

Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, Dec. 6

# 2018 budget includes 25 percent base wage increase

By Lisa Hatfield

The Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) board included a 25 percent salary increase in the base wage for district firefighters in the 2018 budget it approved on Dec. 6. It was able to do this because TLMFPD voters approved the board's proposed mill levy increase in the November district special election.

Director Jason Buckingham was excused.

### Mill levy certified and budget approved

As they had at the November meeting, the directors discussed the exact amount to set for the 2018 property tax mill levy. Voters just approved an increase of "up to 6.9 mills," but Truty explained that since assessed property valuation from El Paso County was slightly higher than expected, staff had used an additional 6.6 mills instead (for a total of 18.1 mills) to create the 2018 budget, since that would generate the amount of revenue the district needed. See [www.ocn.me/v17n12.htm#tlfmpd](http://www.ocn.me/v17n12.htm#tlfmpd).

Vice President Roger Lance again voiced his opinion that TLMFPD should use the full mill levy increase that was approved, which would generate an extra \$130,000, and put the revenue toward uses such as vehicle maintenance, for example.

Treasurer John Hildebrandt said he could

see both sides, but it was always a possibility that the district might have to go back to voters in the future for an additional mill levy increase, so it would be better to just use what was needed for the 2018 budget.

Director Terri Hayes said to remember that 40 percent of the voters did not vote yes on the mill levy increase, and it was important to "build trust with them by taking just what was needed and not all you can."

The consensus was that since the mill levy would be recertified each year, the 2019 budget process would be a good time to re-evaluate how much of the "up to 6.9 mills" increase to use.

The 18.1 mill levy certifica-

tion resolution was approved 5-1, with Lance voting no.

Then, since the budget had been discussed in more detail at prior meetings, the directors unanimously approved the final 2018 budget as well as a resolution appropriating sums of money to the funds in the 2018 budget. The final budget included:

- Projected revenue – \$9.081 million (about a 47 percent increase over 2017's \$6.154 million).
- Budgeted expenses – \$8.867 million.

### New firefighter wage schedule set

Truty said 2017 salaries were about 25 percent below the 2017 Mountain States Employment Council/Special District Association wage survey. He

said that the proposed 2018 wage schedule was consistent with the figures that he has presented throughout the entire 2017 mill levy project and 2018 budget process. It would add 25 percent to the

2017 Firefighter 1 (base) wage upon which most other district salaries are calculated using formulas prescribed in the schedule. Hildebrandt commented that this meant about a \$10,000 raise in base pay.

*Happy Holidays!*



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