

Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District, May 15

# Board chairman becomes interim chief and is cleaning house

By Natalie Barszcz

On May 15, Vice Chairman Rick McMorran told the public about “what has been happening during the last month,” since the last official meeting of the Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) board: PJ Langmaid resigned as board chairman on April 25, and since he had already started an in-depth evaluation of the district and had made himself available, on May 1, “We hired PJ to be interim fire chief.”

This all occurred after the sudden retirement of former Fire Chief Bryan Jack, announced April 5 and effective May 1. See [www.ocn.me/v19n5.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v19n5.htm#bffrpd).

### Board positions rearranged

On May 15, the board voted unanimously to install McMorran as board chairman to fill the position vacated by Langmaid, and Director Rick Nearhoof was voted into the vice chairman position. The board approved Nate Dowden to fill the remaining board position.

McMorran said the board had received four equally worthy applications from Black Forest residents for the board director vacancy. Treasurer Jack Hinton thanked all the candidates, expressing gratitude that the community is willing to step up and commit their time to the department.

### Langmaid’s first chief’s report

McMorran said that a search for a replacement chief would be postponed as Langmaid serves two months as interim chief and continues with his inspection of the department.

Langmaid noted that he had changed James Rebitski’s title from assistant chief to deputy chief. This will avoid confusion about responsibilities in communication with local fire district partnerships, since a “deputy chief” can assume command in the absence of the chief. He introduced further rank restructuring plans that, over the next 10 years, will fill in some additional command and control gaps between deputy chief and lieutenant as the department grows.

Langmaid said that Station 2 is fully staffed 24/7 as of May 1, “per the wishes of the board and the needs of the community.” Residents should always dial 9-1-1 in an emergency so county dispatch is notified.

Six firefighters worked extremely hard to save the life of a woman who later died (gave her the best opportunity to survive) during a tragic accident at Hodgen and Black Forest Roads on May 14. Flight For Life was able to evacuate the injured. Had Station 2 not been manned, the extended response time would have made the victims’ odds of survival much worse.

Langmaid thanked the community for passing the mill levy increase in 2018. “If it weren’t for that, we would be heading in a very bad direction.” As he looks “into every nook and cranny—shining a bright light everywhere—the extra funds [from the increase] will allow for the much-needed improvements to BFFRPD,” he said, commending the dedication of the district’s employees to make-do. “We need to catch up. It’s been a shoestring budget around here.”

In his first two weeks, Langmaid continued a thorough inspection of the department and found many inadequate practices that require immediate attention. Station 1 needs to spend \$109,000 to improve an inefficient removal system for diesel exhaust fumes. Part-time staff need to be replaced with full-time staff, because a crisis situation occurred during three days in April when there was no Advanced Life Support on shift to provide ambulance service in the

district. He has also initiated a reorganization of supply storage and basic building maintenance projects.

Langmaid made the following suggestions to the board after his initial inspection:

- Need to hire one full-time training officer in the rank of captain—with additional paramedic and Heavy Wildland Fire credentials—to replace Capt. Larry Bell, who left this month.
- Need to hire six to seven full-time firefighters for 2020 to man Station 2 without part-timers and volunteers.
- Replacement of 11 sets of expired turnout gear, in addition to the five budgeted.
- Replacement of the chief’s car—the current vehicle is not designed for area terrain.
- Bay door replacement at Station 1—the doors currently take over 30 seconds to open.
- Exhaust removal system—staff have been exposed to fumes for 15 years.
- Develop the wildland fire program so staff can do deployments and generate revenue.
- Decades of medical records retained at Station 2—correct disposal/retention using national standards will begin once a HIPPA approved shredder and scanner/copier have been put in place.
- IT upgrade—currently transitioning to Outlook and Office 365 during the next 30 days to bring the department up to date for less money.
- Century Link will upgrade the Wi-Fi capability from 12 megabits to 1GB. This will allow both Station 1 and Station 2 to access data at a professional speed.
- Mobile Data Computers (MDC) for all vehicles—to assist staff communications with updates from El Paso County dispatch and first responders. Currently BFFRPD MDCs are not compatible with county dispatch.

The board voted 5-0 to authorize the chief to hire one full-time training officer/paramedic in the rank of captain.

The board approved 5-0 a motion to adopt a resolution for the 2008 Colorado State retention schedule for the correct destruction and retention of medical

records.

Results for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant money and EMS state grant hearings are expected in June.

Hinton asked Langmaid about the current status of obtaining a flashing stop sign for the intersection

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