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Skagit 911 Board May Put Sales Tax Increase on the General Election Ballot

Funding will improve current challenges to emergency services

SKAGIT COUNTY, WASH. – With a 13% population increase in the last 12 years, Skagit 911 has become the ninth busiest dispatch agency in the state, and requires an infrastructure that keeps pace with the agency’s needs. System upgrades will prevent cybersecurity attacks, and improve technology and equipment to ensure reliable coverage throughout Skagit County.

The state of the economy is increasing calls to Skagit 911 as well. “Every time there is economic uncertainty, we see 911 calls increase,” says Skagit 911 Director Helen Rasmussen. “We are the safety net for all communities.”

Skagit 911 is funded by a one-tenth of one percent sales tax, a 911 tax on phone bills, and user fees. The agency operates under a balanced budget and actively applies for grants to stretch tax dollars further. That funding model no longer meets the needs of first responders.

The Skagit 911 board may consider a resolution to put a proposed sales tax increase on the November general election ballot to fund operations and capital needs. The cost would be an additional one-tenth of one percent, or 10 cents on a \$100 sale.

“We can’t compromise when it comes to 911,” said Rasmussen. “In good times or bad, we must be able to meet the emergency service needs of Skagit County residents.”

Even with this increase, sales tax in Skagit County would be lower than in Snohomish County. But the benefits to Skagit 911 and the 132,000 residents it serves are indisputable.

As Mount Vernon Fire Chief Bryan Brice reminds us, “It all starts with 911.”

More information on the possible proposed sales tax increase can be found on the Skagit 911 website at www.skagit911.us. Skagit 911 Director Helen Rasmussen also is available to answer questions at (360) 428-3201 or RasmussenH@skagit911.us.

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Skagit 911 is the first number you call in an emergency. It is the 9th busiest in the state for 911 calls. Dispatchers respond to an average of 230,000 calls a year. The agency dispatches all calls for fire, emergency medical service, law enforcement, and disaster agencies in Skagit County. The agency provides family-wage jobs to 45 people covering 1,731 miles and 132,000 residents – a 13% population increase since 2010.