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Statesman Journal

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Bryan Lee, fire chief at St. Paul Fire District, right, and Daniel Mullen, assistant fire chief, speak about the operations levy voters will decide on in the November election. PHOTOS BY KEVIN NERI/STATESMAN JOURNAL

St. Paul Fire District asks voters to approve operations levy

Bill Poehler Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

The number of calls the St. Paul Fire District responds to has skyrocketed. ● Between increasing medical calls and more fires, the small district providing service along several roads that have frequent crashes has been busy. ● St. Paul Fire District is asking voters to pass an operations levy that would charge property owners \$1.08 per \$1,000 of assessed value in the Nov. 4 election.

That levy would replace the expiring five-year, 85 cent per \$1,000 operating levy passed by voters in 2020, which concludes on June 30, 2026.

That levy allowed the department to staff at all times with paid paramedics for the first time and purchase equipment.

If the levy fails, money to fund operations would be tight.

“When we were doing the budget, we looked up what \$1.06 (the district’s permanent tax rate) would get us when this dries up, and we would be out of business in five years,” St. Paul fire chief Bryan Lee said. “We wouldn’t be able to fund it.”

If the levy passes, it would cost a property owner with an assessed value of \$250,000 an increase of about \$57.50 per year over the current levy.

The majority of the money from the levy would be used to continue to pay the increased costs to maintain the 24/7 coverage by paid paramedics.

The levy is expected to raise \$243,300 in the 2026-2027 fiscal year and \$1.3 million over the five years.

St. Paul Fire District receiving large number of calls

The St. Paul Fire District covers 35 square miles. It also provides ambulance service for 44 square miles.

The department responded to 314 calls for service in



The St. Paul Fire District covers 35 square miles and provides ambulance service for 44 square miles.

2024, with 132 of them medical calls and 69 for motor vehicle accidents, 20 for structure fires and 19 for grass fires.

As of the end of July 2025, the department answered 193 calls, which is on pace to exceed last year’s total.

Assistant chief Dan Mullen, a volunteer, said the department has transported 60 patients so far this year, as many as it budgeted for the entire year.

See OPERATIONS LEVY, Page 2A

1 dead, 1 injured in 2-alarm house fire in south Salem

Jonathan Williams

Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

One person died and another was injured in a two-alarm house fire in south Salem on the morning of Sept. 14, according to the Salem Fire Department.

Salem Fire said 911 received a call reporting the house fire at 6:23 a.m.

According to Pulsepoint, the fire was at a home in the 4000 block of Matthews Loop S.

Salem Fire said crews arrived and found the home heavily involved in the fire and requested a second alarm.

Crews began “an aggressive attack on the fire and conducted victim searches under extreme conditions” and found two people trapped, Salem Fire said.

Robert Wilson Parker, 93, was found dead. An 88-year-old woman was taken to Salem Health hospital and was in stable condition, according to Salem Fire and Salem Police spokesperson Jonathan Hardy.

The fire was under control in 20 minutes and did not impact neighboring homes, Salem Fire said. At least 20 units responded, according to Pulsepoint.

Salem Fire and Salem Police are investigating the incident.

Jonathan Williams is the news editor of the Statesman Journal. Reach him at jcwilliams1@salem.gannett.com

Oregon joins lawsuit against Trump over Columbia River agreement

Zach Urness

Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon joined tribes and environmental groups to restart a lawsuit against the federal government with the aim of protecting salmon runs on the Columbia River.

The groups cited a June Trump Administration decision to withdraw from a historic agreement reached two years ago that prioritized salmon restoration and clean energy.

In the previous agreement — between Oregon, Washington, the tribes and the National Wildlife Federation — the federal government said it would spend \$1 billion to help restore salmon runs and build new clean energy projects in the Pacific Northwest to replace the hydropower generated by the Lower Snake River dams, if they were ever removed.

However, on June 12, President Donald Trump pulled the federal government out of the agreement, saying that he was “protecting the American people from radical green agenda policies that make their lives more expensive,” a memorandum said.

See COLUMBIA RIVER, Page 2A



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