



## Eugene Springfield Fire Governance Options

### Regional Fire Authority

#### Summary Description of Option(s):

Regional Fire Authorities (RFA), common in Washington, are not currently provided for under Oregon law. Under Washington law:

An RFA is an independent municipal special purpose district established by voters in a service area that provides funding for fire and emergency medical services. It allows fire districts, city departments, or tribal nations to join together for the provision of fire and emergency services. The RFA can combine fire districts to fire districts; city to city; fire district to city; or a number of other combinations. An RFA operates very similar to that of a fire district.

An RFA is created by a vote of the people in the proposed service area. Depending on the proposed funding for the RFA, the vote required is either a simple majority or 60% approval of all those voting in the proposed service area.

An RFA would create a single fire service provider and could be funded by such mechanisms as a fire property tax levy and/or fire benefit charge.

The RFA has a range of governance options, recommended by a planning committee and voted on by voters. Regardless of the RFA Plan details, all governing board members will be elected officials that must be registered voters residing within the RFA boundaries. Until an election can be held, RFA Board members are appointed by the member jurisdictions.

If the RFA is approved by voters, firefighters and all other staff from the two cities would become employees of the RFA.

#### Financial Considerations:

In Washington: an RFA can either be funded by property taxes or a combination of property taxes and a benefit charge. A benefit charge is not a tax; it is a fee based on the benefit of having fire and emergency medical services. The benefit charge is not a per call charge and is not based on property values. Instead, the charge is based on the size, use and risk of structures located on property. RFAs can also charge various fees for services provided to other jurisdictions, or to individuals receiving services.

Interim Finances: Funding is necessary from the point the RFA is created until the RFA's levies can be imposed and/or fees can be implemented. Typically, member agencies must fund the RFA's operations during the first year after creation.

**Legal Considerations and Process:**

In Washington: An RFA requires convening a planning committee, comprised of elected officials from each participating jurisdiction, to develop and adopt an RFA protection service authority plan providing for the design, financing, and development of fire protection and emergency services; all through a public process. Once the plan is adopted, it must be forwarded to the participating fire protection jurisdiction's governing bodies to initiate an election process. The RFA must be approved by both the governing body and by the voters through a ballot measure.

Because Oregon state law does not currently allow for the creation of an RFA, a new law would need to be passed by the Oregon Legislature before this option could be pursued.

Facilities, Apparatus and Equipment: A decision must be made for these items. Member agencies can: retain title and lease to the RFA\*; can transfer to the RFA for no charge; or can sell to the RFA\*.

\*not typical as seen as paying twice.

**Comments from Governance Review Panel:**

**Attachments:**

1. None