to take no action, change the recommended action or adopt a resolution in opposition to the recommended action, it would prevent the measure from appearing on the ballot. The consequences of such action would mean that there would be no funding for EMS services in Shoreline and the rest of King County in 2008 and subsequent years.

If the levy were to fail or if the Council were to not adopt the recommended action, the Shoreline Fire Department may be able to sustain minimal BLS services until such time as alternative funding could be arranged. This would either be through another attempt at a countywide levy or, in the absence of such an effort, the Shoreline Fire Department would in all likelihood place this on the ballot as a single jurisdiction levy. However, the Department would not be able to maintain ALS service without significant reduction in BLS and fire suppression services throughout Shoreline.

The proposal for Council to consider would reauthorize the existing levy up to \$.30 per \$1,000 assessed value. Assuming a \$.30 per \$1,000 assessed value levy rate, the 2008 EMS levy will generate nearly \$2 million in revenue from Shoreline rate payers. For the average homeowner (\$314,000) in Shoreline, this equates to approximately \$97 in 2008, approximately \$28 more than in 2007.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council was briefed on this topic at their Workshop Dinner Meeting of February 26 and discussed this issue at the April 2 study session. On April 9 the Council will be holding a public hearing, and is scheduled to take action on Resolution No. 257 authorizing a countywide ballot proposition for the Medic One levy up to \$.30 per \$1,000.

In addition, staff recommends that Council consider a resolution supporting the EMS levy prior to the November election. The timing for Council's consideration would be in September or October in order to help inform voters.

Approved By: City Manager  City Attorney ____

ATTACHMENT A

Resolution No. 257 Approving the Countywide Ballot Proposition for Funding the Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy for the Period from January 1, 2008, through December 31, 2013, Pursuant to RCW 84.52.069

RESOLUTION NO. 257

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF SHORELINE,
WASHINGTON, APPROVING THE COUNTYWIDE BALLOT
PROPOSITION FOR FUNDING THE MEDIC ONE/EMERGENCY
MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) LEVY FOR THE PERIOD FROM
JANUARY 1, 2008, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2013, PURSUANT
TO RCW 84.52.069**

WHEREAS, the existing Medic One/EMS levy will expire at the end of the year 2007; and

WHEREAS, King County is seeking voter authorization of a six-year Medic One/EMS levy of \$.30 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation for the period of 2008 through 2013; and

WHEREAS, the Medic One/EMS levy supports the valuable and renowned regional Medic One/EMS program; and

WHEREAS, a region-wide effort to thoroughly review the future needs of the emergency medical services system began in October of 2005 and involved the full range of Medic One/EMS Stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, such analysis included the impacts that a specific levy type, length and rate might have on the regional system and taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the City of Shoreline significantly participated in these discussions throughout the process and was represented as a Stakeholder on both the Technical Stakeholder and the Elected Official Committees; and

WHEREAS in October of 2006, Stakeholders developed consensus around the future funding and operational plans for a 2008-2013 Medic One/EMS levy and unanimously endorsed a six-year, \$.30 per thousand dollars of assessed value levy proposal; and

WHEREAS, in order to continue funding for emergency medical services for six years, King County Council must receive the consent of all of the cities with a population in excess of 50,000 to place the EMS levy before the voters; and

WHEREAS, Shoreline has a population in excess of 50,000; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has determined that it is in the best interests of the City that such a countywide levy again be placed on the ballot;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The City of Shoreline hereby approves submission to the voters of a ballot proposition for a countywide additional regular property tax levy of not more than \$.30 cents per thousand dollars assessed valuation each year for a period of six consecutive years for funding countywide Medic One/Emergency Medical Services pursuant to RCW 84.52.069.

ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL ON APRIL 9, 2007.

Robert L. Ransom
Mayor

ATTEST:

Scott Passey
City Clerk