

yet we just split our resources," he said. "This would streamline the effectiveness of the services we put out for a good portion of Mason County."

The districts train volunteers and staff the same way and perform many of the same functions, Bakken continued.

"We are the two biggest fire districts in Mason County, but as fire districts go in Washington state, we are probably below the middle as far as size," he said. "If we get a full-fledged structure fire, it is difficult to get the minimum number of firefighters we need on scene, so we're already calling Central Mason."

Mason County Fire District No. 2 formed in 1946, while the Allyn-Victor Fire District No. 5 formed in 1953. District 5 joined with the Shelton Fire Department in 2008.

North Mason Regional Fire Authority's annual budget is about \$4.1 million, with more than \$2.2 million allocated toward fire and \$785,990 toward emergency medical services.

Central Mason Fire & EMS' annual budget is more than \$5 million, with around \$2.9 million budgeted for fire service and about \$514,000 for emergency medical services.

Central Mason's fire and EMS levies (\$1.48 per

\$1,000 of assessed value of a home for fire and .25 per \$1,000 for EMS) are slightly lower than North Mason's \$1.50 for fire and .50 for EMS, meaning residents could see a rise or fall in their taxes were the districts to combine.

The NMRFA has six commissioners on its board, with the goal to reduce it to five by the end of the year, while Central Mason has three commissioners on its board.

Residents who might worry about a lack of representation from their fire district should speak with NMRFA commissioners, who have been through the process, Bakken said.

"I would challenge anyone with that concern to talk to the district commissioners and ask if they feel like they got run over," he said. "I would hope that they would find that was not correct. A new board will take a look at what type of governing structure and representation would be possible."

Looking ahead, both districts are struggling to recruit and retain volunteers and maintain decades-old fire stations and vehicles, Bakken said.

The need for joint training and an improved joint maintenance facility is also key, McKern added, so working to-

gether would help both districts strategize better for their futures.

Other fire districts have informally broached the topic of joining a new regional fire authority with North Mason and Central Mason.

"I think we started the ball with (merging with) District 8," Bakken said. "We are committed to making this the best possible project. I think the other districts will see the benefits for their district and may want to participate. That is the decision of those citizens."

Any decision to form a new regional fire authority would go before a vote of the public, after a

joint committee creates a plan.

"Through this exploration process, there are three words we're repeating: trust, commitment and integrity," McKern said. "We're going to stay the course."

Whether or not the authority is formed, the fact that the two districts are working together is momentous, Bakken said.

"I think anyone who has lived in Allyn or Belfair and knows the relationship between the two districts knows we have not always seen eye to eye," he said. "It is no longer about the politics or the board, it is truly about helping people out. It's historic. It really is."

Mason General Hospital & Family of Clinics elects board officers

SHELTON — Public Hospital District No.1, the governing body of Mason General Hospital & Family of Clinics, recently announced its officers on the board of commissioners for 2015.

Nancy Trucksess of Shelton was elected president of the three-person board. Scott Hilburn of Shelton is secretary, and Don Wilson of Potlatch is a trustee.

The board of commissioners meets at 8 a.m. every second and fourth Tuesday of the month (except holidays) in the Ellinor Room at Mason General Hospital.



PHOTO COURTESY OF
MASON GENERAL HOSPITAL
& FAMILY OF CLINICS
Nancy Trucksess was elected president of the MGH & FC Board of Commissioners.

Mason County seeks citizen volunteers

MASON COUNTY — Mason County is re-advertising for citizen volunteers to serve on the Transportation Improvement Program-Citizens Advisory Panel (TIP-CAP).

The mission of TIP-CAP is to represent citizen transportation interests drop Mason County for all modes of travel during the development of the six-year TIP.

The TIP-CAP will review and analyze Mason County transportation needs and present the recommendations to the board of Mason County

Commissioners. Members serve a two-year term with the first meeting in January 2015.

Mason County is seeking interested individuals from Commissioner District No. 2, the Belfair-Allyn and Hoodsport-Union

urban growth areas, and truck/freight industry to apply who represent transportation interests as spelled out in the current resolution establishing the advisory panel.

Interested persons may apply by obtaining an ap-

plication from the Mason County's Commissioners Office, 411 N. Fifth St., Shelton or by calling 427-9670, ext. 419 or from the county website www.co.mason.wa.us.

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Mason Transit Authority is pleased to make available space at the renovated Transit-Community Center at 601 W. Franklin St. in downtown Shelton.

Lease spaces can be built to suit needs of small businesses and offices

- \$1.50 /sf retail space • \$1.25 /sf program/office
- Gymnasium, commercial-catering kitchen, computer lab and conference rooms

leased hourly or daily basis for events and community gatherings.

The facility will provide a central location for all ages to meet, recreate and learn while connecting through public transit. Call Kathy at 360-432-5754 for details.

Rededication Ceremony April 1, @3pm!
with guest speaker, Governor Inslee!

Interested in learning more about tailoring your space or reserving a paver to support this project? Contact:

Kathy Geist
Transit-Community Center Manager, Mason Transit Authority
phone: 360-432-5754 | kgeist@masontransit.org

masontransit.org