



INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: **Finance Committee**

FROM: **Vicky Carlsen, Finance Director**

CC: **Mayor Ekberg**

DATE: **August 17, 2020**

SUBJECT: **Update Police and Fire false alarm fees**

ISSUE

Update fee schedule for false alarms

BACKGROUND

Fees for false alarms were last adjusted in 2014. As City resources are expended to respond to, and bill for false alarms, a restructure and an increase in false alarm fees is being proposed to deter the occurrence of false alarms and to help recoup City costs.

Responding to an Alarm

When an alarm monitoring company receives an alert that an alarm has been triggered, they call 911 to report the alarm. Valley Com procedures stipulates that the alarm company calls two phone numbers before calling 911 to dispatch. This is their verification process and is an attempt to reduce the number of false alarm. If there is no response from either phone call, or if someone does answer and requests help, then officers are dispatched.

The standard response for police is a minimum of two officers. When they arrive at the scene, they will walk the perimeter and check doors and windows for any signs of a break-in. If nothing suspicious is located and there are no signs of a break-in, they mark the incident report as a false alarm. The average length of a response to a police false alarm is 10-20 minutes, depending on the size of the business or residence.

Fire personnel are dispatched to an alarm in a similar manner. The average length of a response to a fire false alarm is 30-45 minutes, depending on the type of the business or residence. Most often more time is needed to re-set the alarm panel for a fire alarm as compared to the police response.

Costs to the City for responding to a false alarm include apparatus usage and personnel time spent responding to the alarm, as well as administrative time to bill and collect payment for the false alarm.

Current False Alarm Fees

The current structure for false alarm fees is as follows:

First two alarms: Free

Third alarm: \$150

Fourth and subsequent: \$200

The schedule resets each year which means every alarm owner is not charged for the first two false alarm responses each year. The current fee structure requires significant staff time each month to review all false alarms to determine if it is the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. alarm of the year.

DISCUSSION

False Alarm Statistics for the City

The table below represents the number of false alarms for both police and fire for the last three complete calendar years. A large percentage of false alarms are not billable because they are either the first or second false alarm in a calendar year. False alarm data from 2010-2012 has been included to demonstrate that the substantial fee increase in 2014 did not reduce the number of false alarms.

Year	Police # of False Alarms	Fire # of False Alarms
2019	1,030	611
2018	1,089	606
2017	1,037	713
2012	872	552
2011	810	632
2010	837	666

As a side note for fire false alarms, the total number of false alarms listed above includes false alarms outside of the City of Tukwila and are not billable. The average number of false alarms per year that would qualify as billable averages between 425 and 475.

Comparison of Surrounding Jurisdiction False Alarm Fees

The table below lists several surrounding jurisdictions and the fees they charge for false alarms. The table does not include information on alarm registration fees, alarm renewal fees, or other action that may be taken by the jurisdiction responding to a false alarm. Additionally, many of the cities that charge for false alarms have outsourced the billing function. Outsourcing the billing function would result in either additional fees to the alarm owner or reduced cost recovery to the City.

City	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th+
Auburn	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100
Federal Way	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50	\$ 100	\$ 150	\$ 200
Seattle	\$ 115	\$ 115	\$ 115	\$ 115	\$ 115	\$ 115
Burien	\$ 150	\$ 150	\$ 150	\$ 150	\$ 150	\$ 150
Des Moines	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 100	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200
Kent	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Renton	\$ -	\$ 100	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250
SeaTac	\$ -	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100
Tukwila (current fee)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 150	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200
Auburn	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200
Federal Way	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 75	\$ 150	\$ 225	\$ 300
Seattle	\$ 230	\$ 230	\$ 230	\$ 230	\$ 230	\$ 230

Source: City Codes, websites

Staff is recommending the following fee structure. The intent of the new fee structure is twofold. The new fee structure will streamline the review and billing process. A reduction in time spent reviewing and billing false alarms could be redirected to other responsibilities. An updated fee schedule could encourage alarm owners to take steps to reduce the number of false alarms. Decreasing the number of false alarm responses for both Police and Fire personnel will redirect time to responding to actual alarms.

The proposed and current fee schedule for false alarms follows:

False Alarm	Proposed Fee	Current Fee
First (lifetime for alarm owner)	\$0	\$0
Second	\$250	\$0
Third	\$250	\$150
Fourth and Subsequent	\$250	\$200

The recommended fee structure will keep the rates comparable with surrounding jurisdictions. Fees incurred in the new schedule will help to offset costs of responding to recurring false alarms.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council is being asked to approve the resolution and consider this item at the September 14, 2020 Committee of the Whole meeting and subsequent September 14, 2020 Regular Meeting Consent Agenda.

ATTACHMENTS

- Draft Resolution
- Draft Ordinance

DRAFT

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TUKWILA, WASHINGTON, REPEALING RESOLUTION NO. 1818, AND ADOPTING A FALSE ALARM FEE SCHEDULE.

WHEREAS, the City has reviewed the existing fee schedule for false alarms; and

WHEREAS, fees for false alarms have not been adjusted since 2014; and

WHEREAS, it has been determined that false alarm fees should be increased to encourage the reduction in number of false alarms and to recover some costs associated with responding to false alarms; and

WHEREAS, false alarm fees should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TUKWILA, WASHINGTON, HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. False alarm fees will be charged according to the following schedule, which shall supersede any previously adopted false alarm fees:

DESCRIPTION	FEE (effective 1/1/21)
First false alarm dispatch (one per alarm owner/user)*	\$0
Second and subsequent false alarm dispatch per alarm owner/user*	\$250
<i>*The first false alarm per alarm owner/user is a warning only. The false alarm fee will be imposed on the second and subsequent false alarms.</i>	

Section 2. Repealer. Resolution No. 1818 is hereby repealed.

Section 3. Effective Date. This resolution and the false alarm fee schedule contained herein shall be effective as of January 1, 2021.

PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TUKWILA, WASHINGTON, at a Special Meeting thereof this _____ day of _____, 2020.

ATTEST/AUTHENTICATED:

Christy O'Flaherty, MMC, City Clerk

De'Sean Quinn, Council President

APPROVED AS TO FORM BY:

Filed with the City Clerk: _____
Passed by the City Council: _____
Resolution Number: _____

Office of the City Attorney

DRAFT

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TUKWILA, WASHINGTON, AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 1363 (PART), AS CODIFIED AT TUKWILA MUNICIPAL CODE SECTION 8.08.040, "FALSE ALARM – FINES," TO REVISE LANGUAGE REGULATING FALSE ALARM FEES; REPEALING ORDINANCE NO. 2434; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 2434 amended Tukwila Municipal Code Section 8.08.040, which regulates fines for false alarms; and

WHEREAS, the fines for police and fire false alarms have not been adjusted since 2014; and

WHEREAS, it has been determined that false alarm fines should be increased to encourage the reduction in number of false alarms and to recover some costs associated with responding to false alarms; and

WHEREAS, false alarm fines should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TUKWILA, WASHINGTON, HEREBY ORDAINS AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. TMC Section 8.08.040 Amended. Ordinance No. 1363 (part), as codified at Tukwila Municipal Code Section 8.08.040, "False Alarm – Fines," is hereby amended to read as follows:

8.08.040 False Alarm – Fines

In the event that any department of the City receives or responds to a total of more than one false alarm of fire, intrusion, crime or other safety-related emergency at any single place of business, home, vehicle or other premises or place, the owner of said premises or place shall, within 10 days of receipt of written bill therefor, pay to the City the fee charged in accordance with the fee schedule to be adopted by resolution of the Tukwila City Council.

Section 2. Repealer. Ordinance No. 2434 is hereby repealed.

Section 3. Corrections by City Clerk or Code Reviser Authorized. Upon approval of the City Attorney, the City Clerk and the code reviser are authorized to make necessary corrections to this ordinance, including the correction of clerical errors; references to other local, state or federal laws, codes, rules, or regulations; or ordinance numbering and section/subsection numbering.

Section 4. Severability. If any section, subsection, paragraph, sentence, clause or phrase of this ordinance or its application to any person or situation should be held to be invalid or unconstitutional for any reason by a court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect the validity or constitutionality of the remaining portions of this ordinance or its application to any other person or situation.

Section 5. Effective Date. This ordinance or a summary thereof shall be published in the official newspaper of the City, and shall take effect and be in full force January 1, 2021.

PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TUKWILA, WASHINGTON, at a Special Meeting thereof this _____ day of _____, 2020.

ATTEST/AUTHENTICATED:

Christy O'Flaherty, MMC, City Clerk

Allan Ekberg, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM BY:

Filed with the City Clerk: _____

Passed by the City Council: _____

Published: _____

Effective Date: _____

Ordinance Number: _____

Office of the City Attorney