

CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Resolution approving a countywide ballot proposition for the Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy covering the period of January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2025.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As directed by Council on May 28, this Resolution supports placing the 2020-2025 King County Medic One/EMS Levy on the countywide November ballot.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to adopt Resolution No. 9612.

If approved, effective date: 06/17/2019

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

On May 28, Council received a briefing regarding the proposed Medic One/EMS levy. Council discussed the current service level and how Bellevue residents and visitors benefit from continuing a regional approach to EMS services. Based on Council direction at the May 28 study session (previous agenda memo attached), this Resolution supports placing the Medic One/EMS levy on the ballot.

The King County EMS system provides essential life-saving services to the residents and visitors of the County. With an international reputation for innovation and excellence, it offers uniform medical care regardless of location, incident circumstances, day of the week, or time of day. The system is recognized as one of the best emergency medical services programs in the country. It is also acclaimed for its patient outcomes, including among the highest reported survival rates for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest patients across the nation.

RCW 84.52.069 requires the legislative bodies of 75 percent of cities with a population over 50,000 approve a resolution authorizing placing the levy on the ballot. In King County these cities are Bellevue, Seattle, Kent, Renton, Federal Way, Kirkland, Auburn, Sammamish, Redmond, Shoreline, and Burien.

Levy Rate

Since 1979, the EMS system has been funded through a series of voter approved levies. The current six-year EMS levy expires December 31. To ensure continued emergency medical services in 2020 and beyond, a new levy must be approved by voters. The 2019 rate is \$0.22 per \$1,000 of assessed value (AV). The levy rate passed by voters in 2013 was \$0.33 per \$1,000 of AV. Due to rising property values, the rate has declined over the course of the existing levy. Bellevue property owners contribute approximately \$14 million per year under the current levy.

The proposed EMS levy rate is \$0.265 per \$1,000 of AV for 2020-2025, which would raise \$1.1 billion over the course of the levy. In 2020, Bellevue property owners would contribute approximately \$18.6 million per year under the proposed new rate.

EMS Levy Planning Process

The planning process for the next EMS Levy began in January 2018 with the first meeting of the EMS Levy Advisory Task Force. The 20-member Task Force members included elected officials from the County, cities, and fire districts, representing those who administer, authorize, and are served by the system. Councilmember Jennifer Robertson represented Bellevue on the Task Force.

In September, the Task Force adopted final programmatic and financial recommendations, which informed the EMS proposal transmitted to the King County Council by the County Executive.

Tiered Medical Model

Services provided by EMS personnel are derived from the highest standards of medical training, practices and care, scientific evidence, and close supervision by EMS physicians. The tiered system is predicated on Basic Life Support (BLS) agencies responding to every incident to stabilize the patient and secure the scene. This reserves the more limited regional resource of an Advanced Life Support (ALS) unit (known locally as a "medic unit" that is staffed by paramedics) for the serious or life-threatening injuries and illnesses. The tiered system pairs highly successful outcomes with reasonable cost controls, features that are somewhat unique to the King County system.

In 2018, Bellevue responded to 15,346 EMS incidents: 4,648 for ALS and 10,698 for BLS.

The primary services funded by the EMS Levy include:

- **ALS Services:** Paramedics provide out-of-hospital emergency medical care for critical or life-threatening injuries and illnesses. Bellevue is one of five regional providers of ALS services in King County. The Bellevue Fire Department operates four paramedic units; two units are located in Bellevue, one in Issaquah, and one in North Bend. In addition to providing ALS services to Bellevue residents, the Bellevue Fire Department provides ALS to other Eastside communities including Mercer Island, Medina, Clyde Hill, Beaux Arts, Hunts Point, Yarrow Point, Newcastle, Issaquah (Fire District 10), Fall City, Sammamish, North Bend, Snoqualmie, and Snoqualmie Pass (Fire District 51).
- **BLS Services:** BLS personnel are the "first responders" to an incident, providing immediate basic life support medical care that includes advanced first aid, staffed by firefighters trained as Emergency Medical Technicians. The proposed BLS funding formula is based on AV and calls for service, which results in a 2019 Bellevue allocation of \$2.5 million. Bellevue would receive an additional \$400,000 each year for BLS services from the proposed levy. Funding is not intended to supplant current funding, but to increase services.
- **Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH):** The proposed levy also includes \$4 million specifically for MIH services. Bellevue is estimated to receive \$600,000 per year from

the levy for MIH services.

Bellevue provides base services already through the Citizens Advocates for Referral and Education Services (CARES) program. The CARES program addresses the needs of frequent, low acuity 911 callers. Without underlying needs being met, individuals often become high users of the 911 system and hospital emergency departments. CARES is staffed with professional social workers and graduate students completing their master's degree in social work program.

Bellevue funded the CARES program with multiple grants in order to bridge the program until a new levy is passed.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

Council action to approve the Resolution will satisfy the requirements of RCW 84.52.069, which requires the legislative bodies of 75 percent of cities with a population over 50,000 approve a resolution authorizing placing the levy on the ballot. In King County these cities are Bellevue, Seattle, Kent, Renton, Federal Way, Kirkland, Auburn, Sammamish, Redmond, Shoreline, and Burien.

Fiscal Impact

The current levy expires at the end of 2019. A new rate is set each year in order to collect the amount needed for the programs. The 2019 rate is \$0.22 per \$1,000 of AV. The levy rate passed by voters in 2013 was \$0.33 per \$1,000 of AV. Due to rising property values, the rate has declined over the course of the existing levy. The median home value in Bellevue is \$941,000, and in 2019 that property taxpayer contributes about \$205 for EMS services. Bellevue property owners contribute approximately \$14 million per year under the levy.

The proposed levy rate is \$0.265 per \$1,000 of AV for 2020-2025 and would collect \$1.1 billion countywide over the course of the levy. In 2020, Bellevue property owners would contribute approximately \$18.6 million per year under the proposed levy. With the proposed rate of \$0.265, the 2019 median homeowner in Bellevue would pay approximately \$250 per year for EMS services, an increase of approximately \$45 per year over the existing levy.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt the Resolution approving a countywide ballot proposition for the Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy covering the period of January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2025.
2. Do not adopt the Resolution and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

A. May 28, 2019 Agenda Memo
Proposed Resolution No. 9612

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A