



## MOUNTAIN VIEW FIRE AND RESCUE

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August 8, 2019

Mayor Carol Benson  
Councilmember Tammy Deady  
Councilmember Janie Edelman  
Councilmember Chris Wisnoski  
Councilmember Erin Stout  
Councilmember Melissa Olgesbee  
City of Black Diamond  
PO Box 599  
Black Diamond, WA 98010

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council,

For the past thirteen years, Mt View Fire and Rescue (formerly King County Fire District 44) has been providing fire and emergency medical services to the city of Black Diamond (City). Our team of professional firefighters and highly trained volunteers have continuously worked to meet the needs of the citizens of Black Diamond. During this timeframe, Mountain View Fire and Rescue (the District) has maintained the City's identity; added \$250,000 of District funds to bring Station 98 up to code; fully staffed Station 98 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with no calls going unanswered; use the District's Fire Apparatus as there is only one City fire engine in service; and use the District's Breathing Apparatus after the City's became obsolete. Also, after the ILA, the Washington State Rating Bureau reduced the Protection Classification from a 6 to a 4 thereby reducing the insurance premiums for every homeowner and business in the City.

Of major concern to District Fire Commissioners is the fact that the citizens of Black Diamond *are paying about 57% less for fire and EMS services* than the neighboring communities of Enumclaw, Covington, Maple Valley and the citizens of Mountain View Fire and essentially receiving the same level of service. It is expected that this levy rate will be further reduced in 2020 below the current rate for 2019 of \$.64.

In order to fully explain the history, the relationship and concerns of Mt View Fire and Rescue, the following information has been compiled:

## **Background**

Black Diamond was incorporated as a City in 1959, from this date until the year 2000, the City's fire service was provided by King County Fire District 17 through means of an agreement. Prior to incorporation, Black Diamond was part of KCFD 17 as formed in 1943. In 2000, the City annexed Lake Sawyer. Under the agreement with KCFD 17, the entity with the largest assessed value would "run" the Fire Department. When Lake Sawyer was annexed into the City, the City took control of the Fire Department and provided service to the District. The City operated the fire department for five years with a mostly volunteer fire department and two career firefighters staffing the station Monday through Friday during the day only. After several changes in Fire Chiefs and 911 incidents that received no response from the Black Diamond Fire Department occurred, the City hired a temporary Fire Chief to assist the City in exploring other options to providing emergency fire services.

- In 2006, the City of Black Diamond and Mountain View Fire, signed the 1<sup>st</sup> Interlocal Agreement (ILA) for fire and EMS services.
- In 2008, the voters of KCFD 17 (Black Diamond) approved the merger of KCFD 17 into Mountain View Fire.
- In 2008, the City and District signed a 2<sup>nd</sup> ILA, due to the KCFD 17 merger into Mountain View Fire.
- In 2013, Resolution 13-883 established the Ad Hoc Committee to explore long-term Fire and Emergency Medical service models available to the City. The Committee consists of the Black Diamond Public Safety Committee, two Mountain View Fire and Rescue Board members and Fire Chief Greg Smith and Deputy Chief Mike Barlow.
- In February of 2015, a joint meeting of the City Council and the Board of Fire Commissioners occurred. A letter from the Ad Hoc Committee, after a 2 year study, recommended that the City of Black Diamond annex into Mountain View Fire.
- The City of Black Diamond adopted Resolution 15-1018 and Mountain View Fire and Rescue adopted Resolution 15-501, each of these Resolutions approving the continued work of the Fire Ad Hoc Committee, originally authorized in 2013. These Resolutions expanded the scope of their efforts, to include drafting a recommended "Pre-Annexation Agreement" between the City and District.
- In 2015, a pre-annexation agreement developed by the Ad Hoc Committee, was provided to the City of Black Diamond Legal, for review.
- *No further action has been taken on this agreement or recommendations by the Ad Hoc Committee as of July, 2019.*
- Ad Hoc Committee continued to meet. Due to no progress on the annexation of the City into Mountain View and in accordance with Section 14.3 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ILA:

- “...the parties agree to meet in 2013, and each and every 5 years thereafter, to see if additional adjustments to the base rate are appropriate based upon the fair rate of compensation for such services in similarly situated service areas.”
- In 2018, the Ad Hoc Committee agreed that it was reasonable to review the current ILA (2<sup>nd</sup> amendment) and review the funding mechanism.
- March 2019, the City of Black Diamond was provided with a Draft 3<sup>rd</sup> Addendum to the ILA.
- Several dates were set and moved to conduct a joint meeting of the City Council and Board of Fire Commissioners to discuss the 3<sup>rd</sup> Addendum with the meeting taking place in August of 2019.

During the past several years the City has benefited financially by:

- Mountain View Chiefs worked with the Washington State Rating Bureau in 2011 and identified benefits to the City’s fire protection, due to the ILA with Mountain View and its resources. This endeavor by the District, *reduced* the Protection Classification from a 6, to a 4, thereby *reducing the insurance premiums* for every home owner and business in the City of Black Diamond.
- Fire Station 98 has been fully staffed, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with no 911 call for fire or EMS going ‘un-answered’ by Black Diamond Fire since the 1<sup>st</sup> ILA between the District and City was signed.
- \$250,000 improvement to Station 98, utilizing District funds bringing station up to code (sprinkler system, fire walls, emergency generator) and a remodel of the station.
- Use of District Fire Apparatus due to only one City fire engine is in service.<sup>1</sup>
- Use of District Breathing Apparatus after the City’s became obsolete.<sup>2</sup>

### Cost for Fire Department Emergency Services City of Black Diamond

TAX YEAR	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
LEVY RATE	1.89	2.027	2.129	2.447	2.418	2.61
FIRE PER 1K A/V	.64	.69	.72	.75	.77	.80
LEVY REMAINDER	1.34	1.203	1.101	.78	.812	.62
LID LIFT	.86	.81	.78	.75	.73	.62
AVAILABLE FOR FIRE	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
LEVY NOT COLLECTED	.48	.39	.32	.03	.08	.0

*The Citizens of Black Diamond are paying about 57% less for Fire and EMS services, than the Cities of Enumclaw, Covington, Maple Valley or the citizens of Mountain View Fire and receiving essentially the same level of service. It is expected that this levy rate for fire and EMS will be further reduced in 2020, below the .64 that is current for 2019.*

<sup>1</sup> See Section 20.1 of the Black Diamond, Mountain View 2<sup>nd</sup> addendum ILA

<sup>2</sup> See Section 20.2 of the Black Diamond, Mountain View 2<sup>nd</sup> addendum ILA

In February 2019, the *Seattle Times* reported the City of Black Diamond had a **-9.7% drop** in property taxes for Median Priced Homes in the City.<sup>3</sup>

CITY	2018 MEDIAN VALUE	2018 LEVY RATE	2018 TAXES	2019 MEDIAN VALUE	2019 LEVY RATE	2019 TAXES	TAX CHANGE (2018-19)
ALGONA	\$234,000	14	\$3,277	\$275,000	10.8	\$2,980	-9.1%
AUBURN	\$304,000	14.7	\$4,463	\$343,000	11.5	\$3,954	-11.4%
BEAUX ARTS	\$1,310,000	9.2	\$12,031	\$1,577,000	8.2	\$12,878	7.1%
BELLEVUE	\$791,000	9.2	\$7,273	\$941,000	8.2	\$7,727	6.3%
BLACK DIAMOND	\$353,000	11.4	\$4,036	\$386,000	9.4	\$3,647	-9.7%
BOTHELL	\$523,000	11	\$5,754	\$624,000	10.6	\$6,592	14.6%
BURIEN	\$337,000	13.7	\$4,618	\$395,000	11.4	\$4,520	-2.1%

The current budget line item for Fire and Emergency Medical services in Black Diamond is about 1% less than was budgeted 14 years ago in 2005, prior to the ILA with Mountain View Fire and Rescue. The total Black Diamond budget has increased about 9.5% during this same time period. The inflation rate for the US over the last 10 years is 19.9%

2005 (last year BD had its "own" Fire Department) FIRE DEPT BUDGET	2016 FIRE DEPT BUDGET	2017 FIRE DEPT BUDGET	2018 FIRE DEPT BUDGET	2019 FIRE DEPT BUDGET
\$ 564,197	\$ 498,882	\$ 514,360	\$ 540,300	\$ 558,650*

***The concerns of the District relate to these primary issues:***

1. Concern of District related to a State Audit.

- If the Citizens of Mountain View Fire are paying 1.50 per Assessed Value of their homes, and the Citizens of Black Diamond are paying .64 cents (or less) for the same level of service, is Mountain View susceptible of a finding during a State Audit of gifting of public funds?
- Is it "fair and equitable" for the Citizens of Mountain View, to be charged a rate that is more than double that what is paid for by the Citizens of Black Diamond, for the same level of service? The inability of the City to fund adequate EMS and Fire service should not place a burden on the citizens of the District to fund adequate fire services to the City.
- With the City expanding in size (Population, Residential buildings and Commercial), what is the plan for expansion of service and how will this be funded?

<sup>3</sup> Seattle Times February 15, 2019

2. Six years of study and recommendations with *no tangible results*.

- A study conducted by and between the City of Black Diamond elected officials and the Mountain View Board of Commissioners, recommended in 2015 the annexation of the City into the District. As of this date, *no action* has been taken on any of the studies recommendations and/or draft agreements by the City (four years).
- Additional expenditures by Mountain View, due to the expectation that the City was acting in good faith, towards the eventual consolidation of the City and the District Fire Departments.
  - Over \$250, 000 of District funds, spent improving Fire Station 98, bringing this Station up to code.
  - Black Diamond Fire is utilizing Mountain View breathing apparatus after Black Diamond’s Breathing Apparatus no longer could be used.
  - Black Diamond Fire has only one remaining Fire Engine that can be utilized. When this in out of service for maintenance, a Mountain View Apparatus is utilized. No new Fire Apparatus has been ordered by the City, nor, have any steps been taken by the City to utilize the suggested purchase process. Information has been supplied to the Mayor, Council Members and City Legal. No new apparatus is expected to be delivered until 9-12 months from the order date.

4. The City may soon be out of compliance with NFPA 1720 due to population increase. What are the plans to improve the standard of cover for the City,<sup>4</sup> and how will that be funded? (See chart below)

**NFPA 1720 Staffing and Deployment Standards of Coverage**

Demand Zone <sup>a</sup>	Demographics	Minimum Staff to Respond <sup>b</sup>	Response Time (minutes) <sup>c</sup>	Meets Objective (%)
Urban area	>1000 people/mi <sup>2</sup>	15	9	90
<b>Suburban area</b>	<b>500–1000 people/mi<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>80</b>
Rural area	<500 people/mi <sup>2</sup>	6	14	80
Remote area	Travel distance ≥ 8 mi	4	Directly dependent on travel distance	90
Special risks	Determined by AHJ	Determined by AHJ based on risk	Determined by AHJ	90

<sup>4</sup> See Standard of cover next page

*Note: The City of Black Diamond has a population of about 4,450(+/-) and encompasses approximately six (6) square miles; this equals a population density of about 740 persons per square mile. This places the City in the “Suburban” classification. The City could not provide for the Minimum Staffed Response without relying on Mountain View Fire resources. An “urban” level of service, cannot be achieved, without additional resources in the City.*

Considering the previously stated facts, should a fair and equitable plan not be implemented to fund fire and emergency services in the City of Black Diamond, elected officials for Mountain View Fire will be forced to consider the District’s options related to the continuance of the current Interlocal Agreement, 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment.

We look forward to further discussion.

James Farrell  
Chairman  
On Behalf of the Board of Mt View Fire Commissioners