

**2025 Poulsbo Fire Department - Strategic Advisory Board Review
November 2025**

District Policy and Procedure: *The Fire Chief shall assemble a group of citizens to form a Community Budget Review Committee (CBRC). This group, known as the Strategic Advisory Board (SAB), is to review the department’s budget and create a written report with strategic recommendations. These written recommendations shall be reviewed by the Board of Fire Commissioners and Fire Chief for consideration and strategic direction.*

On October 6th, 2025 the Poulsbo Fire Department (PFD) hosted a meeting with the Strategic Advisory Board (SAB). The purpose of the meeting was for the Commissioners and Department to have a conversation with the SAB and seek feedback and recommendations on how the PFD is serving the community.

Meeting Attendance.

Commissioners	Poulsbo Fire Department	SAB Members
Darryl Milton, Chair	Jim Gillard, Fire Chief	Gary Etchells
Jim Ingalls	Shane Anderson, Deputy Chief	Doug Newell
William Whiteley	Travis Beach, Captain	Jim Schlachter
David Ellingson	Kevin Vay, Captain	David Strickon
Jeff Uberuaga	Nichole Sawyers, Admin Director	Val Torrens
	Amy Strzalka, Finance Director	KJ Lange
		Erin Devoto
		Wayne Lamont
		Ken Dehan
		Todd Smith
		Brandon Wieschhaus
		Doug Lyons

SAB Review - Poulsbo Fire Department Presentation

Changes Since 2024 SAB Review:

- Improved Emergency Response Staffing Level
- Capital Improvement Plan Progression
- Saint Michael Medical Center and Free-Standing Emergency Departments
- Adoption of the City of Poulsbo and Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan
 - Increasing Population
 - Increased density in Residential Dwelling Units
- Decline (Leveling) in Assessed Property Values

2025 Poulsbo Fire Department - Strategic Advisory Board Review

November 2025

SAB Review - Poulsbo Fire Department Presentation (Continued)

Strategic Plan Review. Progress toward the goals identified in the 2020 Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: Emergency Response.

- A performance comparison was presented. The PFD average response time was 6:36 in 2024, a slight improvement from their 2023 performance; and the PFD time remains the best in the county.
- A “heat diagram” was presented showing response time variation across the district. Station 76 is well located to support improving response times by reducing some of the variance.
- CARES Performance. 80% Reduction in 911 Calls and Emergency Department Visits, following Intervention by the CARES Teams

Goal 2: Community Risk Reduction.

- PFD maintained efforts to conduct Life-Safety Inspections

Staffing Review:

- Previously, PFD increased emergency response staffing during peak activity teams. This transitioned to 24/7 staffing in the 2nd quarter of 2025 with the addition of two FF/EMT positions to provide normal staffing of eleven (11) personnel.

Capital Improvement Plan Review:

- Fire Apparatus Goals.
 - New Medic Unit ordered.
 - Discussed future needs that are funding dependent.
- Facility Needs discussion on short-term, mid-term, and long-term needs.
- Station 76 is complete (ribbon cutting occurred on November 22, 2025).

Funding Sources Review:

- Fire and EMS Levies are the primary source of funding, 87% of total revenue.
- Fee for Service (transport to hospital) is 10% of annual revenues.
- Capital Bond Options: Discussion on potential for Excess Levies for Capital Requirements
 - “Small Bond” vs “Large Bond”
 - Provides funding for facilities and apparatus needs.
 - Projected Cost – \$0.12/\$1000 to \$0.17/\$1000 of assessed value. is
- Impact Fees: Allowed by RCW but not currently levied. City of Poulsbo will consider a PFD request for imposition of impact fees in 2026.

2025 Poulsbo Fire Department - Strategic Advisory Board Review

November 2025

SAB Comments and Feedback

These comments are derived from the online survey developed by the Poulsbo Fire Department and independent feedback from members of the SAB. The “stars” ratings refer to feedback received from the survey.

Emergency Response Services. The SAB strongly approves of the ability for the PFD to respond to the community’s needs. (4.875/5 Stars). Comments:

- *“Ensuring that response times continue as low as they are as Poulsbo continues to approve new neighborhoods.”*
- *“Is it possible to do better communication with the older folks? Not sure what this would look like though. Possibly communicating at grocery stores or churches?”*

Community Risk Reduction (Fire Prevention, Public Education, CARES Team, etc.): The SAB strongly supports the PFD’s efforts to reduce community risk. (4.75/5 Stars).

Comments:

- Several SAB members were unsure if the programs are visible, accessible, and meeting community needs.
- PFD may consider using additional communication channels to increase awareness of these programs.

Prioritization of Budget and Service Levels:

- Highest Priority. Emergency Response Personnel.
- 2nd Highest Priority. Equipment and Facilities.
- 3rd Highest Priority. Community Risk Reduction Personnel.
- Lowest Priority. Cost-saving measures.

Financial Strategy. The SAB strongly supports the PFD’s financial strategy. (4.875/5 Stars). Several SAB members recommend to continue growing staffing and programs in line with community growth; while others recommend to maintain current staffing levels to build financial resilience.

2025 Poulsbo Fire Department - Strategic Advisory Board Review November 2025

SAB Comments and Feedback (Continued)

Capital Funding Strategy. The SAB strongly supports the department's strategy to fund capital needs using reserves and/or capital bonds, while using the fire and EMS levy primarily for operational costs. (4.875/5 Stars).

- The majority of the SAB supports asking for a bond in 2026 for capital needs; however, several members thought it should be balanced with use of reserves and potentially reducing operations levy.
- The SAB was split on the size of the bond ("Large" vs Small").

Growth Impact Fees. The majority of the SAB believes that new development (homes, businesses, etc.) should help fund growth-related capital projects through impact fees, to reduce the burden on existing taxpayers. (4.75/5 Stars). However, one member is opposed to impact fees because they can increase the cost of new construction housing.

Additional Input. Additional comments, concerns, or suggestions regarding the fire department's services, priorities, and financial planning.

"I appreciate the combination of excellent service, focus on team members and frugality displayed the department"

"I believe that the Dept. should be aggressive in going after a facilities and equipment bond measure - it's needed"

"I think we need a steady stream of educational material via social media at minimum to make the public aware of progress of department and anticipated growth and needs. I think this is important even before starting any kind of capital campaign for property tax levy that will cause a lot of heads to explode."

"I believe that the Fire District is moving forward with the correct balance of priorities."

"I think that existing facilities such as the fire house in Keyport should be repurposed for storage rather than building a new facility."

Summary.

The SAB finds that the Poulsbo Fire Department (PFD) continues to manage its fiduciary duties in a fiscally prudent and responsible manner. The PFD team demonstrates this through its planning efforts to seek and pursue alternative revenue sources, use of conservative revenue projections, use of strategic cost avoidance strategies, and frugal

2025 Poulsbo Fire Department - Strategic Advisory Board Review

November 2025

financial management practices. All which is realized by the public as service response remains best in the county; and the Poulsbo Fire Department continues to improve it's facilities and equipment.

As we move toward the new year 2026, the majority of the SAB members supports asking for a bond in 2026 for capital needs, but balanced with the use of reserve funds and a potential operations levy reduction.

Prepared by Doug Newell and Jim Schlachter