



January 13, 2012

VIA EMAIL

Chief Kevin Nalder  
Fire Department  
City of Kirkland  
123 Fifth Avenue  
Kirkland WA 98033-6189

**RE: Finn Hill Fire Station 24 Closure**

Dear Chief Nalder:

On behalf of the Finn Hill Neighborhood Alliance (FHNA), I would like to thank you for meeting with Ted Marx, Jeff Hoerth, Jon Pascal and me last week to discuss the upcoming fire station siting study for Finn Hill and the closure of Fire Station 24 on 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and NE 141<sup>st</sup> Street. We are very grateful for your time and your willingness to discuss these issues.

As we discussed, it is important to have a productive public meeting on January 18<sup>th</sup> in order to continue progress on identifying a feasible site for a new Finn Hill fire station. However, the closure of Fire Station 24 on December 31st has raised immediate concerns about emergency response services within the northern area of our neighborhood. These concerns and related questions about the changing role of the firefighter Reserve program are likely to arise at the public meeting. We ask that, in order to address legitimate neighborhood inquiries regarding Station 24, as well as to help keep the meeting focused on the fire station study, the City commit to providing Finn Hill residents promptly with answers to some basic but specific questions relating to the closure of Station 24.

Based on what we have heard from Finn Hill residents as well as our own review of the matter, we believe that the critical questions concern the following:

- **Lower Level of Service / Increase in Response Times:** We understand that Reserves staffed Fire Station 24 only during the evening hours and were equipped to respond only to medical emergency calls, although they did provide support to professional firefighters at fire incidents throughout the City. They were backed up on all calls to which they responded by professional fire fighters from other stations. According to the City's December 29 press release concerning

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(formerly Denny Creek Neighborhood Alliance)  
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the Reserves Program, the Reserves Station 24 answered an average of 150 calls per year, which we understand is well below the response levels experienced by other fire stations.

However, according to a 2010 Kirkland Fire Department report, more than 80 percent of the calls the Reserves answered were medical in nature, and because the reserves were trained and certified EMTs, they were able to treat and administer aid when they arrived at the scene. For those medical calls in the northern part of Finn Hill, we assume the Reserves arrived several minutes before the professional firefighters, who had to respond from Stations 25 or 27. It therefore appears that the Reserves in Station 24 have enhanced the service level for emergency medical response in northern Finn Hill beyond what can be provided by the fire fighters in Stations 25 and 27.

The community is entitled to know, we think, what the service level will be for medical emergency responses in northern Finn Hill now that Station 24 has been closed. More specifically, can you provide information and supporting back-up data that summarizes the response times for both Fire Station 24 Reserve personnel and the professional firefighters who responded to medical emergencies in northern Finn Hill during the evening hours over the past several years? Can you also summarize the impacts to response times or reduced levels of service for medical emergencies that could be expected due to the closure of Fire Station 24?

- Firefighter Reserve Program Proposal: The annual stipend for the Reserves is \$60,000. While we support the City's efforts to minimize expenditures, we would like to know if this is the extent of the cost savings that will result from closing Station 24 and terminating the Reserve program. (We also assume that any cost savings will affect only the finances of District 41, which Finn Hill neighbors still support through levies, and will not benefit Kirkland residents generally.)

We understand that the Reserves have offered to continue in their current capacity (staffing and responding to calls out of Fire Station 24 during the evening hours) without a stipend. This offer suggests that funding concerns are not the basis for terminating Reserve staffing at Station 24. If funding is not the issue, can the City explain why it should not continue the Reserve program for another 2 to 3 years until a new fire station is operational on Finn Hill?

- Simultaneous Operation of the Firefighter Reserve Program and Fire Corps: We understand the role of the firefighter reserves is transitioning to the Fire Corps Program, which is funded in part by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Fire Corps Program is designed to reduce the number of emergency calls for fire fighters and EMTs through community education. It would be helpful for Finn Hill residents to hear more about the effectiveness of this program and the extent of its adoption in other cities in Washington and across the country.

One of the requirements of the program is that participants can no longer directly respond to aid calls. Why is this the case? In any event, we continue to wonder why the Reserve and Fire Corps Programs could not exist simultaneously in order to supplement career firefighters in responding to aid calls until a new fire station is operational on Finn Hill. Is the management of both a Reserve and a Fire Corps Program a burden on City staff? With reduced tax revenues and all City departments being asked to reduce services, wouldn't the reserve program be one way to maintain levels of service in light of reduced funding?

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We believe that your specific written responses to these important questions will be very helpful to the community, and, to be candid, may illuminate the merits (or the disadvantages) of terminating the Reserve program at Station 24. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 206.972.9493 or by email at [scottkmorris@comcast.net](mailto:scottkmorris@comcast.net) if you would like to discuss these issues further.

Respectfully,

FINN HILL NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott Morris".

Scott Morris, President

cc: City Council  
Kurt Triplett  
Kari Page

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