

**Chapter 52.04 RCW  
ANNEXATION**

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*Merger of part of district with adjacent district: RCW 52.06.090.*

**RCW 52.04.001 Actions subject to review by boundary review board.** Actions taken under chapter 52.04 RCW may be subject to potential review by a boundary review board under chapter 36.93 RCW. [1989 c 84 § 42.]

**RCW 52.04.011 Annexation of territory by election method—Procedure—Indebtedness—Election dispensed with, when.** (1) A territory located within reasonable proximity to a fire protection district and not within the boundaries of a city, town, or other fire protection district may be annexed to the fire protection district by petition of fifteen percent of the qualified registered electors residing within the territory proposed to be annexed. Such territory

may be located in a county or counties other than the county or counties within which the fire protection district is located. The petition shall be filed with the fire commissioners of the fire protection district and if the fire commissioners concur in the petition they shall file the petition with the county auditor of the county within which the territory is located. If this territory is located in more than one county, the original petition shall be filed with the auditor of the county within which the largest portion of the territory is located, who shall be designated as the lead auditor, and a copy shall be filed with the auditor of each other county within which such territory is located. Within thirty days after the date of the filing of the petition the auditor shall examine the signatures on the petition and certify to the sufficiency or insufficiency of the signatures. If this territory is located in more than one county, the auditor of each other county who receives a copy of the petition shall examine the signatures and certify to the lead auditor the number of valid signatures and the number of registered voters residing in that portion of the territory that is located within the county. The lead auditor shall certify the sufficiency or insufficiency of the signatures.

After the county auditor has certified the sufficiency of the petition, the county legislative authority or authorities, or the boundary review board or boards, of the county or counties in which such territory is located shall consider the proposal under the same basis that a proposed incorporation of a fire protection district is considered, with the same authority to act on the proposal as in a proposed incorporation, as provided under chapter 52.02 RCW. If the proposed annexation is approved by the county legislative authority or boundary review board, the board of fire commissioners shall adopt a resolution requesting the county auditor to call a special election, as specified under RCW 29A.04.330, at which the ballot proposition is to be submitted. No annexation shall occur when the territory proposed to be annexed is located in more than one county unless the county legislative authority or boundary review board of each county approves the proposed annexation.

(2) The county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties within which such territory is located have the authority and duty to determine on an equitable basis, the amount of any obligation which the territory to be annexed to the district shall assume to place the property owners of the existing district on a fair and equitable relationship with the property owners of the territory to be annexed as a result of the benefits of annexing to a district previously supported by the property owners of the existing district. If a boundary review board has had its jurisdiction invoked on the proposal and approves the proposal, the county legislative authority of the county within which such territory is located may exercise the authority granted in this subsection and require such an assumption of indebtedness. This obligation may be paid to the district in yearly benefit charge installments to be fixed by the county legislative authority. This benefit charge shall be collected with the annual tax levies against the property in the annexed territory until fully paid. The amount of the obligation and the plan of payment established by the county legislative authority shall be described in general terms in the notice of election for annexation and shall be described in the ballot proposition on the proposed annexation that is presented to the voters for their approval or rejection. Such benefit charge shall be limited to an amount not to exceed a total of fifty cents per thousand

dollars of assessed valuation: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, That the special election on the proposed annexation shall be held only within the boundaries of the territory proposed to be annexed to the fire protection district.

(3) On the entry of the order of the county legislative authority incorporating the territory into the existing fire protection district, the territory shall become subject to the indebtedness, bonded or otherwise, of the existing district. If the petition is signed by sixty percent of the qualified registered electors residing within the territory proposed to be annexed, and if the board of fire commissioners concur, an election in the territory and a hearing on the petition shall be dispensed with and the county legislative authority shall enter its order incorporating the territory into the existing fire protection district. [2018 c 28 § 1; 2015 c 53 § 73; 1999 c 105 § 1; 1989 c 63 § 8; 1984 c 230 § 22; 1973 1st ex.s. c 195 § 49; 1965 ex.s. c 18 § 1; 1959 c 237 § 3; 1947 c 254 § 5; 1945 c 162 § 2; 1941 c 70 § 3; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-116a. Formerly RCW 52.08.060.]

**Severability—Effective dates and termination dates—Construction—1973 1st ex.s. c 195:** See notes following RCW 84.52.043.

**RCW 52.04.021 Annexation by petition method—Alternative to election method.** The method of annexation provided for in RCW 52.04.031, 52.04.041, and 52.04.051 shall be an alternate method to that specified in RCW 52.04.011. [1984 c 230 § 23; 1965 c 59 § 1. Formerly RCW 52.08.065.]

**RCW 52.04.031 Annexation by petition method—Petition—Signers—Content.** A petition for annexation of an area located within reasonable proximity to a fire district shall be in writing, addressed to and filed with the board of fire commissioners of the district to which annexation is desired. Such territory may be located in a county or counties other than the county or counties within which the fire protection district is located. It must be signed by the owners, according to the records of the county auditor or auditors, of not less than sixty percent of the area of land included in the annexation petition, shall set forth a legal description of the property and shall be accompanied by a plat which outlines the boundaries of the property to be annexed. The petition shall state the financial obligation, if any, to be assumed by the area to be annexed.

For the purposes of this section, "reasonable proximity" has the same meaning as in RCW 52.26.020. [2018 c 28 § 4; 1999 c 105 § 2; 1989 c 63 § 9; 1984 c 230 § 24; 1965 c 59 § 2. Formerly RCW 52.08.066.]

**RCW 52.04.041 Annexation by petition method—Hearing—Notice.** If the petition for annexation filed with the board of commissioners complies with the requirements of law, the board may accept the petition, fix a date for public hearing, and publish notice of the hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in the area proposed to be annexed and also post the notice in three public places within the area proposed for annexation. The notice shall specify the time and

place of the hearing and invite interested persons to attend. The expense of publication of the notice shall be paid by the district. [1984 c 230 § 25; 1965 c 59 § 3. Formerly RCW 52.08.067.]

**RCW 52.04.051 Annexation by petition method—Resolution providing for annexation.** After the hearing, the board of fire commissioners shall determine by resolution whether the area shall be annexed. It may annex all or any portion of the proposed area but may not include in the annexation property not described in the petition. The proposed annexation shall be subject to action by the county legislative authority, as provided under RCW 52.04.011, to the same extent as if the annexation were done under the election method of annexation. If the area proposed to be annexed under this procedure is reduced, the annexation shall occur only if the owners of not less than sixty percent of the remaining area have signed the petition. After adoption of the resolution a copy shall be filed with the county legislative authority or authorities within which the territory is located. [1989 c 63 § 10; 1984 c 230 § 26; 1965 c 59 § 4. Formerly RCW 52.08.068.]

**RCW 52.04.056 Withdrawal or reannexation of areas.** (1) As provided in this section, a fire protection district may withdraw areas from its boundaries, or reannex areas into the fire protection district that previously had been withdrawn from the fire protection district under this section.

(2) The withdrawal of an area shall be authorized upon: (a) Adoption of a resolution by the board of fire commissioners requesting the withdrawal and finding that, in the opinion of the board, inclusion of this area within the fire protection district will result in a reduction of the district's tax levy rate under the provisions of RCW 84.52.010; and (b) adoption of a resolution by the city or town council approving the withdrawal, if the area is located within the city or town, or adoption of a resolution by the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties within which the area is located approving the withdrawal, if the area is located outside of a city or town. A withdrawal shall be effective at the end of the day on the thirty-first day of December in the year in which the resolutions are adopted, but for purposes of establishing boundaries for property tax purposes, the boundaries shall be established immediately upon the adoption of the second resolution.

The authority of an area to be withdrawn from a fire protection district as provided under this section is in addition, and not subject, to the provisions of RCW 52.04.101.

The withdrawal of an area from the boundaries of a fire protection district shall not exempt any property therein from taxation for the purpose of paying the costs of redeeming any indebtedness of the fire protection district existing at the time of the withdrawal.

(3) An area that has been withdrawn from the boundaries of a fire protection district under this section may be reannexed into the fire protection district upon: (a) Adoption of a resolution by the board of fire commissioners proposing the reannexation; and (b) adoption of a resolution by the city or town council approving the reannexation, if the area is located within the city or town, or adoption of a

resolution by the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties within which the area is located approving the reannexation, if the area is located outside of a city or town. The reannexation shall be effective at the end of the day on the thirty-first day of December in the year in which the adoption of the second resolution occurs, but for purposes of establishing boundaries for property tax purposes, the boundaries shall be established immediately upon the adoption of the second resolution. Referendum action on the proposed reannexation may be taken by the voters of the area proposed to be reannexed if a petition calling for a referendum is filed with the city or town council, or county legislative authority or authorities, within a thirty-day period after the adoption of the second resolution, which petition has been signed by registered voters of the area proposed to be reannexed equal in number to ten percent of the total number of the registered voters residing in that area.

If a valid petition signed by the requisite number of registered voters has been so filed, the effect of the resolutions shall be held in abeyance and a ballot proposition to authorize the reannexation shall be submitted to the voters of the area at the next special election date according to RCW 29A.04.330. Approval of the ballot proposition authorizing the reannexation by a simple majority vote shall authorize the reannexation. [2006 c 344 § 33; 1989 c 63 § 11; 1987 c 138 § 3.]

**Effective date—2006 c 344 §§ 1-16 and 18-40:** See note following RCW 29A.04.311.

**RCW 52.04.061 Annexation of proximate city or town—Procedure—Definition.** (1) A city or town located within reasonable proximity to a fire protection district may be annexed to such district if at the time of the initiation of annexation the population of the city or town is 300,000 or less. The legislative authority of the city or town may initiate annexation by the adoption of an ordinance stating an intent to join the fire protection district and finding that the public interest will be served thereby. If the board of fire commissioners of the fire protection district shall concur in the annexation, notification thereof shall be transmitted to the legislative authority or authorities of the counties in which the city or town and the district are situated.

(2) For the purposes of this section, "reasonable proximity" means geographical areas near enough to each other so that governance, management, and services can be delivered effectively. [2017 c 326 § 1; 2010 c 136 § 2; 2009 c 115 § 1; 1999 c 105 § 3; 1985 c 313 § 1; 1979 ex.s. c 179 § 1. Formerly RCW 52.04.170.]

**RCW 52.04.071 Annexation of proximate city or town—Election.** The county legislative authority or authorities shall by resolution call a special election to be held in the city or town and in the fire protection district at the next date according to RCW 29A.04.321, and shall cause notice of the election to be given as provided for in RCW 29A.52.355.

The election on the annexation of the city or town into the fire protection district shall be conducted by the auditor of the county or counties in which the city or town and the fire protection district

are located in accordance with the general election laws of the state. The results thereof shall be canvassed by the canvassing board of the county or counties. No person is entitled to vote at the election unless he or she is a qualified elector in the city or town or unless he or she is a qualified elector within the boundaries of the fire protection district. The ballot proposition shall be in substantially the following form:

"Shall the city or town of . . . . . be annexed to and be a part of . . . . . fire protection district?

YES . . . . .  
NO . . . . . "

If a majority of the persons voting on the proposition in the city or town and a majority of the persons voting on the proposition in the fire protection district vote in favor thereof, the city or town shall be annexed and shall be a part of the fire protection district. [2017 c 326 § 2; 2011 c 10 § 82; 2009 c 115 § 2; 2006 c 344 § 34; 1984 c 230 § 16; 1979 ex.s. c 179 § 2. Formerly RCW 52.04.180.]

**Notice to registered poll voters—Elections by mail—2011 c 10:** See note following RCW 29A.04.008.

**Effective date—2006 c 344 §§ 1-16 and 18-40:** See note following RCW 29A.04.311.

*Elections: Title 29A RCW.*

**RCW 52.04.081 Annexation of proximate city or town—Annual tax levies—Limitations.** The annual tax levies authorized by chapter 52.16 RCW shall be imposed throughout the fire protection district, including any city or town annexed thereto. Any city or town annexed to a fire protection district is entitled to levy up to three dollars and sixty cents per thousand dollars of assessed valuation less any regular levy made by the fire protection district or by a library district under RCW 27.12.390 in the incorporated area: PROVIDED, That the limitations upon regular property taxes imposed by chapter 84.55 RCW apply. [2017 c 326 § 3; 2009 c 115 § 3; 1984 c 230 § 17; 1979 ex.s. c 179 § 4. Formerly RCW 52.04.190.]

**RCW 52.04.091 Additional territory annexed by city to be part of district.** When any city, code city, or town is annexed to a fire protection district under RCW 52.04.061 and 52.04.071, thereafter, any territory annexed by the city shall also be annexed and be a part of the fire protection district. [2017 c 326 § 4; 2009 c 115 § 4; 1989 c 76 § 1.]

**RCW 52.04.101 Withdrawal by annexed city or town—Election.** The legislative body of such a city or town which has annexed to such a fire protection district may, by resolution, present to the voters of such city or town a proposition to withdraw from said fire protection district at any general election held at least three years following the annexation to the fire protection district. If the voters approve such a proposition to withdraw from said fire protection district, the

city or town shall have a vested right in the capital assets of the district proportionate to the taxes levied within the corporate boundaries of the city or town and utilized by the fire protection district to acquire such assets. [2017 c 326 § 5; 2009 c 115 § 5; 1979 ex.s. c 179 § 3. Formerly RCW 52.04.200.]

**RCW 52.04.111 Annexation of city, code city, or town—Transfer of employees.** (1) When any city, code city, or town is annexed to a fire protection district under RCW 52.04.061 and 52.04.071, any employee of the fire department of such city, code city, or town who: (a) Was at the time of annexation employed exclusively or principally in performing the powers, duties, and functions which are to be performed by the fire protection district; (b) will, as a direct consequence of annexation, be separated from the employ of the city, code city, or town; and (c) can perform the duties and meet the minimum requirements of the position to be filled, then such employee may transfer his or her employment to the fire protection district as provided in this section and RCW 52.04.121 and 52.04.131.

(2) For purposes of this section and RCW 52.04.121 and 52.04.131, employee means an individual whose employment with a city, code city, or town has been terminated because the city, code city, or town was annexed by a fire protection district for purposes of fire protection. [2017 c 326 § 6; 2010 c 8 § 15001; 2009 c 115 § 6; 1986 c 254 § 10.]

**RCW 52.04.121 Annexation of city, code city, or town—Transfer of employees—Rights and benefits.** (1) An eligible employee may transfer into the fire protection district civil service system, if any, or if none, then may request transfer of employment under this section by filing a written request with the board of fire commissioners of the fire protection district and by giving written notice to the legislative authority of the city, code city, or town. Upon receipt of such request by the board of fire commissioners the transfer of employment shall be made. The employee so transferring will: (a) Be on probation for the same period as are new employees of the fire protection district in the position filled, but if the transferring employee has already completed a probationary period as a firefighter prior to the transfer, then the employee may only be terminated during the probationary period for failure to adequately perform assigned duties, not meeting the minimum qualifications of the position, or behavior that would otherwise be subject to disciplinary action; (b) be eligible for promotion no later than after completion of the probationary period; (c) receive a salary at least equal to that of other new employees of the fire protection district in the position filled; and (d) in all other matters, such as retirement, vacation, and sick leave, have all the rights, benefits, and privileges to which he or she would have been entitled as an employee of the fire protection district from the beginning of employment with the city, code city, or town fire department: PROVIDED, That for purposes of layoffs by the annexing fire agency, only the time of service accrued with the annexing agency shall apply unless an agreement is reached between the collective bargaining representatives of the employees of the annexing and annexed fire agencies and the annexing and annexed fire agencies. The city, code city, or town shall, upon receipt of such notice, transmit to the board of fire

commissioners a record of the employee's service with the city, code city, or town which shall be credited to such employee as a part of the period of employment in the fire protection district. All accrued benefits are transferable provided that the recipient agency provides comparable benefits. All benefits shall then accrue based on the combined seniority of each employee in the recipient agency.

(2) As many of the transferring employees shall be placed upon the payroll of the fire protection district as the district determines are needed to provide services. These needed employees shall be taken in order of seniority and the remaining employees who transfer as provided in this section and RCW 52.04.111 and 52.04.131 shall head the list for employment in the civil service system in order of their seniority, to the end that they shall be the first to be reemployed in the fire protection district when appropriate positions become available: PROVIDED, That employees who are not immediately hired by the fire protection district shall be placed on a reemployment list for a period not to exceed thirty-six months unless a longer period is authorized by an agreement reached between the collective bargaining representatives of the employees of the annexing and annexed fire agencies and the annexing and annexed fire agencies. [2017 c 326 § 7; 2009 c 115 § 7; 1994 c 73 § 4; 1986 c 254 § 11.]

**Effective date—1994 c 73:** See note following RCW 35.10.365.

**RCW 52.04.131 Annexation of city, code city, or town—Transfer of employees—Notice—Time limitation.** When a city, code city, or town is annexed to a fire protection district and as a result any employee is laid off who is eligible to transfer to the fire protection district pursuant to this section and RCW 52.04.111 and 52.04.121, the city, code city, or town shall notify the employee of the right to transfer and the employee shall have ninety days to transfer employment to the fire protection district. [2017 c 326 § 8; 2009 c 115 § 8; 1986 c 254 § 12.]

**RCW 52.04.141 Annexation of contiguous territory not in same county.** Any attempted annexation in 1987 and thereafter by a fire protection district of contiguous territory, that is located in a county other than the county in which the fire protection district was located, is validated where the annexation would have occurred if the territory had been located in the same county as the fire protection district. The effective date of such annexations occurring in 1987 shall be February 1, 1988, for purposes of establishing the boundaries of taxing districts for purposes of imposing property taxes as provided in RCW 84.09.030.

Any reference to a county official of the county in which a fire protection district is located or proposed to be located shall be deemed to refer to the appropriate county official of each county in which the fire protection district is located or proposed to be located. [1988 c 274 § 12.]

**Purpose—Severability—1988 c 274:** See notes following RCW 84.52.010.



**RCW 52.04.151 Annexation of territory not in same county—**  
**District name.** Any fire protection district located in a single county that annexes territory in another county shall be identified by the name of each county in which the fire protection district is located, listed alphabetically, followed by a number that is the next highest number available for a fire protection district in the one of these counties that has the greatest number of fire protection districts. [1989 c 63 § 12.]

**RCW 52.04.161 Newly incorporated city or town deemed annexed by district—Withdrawal.** If the area of a newly incorporated city or town is located in one or more fire protection districts, the city or town is deemed to have been annexed by the fire protection district or districts effective immediately on the city's or town's official date of incorporation, unless the city or town council adopts a resolution during the interim transition period precluding the annexation of the newly incorporated city or town by the fire protection district or districts. The newly incorporated city or town shall remain annexed to the fire protection district or districts for the remainder of the year of the city's or town's official date of incorporation, or through the following year if such extension is approved by resolution adopted by the city or town council and by the board or boards of fire commissioners, and shall be withdrawn from the fire protection district or districts at the end of this period, unless a ballot proposition is adopted by the voters providing for annexation of the city or town to one fire protection district or providing for the fire protection district or districts to annex only that area of the city or town located within the district. Such election shall be held pursuant to RCW 52.04.071 where possible, provided that in annexations to more than one fire protection district, the qualified elector shall reside within the boundaries of the appropriate fire protection district or in that area of the city located within the district.

If the city or town is withdrawn from the fire protection district or districts, the maximum rate of the first property tax levy that is imposed by the city or town after the withdrawal is calculated as if the city or town never had been annexed by the fire protection district or districts. [2003 c 253 § 1; 1993 c 262 § 1.]

**RCW 52.04.171 Annexation of property subject to excess levy—**  
**Repayment of voter-approved indebtedness.** All property located within the boundaries of a city, or town annexing into a fire protection district, which property is subject to an excess levy by the city or town for the repayment of voter-approved indebtedness for fire protection related capital improvements incurred prior to the effective date of the annexation, is exempt from voter-approved excess property taxes levied by the annexing fire protection district for the repayment of indebtedness issued prior to the effective date of the annexation. [2017 c 326 § 9; 2010 c 63 § 1.]

**Effective date—2010 c 63:** "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 15, 2010]." [2010 c 63 § 2.]

**RCW 52.04.181 Final report—Fees assessed for fire protection—Findings—Annexation of parcels by local fire districts—Authority—Procedure.** (1) On September 13, 2017, the joint legislative audit and review committee distributed the 17-06 final report: Fees assessed for forest fire protection. The report identified more than twenty thousand parcels of land that do not pay the forest fire protection assessment or a local fire district levy but are likely still protected by the department of natural resources or a local fire district.

The legislature finds that fire protection services at the state and local level are vital to the preservation of public and personal property throughout the state. The legislature further finds that fire protection resources are very limited in carrying out the substantial duties that fire protection services are asked to perform. Therefore, properties that benefit from fire protection should be required to contribute to the operation and maintenance of such essential services.

(2) (a) A local fire district may propose to annex any parcel or parcels having all boundaries of the property wholly within the external boundary of the requesting local fire district if such parcel or parcels are not presently being assessed a local fire district levy.

(b) Prior to annexing a parcel or parcels under this section the local fire district must:

(i) Verify with the county assessor that the parcel or parcels have all boundaries of the property wholly within the external boundary of the requesting local fire district and are not presently assessed a local fire district levy;

(ii) Notify the owner of record of each parcel in writing no less than sixty days prior to conducting a public hearing that the local fire district is seeking to annex the parcel; and

(iii) Hold at least one public hearing on the proposed annexation.

(3) Following the hearing, the local fire district must determine by resolution whether any parcel will be annexed. After adoption of the resolution, the local fire district must send a copy to the county legislative authority, the county assessor, and the owner of record of any parcel proposed to be annexed. The resolution must include a list of all parcels proposed to be annexed.

(4) Within thirty days of notification of the resolution, the owner of record of a parcel proposed to be annexed may appeal the proposed annexation to the county legislative authority. Issues raised under appeal may include compliance with the process established under this section, whether the parcel is presently being assessed a local fire district levy, whether the levied amount is consistent with local fire district levy amounts, whether the local fire district actually has the resources to provide the parcel or parcels with timely service. The county legislative authority may address multiple appeals at the same hearing. The decision of the county legislative authority or its designee is not appealable.

(5) If the proposed annexation is upheld or no appeal is made within thirty days of notification of the resolution, the county legislative authority must approve the proposed annexation of any parcel or parcels of land submitted under subsection (3) of this section into the local fire district. The order must include a

description of the property to be annexed and the effective date of the annexation. The order is not subject to referendum.

(6) A notice of intention must be filed with the boundary review board created under RCW 36.93.030. However, the jurisdiction of the board may not be invoked as described in RCW 36.93.100 for annexations under this section.

(7) Any local fire district levy to be imposed on a parcel annexed in accordance with this section may not be assessed until the next tax assessment cycle following the annexation.

(8) Annexations of a parcel or parcels of land under this section must be initiated by January 1, 2021.

(9) For the purposes of this section, "local fire district" means a fire district, regional fire protection service authority, city, or town.

(10) The annexation process established under this section is not exclusive and does not limit annexation through other statutory authorities. [2019 c 178 § 1.]