SOUTH KING FIRE

SPECIAL COMMISSIONERS MEETING
Budget Workshop – Public Hearing
Virtual and Station 68
November 6, 2025

Commissioner Vadino called the meeting to order at 1430 hours with Commissioners Gates, Fuller and Burrus in attendance. Board Secretary Lauri Perry recording.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Burrus.

To listen to the recording of the meeting, please visit our website – southkingfire.org

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Burrus had no comments.

Commissioner Fuller had no comments.

Commissioner Gates had no comments.

Commissioner Vadino had no comments.

PUBLIC HEARING – ESTABLISHMENT OF FBC PER RCW 52.18.060 WITH ACTION ESTABLISHING FBC (FIRE BENEFIT CHARGE)

Commissioner Vadino called the FBC Public Hearing to Order – The purpose of the public hearing is to hear testimony from citizens as to the 2026 Fire Benefit Charge and for the Board to review the Benefit Charge. Subsequent to the hearing, the Board will take action to establish the Fire Benefit charge for collection in 2026. This hearing is being called pursuant to RCW 52.18.060.

Executive Director Ganem began the presentation by sharing the history of the FBC. Our voters approved the FBC a little over a year ago with a 65.28% approval during the primary election in 2024. This established the Fire Benefit charge for the next six years. The FBC is collected on properties that would pay property taxes and during the same time period, April and October of each year. Our property tax collection was lowered from $1.50 per $1,000 AV to $1.00 per $1,000 AV and the FBC makes up the difference. The FBC is based on a formula based off risk factors which equates to our total annual fire assessment. The FBC can supplement up to 60% of our total operating budget. We had a goal coming into this budget cycle of the FBC staying below 40% and we are currently tracking that it will come in at 39.25% for 2026.

Commissioner Vadino read the Public Hearing Ground Rules into the record. The following rules will be enforced at the public hearing:

1. Each speaker shall be allowed a maximum of 3 minutes.
2. No individual speaker shall speak more than once until all prospective speakers have been heard.
3. Speakers shall not directly question or argue with each other.
4. All questions and comments shall be directed to the Chair.
5. Questions asked must be pertinent to the subject of this hearing.

Are there any Public Comments? There were no public comments or questions about the FBC collection in 2026. Commissioner Vadino added that we need a motion to establish the Fire Benefit Charge for collection in 2026 in the amount of $22,500,000. Commissioner Gates moved that South King Fire establish the Fire Benefit Charge collection in 2026 in the amount not to exceed $22,500,000. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Burrus. Motion passed.

Commissioner Vadino reported that we will now adjourn the Public Hearing. The Public Hearing is closed and no additional comments will be heard. The Regular Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners resumes with subsequent action by the Board establishing the Fire Benefit charge collection in 2026.

2026 BUDGET PRESENTATION- PUBLIC HEARING RE; REVENUE RESOURCES PER RCW 84.55.120

Commissioner Vadino called the Public Hearing to Order – the purpose of the public hearing is to hear public testimony from citizens with respect to the 2026 sources of revenue and proposed allowable levy of taxes for South King Fire. This hearing is being called pursuant to RCW 84.55.120.

Executive Director Ganem reported that this year he created a presentation that summarizes the budget:

- The 2026 budget addresses rising demands and is mostly driven by the growth in our communities. We have seen a lot of growth in South King County, and we are seeing increases in our call volume.
- The budget also accounts for the rising costs for equipment and staffing needs
- We will continue to staff all seven (7) stations.
- We recently began staffing an additional unit – a 12th unit. As our call volumes continue to increase, we would like to try to staff a 13th unit in 2026.
- Includes an EMS Officer role that is pending negotiations with Local 2024.
- A full-time GIS Data Specialist, this position replaces a long-tenured employee that has been working part-time, but this work really needs an FTE.
- A restructuring of Human Resources.
- Funds over $1.2 M in Capital Projects.
- We also have debt service payments totaling $1.8M that we incurred by financing fire apparatus, the new Headquarters Building, and the issuance of an LTGO Bond to complete major capital projects.

In 2025, we secured an LTGO Bond. A requirement for securing this funding is a thorough credit analysis. Standard and Poor's (S&P) reviewed the last five (5) years of our financial history and outlook. We received an AA+ credit rating, the best rating possible for an organization using a cash basis accounting method.

Additional Budget Highlights:

- Our projected revenue for 2026 is $58.6M; we are just shy of a $60M budget.
- Operations budget will increase by about 10.68% or $5.5M; this is not an increase we will expect to see every year. This is due to increased staffing; we are going to add 12 additional firefighters, but this budget reflects an increase of 16 firefighters due to some upcoming retirements and the new positions that were created, leaving vacancies in Operations so we are planning in advance.
    - For instance, the two (2) new Day Shift BC positions that were approved in 2025 via the new CBA.

    - Potential for an EMS Officer
- Budget includes a new Public Educator
- GIS Specialist
- Additional HR personnel
- Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) for our eligible employees
- AC Michaels requested funding for an Officer Development Program
- Solidifying a Strategic Plan
- L&I Leave Management – we are currently using a third-party. The goal would be to bring this body of work back in-house with additional staffing in HR.
- Legislative Advocate, he has assisted us in securing funding for the boat and some funds for the Exposure Reduction Program.
- Software Systems Upgrades
    - Updated website
    - Telestaff, (shift staffing software) which we have used since 2005
- Network Infrastructure Replacements
- Station Alerting
- We have moved several items that used to come out of Capital into our operating budget, and we have created new line items for:
    - Replacing Hose
    - Replacing Computers, Laptops, Tablets
    - Exterior Painting of Stations
    - Replacing Chainsaws
    - Additional SCBA Masks for everyone as part of our Exposure Reduction Initiative
        - This will provide a second mask so our firefighters should always have a clean mask
    - Additional SCBA Bottles
    - Three (3) Vehicles for our Training Officers, their vehicles will be repurposed to other divisions, prolonging their service life and lowering maintenance.
    - Station 61 will receive a new Nederman System (Vehicle Exhaust/Ventilation System)
    - Hardscaping at Station 64 – 911 Memorial
    - Replacing concrete ramp at Station 65, it is cracked
    - Station 67 will get some attention this year:
        - HVAC system will be recommissioned
        - Dry sprinkler heads need to be replaced
        - New paint and carpet in the bunkrooms
        - Exterior of Station will be repainted and new signage to match the other stations
    - The Training Tower needs some additional repairs that were under budgeted last year
    - Staircase for accessing the dumpsters at Station 68
    - Station 60 – Fleet will get a few shipping containers to store some tires and free up space in the Logistics Building
    - We need to purchase additional apparatus to add to our fleet this will assist as we continue to increase staffing.
    - We will also have renovations at Station 62 and the Fire Admin Building – this is being funded via the LTGO Bond
    - We are also looking at a CO2 cleaning machine; however, it is unfunded currently as we have some grants that are pending
- The budget funds 221 FTEs, which is the highest employee headcount ever for our district.

At 1523 hours the meeting recessed for five minutes until 1528 hours.

At 1528 hours the Special Meeting reconvened.

Executive Director Ganem presented the Divisional Budgets

- Commissioners Budget – increased about 5% or $7,260
  - Chair Baruso would like funding for a Commissioners Retreat
- Elections and Audit Budget – increased 39.8% or $9,115
  - This is due to the increase in Audit costs
- General Budget – increased 42.1% mostly driven by the Debt Service payment for the LTGO Bond
  - Employee Recognition and Employee Appreciation has increased
    - We have more employees and promotions to recognize
  - Consultants' Budget - increased
  - Strategic Plan
  - Insurance Budget has increased - we have additional facilities to cover
  - Utility Costs have increased
  - We now have a Debt Service payment for the LTGO Bond at $1.2M
- Administration Budget – decrease of 20.4% or $484,702 due to retirements and the organizational restructure
- Business Operations Finance Budget – increased 4% or $26,050
  - Increase for Consultants – Employee Resource Center (ERC) for workflows and form development
- Business Operations Human Resources Budget – increased 5.3% or $32,788
  - Includes four budgeted positions vs three in 2025, with overall employee cost reduction
  - Increase in background checks and investigations for hiring and increase in L&I claim management costs
- Operations Budget – 8.8% increase or $2,416,279
  - Increased firefighter staffing levels
  - Adjustments to overtime allocations based on actuals
  - Increase for Honor Guard
  - Addition of Extrication Program
  - Apparatus equipment fund
  - Ops equipment – chainsaw maintenance and replacement
- EMS Officer Budget – increase 512.5% or $174,784
  - Creation of an EMS Officer position pending successful negotiation
- Special Teams Rescue Budget – increase 7.7% or $12,512
  - Adjustments to equipment, maintenance and training
- Special Teams Marine Budget – decrease 5.2% or $6,885
  - Reduction in instructor overtime
  - Adjustments to materials and maintenance
- Special Teams Hazmat Budget – increase of 11.1% or $14,836
  - Adjustment to overtime for additional members
  - Reduction in training
  - Increase to Hazmat protection – new suits
- Swimmers Budget – increase of .06% or $596
  - Reduction in instructor costs
  - Increase to equipment for wetsuit replacements
- Health & Wellness – Safety Committee Budget – increase of 47.3% or $111,548

- Adjustment to overtime for programs
- Increase to cover LEOFF2 Chief Officers for wellness checks due to career exposure
- Gym equipment for recruit academy
- Ready Rebound moved from Training budget

- Fire Marshal Office Budget – decrease of 2.8% or $46,227
  - Change in personnel from previous year's budget
  - Education benefit
  - Reduced reference materials
  - Reduced fire investigation services – King County
- Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) CARES Budget – increase of 3.3% or $18,592
  - Increased MIH supplies
- Training & SKCFTC Consortium Budget - increase of 16.6% or $161,452
  - Increased cost for Training Consortium
  - Moved Ready Rebound to Health & Safety Budget
- Business Operations Facilities Budget – increase 2% or $15,655
  - Appliance cleaning
  - Plumbing costs
  - Fueling stations
- Business operations Fleet Maintenance Budget – increase 4.2% or $36,202
  - Line-item adjustments on actuals
  - Increase in apparatus parts
  - Increase in marine unit repairs
- Business Operations Logistics Budget – increase 27.5% or $334,357
  - New line items moved Hoses from Capital Budget to Logistics
  - Moved PSERN Fees from Information Technology Division
  - BA Repairs
  - Increased PPE purchase and replacement budget due to increase in FF staffing levels
  - Increased sewing and PPE repairs
- Business Operations Information Technology Budget – increase 21.1% or $332,636
  - Changes in personnel – retirements and new hires
  - Moved Computers, Tablets, Station Alerting and Battery Back-up from Capital Budget to Information Technology budget
  - Increased cloud-computing, Software-as-Service (SAS)
  - Major system upgrades
- Employee Health Benefits Budget – increase 6.8% or $460,614
  - Adjusted fees and contracts for medical program
  - Increased employee headcount
  - Reduced HRA – Plan election changes by employees

What's Next:

- Strategic Direction
  - Shore up current strategic direction and projects into a Strategic Plan
- Continuing Growth Plan
  - Station 62 remodel, Admin Building improvements and fire operations expansion options; including additional apparatus and response locations
- Resources for Community
  - Emphasis on adequate firefighter staffing levels and new approaches to response locations and apparatus to improve quality service levels
- Community Risk Reduction and Engagement

- Focus on services provided to our communities and increase engagement and awareness of fire district activities meant to serve residents

Executive Director Ganem thanked everyone that participated in the budget process by presenting their divisions budget.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

Meeting adjourned at 1606 hours.

COMMISSIONER (CHAIR)

COMMISSIONER (VICE CHAIR)

COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER

BOARD SECRETARY