



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Melanie Harding, Chief Policy Analyst to the Mayor, City Manager's Office
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution – Renaming Fireman's Park to Firefighters' Park – May 4, 2021
DATE: April 23, 2021

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution renaming Fireman's Park, located at 801 A Street in Tacoma, to Firefighters' Park, aligning the name of this public park with the goals of the guiding City principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion, while continuing to recognize the history and many contributions of Tacoma's Fire Department.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Victoria R. Woodards, Councilmember Conor McCarthy, Councilmember Robert Thoms, Councilmember Catherine Ushka

BACKGROUND:

In 2014, the City Council adopted an Equity and Empowerment framework which made equity a guiding principle across the organization and committed the City to changing practices which created or sustained inequities. On August 20, 2019, the City Council approved Resolution 40408 amending the City's policy on place names and name changes. One of the primary recommendations for updating this policy was to align it with guiding City principles and include the concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion when considering place names and name changes throughout the City. The policy amendment also provided the Mayor and City Council with the authority to make naming proposals.

Fireman's Park is currently located at 801 A Street, Tacoma (see attached map).

Tacoma Fire Department (TFD) has been working to meet our organization-wide goal of having employees who reflect the diversity of Tacoma. Part of this work has included efforts to increase the representation of women in the TFD workforce. This renaming request seeks to acknowledge this work and align the name of this public park with the goals of the guiding City principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion, while continuing to recognize the history and many contributions of Tacoma's Fire Department.

While women remain underrepresented in the field, the national history of women in firefighting goes back more than 200 years. In 1818, Molly Williams was recorded as being the first female firefighter in the United States. As a slave in New York City, she became a member of Oceanus Engine Company #11, a volunteer engine company. During the blizzard of 1818, male firefighters were scarce due to an influenza outbreak and Williams took her place alongside male peers, pulling the pumper to a fire through the deep snow.

The city's first female firefighter, Eileen Lewis, joined TFD in 1981. In 2000, Lewis became TFD's first female fire chief and the first woman in the United States to lead a large municipal fire department.¹ That same year, under Lewis's leadership, Fire Station No. 10 gained national recognition for having one of the first all-female firefighting

¹ <https://www.tacomadailyindex.com/blog/tacoma-fire-chief-lewis-will-retire/581969/>



crews in the country.²

In addition to efforts to recruit a more racially diverse staff, targeted outreach to women is now a standard recruiting practice. TFD has partnered with our Human Resources Department on efforts like the 2019 “Women’s Firefighter Workshop.” In that workshop:

- Fifty women from the community attended to meet and speak with women serving as career firefighters;
- In addition to hearing from these experienced, highly-trained professionals, they were also provided hands on experiences and information on how to apply to join the Tacoma Fire Department.

In 2020, the Human Resources Department created virtual sessions due to COVID, and eighty women attended.

It is because of efforts like these that 13.4% (54) of TFD’s current 404 uniformed staff are women. This is significant because the percentage of women on almost all other departments across the nation is closer to 5%. Also, nine are Firefighter-Paramedics and seven serve in roles of supervision/leadership (including one who serves as an Assistant Chief). Additionally, one – Allyson Hinzman – was elected to serve as the President of the Firefighter’s union, IAFF Local 31, in December 2020. She is the first woman to do so.

In acknowledgment that this career is not for men alone, TFD Lieutenant Marja Stowell took the initiative to request the renaming of Fireman’s Park to Firefighters’ Park in 2019, noting that “changing the name fits with the city’s values of equity.”³ An online petition was circulated in May of 2019 as part of that effort.

In response to Lt. Stowell’s request and in alignment with Resolution No. 40408, Mayor Woodards announced an intent to bring forward a proposal to rename the park in March 2020 during that year’s State of the City Address. Her renaming proposal was delayed due to COVID-related restrictions on the legislation that could be brought forward in newly virtual public meetings as well as the need to pivot attention to emergency response efforts. This year, she proposes that a resolution renaming the park be considered on International Firefighters’ Day: May 4, 2021.

As the Tacoma News Tribune Editorial Board noted at the beginning of the pandemic “we can and should mark the progress made by females in all careers, especially those most historically dominated by males— and those who are exemplifying true Tacoma grit during the novel coronavirus emergency.”⁴

In addition to forward the City values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, this proposal strives to retain recognition of the history and many contributions of the Tacoma Fire Department.

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<https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article241377011.html#:~:text=%E2%80%9COut%20of%20410%20fire%20fighters,24%20firefighters%20includes%20nine%20women.>

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Tacoma was the first city in Washington State to establish a paid fire department. Within two weeks of the 1889 fire which caused extensive damage in Seattle, the Tacoma City Council voted to put its volunteer department on salary.⁵

On Saturday June 20, 1891 the Tacoma Fire Department moved into newly built Station No. 6 at 823 A Street. The two-story brick building, TFD's first brick fire station, also became the headquarters for the Fire Department. According to the Old City Hall Historic District Nomination, an adjacent park was completed in 1894 and popularly called Fireman's Park due to its co-location with Fire Station #6. While Fire Station #6 was torn down in 1974, Fireman's Park has retained its name to date.⁶

The park has recently been the subject of conversation around the deaccessioning of the Tacoma Totem Pole. The renaming of this park is not intended in any way to limit or restrict this process nor the placement of any future historical markers or art pieces relevant to other aspects of Tacoma's history.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

This request originated from a female lieutenant within the Tacoma Fire Department, and TFD leadership has expressed support of the change. An online petition was circulated in May 2019, which gathered a number of signatures. Mayor Woodards announced an intent to bring forward a proposal to rename the park in March 2020 during the State of the City Address. There was news coverage of the proposal to rename the park in March 2020.

In addition to last year's public announcement and as part of her outreach efforts, Mayor Woodards has sought the support of the Downtown Tacoma Partnership and IAFF Local 31. At Mayor Woodards request, staff provided notice to the City of Tacoma's Landmarks Preservation Commission on April 22, 2021, prior to City Council discussion of this item in Study Session.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility: (Mandatory)

Women are underrepresented in firefighting across the nation, making up roughly 5% of uniformed staff. Tacoma Fire Department has been a national leader in the representation and leadership of women in firefighting for more than two decades. This change in name reflects the contributions and service of all the City's firefighters.

Civic Engagement: Equity Index Score: N/A

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

Livability: Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).

Meeting the goal that City of Tacoma staff reflect the diversity of the community they serve requires people of all backgrounds to be able to envision a career in local government. Changing the name of this park will forward this goal, as the new name will better communicate that firefighting is a career for people of all genders.

⁵ https://www.iafflocal31.com/?zone=/unionactive/view_page.cfm&page=Local203120History

⁶ <https://cdm17061.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p17061coll21/id/12576/rec/3>



ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Do not change the name of the park	No change in signage or language will be needed	The contributions of firefighters who are not men are not acknowledged and the park name perpetuates the perception of firefighting as a male-only field
2.		
3.		

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

If the resolution is passed, the Mayor’s Office will work with Public Works on an update to the signage at the park.

STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

The sponsors recommend passage of the resolution and the renaming of the park.

FISCAL IMPACT:

In consultation with Public Works staff, the current sign is nearing the end of its useful life and the cost of replacing it with a sign of the same style can be covered within the existing budget.

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1. N/A			
2.			
TOTAL			

What Funding is being used to support the expense?

Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium’s current budget?

YES
 IN CONSULTATION WITH PUBLIC WORKS STAFF, THE CURRENT SIGN IS NEARING THE END OF ITS USEFUL LIFE AND THE COST OF REPLACING IT WITH A SIGN OF THE SAME STYLE CAN BE COVERED WITHIN THE EXISTING BUDGET.

Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?

YES

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

No

Will the legislation change the City’s FTE/personnel counts?

No



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment A – Fireman’s Park Map
- Attachment B – Historic Photo of Fire Station #6
- Attachment C – Letter of Support from Allyson Hinzman, President of Tacoma Firefighters Local #31