

Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District, April 15

# Emergency disaster declared; board election canceled

By Natalie Barszcz

On March 24 at 5 p.m., the Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) board met via email to approve an emergency disaster declaration and on

March 3 moved to cancel the May board election. The regular April 15 meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

### Emergency disaster declaration

On March 17, interim Fire Chief PJ Langmaid announced a disaster declaration for BFFRPD due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The declaration allows the fire chief to deal with the emergency, and includes allocating sufficient funding from district reserves to purchase additional Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and implement protective policies and procedures to restrict exposure of district emergency first responders and staff in the effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The emergency disaster declaration is set to expire on May 31 but may be extended.

The board moved unanimously to ratify the proceedings of the March 24 email meeting, 5-0.

### Board election canceled

Board Chairman Rick Nearhoof confirmed that the scheduled board election had been canceled on March 3 because no one applied other than the three current incumbent directors. Incumbent Treasurer Jack D Hinton and Director James Abendschan will be sworn in for three-year terms, and Director Nathan Dowden will be sworn in for a two-year term at the May board meeting.

### Public/board comment

Nearhoof thanked Langmaid and the BFFRPD staff for putting actions into place to ensure fire personnel and the citizens of the community were protected in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Financial report

Hinton updated the board as follows:

- The district received just over \$1 million in property tax revenue in March, resulting in a total of \$866,427 of unrestricted funds.
- The district has a total of \$1.37 million, part of which is restricted for TABOR and emergency reserves.
- Expenses for the pandemic have been lower than expected.
- The district has received 40.5% of revenues to date this year and is expected to receive the Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) grant for two new ambulances after the mid-June delivery. See [www.ocn.me/v19n11.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v19n11.htm#bffrpd).
- The cancellation of the May board election saved the district \$17,623.

The district is currently 18.7% under budget this year. "It's a good thing!" said Hinton. The board accepted the financial report, 5-0.

### Fleet/station updates

Langmaid and Deputy Chief James Rebitski confirmed the following for the board members:

- The two new ambulances are currently in production at Pierce Manufacturing Inc. and on target for delivery by mid-June. Pierce is 100% operational during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- BFFRPD is accepting bids for the balcony repair at Station 1.
- CenturyLink had accidentally filled a PVC pipe with foam for about 6 to 8 feet at Station 1. The problem has now been rectified and the pipe is now in use as a conduit.
- Station 2 had a burst water pipeline and that has also been repaired.

### Easter egg hunt volunteers

Hinton said he was disappointed that BFFRPD volunteer staff members were unavailable for the Annual 2020 Black Forest Easter Egg Hunt. "It is quite a big deal for BFFRPD to be there for the community," he said. Langmaid responded, "We still want to be present and have a good public relationship, but we cannot use our volunteer core when they are needed on call, nor can I force volunteer staff to attend since the event is not in the budget."

"In the future, it would be helpful to partner with another volunteer group in the community to coordinate set-up," Langmaid said.

### Future meetings

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, Langmaid canceled the scheduled March 18 meeting after implementing a strict no-visitor policy at all BFFRPD stations until further notice. Nearhoof confirmed during the meeting that BFFRPD may continue to conduct board meetings virtually via Zoom until further notice. This decision is in the best possible interests of public health and safety during the COVID-19 outbreak and will remain in effect until such time as Colorado residents can move around their communities freely. Members of the public who wish to join/attend future meetings can find information at [www.bffire.org](http://www.bffire.org).

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

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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 regular board meeting is scheduled for May 20. For updates, visit [www.bffire.org](http://www.bffire.org).

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Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, March 31 and April 21

# May 5 election discussed; annual audit clean

By Allison Robenstein

The Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) held virtual meetings on March 31 and April 21. The board discussed ways to minimize contact between voters and election officials during the May 5 election. The annual audit was announced to be clean. A station LED lighting project was approved, and there was discussion to rework the district's website and social media platforms. Although no action was taken, the board discussed capital projects and strategic planning, especially with regard to unmanned Station 3. During a bi-annual pension meeting, the board discussed increasing monthly retirement benefits, but no decisions were made.

### May 5 election for three director seats

Three director positions are open for the May 5 election. The terms for Secretary Lawrence Schwarz and Dwayne Garrett expired in April, and one seat is vacant after the passing of former Chairman William

"Bo" McAllister. Resident Steve Simpson, who is vying for one of the open seats, asked the board how it is handling the May 5 election logistically in light of the safer-at-home order. Besides Simpson, Schwarz and Garrett are running as well as Chris Mendrop and Charles Fleece.

The polling place election will be held at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Drive, Colorado Springs. The election style, which requires voters to be physically present to vote, was set up before the pandemic outbreak when COVID-19 wasn't on anyone's radar. Absentee voting is allowed, but voters had to request a ballot before April 28, according to district counsel Michelle Ferguson.

Chief Vinny Burns said he intends to minimize contact for election judges and the public. Voters will enter and exit into the bay at the south-side door, where rigs are normally parked, provide their identification and then move to a physically separate lo-

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