

of Shoup and Milam Roads. Langmaid said Rebitski is representing the department at the countywide chiefs' group in an effort to resolve this type of problem.

Nearhoof thanked all the firefighters and paramedics for their outstanding performance during the March blizzard.

Insurance change proposal

Firefighter/Paramedic Jess Manzo, speaking as secretary of the International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 4502, gave a presentation to the board on the current health insurance benefits offered at BFFRPD. Manzo provided a comparison of local fire district insurance plans, emphasizing the need to find a comparable cost-saving solution to the current benefits offered, since they don't compare well with those offered at Wescott, Tri-Lakes Monument, and Falcon Fire Protection Districts, and this financial hit may be

luring employees away from BFFRPD.

Ideally, building a bigger group plan including TLM-FPD - Falcon - Cimarron Hills would be best for all employees, said Langmaid. Manzo said that she could provide data by August in an effort to find a cost-effective plan for the proposed 2020 budget.

Financial update

Hinton said that BFFRPD currently has \$1.766 million in reserve, which will go quickly due to expenses previously neglected. Holding a million in reserve would make him feel comfortable, however, "everything will be used," despite the passing of the mill levy and the recent property tax increases. The biggest proposed change for 2020 would be the hiring of six new full-time firefighters, in addition to one being hired in 2019, so that the district could staff Station 2 full time without spending extra money on overtime or depending on part-timers, which has not

been a reliable system, he said. Langmaid said the budget he will propose for next year will be a lot different than past ones, and he hopes to get it to the board before his interim position is up in July.

Hinton suggested a work session be held in July to discuss the 2020 budget. Langmaid said all employees will be required to submit a budget and prioritize how money should be spent before any decisions are made. "Even new folks can see where and why every penny counts!"

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Meetings are usually held at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at BFFRPD Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. The next meeting is scheduled for June 19. See www.bffire.org.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz@ocn.me.

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, May 21

Southern district won't be annexed by Colorado Springs

By Allison Robenstein

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) board members disagreed about whether the board needs to approve the chief's spending of the committed funds section of the budget May 21. The board also heard from the chiefs regarding their previous request to inquire whether the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) would annex the southern outskirts of the district. The board voted to approve three new medical leave policies, and the directors got a surprise regarding the Station 2 property adjustments.

Director disagrees on spending authority

Director Gary Rusnak asked DWFPD Chairman William "Bo" McAllister to discuss Chief Vinny Burns' purchase of a new command vehicle after Rusnak declined to approve the April financials.

At the April meeting, Burns told the board, "as they had approved, he had purchased a 2019 Chevrolet Tahoe" as the new command vehicle. It cost \$45,710 out of the \$70,000 line in the 2019 budget. See line 620.5 in http://wescottfire.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2019_budget.pdf.

At every meeting since the 2019 budget was passed, Rusnak has been verbally confirming the chiefs must ask for board approval for items within the "committed funds" section of the budget, which includes the command vehicle line item. Rusnak has also repeatedly said the board does not control line items. In May, McAllister said he had heard Rusnak's frequent confirmations but thought he meant

only one line item, the \$61,000 "promotions" line item the board put into reserves at its December meeting. See www.ocn.me/v19n1.htm#dwfpd.

District counsel Matt Court said he believes the chiefs have control of the entire budget and can spend as needed once the budget has been approved by the board, as long as they stay within the line item parameters. Lacking any historical practice of asking the chiefs to request board approval, there were no errant actions.

"Because we don't have a written process," can this be overlooked?" asked Rusnak. Director Larry Schwarz wondered aloud why there was a reserves section of the budget if the chiefs had full sanction to spend any budget funds.

McAllister said, "we want to be transparent to the people we represent" but said historically, this is how the district spends the annual budget. Schwarz said at the very least, as a courtesy, the chiefs should notify the board of their spending. Regarding large capital and fleet purchases, Schwarz said he wants a presentation ahead of the purchase to make good financial decisions.

CSFD not annexing isolated territory

Rusnak has been asking for district consolidation to create equal property taxation throughout Wescott for some time. The entire district including a small island of land south of Old Ranch Road has an overall levy of 7.00 mills. The vestigial territory sits seven miles south of Station 1 and is surrounded by the city of Colorado Springs, which has avoided annexing it as it acquired land moving northwards. Wescott's northern subdistrict including Gleneagle and Pleasant View Estates has an additional mill levy of 14.90 mills approved in November 2017 by northern subdistrict voters. See www.ocn.me/v17n12.htm#dwfpd, <http://wescottfire.org/about-wescott-fire/>.

At the April meeting, the board directed the chiefs to ask CSFD if it would consider annexing that small southern portion of Wescott's district.

Chief Vinny Burns said the small bit of land does not include any retail, and it would be costly for CSFD to make the necessary road and water infrastructure improvements required. Assistant Chief Scott Ridings said the cost estimate was \$5,000 per acre split between fire and police improvement needs.

Ridings reported the discussion with CSFD did not go as hoped because it wasn't interested in annexation and thought the current mutual agreements between the two

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