



21390 Main St NE, Aurora OR 97002

February 11, 2022

Co-Chair Girod
Co-Chair Holvey
900 Court St NE.
Salem, OR, 97301

Dear Co-Chair Girod and Holvey,

On behalf of the Aurora Fire District I am writing to you to ask for your support in securing a Funding for a new fire station. Unfortunately, Oregon's special Districts were left out of the funding mechanism for the ARPA, and this projects is too costly for us to bare.

Aurora Fire District provides first responder emergency services to the people of Aurora, Donald and Butteville. We cover interstate 5, HWY 99 and a large portion of unincorporated Marion and Clackamas County. Over 6000 people rely on our district to provide them with fire and medical protection

A fire station is an excellent example of needed infrastructure, and a project that would be very popular among taxpayers. The Aurora Fire District is essential for supporting our disadvantaged rural community. We are in desperate need for a new fire station.

Our 2 current fire stations, one in Donald, and one in Aurora were both built in the 50's and are not adequate for today's needs. I have included some facts about the fire stations that I hope you will find helpful. Please keep in mind we have 2 career firefighters on 24 hours a day.

- Neither fire station has sleeping quarters
- Neither fire station has a shower
- The fire stations do not have air conditioning
- Our exercise area is in the same garage that our fire engines are stored
- Neither fire station has a bathroom that meets ADA requirements
- Aurora Fire District has to rent a house in order house our residents
- Aurora Fire District has had to buy two homes near the fire station to house our students and career staf. Not having our firefighters in the stations causes a delay

- During last years heat wave, we could not offer the public a cool place to be, in fact we had to cancel our own fire training because the fire station was too hot.

We have survived in these fire stations for over 70 years and they have served us well. The time has long since passed when we needed a new fire station. In 2014 the fire district asked the voters to support our efforts in building a new fire station, unfortunately it was denied. This bond request was during the recession that hit us all hard.

With massive growth and a major increase in calls to the fire district, In 2019 the Aurora Fire District asked our voters to double their taxes to hire firefighters. The public overwhelmingly passed the local option levy. This ushered in the first time we were able to provide 2 career staff 24 hours a day 7 days a week. This obviously created its own challenges, such as where to put them. We currently own 10 acres on Ehlen Road near Interstate 5. This is land we purchased many years ago with the intention of building one day. It is on this parcel, we wish to build.

Our residents have just doubled their property taxes in the Aurora Fire District. We are concerned our public simply cannot afford more. We are asking for help from the Marion County allocation of funds. We estimate a new fire station to cost 8 million dollars.

During the wildfires the Aurora Fire District was an evacuation center for other displaced fire agencies. Firefighters could not shower, and had to wait in line at our homes. We had over 20 firefighters waiting for 2 bathrooms. We had firefighters sleeping on the floor after fighting fires all day and night. The fire station was so full, there was no room for any public that may have needed a place to go during the fires.

During the recent ice storm, we were the only building in the city with power, yet there is no room for the public to go. During the ice storm we had a charging area set up for the public. They had to wait outside in the cold because we had firefighters sleeping in our training room on the floor. During the current COVID 19 emergency, we struggled with separating the public from our emergency responders.

The residents of Aurora and Donald, and all the unincorporated areas in between are your constituents. Can you help us?

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

Chief Joshua L. Williams
Aurora Fire District

Aurora Fire Station Project Information

1. Below we describe the following:

- a. **Total estimated project budget**
- b. **Estimated start date and completion dates**
- c. **Our project team. Include the name, title, employer, and a high-level overview of their role in the project.**

The organization that will be monitoring this project is the Aurora Fire District (AFD). The Aurora Fire District is located in the northernmost part of Marion County and serves the residents of Marion County in a diverse area. We not only protect the cities of Aurora and Donald, but in addition, we serve a bulk of the residents in rural, unincorporated areas of Marion County.

The Aurora Fire District is in the unique position as a rural fire district in that we have a small staff of firefighters, both career and volunteers, that deal with urban issues. We protect the Aurora State Airport, which is the 3rd busiest in the state. We cover several miles of Interstate 5 and Highway 99E. The stretch of interstate we cover has been documented as one of the busiest for traffic accidents in the region. Additionally, we provide mutual aid into Clackamas County, primarily to the cities of Canby and Wilsonville.

We must admit, we are apprehensive to present our estimated budget for this project. The reason is mainly due to how much construction costs have increased over the years, and especially how costs have risen even more recently. The estimated total project cost is \$8,000,000.00. This budget is for a 'turnkey' fire station with administration, crew quarters, and community rooms. The District already owns the land, has preliminary drawings, and has obtained several estimates. The Aurora Fire District has adopted public contracting rules and is quite familiar with requirements for public projects.

If we are awarded this funding, we will begin execution of this project immediately. We will meet all guidelines outlined in the application, such as all contracts signed by December 31, 2024, and project completion by December 31, 2026. Realistically speaking, if we were awarded the funds, we anticipate a 24-28 month period to completion.

The primary personnel that will be responsible for the implementation of this project will be as follows:

1. Fire Chief Joshua L. Williams
2. Assistant Fire Chief Michael Corless
3. Administrative Assistant Emily Murphy
4. AFD Board of Directors

There are many aspects to this project and we will assign each of them accordingly. The AFD Board of Directors will approve and award contracts as needed in compliance with contracting laws. The primary project managers will be Chief Williams and Chief Corless. Both Chiefs will provide recommendations to the Board of Directors and ensure compliance of the fire station construction contract.

Financial tracking and reporting will be assigned to our Administrative Assistant as well as a Chief Officer..

2. Aurora Fire District's needs and the impact the project will have on the local community and Marion/Clackamas County.

As I type this, I struggle to come up with where to begin because I have so much to say, so I will simply go ahead and start at the beginning. A fire station is one of the most basic needs of any community. Public safety is the number one priority that governments should strive for, and the AFD is providing this on a daily basis. The Aurora Fire District began serving the citizens in this area in 1948. The District has a fire station in each of our two cities, Donald and Aurora. Both of these fire stations were constructed in the 1950's, at a time when primary responses were from volunteer firefighters and there were very few calls for service.

Fast forward to today's times. We still occupy and use the stations that were built 70 years ago. Some stark differences are that we now require career staff to sleep at the station, and we respond to significantly more calls for service. In 2021, we responded to 1302 calls for service, which was a record, I'm writing this. We experienced a 20% increase of calls from just last year in 2020. Based on just these numbers, we anticipate this trend to continue, as growth is scheduled to extend throughout North Marion County.

I would like to first focus on why the community is in need of this new fire station and believe we can demonstrate this absolute need to you. In order for you to fully understand, I will begin by briefly outlining our daily operations. AFD is currently staffed with 9 full time employees. During the Monday to Friday normal work week, there is a full time Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, and Administrative Assistant. Our responding firefighters (1 Lieutenant and 1 Engineer) are on 48/96 hour shifts, which means they work 48 hours on duty and then receive 96 hours off duty. So they are on duty Monday through Friday, including Saturdays and Sundays. While on duty, they reside in District facilities, but not necessarily in the fire station.

All staff work out of the Aurora Fire Station, which is on the East side of our District. This means that when there is a call anywhere within our response area, our responders are coming from Aurora. If there is a call in Donald, we are responding from Aurora. If we have an emergency on I-5, out in Butteleville, or towards St. Paul, we are responding from Aurora. We do this because we do not have any other options. Using mapping and response time modeling, we have determined that we will reduce our response times to a large majority of our area by 50%.

The Aurora and Donald Fire Stations do not have the capacity to house firefighters in 2021. Back in 2003, the AFD chose to purchase a small house next to the Aurora Fire Station to house the volunteers who signed up to respond to calls. As calls for service continued to increase, the AFD began renting (and still does) another house across the street from the Aurora Fire Station. The District also purchased a home next to the Donald Fire Station. This is how we house our firefighters. Regardless of the rain, ice, or snow, our firefighters have to leave the houses and walk to the closest fire station to respond to calls.

Below are some facts about our current facilities.

The following is a list showing the conditions of our current fire stations that I hope you will find helpful in determining our need for a new station. Please keep in mind that we have 2 career firefighters on shift for 24 hours, every day.

- Neither fire station has sleeping quarters
- Neither station has a dedicated decontamination area (used daily, especially during COVID-19)
- Neither fire station has a shower
- The fire stations do not have air conditioning
- Our exercise area is located in the same garage that our fire engines are stored
- Neither fire station has a bathroom that meets ADA requirements
- Aurora Fire District has to rent a house in order to house our resident volunteer firefighters
- Aurora Fire District has had to buy two homes, one near each of the old fire stations, in order to house our students and career staff. Not having our firefighters quarters in the stations causes a response delay.

The need for a new fire station for our District and Marion County residents became overwhelmingly evident during several natural disasters that occurred the past few years. During the wildfires last year, the Aurora Fire District became an evacuation center for other displaced fire agencies. The firefighters who came unfortunately could not shower at the station, so they had to wait in line at our homes. We consistently had over 20 firefighters waiting for 2 bathrooms. In addition, we had firefighters sleeping on mats and in sleeping bags on the floor after fighting fires all day and night. The fire station was so full there was no room for any members of the public that may have needed a place to go or seek refuge during the fires.

During the recent ice storm, thanks to an old generator, we were the only building in the city that still had power, yet there was no room for the public to come inside. We managed to set up a charging area for the public to use, but they had to wait outside in the cold because we had firefighters sleeping in our training room on the floor. We feel that we can do better for our citizens. The residents of Aurora, Donald and Marion County are proud of their responders and they look to us in times of need. They deserve to have a place to come that is updated and ready to meet their needs, and more importantly, those of their responders who've committed to serve them.

We realize this is a large request, but we believe it is something that can clearly be justified. If this request is approved, these funds will have a positive effect on the citizens of Marion/Clackamas County for the next half century. As explained, both fire stations were built in the 1950's, which clearly shows the longevity of our buildings and also demonstrates our commitment to properly care for and maintain what we have.

3. How and who will work on this project.

The proposal to be accomplished is the construction of a new fire station for the Aurora Fire District.

The new station will be located at 12810 Ehlen Rd. NE in Aurora. This site is a parcel of land currently owned by the fire district and was purchased nearly 10 years ago for this purpose due to its location. The intent of this project is to provide better services to all of our community.

We have identified this location to provide optimal service to our community. We can accomplish this by a reduction in response times, as this location is in the center of our response area. Currently, all career responses originate from our main station in the City of Aurora, which creates a disproportionately negative effect on our rural residents since travel times are increased. We have also identified that the district (North Marion County area) lacks a larger area for our residents to flee to in the event of an emergency, which became very evident during the fires of 2020 and the ice storm of 2021.

During the current COVID-19 pandemic, like many others, we were forced to shut our doors since we do not have a way to safely isolate the public from our responders. We also do not have a way to separate our workforce from public exposure. We do not have a proper area for decontamination. This new fire station will eliminate those problems along with many others, as described and demonstrated throughout this application.

With this project we will accomplish something that we as a district have not been able to accomplish on our own -- provide a new fire station capable of mitigating modern issues and housing emergency responders properly. This project will allow the community access to their responders, while also providing us a way to navigate through the continuing pandemic safely.

If we were to assume that a full funding were to be awarded and we were notified sometime in March, we would begin our project immediately. Below is a potential timeframe as well as the team members who would each be assigned to work on each delegated item.

- March 2022-May 2022 Chief Williams, Corless & MCSO representative
 - We will begin to finalize our current architectural drawings, including the office space for MCSO.
 - We will update location and plans for well and septic system
 - We will begin researching the permit process
 - Develop RFP's as needed for the AFD board of directors
 - Identify any additional studies or planning needed
 - Begin a public information campaign
 - Follow all reporting requirements
- May-2022-September 2022 Chief Williams, Corless & Aurora Board
 - Approve RFP's and contracts in compliance with funding requirements
 - Apply for permitting
 - Complete any additional studies or requirements
 - Continue public information campaign
 - Follow all reporting requirements
- October 2022-May 2023 Chief Williams, Corless, and builders
 - Begin construction
 - Continue public information
 - Follow all reporting requirements
- June 2023 All AFD, MCSO move into new fire station

4. Description on how our project meets the ARPA eligible the categories and the specific category

The AFD Fire Station Project is clearly one that is eligible as outlined in the ARPA guidance. More specifically, this project falls under the most important category -- Public Health.

Category 1 Public Health

1.7 Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The Aurora Fire District has been an integral part of emergency response in Marion County for decades. The pandemic has challenged us like no other time in our history. We are truly on the front lines battling this pandemic by responding to the communities needs. We have been responding to COVID-19 patients through the community and beyond. AFD has implemented many new changes in our responses and our operational procedures.

Some of our struggles have included working spaces and decontamination. Our front office consists of an open concept area that has three personnel all working in the same area. The space is not conducive for the public entering the fire station that may be ill or looking for assistance due to the fact there is no possible option for isolation.

Decontamination is also a major challenge as we do not have a specific decontamination room as required in modern fire stations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, decontamination is essential for keeping the public and first responders safe. Not having a shower in the fire station means that the first responders must leave the station and walk over to the shift house next door. This is problematic since any contaminants they might harbor are being carried into the living spaces where all of our responders reside.

Another issue is the quarantining of emergency responders. Neither fire station is adequate to hold any personnel in the event of a quarantine. We have resorted to purchasing a travel trailer and placed it at the back of the fire station as an emergency quarantine facility. Unfortunately, we have had to use this on several occasions. The good news is that our affected personnel have always recovered successfully. The capital investment in a new fire station will help solve all of these issues as outlined in category 1.7.

An additional key element identified that was mentioned earlier is the disproportionate effect on rural residents. With our only career response available out of the City of Aurora, we struggle to provide adequate response times to our rural residents, which would be resolved with a centrally located new station.

5. History of documented community need?.

There is actually a lengthy history of the District identifying a need for a new fire station. The Aurora Fire District had a contracted Strategic Plan commissioned in November of 1999. This Strategic Plan was a comprehensive document that analyzed all aspects of the Aurora Fire District. As it specifically relates to a district facility, a 'lack of sleeping quarters' was officially identified as a weakness. On the opposite end, the report also identified 'improved facilities and equipment.'

The District took this to heart years later when it was identified that a third fire station was needed in the center part of the AFD area. Official board action was taken to find suitable land to better serve the public. Finding this property would prove a challenge as the area needed to establish a fire station was lacking available land for this purpose. It would take an actual legislative change for this to occur.

At the August 2010 Board of Directors meeting, the Board began developing a legislative strategy to change land use laws. A parcel of land was found, but it was a 56 acre plot of EFU, or 'Exclusive Farm Use' so was by law, unable to be partitioned off into a smaller parcel. With 2 years of work and many partner meetings, SB-640 was introduced and passed by the Oregon legislators and signed by the Governor. This bill was specifically designed to assist AFD in purchasing only 10 acres of the 56 parcels and securing the land for a future fire station. Fast forward to 2021 and we now own the land free and clear and have an access driveway completed.

In 2021, the Aurora Fire District contracted with Emergency Services Consulting Inc. (ESCI) to develop an updated Master Plan. We are confident a component of this will outline the need for this new fire station; however, the study has just begun and will not be completed in time to share as part of this application.

6. AFD's history managing federal/State funds..

The AFD's leadership team is a very experienced team. Both the Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief have many years of experience managing subrecipient grants. This experience ranges from the federal to state levels. Both Chiefs also have experience with receiving federal funds for a variety of projects such as firefighting equipment, vehicles, and personnel. Chief Williams has direct experience with federal funds from the USDA in his previous position. The Administrative Assistant has worked with Covid Relief Funding and FEMA, providing all necessary documentation, appropriating funds per GAP (General Accounting Procedures), while also maintaining and submitting each requirement for reimbursement. With Emily Murphy's assistance, Chief provided the Resolutions required to the Board of Directors for approved use of the funds, keeping all records organized and readily available for audit or other review purposes.

Both Chiefs and the Administrative Assistant have experience with records retention, invoicing, public contracting and careful fiscal management. Everyone is aware and prepared for the stringent requirements associated with federal funding. Since AFD is fortunate enough to have career chiefs, we have the capacity, along with our highly organized and efficient administrative assistant, to successfully manage this award.

7. Our partnerships the organization has secured to assist with the project.

The Aurora Fire District has been actively seeking input from the Marion County Sheriff's Department and are happy to report that we have officially received support from Marion County Sheriff Joe Kast. We

are proposing office space within the new fire station specifically for a 'North County MCSO Annex.' What this means is that we will have an area reserved within our fire station that will be dedicated and available for MCSO's use at any time. We feel this is a good use of space, and frankly, we enjoy having law enforcement present at our fire stations. The location of this property on Ehlen Rd. just off I-5 is a prime location for the deputy on the road.

In addition to dedicated office space, there will also be the availability of many other resources that would be typically part of a fire station. Some of these resources could be conference rooms, restrooms that are ADA compliant, user-friendly kitchen, etc. The AFD Board of Directors has indicated that it is excited and prepared to develop an agreement with Marion County to make this happen. In addition to MCSO, we envision a longer term relationship with Marion County as a whole. As previously stated, the parcel where the new fire station will be located is on 10 acres. The size of our lot provides the ability to be a location for staging areas during unexpected events, whether natural or man made. We recognize our location is prime and hope to offer many amenities to our local neighboring partners if awarded this grant money and upon completion of the project.

We also believe this would be a great location to partner with ODOT especially due to the space available for large vehicles.

8. How our operations will be funded after the project is complete.

Once this project has been completed, the Aurora Fire District will absorb the operation costs into our annual budget. With the current collection rate and AFD valuation, this is a new cost that will be comfortable and well within our means. Additionally, and as indicated previously, we currently rent a house for our firefighters to reside in. With approval of this project, we will no longer have to spend money on rent and utilities, so those monthly costs will be immediately transferred to maintaining the new fire station. It is important to note that the Aurora Fire District is financially stable and very capable of maintaining annual operations. The area we struggle with is large capital purchases such as purchasing or building a fire station. The only other way to accomplish this is by the request of a taxpayer funded bond, which is very difficult to achieve with the current rate of inflation. Also of consideration, the Aurora Fire District has successfully met the requirement for annual state audits.

9. What have we done for funding assistance?

In 2014, the Aurora Fire District went to our voters and asked for funding for a new fire station. Unfortunately, the bond measure failed as the area was still in recovery from the previous recession. Since the failure of the bond measure, the project has been on hold and the district has tried very hard to save money. After years of saving, the Aurora Fire District got Board approval to build a road into the property so it could at least be accessed for training. The access driveway cost us over \$250,000.

As years have passed by, we have not had the ability to go out to the voters again. We have experienced such a dramatic increase in calls that we ultimately decided to concentrate on 'people versus things.' So even though we clearly needed a new fire station, we needed the career firefighters more. In 2019, AFD voters doubled their tax rate so we could provide them with a full time crew and 24 hour service.

We have searched high and low for building grants and have come up empty. We inquired with the USDA regarding loan programs and community facilities grants, but we were not eligible. We have also tried to take advantage of the federal funds for infrastructure. We believe a fire station is a remarkable use of

funds for a community especially like ours. And since it is also a building, it is a tangible project that people really like to see and something which they can take pride and ownership in.

As the Fire Chief, I have written letters on behalf of the Aurora Fire District to every local official I could think of. Multiple letters have been written and sent to our entire federal delegation. We have even sent a letter to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos. Unfortunately, all of this effort has been to no avail, until we received this request to apply for this opportunity from Marion County. Each letter we sent requesting funds indicated that the cost of this project would be in excess of 6 million dollars. To date, we have not received any money for our project, nor have we been notified of any other grant programs.

We were recently invited to apply for a grant from Marion County for a new fire station, however we were denied the funding.

10. What happens if we are not funded?

We are hoping that we have provided the justification and demonstrated our need for a full award. We realize this is a large amount; however, we also realize this is an investment in our community which will benefit them for the next 50 plus years. The full award will ensure that we will not need to ask our taxpayers for funding for this building, as these funds are already taxpayer funded money.

If partial funding is awarded, we will try to design a fire station at a lower cost that will meet our needs. The station that we designed in 2012 which the costs are based upon, is a station that future proofs us. We do not want to build something that will just get us through for a few years. We need a true 50 year fire station that allows us to grow with a growing population in North Marion County.

If funding does not happen on this building, there are currently no plans to go to the voters for the building. Again, we just asked our voters to double their tax rate to allow us to hire firefighters, so we cannot in good conscience ask for more, especially with the economic conditions of today. There has been widespread job loss and downsizing during the pandemic, and we are very aware that people are stretching their budgets and having to pinch every penny, just like we are.

11. Work we have done up to this point.

We believe the Aurora Fire District has the advantage of having already prepared for this project in 2014. If awarded full funding of this project, we intend on building the fire station as originally designed, which will save a significant amount of time. We are confident in our ability to meet the deadlines as outlined in the funding documents. We understand that we are required to have any and all contracts signed before December 31, 2024. Frankly, we would plan to be in our new fire station by that point, mainly due to the legwork that has already been completed by the AFD.

As stated, the Aurora Fire District began this process many years ago. Some of the items we have completed are as follows.

- Site plans
 - We have a site plan that was developed that shows locations for a driveway into the property as well as fire station, well, and septic location.
- Architectural drawings

- We have floor plans and elevation drawings of a conceptual building.
- Limited geotechnical study
 - When a driveway access was constructed in 2019 we had a limited geotechnical study completed on the property. We anticipate another study would be needed.
- Zoning changes approvals
 - This was completed through the legislature and Marion County. The property is lined for public use and is ready for a fire station.
- Driveway into property off Ehlen Rd. completed.
 - Access to the property was completed in 2019. The access driveway that we have already paid for may help to offset some costs of asphalt and concrete.
- Initial septic and well locations.
 - Both of these studies have been completed and a 'perk' test has been completed. We anticipate that due to the length of time since our last study, a new location and test will need to be completed.

From experience, we know one of the most lengthy aspects of a project like this is the conceptual design phase. This is an area in which we are at an advantage because the design / architectural phases are already completed. While we note the designs are based upon 2014 standards, we believe for the most part the design is still relevant. With this being said, based upon funding and changing standards, we understand there may need to be some changes, but also believe this will not suppress our timeframe, as a bulk of the work is complete.

We are also confident in our timeframe for meeting deadlines due to the action the AFD Board of Directors has taken, including being diligent on use of public contracting laws and proper bidding of vendors. We have identified several sources that are ready to assist us on this project, while maintaining integrity of program rules and fiscal accountability. Our timeframe to begin this project will be immediate. We are so in need of this fire station that we can promise this project will become our number one priority.

12. Additional information related to our project.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation for considering us for funding. This is a large project, an expensive project, but it is also a project that will have a direct impact on Marion/Clackamas County and beyond for 50 plus years. We believe it is this type of project that taxpayers like to see -- a fire station our residents can be proud of.

This project meets the requirements as outlined in the American Rescue Plan Act and the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Program. I am confident I have outlined our needs successfully and that this information will place us into high consideration for these funds. We continue to deal with the impacts of the COVID 19 outbreak on a daily basis and in every aspect of our work and lives. These funds will allow us to continue responding safely while providing an option for our public during an emergency.

Thank you for your consideration.

