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City of Othello begins discussion of potential fire district annexation
Public invited to Aug. 10 workshop on long-term fire service planning

OTHELLO, Wash.— The Othello City Council and city leadership are discussing the possibility of annexing the city into Adams County Fire Protection District #5 as a long-term approach to maintaining fire services for residents and businesses.

The City currently contracts with the Fire District for service. The agreement expires in 2027, and city leadership is preparing a recommendation for the City Council to consider. No decision has been made about annexation or placing a measure before voters.

“For more than 25 years, the City and Fire District have worked together to provide fire services to Othello residents,” said City Administrator Aaron Garza. “We are beginning this discussion now so the City Council and community have time to understand annexation and consider whether it is the right long-term approach.”

Adams County Fire District #5 responds to structure fires and wildland fires and provides rescue services in unincorporated Adams County and the City of Othello. Through its contract with the City, the Fire District also provides fire suppression, life safety programs, fire prevention, and building inspection services that support planning and development.

Property owners within the Fire District currently pay a fire levy of \$0.90 per \$1,000 of assessed property value directly to the district. Othello property owners pay the City’s general property tax levy, and the City uses a portion of that revenue to pay the Fire District for service. As the cost of fire service increases, the amount available for other city services is reduced.

Under annexation, all property owners served by the Fire District—including those in Othello—would pay the same fire levy rate directly to the district. The City Council would also determine whether any of the property tax revenue currently used for the fire service contract would remain with the City to support services such as police, parks and recreation, planning, and development.

If discussions continue, the City and Fire District would consider whether to place an annexation measure before voters. Any annexation measure would require voter approval in both jurisdictions to take effect.

Residents are encouraged to attend a City Council workshop at 5 p.m. Monday, Aug. 10, at Othello City Hall, 500 E. Main St., where city leaders will continue discussing the possibility of annexation. The workshop will be followed by the regular City Council meeting, and both meetings are open to the public. Additional opportunities for public information and discussion will be provided as the process continues.

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Adams County Fire Protection District #5 provides fire protection, rescue services, and emergency medical response to approximately 7,600 residents across 215 square miles in unincorporated Adams County. Through a contract with the City of Othello, the district also provides fire and rescue services to approximately 9,200 city residents. The district is staffed by five career firefighters and 31 volunteer emergency personnel.