

Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District, July 17

## Training captain sworn in; staffing search continues; board chairman resigns

By Natalie Barszcz

At its meeting on July 17, Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD), the board witnessed the swearing in of the new training captain, approved the search for hiring additional full-time staff, and accepted the resignation of board Chairman Rick McMorran. The board also appointed a new director and reassigned board positions.

Treasurer Jack Hinton was excused, and several items were postponed to Aug. 20 so he could participate in those discussions.

### New training officer

The BFFRPD board welcomed Capt. Chris Piepenburg, who was hired July 2, for the newly created position of full-time training officer. Piepenburg was formerly employed at South Metro Fire Rescue, Denver, and is a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and East Coast Fire Training School instructor. The oath to the constitution was administered by McMorran during the swearing-in ceremony.

**Note:** In May, Interim Fire Chief P.J. Langmaid suggested creating this new position at his first meeting



**Above:** Capt. Chris Piepenburg receives his badge from his son, Cole Piepenburg, after taking the oath to the constitution at the BFFRPD board meeting on July 17. Board President Rick McMorran administered during the swearing-in ceremony of the new training officer. Photo by Natalie Barszcz.

as chief instead of as board president. See [www.ocn.me/v19n6.htm#bffire](http://www.ocn.me/v19n6.htm#bffire).

### Additional staffing search approved

Langmaid said BFFRPD needs stable, consistent staffing levels to operate the rigs and get out the door with a "standard response." Currently, trucks are delayed leaving the stations because it is difficult to know how many staff can respond to a call, and on which rigs, instead of the "spinning of plates" on staffing occurring on a regular basis due to reliance on part-timers and volunteers, he said. See [www.ocn.me/v19n7.htm#bffire](http://www.ocn.me/v19n7.htm#bffire), [www.ocn.me/v19n4.htm#bffire](http://www.ocn.me/v19n4.htm#bffire).

Langmaid commented:

- Hiring three firefighter/paramedics would cost the district \$28,455 more than hiring firefighter/EMTs.
- Finding firefighter/paramedics is a lengthy process because they are a rare resource for small fire districts.
- On the other hand, firefighter/EMT staff could be hired as soon as August.
- The paramedic shortage within the district is critical and needs to be addressed immediately within the district.
- The offer of competitive wages would be an incentive in the hiring process.

Langmaid recommended replacing 1 1/2 part-timers with three full-time firefighter/EMTs or firefighter/paramedics if possible, and disbanding most of the part-time program, but keeping an affiliation with the part-time paramedics. The board approved his recommendation, 4-0.

### Advanced Life Support standards of coverage

Langmaid informed the board that American Medical Response (AMR) had been notified that BFFRPD is changing its terms of service and will no longer be providing a paramedic to Colorado Springs, a city already saturated with paramedics.

Langmaid asked the board to consider raising the district's "standards of coverage" by setting a goal of having at least one Advanced Life Support (ALS) staff on duty at least 95% of the time within the district. Langmaid explained the following:

- 100% ALS coverage is not reasonable because extending past 48-hour shifts to cover an absent paramedic is not good for patient care and staff.
- During the past 2 1/2 months, the district went without in-district ALS coverage for a total of three days and two hours.
- ALS is key for cardiac arrest and breathing treatment calls and is done by paramedics.
- Basic Life Support (BLS) is done by EMTs.
- ALS coverage is supplied by neighboring districts during a BFFRPD staff shortfall.
- He is also working on a staffing model that will force back some staff on days when coverage is short.

The board approved 4-0 the motion to establish a goal of maintaining ALS coverage within the district 95% of the time.

### Chief's report

Langmaid said preventive maintenance involving safety issues would be a priority when allocating funds. He also thanked Deputy Chief James Rebitski for his hard work in obtaining a state grant for the purchase of an ambulance. Langmaid also said the fol-

lowing:

- The new 711 engine will be in service Aug. 1.
- BFFRPD will not commit to joining Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District in the development of a regional fleet maintenance facility until he knows more of the details.
- Nine sets of bunker/turnout gear have been purchased. This topic was discussed last month, and the board did not make a decision.
- Target Solutions Fire & EMS Online Training programs are now available for various staff employment training.
- A physical fitness training program is now in place—every day will be a training day at BFFRPD.
- Plymovent will install the new diesel exhaust ventilation systems on Aug. 12.
- The air conditioning in the IT Server room cost \$5,600 to repair.
- AARP sent a card of thanks for BFFRPD's assistance with their June shredding program.

### 2018 audit extended

Due to unforeseen circumstances and scheduling conflicts, BFFRPD auditor Dawn Schilling of Schilling & Company Inc. Certified Public Accountants requested an extension from the state as well as a date change for the August meeting.

The board voted 4-0 to move the next board meeting to Tuesday, Aug. 20.

### Public and IAFF Local 4502 comments

Black Forest resident Gary Watson thanked the board for spending money wisely on the new engine. He also thanked Lt. Rick Robirds for his detailed tour of the new 711 engine during the recent open house. See related snapshot on page 25.

Watson asked when BFFRPD would be re-applying for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant. Langmaid said they are still waiting for the federal government to determine approval of a grant before re-applying. See [www.bffire.org/community/newsroom/news-information/](http://www.bffire.org/community/newsroom/news-information/).

Firefighter/EMT Larry Bell, IAFF Local 4502 representative, asked the board when the process to search for a new fire chief would commence. McMorran said the new board will review the matter during the August board meeting. Note: Langmaid's term as interim chief was extended through September at the June 19 meeting.

### Board president resigns

McMorran had previously notified the district that due to his residency change and no longer owning a property in Black Forest, his resignation would be effective after the regular board meeting on July 17. Langmaid presented him with a plaque in appreciation for his seven years of service to BFFRPD. His wife, Anita McMorran, was also recognized with a plaque for "21 years, two months, and seven days" of volunteer service as an auxiliary to department operations.

The regular board meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

### New board member appointed, roles change

In the special meeting that followed, Chairman Rick Nearhoof introduced the three Black Forest residents who were seeking a position on the BFFRPD board. Nearhoof thanked all three candidates, Jim Abend-schan, Thomas Garmong, and Maggie Mae Sharp, for making the selection a difficult choice.



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