

Board of Fire Commissioners • Public FAQ

Official Transparency Portal Publication

CORE TRANSITION PRINCIPLES

The Board of Fire Commissioners is strictly dedicated to executing this dual-vacancy transition with absolute statutory correctness, uncompromised transparency, and localized self-determination. By structuring an objective, merit-driven recruitment framework, we guarantee the preservation of local control over our taxing district's assets while actively evolving our administrative infrastructure to the executive level our taxpayers deserve and expect.

SECTION 8 — ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Q26 – Why do the interviews have to be done in public? The Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) under RCW 42.30 dictates that the business of the public must be conducted in view of the public. While RCW 42.30.110(1)(h) allows the Board to evaluate candidate qualifications in a private Executive Session, the actual interviews represent the active examination of future public officials. Holding these interviews in an open public session ensures complete transparency, allowing taxpayers to directly observe the competence, governance philosophy, and merit of each candidate before an appointment is made.

Q27 – Can Volunteer firefighters apply? Yes. Volunteer firefighters are fully eligible to apply and legally serve as Fire Commissioners, as they are not considered direct employees of the district under standard municipal parameters. However, strict legal boundaries exist under chapter 42.23 RCW regarding direct employment and operational hierarchies. Full-time, paid employees of the district are structurally prohibited from serving on the Board due to an inherent conflict of interest. Furthermore, while volunteer firefighters can serve, a commissioner cannot simultaneously hold an operational officer role or a supervisory role (such as a station officer or captain) within the department. To maintain proper governance and operational boundaries, any selected applicant currently serving as an operational officer would be required to step down from that leadership rank prior to taking the official Oath of Office.

Q28 – What are some examples that would be a conflict and disqualify a candidate? Under RCW 42.23, an irreconcilable conflict of interest occurs if an applicant has a direct or indirect financial interest in a contract with the district. Examples that would disqualify a candidate include being a paid employee of the district, serving as a commercial vendor or contractor providing paid services/equipment to LWFR, or having an immediate family member in an administrative position where the commissioner would directly oversee their compensation or contract. Any candidate with these active, unresolvable conflicts will be disqualified by staff prior to the

evaluation phase to maintain strict fiduciary integrity.

Q29 – How does this structured process help build the elite fire district our community expects? Modern emergency services demand professional administrative leadership. By using a highly standardized procurement framework and an objective candidate scoring matrix, we ensure that new commissioners are selected based on raw competence, corporate-level fiscal literacy, and long-term strategic vision. This rigorous process guarantees the Board is equipped to properly handle multi-million dollar capital assets and complex statutory compliance.

Q30 – If I cannot attend the Special Session on July 7th, how can I review what happened? In alignment with our core transition principles of absolute transparency, the physical scoring matrices, handwritten evaluations, and notes recorded by the sitting commissioners during the session instantly become permanent public records under RCW 42.56. These materials, along with the official meeting minutes, will be archived with the District Secretary and made available on the online documentation portal.

Q31 – What specific skills is the Board looking for in the candidate portfolios? The Board is evaluating applicants against the critical executive duties of a policy-setting board. While community leadership is valuable, the five-point candidate scoring matrix explicitly prioritizes statutory and fiscal literacy, an understanding of governance boundaries, and capital asset oversight capability. The goal is to find leaders who can navigate complex operational needs and long-term capital balancing.

Q32 – Why are the candidates required to submit a professional resume and a multi-page letter of interest? Serving as a Fire Commissioner is a serious fiduciary and legal responsibility. Requiring an up-to-date professional resume and a detailed letter of interest forces candidates to clearly articulate their municipal leadership, fiscal literacy, and overarching governance philosophy before they are ever interviewed. This upfront requirement ensures only serious, highly qualified individuals enter the active candidate pool.

Q33 – Does the public get to vote on or rank the candidates in the Active Candidate Pool? No. Under Washington State law (RCW 42.12.070), the statutory authority to fill vacancies on an elective board rests strictly with the remaining sitting commissioners. However, by conducting the process via a synchronized, open public session, the community is given full visibility into how the Board scores and discusses each applicant before casting their official votes.

Q34 – How does establishing an "Active Candidate Pool" protect the district's local control? If a district attempts to run separate, uncoordinated recruitment tracks or fails to fill a seat within 90 days, it risks dropping below a legal voting quorum or forfeiting appointment power to the county. A single, unified candidate pool establishes an immediate, legally vetted baseline of qualified local residents. This ensures that both

positions can be filled sequentially without any gaps in local governance.

Q35 – How will candidate privacy be protected if all application materials become public records? While the Public Records Act (RCW 42.56) mandates public disclosure of candidate credentials and letters of interest, the district strictly respects personal boundaries. Under the authority of RCW 42.56.250, administrative staff will thoroughly redact sensitive personal data—including cell phone numbers, home email addresses, and residential street numbers—before any packets are made viewable to the public.

Q36 – If an appointee does an excellent job, why do they still have to run in the November 2027 election? Pursuant to RCW 42.12.070(6), all local board appointments made to fill vacancies are strictly short-term and transitional. To safeguard local self-determination and ensure that final, long-term governance remains entirely in the hands of District 9 voters, any appointee wishing to retain their seat for the remainder of the unexpired term must formally run as a candidate in the next general election cycle.

Q37 – Who can the public contact if they have additional questions about the fairness of this recruitment framework? Absolute public transparency is a foundational pillar of this transition. Any community member with questions, record requests, or procedural concerns is encouraged to contact the Office of the District Secretary directly at Station 91 or via phone at 509-763-3034.

Q38 – If Commissioner Lamar's term ends in December 2027, why does an appointee have to run for election in November 2027?

They are not running to finish a brief 6-month window; they are running for the next full, standard 6-year term. Under RCW 42.12.070(6), an appointed official only holds office until the next district general election cycle. Because Commissioner Lamar's original 6-year term naturally concludes at the end of 2027, the November 2027 election will determine who wins the brand-new, full 6-year term that begins on January 1, 2028. The appointee must file and run in that election if they wish to transition from an interim appointed leader into an elected commissioner.

Q39 – Does the same election timeline apply to Position B (Commissioner Payne's seat)?

Yes. Because both vacancies are being filled during the 2026 cycle, both appointees will serve side-by-side through the certification of the November 2027 general election. At that time, both seats will appear on the ballot. Depending on the original rotation of the seats, one position will be opening for a standard, full 6-year term, while the other may be running to complete a separate unexpired term rotation. This setup guarantees that local voters maintain ultimate oversight over who permanently holds these seats.