

Watchmen Voter Guide for Northside Fire District – Fire Commissioner Subdistrict 3

** Click on each candidate's name to see their completed questionnaire **

	Robert Howard	Vernon Roof
1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?	Bob Howard Northside Fire Commissioner	Vernon Roof. Running for re-election to Northside Fire / Subdistrict 3 Fire Commissioner. It has been my privilege to serve as fire commissioner for the last four years and would like the opportunity to serve the citizens for another term.
2. How could your fire district be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.	Give Volunteers motivation to volunteer Reward volunteers for what they do Create a pathway for volunteers who want to make a full time career	a. Improvement in the outreach program for the Recruitment & Retention of Volunteer firefighters. The district is a combination department consisting of both full time firefighters and compensated volunteer firefighters. The district recently completed a study which looked at what other agencies in the State of Idaho and nationwide are doing to address the issue and have come up with a draft plan to address this very important present and future need. b. Provide district firefighters with the latest technology, equipment and training necessary to meet the needs of an ever changing fire service which is called upon to respond for not only fire related incidents but responses dealing with emergency medical care, hazardous materials, vehicle accidents, public assists and other circumstances where a citizen may not know where to turn in a time of uncertainty. This is especially important in a small community, where the firefighters may interact with friends, neighbors or family members during a response for assistance. c. Continue to work in conjunction with neighboring fire, emergency medical, law, emergency management, utility companies and highway & transportation agencies to insure that when an incident does occur in the district, it is handled in the safest and effective manner. Familiarity with each others organizational values and procedures have proven to usually result in favorable outcomes. In addition, regarding specific cost saving measures, instead of multiple fire agencies each individually purchasing a piece of equipment or apparatus which may only be used on a low frequency basis, can that purchase be made with the cost shared by participating agencies.
3. What are your views on the rapid growth of North Idaho?	Infrastructure needs to Increase with growth	North Idaho is a beautiful region of the country. Just as I was drawn to the area 11 years ago, it does not surprise me that many others would also like to live in the region. Growth can be

		considered a double edged sword with the expected pros & cons. It takes determination, skill, research, public and local government involvement, patience and sometimes a bit of luck to ensure that “Growth” does not come in like a runaway train with the resulting collateral damage.
4. Do you feel that the Fire District has a responsibility to protect the public’s best interests to insure scalable growth?	Yes	Certainly, in most if not all planning and zoning research and reports, fire agencies are asked to weigh in on a particular project or plan. While it is preferred to have open and two way dialogue with parties involved, references to specific fire codes could be made, which may not have the latitude for a great deal of compromise on the part of the fire district, contractor, developer or property owner. On the other hand, there are sections of the codes that allow for discretion on the part of the fire chief and district, regarding instances that are unique in a jurisdiction and the specific operational capabilities of the department.
5. Instead of taxing current residents to pay for growth, what are your suggestions to increase revenue for your fire district?	Impact fees for developments	a. Impact Fees: on growth related capital improvements such as remodeling, construction and equipping on new fire stations in growth areas. (we currently have this fee structure in place and are currently expanding to include the entire jurisdiction) b. Subscription Services: which are offered to citizens living out of the district and currently have no current fire protection services available to them. (several neighboring fire agencies have implemented this type of program with a positive outcome and resulting revenue increases) c. Establish a program to support the response of specific fire equipment and firefighters to incidents both in the State of Idaho and the Western United States during the annual Wildfire Season. Provisions would be made to ensure the district remains protected, while such a deployment is underway. At present, this type of response is provided to the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) on a local level. Numerous departments have successfully implemented this type of program with resulting reimbursement which has most often covered all costs and provided excess funds to be placed back into the departments operating budget. d. Establish a group of fire service and ems instructors, from both the district and neighboring agencies which would provide both basic and advanced level certificate classes for a fee. This would not only bring in additional revenue but allow for added flexibility for

		attendance, which would attract local citizens who may not only want to volunteer but prepare for a career in emergency services.
6. What role should the Fire District have in the design and authorization of new developments?	Ingress, Egress Water Flows Fire Codes	Give feedback as to the ability to assure adequate fire protection with existing fire department facilities, personnel and equipment. Assure compliance with existing codes, while having the ability to work towards solutions in those areas which may present with unique circumstances. Areas such as this, might include vehicular traffic in and out of a development, fire apparatus access and availability of water sources
7. Do you believe access to city managed water should be increased to rural communities and why?	Only if there are no water districts available	Not sure how that pertains to me as a fire commissioner. I would certainly welcome the opportunity to see more fire hydrants in the rural setting to assist with fire control. Remembering of course, that this will certainly increase growth and influence the fire districts plan and ability to maintain an adequate level of service. That decision will have to be decided by the tax payers and utility companies as someone will have to pay for the infrastructure to get the water to those rural communities.
8. In your opinion, what areas can be improved with forest management in your fire district?	The U.S.F.S can manage their lands to help mitigate wildfires	I would certainly defer to the professionals at the Idaho Department of Lands, US Forest Service and other entities who constantly deal with the aspects of maintaining not only a forest but a healthy one. I would stick by the most common practices of periodic controlled burns, harvesting and thinning of areas to not only promote a healthy forest but establish fire breaks. It may also be time for fire districts to spend a portion of their budgets on the prevention and educations aspects of forest fires in conjunction with the above mentioned agencies and the fact that a large portion of Bonner County is in the Wildland Urban Interface. (an area where a built environment meets or intermingles with a natural environment) An example of this would be the “Bonfire Program”, which creates an opportunity for residents to have dangerous wildfire fuel situations mitigated on their property.

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9. What should be the role of the fire district be in working with local governing authorities (county commissioners, city planners, etc.) and why?	They should all work together.	Valuable partners who are there to contribute in the form of guidance, advice and research on specific fire code applications and interpretations. Public Safety is the most important aspect that local governing authorities are tasked with in either a direct or indirect manner. Decisions made without consideration of all the different aspects of an issue can have unintended consequences in both the long and short term.
10. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?	I have worked as a volunteer Fireman and volunteer ambulance I have 30 years in County government.	My background is that of a 14 y/o kid, whose father used to drive him down to the local volunteer fire department, located on the east coast for training classes. Little did I realize this would lead to a life long career in Fire and Emergency Medical Services. During that time, I have been fortunate enough to have worked in both volunteer and paid departments, ranging in size from rural to large metropolitan areas. Positions held include those of Firefighter/EMT, Firefighter/Paramedic, Fire Captain, Division Chief and Acting Fire Chief. I have always felt that education was an integral part of improving ones self and was able to assist in the teaching of others by serving as an Instructor for several community colleges and at the state level, in both Fire Service and Emergency Medical topics. Due to our work schedule in Fire/EMS, I was also able to work in the private sector as a small business owner. This entailed operating a dump truck and hauling service with another firefighter and driving trucks for my father in law. This gave me an appreciation of what a private sector business person often experiences regarding state, county and federal laws/rules. During my first term as Commissioner, having never served in an elected position, it became apparent that being a politician, can at times be a hazardous occupation. I feel that I have been able to be a part of some very beneficial changes in the fire district. This in turn, will result in both present and future impacts of a positive nature to the citizens we serve. There have been instances in which ideas did not work out as expected, but we sometimes learn more from our mistakes as we do from our successes. I feel there are more things that can be done to improve the services provided to the fire district and would appreciate another term to participate in the process.

