



December 1, 2021

To: Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty

From: Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood District

**RE: Staffing for Station 23**

Dear Commissioner Hardesty,

In recent months, our neighborhood has experienced several high profile fires. A tent fire spread to an adjacent four-storey apartment at SE 21st & Powell in September 2021. Several businesses burned to the ground on Hawthorne, including Lounge Lizard and Really Good Stuff in October 2021. And later in October, an empty house at SE 28th & Powell was totally destroyed along with severely damaging two adjacent residences. News reports quoted fire officials as stating that the house might have been saved if Station 23 had sufficient personnel to house a fire engine.

In addition to these events, I have personally witnessed two smaller tent fires in HAND in the past 4 months, and have seen piles of burned debris suggesting several others have occurred. We are very lucky that no one has been killed or seriously injured in these incidents. Fire, and fear of fire, has become an active issue in our neighborhood, and it pains me to inform my neighbors that the fire station closest to us is the only one in Portland that does not have an actively staffed fire engine. Our neighborhood, and those served by Station 23, deserve the same level of fire protection that other parts of Portland have.

Station 23, located at SE 13th & Gideon Street, has a fully functioning fire engine at the station, but it is only staffed with two people, meaning they can only respond to medical calls. It takes a four-person crew to respond to a fire. Every other fire station in Portland is staffed with a minimum of four people.

Because they are the only two-person station in Portland, Station 23 is often tasked with attending to low acuity medical emergencies all over the city, which means they are often unavailable in our area when we require emergency assistance. Despite having our own station, we are dependent on crews from neighboring engine houses and service areas, which means our residents face longer response times.

In addition to the time needed to travel from neighboring areas, crews unfamiliar with our neighborhood can be slowed by our geography. The Station 23 service area is complex, with irregular street patterns

such as in Ladd's Addition, and barriers such as the Brooklyn Yards and Powell Boulevard, which can only be crossed at certain locations. The area is bisected by the UPRR and MAX Orange Line tracks, as well as heavy rail along SE 2nd Ave; these trains block cross streets, with the heavy rail closing crossings for up to an hour several times per day. Because the MAX trains have heavy-rail style crossing arms, they can block crossings for one to two minutes, with up to 8 trains passing per hour. A team that is at home in the area and knows the street patterns and rhythms is able to adjust to blockades and complexities more readily, reducing response time.

We are concerned that we are at risk for delayed responses to both fire and medical events, delays that could make the difference when seconds are critical. A delayed response can quite literally mean the difference between life and death.

Our population is growing quickly, and calls for PF&R service have increased since Station 23 was re-opened in 2017. With a fully functioning fire engine sitting in the bay, the right thing to do is to provide PF&R with the staffing necessary to provide timely fire and EMS response to our neighborhoods.

Please provide a fully-staffed four-person crew for all three shifts at Station 23 so that we may have the same protection that other Portlanders enjoy.

Thank you,

Chris Eykamp,  
Chair, Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood District

cc: Mayor Wheeler  
Commissioner Mapps  
Commissioner Rubio  
Commissioner Ryan  
Fire Chief Sara Boone  
Central Eastside Industrial Council  
Brooklyn Action Corps.