

Tri-Lakes and Wescott committees to compare research

Schwarz reported on a recent meeting between the Wescott committee, composed of himself, Burns, and Hartung, and TLMFPD representatives Chief Chris Truty and Directors John Hildebrandt and Michael Smaldino. The committees met to explore the possibilities of joining the districts in some manner. Schwarz stated that the discussion was friendly and positive. The committees plan to conduct research for comparison purposes and meet again Oct. 9 for a thorough review of the information gathered. Eventually, they will schedule a work session to present their findings to the districts.

Schwarz commented that the difference in the districts' mill levies—Wescott's northern sub-district's is 21.9 mills and TLMFPD's is 18.1 mills—may be a significant barrier to combining, but

the more flexible structure of a Fire Authority may provide a solution. The committees also set a deadline of March 2019 for making a final decision as a way to garner motivation and avoid procrastination, Schwarz said. In closing the discussion, Schwarz noted that other fire professionals in the area support a long-term vision—possibly 15 years—of a northern El Paso County regional department.

Training information included with monthly statistics

Ridings reported that, year-to-date, Wescott's 15 firefighting personnel had trained for 3,708 hours. He listed basic firefighting skills, Firefighter I and II Certifications, basic wildland firefighter training, and driver operator skills such as operator utility, engine pumper, and aerial, as the primary focus. Burns said a contingent from Wescott will travel to the Nassau County Fire Training Academy in September, where they will undergo a broad array of intensive training.

Later in the meeting, Ridings announced that four Wescott firefighters had competed in a combat challenge and qualified for a world competition. Considering Wescott's size, having four firefighters meet these physical standards is "a big deal," he added.

Call volume for Wescott totaled 73 for the month of July. Station 1 responded to 46 calls and Station 2 responded to 27 calls. Thirty-six of the calls pertained to Emergency Medical Services, and the remaining 37 were categorized as fire/rescue-related. Ridings explained that the staff is still learning how to glean statistical information from the emergency reporting software.

Comings and goings of engines

Three firefighters and engine 512 were deployed, first to Durango and then Meeker, and are expected to return soon. Also, with the addition of the Type 6 Brush Engine 542 to the station's apparatus, the board voted to donate the old truck to the San Luis fire district.

Backlog of financials addressed
Financials for May, June, and July were presented and approved. Rusnak and Schwarz expressed discomfort with the lack of detail regarding revenue. Rusnak specified that he struggles with "mixing the carryover."

The regular board meeting, after returning from executive session, adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

The next DWFPD Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sep. 18. The volunteer pension board meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m., and the regular meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Meetings are held at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Drive. Please call (719) 488-8680, a non-emergency number, for more information, or visit www.wescottfire.org. Wescott is also on Facebook and Twitter.

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Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, Aug. 22

Merger talks with Wescott continue; collective bargaining agreement pursued

By Natalie Barszcz

On Aug. 22, the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) board further discussed the possibility of a merger with Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) and continued to pursue a collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

Director Mike Smaldino was excused.

Merger talks move forward

Treasurer John Hildebrandt gave an update on the continuing talks between committee members Chief Chris Truty, Smaldino and DWFPD's Chief Vinny Burns, Director Larry Schwarz, and Treasurer Joyce Hartung with regard to a possible merger between districts. Sixteen items will be discussed over the next seven months characterizing each organization's history, governance, culture, stations, fleet conditions, and the current role of each department. Smaller committees will work on the items and create a report detailing each.

Committee members are exploring four possible governance models:

- Create a whole new entity encompassing both TLMFPD and DWFPD in a wholly new department.
- A merger between the two in which one would encompass the other. This would require mill levy changes since there are different mill levies

in each district. For more information, see DWFPD article on page 17.

- Create a Fire Authority to oversee both boards, which would remain intact, and mill levies would not be changed.
- A contract in which TLMFPD takes over operations in Wescott. Mill levies wouldn't change, but Wescott wouldn't have input into processes. Hildebrandt said they are all leaning toward creating a fire authority, but it will be dependent on finances.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Oct. 9. The goal is to know by March 2019 whether to move forward, with a deadline for implementation of Jan. 1, 2020.

Collaborative working agreement discussion

Truty, TLMFPD board members, and Lt. Franz Hankins, president of the Monument Professional Firefighters Association, revisited the agreement they made at the March meeting. Previously, both groups decided to work on a collaborative agreement addressing working conditions, health and safety issues, salary, and benefits for ranks up to and including captain. Both groups felt the March vote was arbitrary and sought clarity from the board. See <https://ocn.me/v18n4>.

[httm#tlmfpd](http://ocn.me/v18n4) for more information.

Note: Senate Bill 13-205, the Colorado Firefighters Safety Act, provides for two types of collective employee organizations. Collective bargaining agreements are formal obligations between an employer and an employee group, including policies plus compensation. It requires a vote of the people. However, the statute also allows for the employer to choose to waive this requirement and engage in collective bargaining without a public vote. The meet and confer option is available as an informal choice in which an employer and an employee group must come to the table to talk about policies, but does not include compensation. There are no commitments on either side, so unions lack the power to mandate changes.

After much deliberation, Hankins requested that the TLMFPD board seek to implement a collective bargaining agreement going forward. Truty and several board members stated that they didn't feel qualified to make any decision on a legally binding contract regarding either option at this time. The discussion was put on hold until both parties can have their attorneys at the next board meeting.

Financial report

Hildebrandt read the year-to-date financial report ending in July, noting:

- Property taxes received were \$7.382 million or 97.68 percent of the budgeted amount, with expected revenue of \$7.560 million
- Specific Ownership Taxes received were \$491,236 or 96.32 percent of the budgeted amount, with expected revenue of \$510,000.
- Ambulance revenues were \$492,631 or 61.58 percent of the budgeted amount, with expected revenue of \$800,000.

Hildebrandt also said, "Vehicle expenses had exceeded budget for the whole year" and read the following year-to-date expenditures:

- Overtime is 22.4 percent over budget YTD and level from June.
- Wages overall, the biggest expense, are 1.74 percent under budget YTD.
- Overall expenses are 0.7 percent under the YTD budget.

For full TLMFPD monthly financial reports, visit <http://tlmfire.org/board>

Chief's report

Truty said, "The 2019 budget process is underway, and the first draft would be available at the September board meeting."

He stated, "Some districts are going very public with their campaigns [to de-Gallagherize] for the November 2018 election." He also said he "received confirmation that an interim Gallagher Committee has drafted seven resolutions for the 2019 legislative session." For more information on how the Gallagher Amendment could affect future revenues, visit: <https://www.ocn.me/v18n8.htm>.

TLMFPD has one position available. Information can be found at <http://tlmfire.org/Empl-Hiring>.

Training updates

Battalion Chief of Training Jonathon Bradley announced that the "Northern El Paso EMS Training Group" had been approved. This allows TLMFPD to host training classes without having to travel to Penrose-St. Francis Medical Center. Education and training will continue to be offered at Penrose. Director Roger Lance thanked Bradley "for all the hard work in getting that done."

Bradley also reported that TLMFPD hosted some external courses, and TLMFPD firefighters are undergoing or have completed certification in the following:

- National Fire Incident Reporting System Training.
- El Paso County—Incident Safety Officer Class.
- Aerial Driver Operators Course.
- El Paso County Hazmat Team—



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