



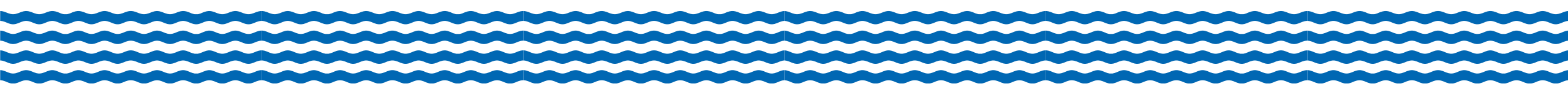
AB 6283: Initial Discussion of Regional Fire Service Proposals

June 6, 2023



Overview

- The purpose of this agenda item is to review and discuss with the City Council the proposals received in response to the Regional Fire Services Request for Proposals.
- Staff will present an overview of the Regional Fire Services Proposals received from the City of Bellevue and Eastside Fire and Rescue, including an initial financial analysis.

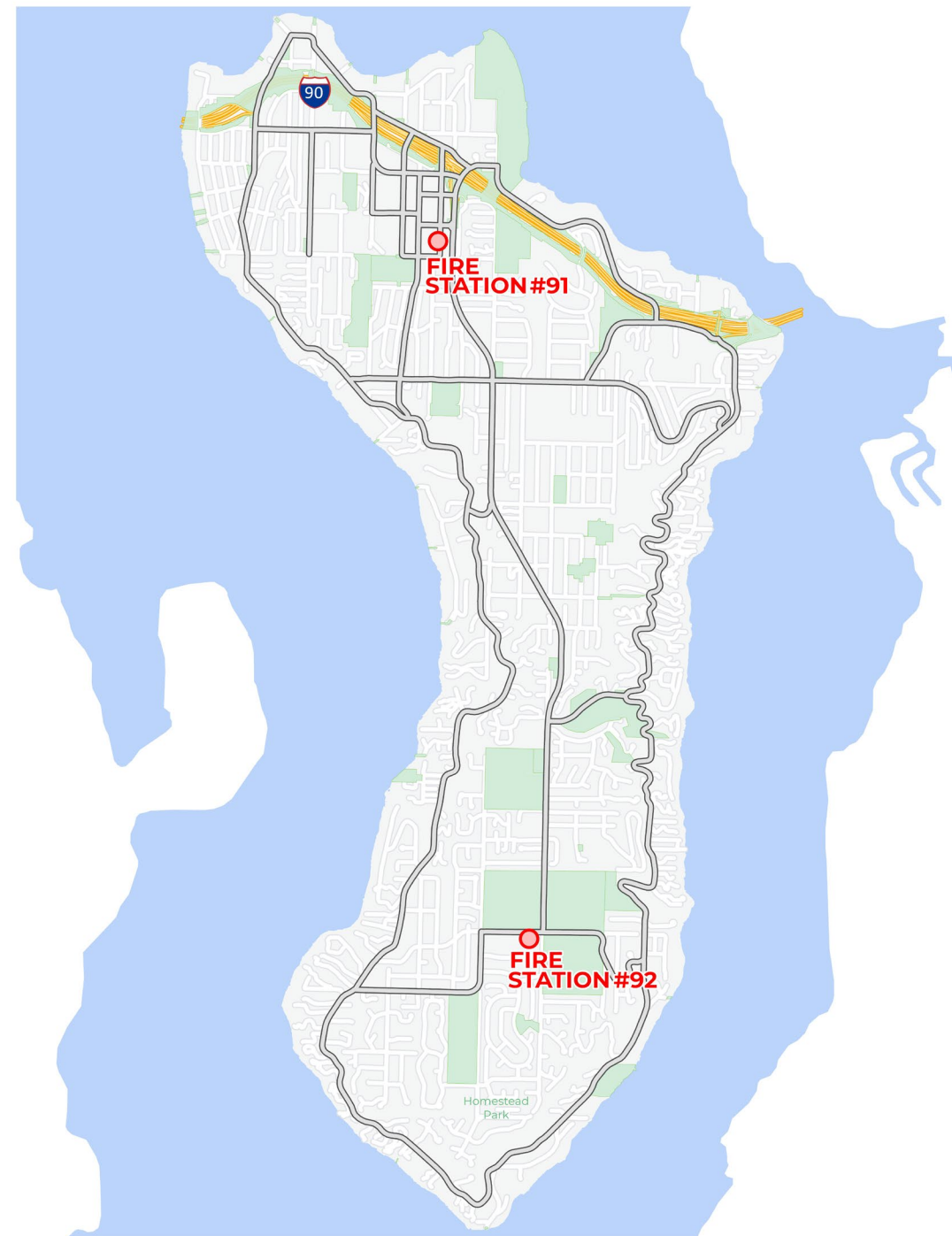


Background



Fire and EMS Service Today

- Mercer Island Fire Department (MIFD) operates two fire stations (Station 91 and 92).
- Under a regional fire services model, both fire stations would remain open and operational and provide services that meet or exceed today's service-level standards.



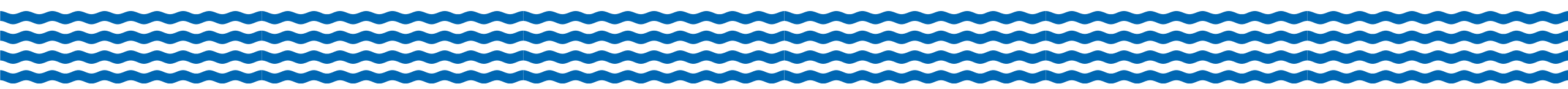
Fire and EMS Service Today

- MIFD staffs 29 firefighters. This includes firefighters, lieutenants, battalion chiefs, and a fire marshal.
- 7 staff members on duty at one time.
 - 1 Battalion Chief in charge of Station 91 and 92
 - 1 Lieutenant at each station
 - 2 Firefighters at each station
- One full-time Fire Marshal
- Interim Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief provided by Eastside Fire & Rescue.
- Part-time Fire Administrative Assistant



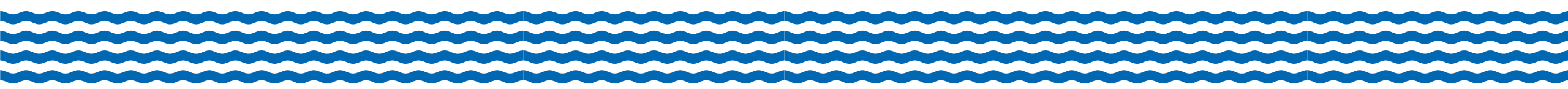
Why regionalize?

- Firefighting today is much different than even a few decades ago.
- Fire departments were originally created to specifically address fire emergencies, and now cover **emergency medical services, hazmat services, special rescue, mobile integrated health, and more.**
- A regional collaboration often provides for enhanced fire and emergency medical services, introducing specialty services not available through a smaller Department.
- Adopting a regional fire services model ensures the response to all these needs **is cohesive, efficient, and cost effective.**



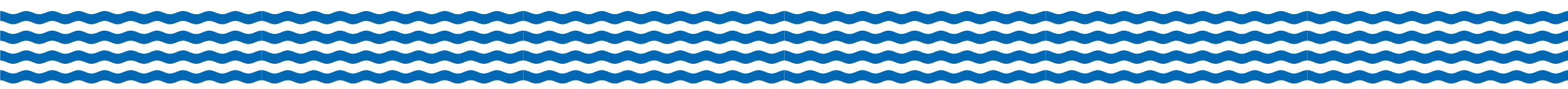
Mutual Aid and Regional Coordination

- All fire departments assist other local departments with emergency response through mutual aid agreements.
- Mercer Island Fire Department operates under a **Regional Coordination Framework** through King County which brings together surrounding agencies to **share personnel, equipment, and information** during an emergency response.
- For example, Mercer Island does not have a ladder truck, so Bellevue Fire provides this service to Mercer Island when needed.
- Mercer Island also provides support to nearby agencies.
- Mercer Island firefighters also train with surrounding agencies to ensure cohesion.



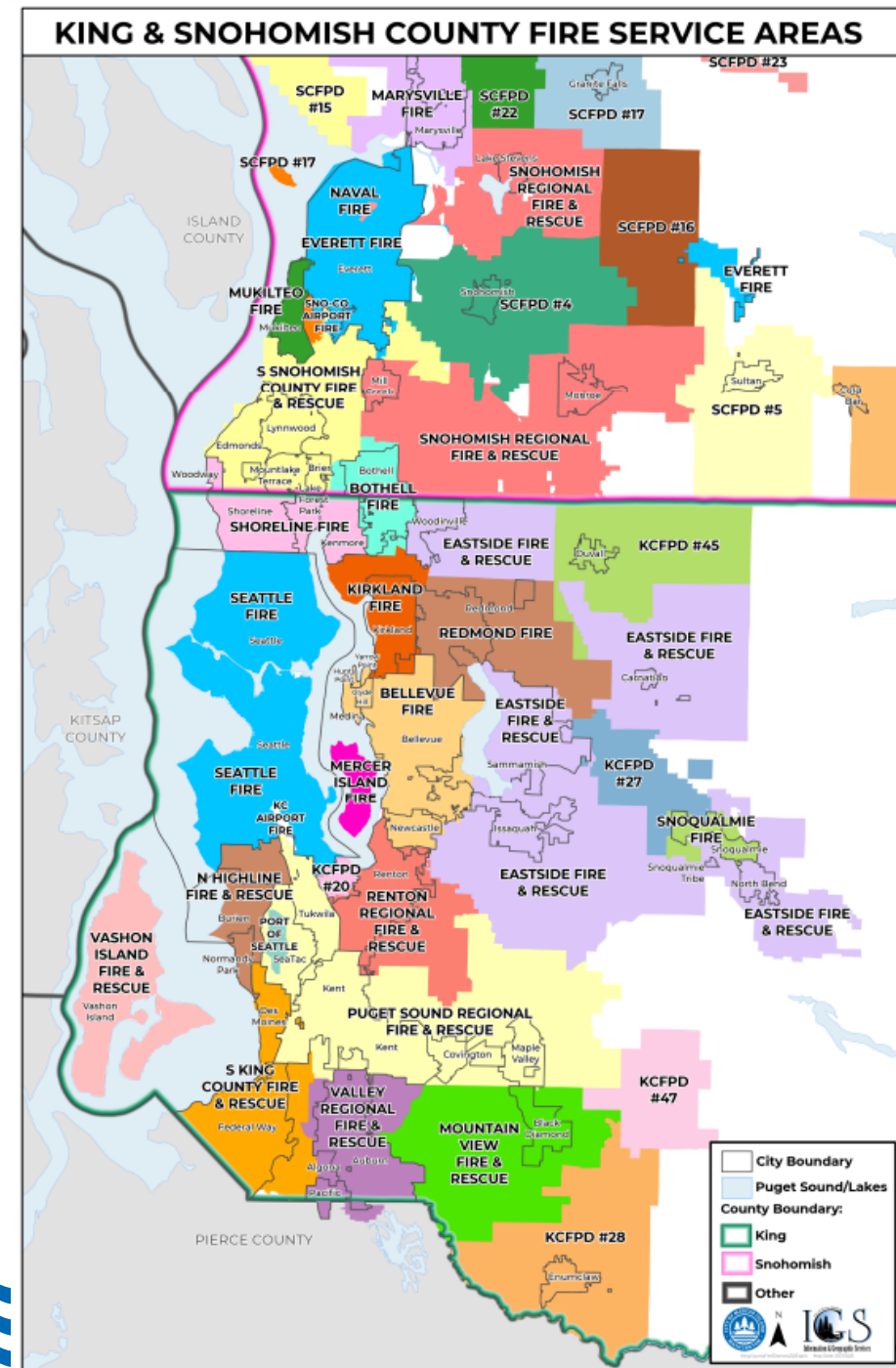
Trend of Regionalization in Fire Service

- Mercer Island is **one of the few remaining stand-alone fire agencies** in the region.
- Most surrounding communities have moved to a regional services model along the lines of what is being evaluated for Mercer Island.
- Edmonds, Woodinville, Lynnwood, Tukwila, and Northshore have recently made this change, with other communities such as Duvall in a similar phase of decision-making on their future
- See regional fire service map next slide.



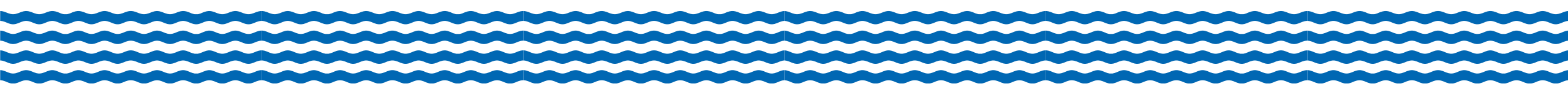
Regional Fire Service Map

- Snohomish Regional Fire & Rescue:
Snohomish Fire District #7 and Monroe Fire merged in 2016, merged again with Lake Stevens Fire in 2020.
- Puget Sound Regional Fire & Rescue: Since 2014, SeaTac and Maple Valley joined Puget Sound Fire, which already provided fire services for Kent and Covington. Tukwila joined in 2023.
- South Snohomish County Fire & Rescue:
Established in 2017, South County Fire now includes Lynnwood, Edmonds, Mountlake Terrace, Brier, and surrounding unincorporated Snohomish county. Mill Creek joined in 2022.



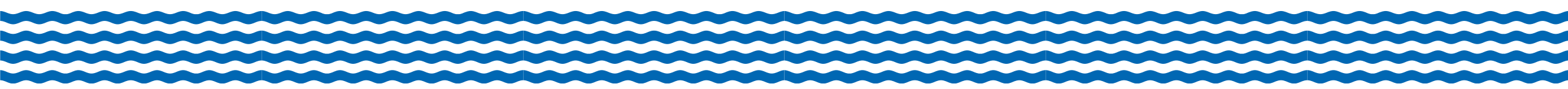
Regional Fire Service Model – Service Levels

- Mercer Islanders should expect **very little change under a regional fire services model.**
- The Fire Department will **continue responding to emergencies**, conducting fire inspections, and inviting your child to sit in a fire truck at events.
- **Fire Stations 91 and 92 will remain open and staffed**, meeting or exceeding current services levels.
- The **City will establish service levels** and ensure the delivery of fire services continues to meet or exceed current service levels.



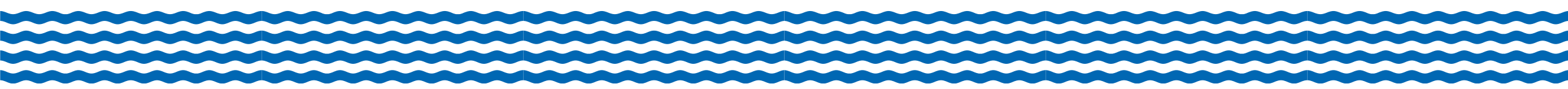
Regional Fire Services Model - Staffing

- Under a regional services model, **fire services will be managed and fulfilled by a regional fire agency** instead of being directly operated by the City of Mercer Island.
- Mercer Island fire personnel would transition to the regional fire agency.
- The internal services needed to support the Fire Department – Human Resources, IT, Finance, for example - will also be largely provided by the regional fire agency.



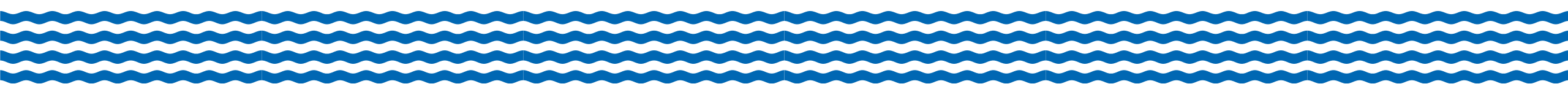
Regional Fire Services Model - Staffing

- **The City has every intention to secure employment opportunities for all Fire Department personnel.**
- Impacts of the transition on City fire personnel will be bargained with Mercer Island IAFF Local 1762.
- A few positions within the department might shift because of the transition to a regional fire services model, but these changes will not have an impact on fire department operations.



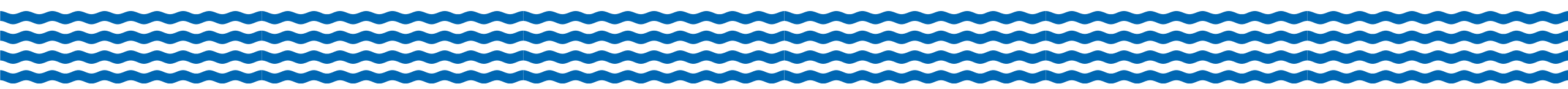
Regional Fire Services Model – Enhanced Services

- **Firefighting today is much different than even a few decades ago;** whereas fire departments were originally created to specifically address fire emergencies, they have gone on to cover emergency medical services, hazmat services, special rescue, mobile integrated health and more.
- **Collaborating with a regional fire services provider helps make the response to all these needs more cohesive.**
- Regional providers are big enough to support entire teams of personnel trained to deal with special risks and circumstances like technical rescue, hazardous materials, and others.
- By joining a regional provider, the City would get the **advantage of this depth of expertise** if there are incidents on the Island where it is required.



Regional Fire Services Model - Leadership

- **Leadership from the regional fire agency will oversee fire services** on Mercer Island with the respective Fire Chief reporting directly to the City Manager.
- Eastside Fire & Rescue currently provides Fire Department Leadership Services for Mercer Island.
 - This **includes an interim Fire Chief**, who currently serves the City about 10 to 15 hours a week and a **full-time interim Deputy Fire Chief**.
- Having interim fire leadership is not a sustainable solution long-term and was never intended to be permanent.
 - Permanence of fire leadership provides stability for the workforce, encourages long-term planning, strategic leadership, and goal setting.

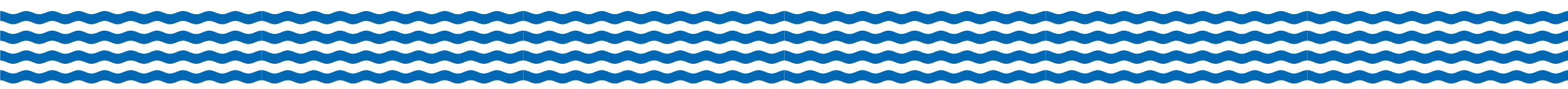


Proposal Review



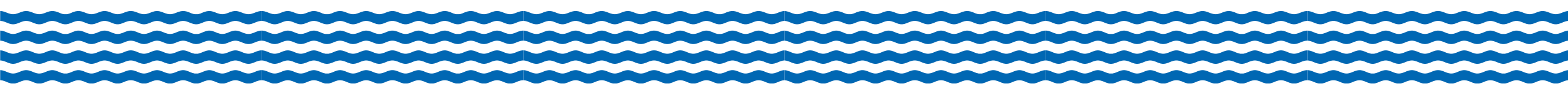
Authorization to Seek Proposals

- On April 4, 2023, the City Council authorized the City Manager to seek proposals from the **City of Bellevue** and **Eastside Fire & Rescue** to provide fire and emergency services on Mercer Island.
- Timely responses were received from both agencies.



Financial Analysis (Exhibit 1)

- Staff prepared an initial analysis of the estimated costs for regional fire services as presented by each agency, compared to the estimated costs for a stand-alone Fire Department in 2024



Next Steps

- The City Manager will prepare a recommendation to the City Council on the adoption of a Regional Fire Services Model, at which time the City Council may take action.
- The date for that meeting has not been set.

