

Gervais Fire Station & Regional Disaster Preparedness Funding Request Written Testimony 5-5-2023 – Capital Construction Committee Hearing

My name is Joe Budge and I am the Chief of the Woodburn Fire District. The fire district is requesting partial funding for the development of a new fire station in Gervais that will improve life safety to this underserved community and help meet large scale regional disaster preparedness needs.

Gervais lies within the boundary of the Woodburn Fire District. 81% of the 3,000 residents of this community are minorities and many have household incomes below the state poverty line. The current response time for fire and medical emergencies to Gervais is more than 10 minutes that is more than double the fire service industry standard for response time. As a result, the several house fires that occur each year in Gervais become heavily involved in fire before firefighters arrive and residents experiencing serious medical emergencies have a lower chance of survival.

The 2020 wildfires and the 2021 ice storm in the north Willamette Valley laid bare the need for improved disaster preparedness infrastructure. This project will provide a seismically stable large capacity fuel storage tank, house a potable water trailer that has been awarded to the fire district under a state SPIRE grant and serve as a training and operations base for more than 50 CERT volunteers from Woodburn and Gervais. CERT members fill a critical role in disaster response and recovery.

This project is shovel ready. Five acres of land have been purchased and the site has been approved for a fire station by Marion County. The project start is planned for early 2024.

In 2021 voters of the fire district approved a bond levy that will provide more than 2.5 million dollars of the project costs. Additional funding from the state is being sought to cover construction cost increases as a result of high inflation and the need to expand the facility to meet regional large scale disaster needs. The bond revenue has been collected and is ready for use.

Thank you for considering support of this important project that improve life safety for the Gervais Community and the entire region for many decades to come. Thank you for your time.