



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND**

**AB 6249  
April 4, 2023  
Regular Business**

**AGENDA BILL INFORMATION**

<b>TITLE:</b>	AB 6249: Seeking Proposals to Consider Adoption of a Regional Fire Services Model	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	Authorize and direct the City Manager to seek proposals from the City of Bellevue and Eastside Fire & Rescue for a regional fire service model.	

<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	City Manager
<b>STAFF:</b>	Jessi Bon, City Manager Robbie Cunningham Adams, Management Analyst
<b>COUNCIL LIAISON:</b>	n/a
<b>EXHIBITS:</b>	1. Regional Fire Service Model Request for Proposals 2. Regional Fire Service Model Q&A 3. Regional Fire Service Map
<b>CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:</b>	4. Focus efforts and actions to be an environmentally and fiscally sustainable, connected, and diverse community.

<b>AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE</b>	\$ n/a
<b>AMOUNT BUDGETED</b>	\$ n/a
<b>APPROPRIATION REQUIRED</b>	\$ n/a

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this agenda bill is to request City Council authorization and direction for the City Manager to seek proposals from the City of Bellevue and Eastside Fire & Rescue for a regional fire service model.

- A regional fire service model is defined as a larger fire agency providing comprehensive fire services across multiple communities. The purpose of adopting a regional fire service model is to maintain or enhance current levels of service while balancing the shared responsibility for long-term cost-effective fire and emergency medical service delivery. In this scenario, Mercer Island would be served by a larger, regional fire agency instead of the City operating its own, smaller department. Mercer Island fire personnel would transition to the regional fire agency and both Island fire stations would remain open.
- The safety and wellbeing of Mercer Island residents is and always has been the top priority for the City of Mercer Island. Taking that priority seriously means ensuring that public fire and safety operations meet the needs of the community now and into the future while employing the best practices possible.

- The City’s fire department has done a remarkable job keeping the Mercer Island community safe. The City is proud of our dedicated fire staff, and we want to ensure they remain an integral part of our community through a fire services model that provides the greatest support, training, and professional development opportunities.
- A regional collaboration will allow the City to offer even stronger fire and emergency medical services to the Mercer Island community, with more cohesion, more consistent leadership, and a deeper bench of resources, specialty services, and growth opportunities.
- City staff developed a request for proposals (RFP) (see Exhibit 1) with a list of objectives and factors to guide the evaluation of regional fire services proposals. The RFP includes a proposed timeline for receiving and evaluating proposals.
- City staff created a Q&A (Exhibit 2) and a [Let’s Talk page](#) with additional information on the model and changes that are being explored.
- The City of Mercer Island has not made any decisions that affect its fire services. Requesting proposals does not commit the City to an outcome.

## ISSUE/DISCUSSION

To ensure the City can continue providing effective and sustainable services, the City Manager is recommending adoption of a regional fire services model, which is defined as a larger fire agency providing comprehensive fire services across multiple communities. The purpose of adopting a regional fire service model is to maintain or enhance current levels of service while balancing the shared responsibility for long-term cost-effective fire and emergency medical service delivery. In this scenario, Mercer Island would be served by a larger, regional fire agency instead of the City operating its own, smaller department. Mercer Island fire personnel would transition to the regional fire agency and both Island fire stations would remain open. With City Council approval, the City Manager will seek proposals from the City of Bellevue and Eastside Fire & Rescue to provide fire and emergency services on Mercer Island.

A regional collaboration would allow the City to offer even stronger fire and emergency medical services to the Mercer Island community, with more cohesion, more consistent leadership, and a deeper bench of resources, specialty services, and growth opportunities. The City of Mercer Island would continue to control service levels for fire services provided on Mercer Island. Fire Stations 91 and 92 would remain open and staffed, meeting or exceeding current services levels.

The safety and wellbeing of Mercer Island residents is and always has been the top priority for the City of Mercer Island. Taking that priority seriously means ensuring that public fire and safety operations meet the needs of the community now and into the future while employing the best practices possible. Calls to the Mercer Island Fire Department today are much different than even a few decades ago. Originally created to specifically address fire emergencies, the fire department today covers emergency medical services, hazmat services, special rescue, water rescue and recovery services, mobile integrated health, and more.

Since its inception, the City’s fire department has done a remarkable job keeping the Mercer Island community safe. The City is proud of our dedicated fire staff, and the City wants to ensure they remain an integral part of our community through a fire services model that provides the greatest support, training, and professional development opportunities.

More information on this proposed change can be found in the Q&A (Exhibit 2) and on the City’s [Let’s Talk page](#). Additional information will also be provided during the presentation at the April 4 City Council meeting.

## **Regionalization Trend in Local Fire Service**

The Mercer Island Fire Department is one of the few remaining stand-alone fire departments in the region, with most surrounding communities having moved to regional services along the lines of what is being proposed; recently, these include Edmonds, Woodinville, Lynnwood, Tukwila, and Northshore, with other communities such as Duvall in a similar phase of decision-making. See the regional fire services map (Exhibit 3) for other local examples of regional fire service models.

Currently, the City employs regional resources for fire department leadership through a contract with Eastside Fire & Rescue. The contract includes an interim Fire Chief, who currently serves the City 10-15 hours a week and a full-time interim Deputy Fire Chief. This contract has been in place since early 2021 when the former Fire Chief resigned, and the contract was subsequently amended when the Deputy Fire Chief resigned later that year.

Adopting a regional fire service model for all fire services would embed the expertise and resources of a larger, integrated fire agency directly within the Mercer Island community.

## **Seeking Proposals from the City of Bellevue and Eastside Fire & Rescue**

City staff have developed a request for proposals (RFP) outlining the City's requirements for a regional fire service model (Exhibit 1). The City has compiled a list of objectives and factors to guide the evaluation of regional fire services proposals. These include:

- Services provided under a regional services model will maintain or improve current fire and emergency medical service levels while balancing the shared responsibility for long-term, cost-effective fire and emergency medical service delivery.
- The City of Mercer Island will continue to control service levels for fire and emergency medical services provided on Mercer Island.
- Both Mercer Island Fire Stations (Station 91 and Station 92) will remain open and operational, with provider services that meet or exceed today's standards.
- Mercer Island fire employees will be hired by the regional agency in their current or comparable positions and will have opportunities for career growth, enhanced training, and other professional development opportunities.
- Other considerations include agency experience in delivering regional fire and emergency medical services, governance model, communications strategies, leadership approach, annual reporting, and more.

The City of Mercer Island has not made any decisions that affect its fire services. Requesting proposals does not commit the City to an outcome. If there are no proposals that meet the City's needs, the City Manager, in consultation with the City Council, will pause the request for regional proposals.

## **Community Engagement**

The City is committed to a productive and transparent evaluation process that will allow residents to review and provide feedback on the proposals. The City encourages everyone to review the [Let's Talk page](#) on this topic, which has additional information on the model and proposed changes, a FAQ, and ways to submit comments or questions.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Upon City Council approval of the City Manager seeking proposals for a regional fire service model, the following is a tentative schedule for review and consideration of the proposals:

Issue RFP	April 5, 2023
Deadline for Submittal of Proposals	May 3, 2023, 4:00 PM PST
Internal Review of Proposals	May 2023
City Council Review of Proposals	May/June 2023
Next Steps	Timeline TBD

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Authorize and direct the City Manager to seek proposals from the City of Bellevue and Eastside Fire & Rescue for a regional fire service model.