



Kevin Kreitman, City Manager
Janelle Booth, Assistant City Manager/City Engineer
Jim Lepin, Mayor

April 1, 2019

Paul Evans, Chair
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
900 Court St, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support of HB2449

Chair Evans, Members of the Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness,

I have over 37 years' experience in the fire service with 30 of those years in administration and as a fire chief. I currently serve as City Manager. In the last 40 years a lot has changed in how emergency services are responded to and handled, including the receipt of data regarding emergencies to emergency response personnel and the notification of the public during major emergencies.

The cost of maintaining the infrastructure capable of delivering emergency calls, in addition to personnel costs, has skyrocketed with technological upgrades that allow for enhanced data to be received and passed on the first responders. This information is invaluable to the successful outcome of emergency response.

The 9-1-1 tax has not been increased since 1995 to match how emergency call centers must plan for the handling of the receipt and dissemination of enhanced data. In 1995 text messaging was virtually unheard of. Since then texting has continuously become a larger portion of how people communicate. Emergency call centers are able to share enhanced information which can be passed on to emergency responders which includes the sharing of live data such as photos and video. However, receipt of the information, which can be vital for emergency responders, is only possible if funding for receipt of the information is provided, which the 1995 funding levels do not consider.

The cost of doing business for 9-1-1 centers has increased each year, but funding has not kept up to meet the changes in technology. It is very clear our situation is dire. This has reached a crucial point, considering the tax money anticipated for collection this year will not be enough to cover any system upgrades already past due.

HB2449 seeks to increase the tax to ensure 9-1-1 centers can deliver not only the current level of service, but also upgrade to technology that will allow them to be more efficient and effective

in their jobs, which is directly related to how effective and efficient emergency responders are in their response to citizen emergencies. This bill will additionally extend the sunset of the 9-1-1 tax.

Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP's) in Oregon were recently notified that the State 9-1-1 program, within Oregon Emergency Management, would likely be unable to continue to fully fund their equipment upgrades and other costs associated with keeping PSAP's functioning as they do today. Some of those costs will have to be absorbed by the agencies or passed on to the users who pay for their services, further compromising the ability to meet emergency response staffing and equipment requirements. This shift in resources that used to be covered by the 9-1-1 tax will have a direct impact on local fire, medical, and police responders.

I request your support of HB2449 to increase the 9-1-1 tax to \$1.50 and extend the sunset of the tax. I respectfully ask for your consideration to remove the following provisions from HB2449:

The provision that provides 2% to counties with a population less than 40,000.

The amount for Oregon Emergency Management 9-1-1 Program from 4% to 2%.

Reduce the amount collected by the Department of Revenue from 1% to .05%.

I also ask your consideration to add language that would specifically allow interest earned on the 9-1-1 tax to be held in an account to be used for future system upgrades. It is my sincere hope we can depend on our legislators to consider adding specific language to, at a minimum, begin saving for what will be necessary for our future 9-1-1 needs as related to technology and infrastructure buildout and security.

You cannot ensure or provide all hazard protection for our communities, when the most vital component being the receipt and timely sharing of information with emergency responders is woefully lacking due inadequate funding. The one item that consistently stands out in every review of a major emergency and/or disaster is that at some point a break down in the communications system occurred. Please, do not allow inadequate funding of our 9-1-1 system to become a greater contributor to communication system failures in future events.

Sincerely,



Kevin Kreitman
City Manager