

Black Forest Fire Rescue/Protection District, Feb. 19

Board hears plea for disability; cheaper vehicle computers considered

By Allison Robenstein

The Black Forest Fire Rescue/Protection District (BF-FRPD) board met on Feb. 19 for its regular board meeting. A pension meeting preceded the regular meeting, during which a volunteer firefighter requested long-term disability benefits after being diagnosed with thyroid cancer and hyperparathyroidism. Interim Chief PJ Langmaid told the board they were now testing a cheaper alternative to the mobile data computers they had bought and returned. The board discussed continued questions about fire codes for new developments in unincorporated El Paso County.

Treasurer Jack Hinton was excused.

Long-term disability request under review

A volunteer firefighter who has been with BFFRPD since 2013 requested long-term disability from the pension board because he has been diagnosed with cancer, making him unable to work.

Chairman Rick Nearhoof said a cancer diagnosis requires a medical line-of-duty injury determination and suggested that this firefighter file a worker's compensation claim. However, the firefighter said going that route would reduce his choices for medical treatment.

Nearhoof said he wants to follow the state statute for fire pensions law (CRS 31-30-1112), which requires a one-year waiting period after the illness is initially diagnosed. In the meantime, the pension board can award short-term disability payments to the firefighter. Any decisions were delayed until the board hears back from its attorney.

The volunteer firefighter requesting disability noted the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recognizes the high risk of cancer for firefighters. He also noted he was initially assigned personal protection equipment that had not been line rated and had constant exposure to diesel exhaust.

Nearhoof said the Fire and Police Pension Association financial report showed the pension fund "was in good shape."

Chief's report

Langmaid said the department had 74 calls for service in January, 64% of which were rescue calls. He also finished interviewing 16 candidates for employment.

Langmaid told the board it was decided to return their standard Panasonic Toughbook mobile data computers following a disappointing installation. Instead, they have purchased one Surface Pro that will be mounted and tested in a vehicle. "Plan B, which is the Surface computer. The Surface and the mount, we can buy three of these for one Toughbook. The rest of the county is moving down that road." These are the devices used to stay in contact with county dispatch. "There's a lot of other folks saying, 'What are you guys doing? We can save that much money?'" said Langmaid.

Note: Panasonic Toughbooks and the associated mount meet military standards for a range of extreme conditions including temperature changes, but more importantly shock, meaning they can withstand the force of a crash. The military-approved mounts prevent the computer from flying toward firefighters in the cab. Other computers and mounts are not rated as such.

Langmaid said the training division had put together an after-action report on the Christmas morning structure fire on Bridle Bit Road that will be posted soon at www.bffire.org so people's questions can be answered. As of Feb. 26, OCN did not see the report posted yet. See www.ocn.me/v20n2.htm#bffire for background.

Fire codes in unincorporated El Paso County

In previous meetings, the BFFRPD has discussed the issue of existing fire codes not being enforced by the El

Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) when they approve new land development plans. Apparent inconsistencies in requirements for cisterns or fire hydrants is one of the issues of concern the board has been discussing. See www.ocn.me/v20n2.htm#bffire.

Referring to county codes not being enforced, Langmaid said, "If the developers are not being required to do something why would they put the money into it?"

The board unanimously approved a symbolic resolution to adopt the 2015 edition of the International Fire Codes with local amendments, but noted "a fire code adopted by the district can only be enforced within unincorporated El Paso County if it is first approved by the BOCC." Currently, El Paso County operates under the 2009 International Fire Code. See www.ocn.me/v14n1.htm#boccc.

BFFRPD will await Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District Fire Marshal Jamey Bumgarner's request to the BOCC that it adopt the updated codes. Then, Deputy Fire Chief Rebitski will represent BFFRPD at the BOCC meeting whenever it is heard there.

Langmaid mentioned another long-running concern, which is that the county does not collect impact fees from new developments to support fire districts that cover those developments. See www.ocn.me/v17n7.htm#epcboccc.

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

The next Black Forest Fire Rescue/Protection District meeting is scheduled for March 18. Meetings are usually held at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at BFFRPD Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. See <https://www.bffire.org/board-meetings>.

Allison Robenstein can be reached at allisonrobenstein@ocn.me.

Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, Feb. 26

Land search begins; 2015 International Fire Code amendments adopted

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Feb. 26 Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) board meeting, members held an executive session at the end of the regular meeting to discuss the search for land. They also approved fire code amendments, adjusted the ambulance billing policy, and heard a presentation on future investment options.

Board President John Hildebrandt and Treasurer Jason Buckingham were excused.

Executive session—land acquisition

The board moved into executive session at the end of

the regular meeting to discuss the acquisition of land for future placement of a fourth station/and or an investment option as recommended in the 2019 Master Plan. See www.ocn.me/v19n5.htm#tlmfpd.

After the executive session, the board unanimously approved two motions, approving \$15,000 for the investigation of a possible land acquisition and authorization for the board president to execute a land purchase agreement not to exceed \$390,000, contingent on the satisfaction of due diligence requirements.

2015 International Fire Code adopted

Division Chief of Community Risk/Fire Marshal Jamey Bumgarner requested the board approve and adopt the 2015 International Fire Code (IFC) and the accompanying TLMFPD amendments before he presents them to the El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) for final approval. These regulations shall be known as the Fire Code of the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, as applicable, hereinafter referred to as the Code.

Bumgarner answered several questions as follows:

- The dates of the International Fire Codes are never going to be up to date, but El Paso County and the BOCC are currently using the 2009 IFC.
- About 45-50 amendments are included in the 2015 IFC.
- The majority of the code amendments are commercial and enforced by the Pikes Peak Regional Building Department, and most architects and builders are already building their projects in compliance with the 2015 IFC.
- Wildland and mitigation fire codes are expanded in the 2015 IFC version with a comprehensive guide for builders planning to construct in wooded areas.
- Vehicle access routes—fire apparatus to homes are also included in the 2015 IFC.

The board unanimously approved and adopted the 2015 IFC for TLMFPD, 5-0.

The Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District has taken a similar step in trying to encourage the county to catch up. See www.ocn.me/v20n2.htm#bffire and related article on page 20.

Future investment options explored

Brent Turner, vice president of Investment Advisory Services of COLO Trust, presented the board with several options available for the investment of funds in a local government pool with access to \$9.3 billion in assets. District accountant Becky Weese suggested that other simpler options could be discussed at a future board meeting, and Secretary Mike Smaldino said, "It is time to start narrowing the options."

Ambulance billing policy updated

Director of Administration Jennifer Martin asked the board to approve Policy 318, which addresses hardships and ambulance billing write-offs when patients are billed for ambulance transportation.

Board Vice President Roger Lance suggested that in addition to transportation fee waivers for TLMFPD employees and their immediate family members, consideration should be given to extend the policy to include all off-duty first responders (firefighters, police officers, and paramedics/EMS) and their spouses and dependents that reside within TLMFPD, and non-resident first responders that are performing professional duties within the district. The board also decided to include retired TLMFPD staff and their spouses and residing dependents within the district, and current board members and their spouses. The board unanimously approved Policy 318 with the discussed amendments.

Chief's report

Chief Chris Truty said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are sending regular information through local EMS providers on the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and the status on the quantities of the N95 masks that are in short supply. Local preparation is going on with several protocol changes occurring over the past several weeks. Smaldino said, "We may see higher-level precautions at the local



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