

**Chapter 52.14 RCW
COMMISSIONERS**

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RCW 52.14.010 Number—Qualifications—Insurance—Compensation and expenses—Service as volunteer firefighter. (1) The affairs of the district shall be managed by a board of fire commissioners composed initially of three registered voters residing in the district, except as provided otherwise in RCW 52.14.015, 52.14.020, and 52.14.140.

(2) (a) Each member of an elected board of fire commissioners shall each receive one hundred four dollars per day or portion thereof, not to exceed nine thousand nine hundred eighty-four dollars per year, for time spent in actual attendance at official meetings of the board or in performance of other services or duties on behalf of the district, except that a commissioner of a district which has an operating budget of \$10,000,000 or more may receive not more than 144 per diem payments at the per diem rate specified by the office of financial management, adjusted for inflation per subsection (4) of this section. Members serving in an ex officio capacity on a board of fire commissioners may not receive compensation, but shall receive necessary expenses in accordance with (b) of this subsection.

(b) Each member of a board of fire commissioners shall receive necessary expenses incurred in attending meetings of the board or when otherwise engaged in district business, and shall be entitled to receive the same insurance available to all firefighters of the district: PROVIDED, That the premiums for such insurance, except liability insurance, shall be paid by the individual commissioners who elect to receive it.

(c) Any commissioner may waive all or any portion of his or her compensation payable under this section as to any month or months

during his or her term of office, by a written waiver filed with the secretary as provided in this section. The waiver, to be effective, must be filed any time after the commissioner's election and prior to the date on which the compensation would otherwise be paid. The waiver shall specify the month or period of months for which it is made.

(3) The board shall fix the compensation to be paid the secretary and all other agents and employees of the district. The board may, by resolution adopted by unanimous vote, authorize any of its members to serve as volunteer firefighters without compensation. A commissioner actually serving as a volunteer firefighter may enjoy the rights and benefits of a volunteer firefighter.

(4) The dollar thresholds established in this section must be adjusted for inflation by the office of financial management every five years, beginning January 1, 2019, based upon changes in the consumer price index during that time period. "Consumer price index" means, for any calendar year, that year's annual average consumer price index, for Washington state, for wage earners and clerical workers, all items, compiled by the bureau of labor and statistics, United States department of labor. If the bureau of labor and statistics develops more than one consumer price index for areas within the state, the index covering the greatest number of people, covering areas exclusively within the boundaries of the state, and including all items shall be used for the adjustments for inflation in this section. The office of financial management must calculate the new dollar threshold and transmit it to the office of the code reviser for publication in the Washington State Register at least one month before the new dollar threshold is to take effect.

(5) A person holding office as commissioner for two or more special purpose districts or serving ex officio as commissioner as a member of the legislative authority of a city or town shall receive only that per diem compensation authorized for one of his or her official positions as compensation for attending an official meeting or conducting official services or duties while representing more than one district or representing a municipality and a district. However, such commissioner may receive additional per diem compensation if approved by resolution of the boards of an affected commission, city, or town. [2024 c 35 s 1. Prior: 2017 c 328 s 7; 2017 c 58 s 1; 2012 c 174 s 1; 2007 c 469 s 2; 1998 c 121 s 2; 1994 c 223 s 48; 1985 c 330 s 2; 1980 c 27 s 1; 1979 ex.s. c 126 s 31; 1973 c 86 s 1; 1971 ex.s. c 242 s 2; 1969 ex.s. c 67 s 1; 1967 c 51 s 1; 1965 c 112 s 1; 1959 c 237 s 4; 1957 c 238 s 1; 1945 c 162 s 3; 1939 c 34 s 22; Rem. Supp. 1945 s 5654-122. Formerly RCW 52.12.010.]

Purpose—1979 ex.s. c 126: See RCW 29A.60.280(1).

Terms of commissioners: RCW 52.14.060.

RCW 52.14.013 Commissioner districts—Creation—Boundaries. The board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district may adopt a resolution by unanimous vote causing a ballot proposition to be submitted to voters of the district authorizing the creation of commissioner districts. The board of fire commissioners shall create commissioner districts if the ballot proposition authorizing the creation of commissioner districts is approved by a simple majority vote of the voters of the fire protection district voting on the

proposition. Three commissioner districts shall be created for a fire protection district with three commissioners, five commissioner districts shall be created for a fire protection district with five commissioners, and seven commissioner districts shall be created for a fire protection district with seven commissioners. No two commissioners may reside in the same commissioner district.

No change in the boundaries of any commissioner district shall be made within one hundred twenty days next before the date of a general district election, nor within twenty months after the commissioner districts have been established or altered unless pursuant to RCW 29A.92.040 or 29A.92.110. However, if a boundary change results in one commissioner district being represented by two or more commissioners, those commissioners having the shortest unexpired terms shall be assigned by the commission to commissioner districts where there is a vacancy, and the commissioners so assigned shall be deemed to be residents of the commissioner districts to which they are assigned for purposes of determining whether those positions are vacant.

The population of each commissioner district shall include approximately equal population. Commissioner districts shall be redrawn as provided in chapter 29A.76 RCW. Commissioner districts shall be used as follows: (1) Only a registered voter who resides in a commissioner district may be a candidate for, or serve as, a commissioner of the commissioner district; and (2) only voters of a commissioner district may vote at a primary to nominate candidates for a commissioner of the commissioner district. Voters of the entire fire protection district may vote at a general election to elect a person as a commissioner of the commissioner district.

When a board of fire commissioners that has commissioner districts has been increased to five or seven members under RCW 52.14.015, the board of fire commissioners shall divide the fire protection district into five or seven commissioner districts before it appoints the two or four additional fire commissioners. The two or four additional fire commissioners who are appointed shall reside in separate commissioner districts in which no other fire commissioner resides. [2019 c 454 s 8; 2012 c 174 s 3; 1994 c 223 s 49; 1992 c 74 s 2.]

Retroactive application—Effective date—2019 c 454: See notes following RCW 29A.92.050.

Creation of commissioner districts upon merger: RCW 52.06.085.

RCW 52.14.015 Increase in the number of commissioners—Election.

In the event a board of commissioners of any fire protection district determines by resolution that it would be in the best interest of the district to increase the number of commissioners to five or seven, or in the event the board is presented with a petition signed by 10 percent of the registered voters resident within the district who voted in the last general municipal election calling for such an increase in the number of commissioners of the district, the board shall submit a resolution to the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the district is located requesting that an election be held. Upon receipt of the resolution, the legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties shall call a special election to be held within the fire protection

district at which election the following proposition shall be submitted to the voters substantially as follows:

Shall the board of commissioners of county fire protection district no. be increased from (three or five) members to (five or seven) members?

Yes
No

If the fire protection district is located in more than a single county, this proposition shall indicate the name of the district.

If the proposition receives a majority approval at the election, the board of commissioners of the fire protection district shall be increased to five or seven members. The additional members shall be appointed in the same manner as provided in RCW 52.14.020. [2021 c 34 s 1; 2012 c 174 s 4; 1994 c 223 s 50; 1990 c 259 s 14; 1989 c 63 s 20; 1984 c 230 s 85.]

RCW 52.14.017 Decrease in the number of commissioners—Election—Disposition of commissioner districts.

Except as provided in RCW 52.14.020, in the event a five-member or seven-member board of commissioners of any fire protection district determines by resolution that it would be in the best interest of the fire protection district to decrease the number of commissioners from five to three or from seven to five, or in the event the board is presented with a petition signed by ten percent of the registered voters resident within the district who voted in the last general municipal election calling for such a decrease in the number of commissioners of the district, the board shall submit a resolution to the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the district is located requesting that an election be held. Upon receipt of the resolution, the legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties shall call a special election to be held within the fire protection district at which election the following proposition shall be submitted to the voters substantially as follows:

Shall the board of commissioners of county fire protection district no. be decreased from five (seven) members to three (five) members?

Yes
No

If the fire protection district has commissioner districts, the commissioners of the district must pass a resolution, before the submission of the proposition to the voters, to either redistrict from five or seven commissioner districts to three or five commissioner districts or eliminate the commissioner districts. The resolution takes effect upon approval of the proposition by the voters.

If the fire protection district is located in more than a single county, this proposition shall indicate the name of the district.

If the proposition receives a majority approval at the election, the board of commissioners of the fire protection district shall be decreased to five or three members. The two members shall be decreased in accordance with RCW 52.06.085. [2012 c 174 s 5; 1997 c 43 s 1.]

RCW 52.14.020 Number of commissioners in district—Terms of first appointees. (1) In a fire protection district with elected commissioners that maintains a fire department consisting wholly of personnel employed on a full-time, fully-paid basis, there shall be five fire commissioners. A fire protection district with an annual budget of ten million dollars or more may have seven fire commissioners.

(2) (a) If two positions are created on boards of fire commissioners by this section, such positions shall be filled initially as for a vacancy, except that the appointees shall draw lots, one appointee to serve until the next general fire district election after the appointment, at which two commissioners shall be elected for six-year terms, and the other appointee to serve until the second general fire district election after the appointment, at which two commissioners shall be elected for six-year terms.

(b) If four positions are created on boards of fire commissioners by this section, such positions shall be filled initially as for a vacancy, except that the appointees shall draw lots, three appointees to serve until the next general fire district election after the appointment, at which three commissioners shall be elected for six-year terms and two commissioners shall be elected for four-year terms, and the other appointee to serve until the second general fire district election after the appointment, at which two commissioners shall be elected for six-year terms. [2017 c 328 s 8; 2012 c 174 s 2; 1984 c 230 s 29; 1971 ex.s. c 242 s 3. Formerly RCW 52.12.015.]

RCW 52.14.030 Polling places. The polling places for a fire protection district election may be located inside or outside the boundaries of the district, as determined by the auditor of the county in which the fire protection district is located, and the elections of the fire protection district shall not be held to be irregular or void on that account. [1994 c 223 s 51; 1984 c 230 s 31; 1939 c 34 s 24; RRS s 5654-124. Formerly RCW 52.12.030.]

RCW 52.14.050 Vacancies. Vacancies on a board of fire commissioners shall occur as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW. In addition, if a fire commissioner is absent from the district for three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings unless by permission of the board, the office shall be declared vacant by the board of commissioners. However, such an action shall not be taken unless the commissioner is notified by mail after two consecutive unexcused absences that the position will be declared vacant if the commissioner is absent without being excused from the next regularly scheduled meeting. Vacancies on a board of fire commissioners shall be filled as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW. [1994 c 223 s 52; 1989 c 63 s 21; 1984 c 238 s 2; 1977 c 64 s 1; 1974 ex.s. c 17 s 1; 1971 ex.s. c 153 s 1; 1939 c 34 s 26; RRS s 5654-126. Formerly RCW 52.12.050.]

RCW 52.14.060 Commissioner's terms. The initial three members of the board of fire commissioners shall be elected at the same election as when the ballot proposition is submitted to the voters authorizing the creation of the fire protection district. If the district is not authorized to be created, the election of the initial

fire commissioners shall be null and void. If the district is authorized to be created, the initial fire commissioners shall take office immediately when qualified. Candidates shall file for each of the three separate fire commissioner positions. Elections shall be held as provided in chapter 29A.52 RCW, with the county auditor opening up a special filing period as provided in RCW 29A.24.171 and 29A.24.181, as if there were a vacancy. The person who receives the greatest number of votes for each position shall be elected to that position. The terms of office of the initial fire commissioners shall be staggered as follows: (1) The person who is elected receiving the greatest number of votes shall be elected to a six-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year or a five-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year; (2) the person who is elected receiving the next greatest number of votes shall be elected to a four-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year or a three-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year; and (3) the other person who is elected shall be elected to a two-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year or a one-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year. The initial commissioners shall take office immediately when elected and qualified and their terms of office shall be calculated from the first day of January in the year following their election.

The term of office of each subsequent commissioner shall be six years. Each commissioner shall serve until a successor is elected and qualified and assumes office in accordance with RCW 29A.60.280. [2015 c 53 s 75; 1994 c 223 s 53; 1989 c 63 s 22; 1984 c 230 s 33; 1979 ex.s. c 126 s 33; 1939 c 34 s 27; RRS s 5654-127. Formerly RCW 52.12.060.]

Purpose—1979 ex.s. c 126: See RCW 29A.60.280(1).

RCW 52.14.065 Voluntary change to electoral system. The board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district may authorize a change to its electoral system pursuant to RCW 29A.92.040 by majority vote. [2018 c 113 s 208.]

Findings—Intent—Short title—2018 c 113: See RCW 29A.92.005 and 29A.92.900.

RCW 52.14.070 Oath of office. Before beginning the duties of office, each fire commissioner shall take and subscribe the official oath for the faithful discharge of the duties of office as required by RCW 29A.04.133, which oath shall be filed in the office of the auditor of the county in which all, or the largest portion of, the district is located. [2015 c 53 s 76; 1989 c 63 s 23; 1986 c 167 s 22; 1984 c 230 s 34; 1939 c 34 s 29; RRS s 5654-129. Formerly RCW 52.12.070.]

Severability—1986 c 167: See note following RCW 29A.16.040.

RCW 52.14.080 Chair—Secretary—Duties and oath. The fire commissioners shall elect a chair from their number and shall appoint a secretary of the district, who may or may not be a member of the

board, for such term as they shall by resolution determine. The secretary, if a member of the board, shall not receive additional compensation for serving as secretary.

The secretary of the district shall keep a record of the proceedings of the board, shall perform other duties as prescribed by the board or by law, and shall take and subscribe an official oath similar to that of the fire commissioners which oath shall be filed in the same office as that of the commissioners. [2010 c 8 s 15003; 1984 c 230 s 35; 1965 c 112 s 2; 1939 c 34 s 30; RRS s 5654-130. Formerly RCW 52.12.080.]

RCW 52.14.090 Office—Meetings. (1) The office of the fire commissioners and principal place of business of the district shall be at some place within the county in which the district is situated, to be designated by the board of fire commissioners.

(2) The board shall hold regular monthly meetings at a place and date as it determines by resolution, and may adjourn its meetings as required for the proper transaction of business. Special meetings of the board shall be called at any time under the provisions of RCW 42.30.080. [1984 c 230 s 36; 1947 c 254 s 8; 1939 c 34 s 31; Rem. Supp. 1947 s 5654-131. Formerly RCW 52.12.090.]

RCW 52.14.100 Meetings—Powers and duties of board. All meetings of the board of fire commissioners shall be conducted in accordance with chapter 42.30 RCW and a majority constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business. All records of the board shall be open to inspection in accordance with chapter 42.56 RCW. The board has the power and duty to adopt a seal of the district, to manage and conduct the business affairs of the district, to make and execute all necessary contracts, to employ any necessary services, and to adopt reasonable rules to govern the district and to perform its functions, and generally to perform all such acts as may be necessary to carry out the objects of the creation of the district. [2005 c 274 s 326; 1984 c 230 s 37; 1939 c 34 s 32; RRS s 5654-132. Formerly RCW 52.12.100.]

Open public meetings: Chapter 42.30 RCW.

RCW 52.14.110 Purchases and public works—Competitive bids required—Exceptions. (1) Insofar as practicable, purchases and any public works by the district shall be based on competitive bids. A formal sealed bid procedure shall be used as standard procedure for purchases and contracts for purchases executed by the board of commissioners. Formal sealed bidding shall not be required for:

(a) The purchase of any materials, supplies, or equipment if the cost will not exceed the sum of \$75,500. However, whenever the estimated cost does not exceed \$150,000, the commissioners may by resolution use the process provided in RCW 39.04.190 to award contracts;

(b) Contracting for work to be done involving the construction or improvement of a fire station or other buildings where the estimated cost will not exceed the sum of \$150,000 if more than a single craft or trade is involved with the public works project, or a public works

project in excess of \$75,500 if only a single craft or trade is involved with the public works project;

(c) Contracts using the small works roster process under RCW 39.04.151 through 39.04.154; and

(d) Any contract for purchases or public work pursuant to RCW 39.04.280 if an exemption contained within that section applies to the purchase or public work.

(2) A fire protection district may have its own regularly employed personnel perform work which is an accepted industry practice under prudent utility management without a contract. For purposes of this section, "prudent utility management" means performing work with regularly employed personnel utilizing material of a worth not exceeding \$300,000 in value without a contract. This limit on the value of material being utilized in work being performed by regularly employed personnel shall not include the value of individual items of equipment. For the purposes of this section, the term "equipment" includes but is not limited to conductor, cabling, wire, pipe, or lines used for electrical, water, fiber optic, or telecommunications.

(3) For the purposes of this section, "lowest responsible bidder" means a bid that meets the criteria under RCW 39.04.350 and has the lowest bid; provided, that if the district issues a written finding that the lowest bidder has delivered a project to the district within the last three years which was late, over budget, or did not meet specifications, and the district does not find in writing that such bidder has shown how they would improve performance to be likely to meet project specifications then the district may choose the second lowest bidder whose bid is within five percent of the lowest bid and meets the same criteria as the lowest bidder. [2023 c 395 s 30; 2023 c 255 s 5; 2019 c 434 s 12; 2009 c 229 s 9; 2001 c 79 s 1; 2000 c 138 s 209; 1998 c 278 s 5; 1993 c 198 s 11; 1984 c 238 s 3.]

Reviser's note: This section was amended by 2023 c 255 s 5 and by 2023 c 395 s 30, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

Effective date—2023 c 395 ss 1-30, 32-34, 36, and 37: See note following RCW 39.04.010.

Findings—Intent—2023 c 395: See note following RCW 39.04.010.

Effective date—2023 c 255 ss 1-5: See note following RCW 54.04.070.

Finding—Intent—2019 c 434: See note following RCW 35.23.352.

Purpose—Part headings not law—2000 c 138: See notes following RCW 39.04.010.

RCW 52.14.120 Purchases and public works—Competitive bidding procedures. (1) Notice of the call for bids shall be given by publishing the notice in a newspaper of general circulation within the district at least thirteen days before the last date upon which bids will be received. If no bid is received on the first call, the commissioners may readvertise and make a second call, or may enter into a contract without a further call.

(2) A public work involving three or more specialty contractors requires that the district retain the services of a general contractor as defined in RCW 18.27.010. [1993 c 198 s 12; 1984 c 238 s 4.]

RCW 52.14.130 Low bidder claiming error—Prohibition on later bid for same project. A low bidder who claims error and fails to enter into a contract with a fire protection district for a public works project is prohibited from bidding on the same project if a second or subsequent call for bids is made for the project. [1996 c 18 s 10.]

RCW 52.14.140 Governance authority of fire protection district.

(1) The members of the legislative authority of a city or town shall serve ex officio, by virtue of their office, as the fire commissioners of a fire protection district created under RCW 52.02.160.

(2) The legislative authority of a city or town may, within the initial resolution establishing the district's formation, relinquish governance authority of a fire protection district created under chapter 328, Laws of 2017 to an independently elected board of commissioners to be elected in accordance with RCW 52.14.060.

(3) (a) The legislative authority of a city or town may, by a majority vote of its members in an open public meeting, relinquish governance authority of a fire protection district created under chapter 328, Laws of 2017 to an appointed board of three fire commissioners at any time after formation. Each appointed commissioner serves until successors are elected at the next qualified election.

At the next qualified election, the person who receives the greatest number of votes for each commissioner position is elected to that position. The terms of office for the initial elected fire commissioners are staggered as follows:

(i) The person who is elected receiving the greatest number of votes is elected to a six-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or a five-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year;

(ii) The person who is elected receiving the next greatest number of votes is elected to a four-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or a three-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year; and

(iii) The other person who is elected is elected to a two-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or a one-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year. The term of office for each subsequent commissioner is six years.

(b) If the legislative authority of a city or town relinquishes governance authority of a fire protection district after formation under this section, and that fire protection district maintains a fire department consisting wholly of personnel employed on a full-time, fully paid basis, that district shall have five fire commissioners. The terms of office for the initial elected fire commissioners are staggered as follows:

(i) The two people elected receiving the two greatest number of votes are elected to six-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or five-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year;

(ii) The two people who are elected receiving the next two greatest number of votes are elected to four-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or three-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year; and

(iii) The other person who is elected is elected to a two-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or a one-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year. The term of office for each subsequent commissioner is six years.

(c) If the legislative authority of a city or town relinquishes governance authority of a fire protection district after formation under this section, and that fire protection district has an annual budget of ten million dollars or more, that district must have seven fire commissioners. The terms of office for the initial elected fire commissioners are staggered as follows:

(i) The three people who are elected receiving the three greatest number of votes are elected to six-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or five-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year;

(ii) The two people who are elected receiving the next two greatest number of votes are elected to four-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or three-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year; and

(iii) The other two people who are elected are elected to two-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or one-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year. The term of office for each subsequent commissioner is six years. [2017 c 328 s 6.]