

March 2, 2025

Testimony in Support of Infrastructure Project for Umpqua Fire Station

Honorable members of the Oregon Legislature,

We are writing to express our strong support for the proposed infrastructure project to add living quarters to Central Douglas Fire & Rescue's existing unstaffed fire station in Umpqua Oregon. This project would significantly enhance responses to emergencies, support our fire science and paramedic students, and improve services in a rural area that is currently underserved.

We have elderly parents that live on our property with us and we have called for medical assistance a few times. The response time is at least 30 minutes because the nearest Fire Department is located in Sutherlin which is 17 miles from our home. Hubbard Creek road is a winding road where we often encounter livestock, wildlife, and logging trucks so it can only be safely traveled between 40-45 MPH. This area is a very active logging and farming community, so our roads are traveled by logging trucks, heavy equipment, support vehicles, and other farming equipment. In the case of an emergency where speed is important, traveling that road faster would put others at risk.

During the Tyee conflagration in 2023, the Umpqua Fire Station and Umpqua Community Center were the hub of support and communication for the firefighting efforts. The Tyee conflagration was designated as the highest priority fire in the nation and required the evacuation of Hubbard Creek and other residence for over two weeks. We witnessed the lighting strikes and reported this fire as soon as it started, however, it grew very quickly and by the next day was out of control. We can't help but think if the fire fighters lived at the Umpqua Fire Station they would have been able to get here sooner and know the area better to contain it much faster.

We have been so impressed with the level of response from Douglas County Fire Department given the vast and varied terrain they support. However, having living quarters at the Umpqua Fire Station would facilitate much quicker response times, a closer connection with our community, and a deeper sense of safety and security for our area.

We strongly request your support for this important infrastructure project.

Respectfully,

Rob and Lisa Stearns

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