

DWFPD (Cont. from 14)

initiative, it must approve the resolution and notify its intent with the county clerk by July 26.

District Attorney Michelle Ferguson said there will be a statewide resolution in November asking voters to repeal Gallagher altogether. In recent years, Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District residents approved such a ballot measure. See <https://ocn.me/v19n12.htm#tlfmfpd>.

Should the statewide ballot issue fail, the 2021 General Assembly is set to review the residential assessment rate, and it could decrease.

Chief's report

Burns said there are some signs of normalcy as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Wescott has begun training again with other north group fire districts. Responses to suspected coronavirus calls for service still require full personal protective gear, but for all other calls just masks are being worn.

Burns said the community has been very generous with not just food but some supplies that have become difficult to procure.

He also identified several Wescott personnel who have been sent to national wildfires. Battalion Chief Scott Ridings is working as a task force leader in Scotts-

dale, Ariz. Stacey Popovich and Rachel Peterson are on assignment in Durango.

The meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

The next Donald Wescott Fire Protection District meeting is scheduled for July 21 at 4 p.m. at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Dr. Meetings are usually on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. For information, call Executive Administrator Stacey Popovich at 719-488-8680 or see www.wescottfire.org.

Allison Robenstein can be contacted at allisonrobenstein@ocn.me. Janet Sellers can be contacted at janetsellers@ocn.me.

Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District June 3, 11, and 17

Langmaid hired as fire chief; new 4x4 ambulances arrive

By Natalie Barszcz

On June 3, the Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) board met in executive session for two hours to discuss a permanent fire chief position. The board met again on June 11 in executive session for a further three hours to discuss the employment status of interim Fire Chief P J Langmaid.

The board met in person under strict COVID-19 distancing guidelines in the Community Room at Station 1 on June 17 to discuss the current status of hiring a permanent fire chief, to hear an update on the anticipated new ambulances, and to accept the 2019 audit. The meeting was delayed until the arrival of Director James Abendschan.

Fire chief's permanent contract

Board Chairman Rick Nearhoof said that after two long executive sessions, a contract for a permanent fire chief had been finalized by the district's attorney, Linda Glesne of Collins Cockrel and Cole Law Firm, Denver. Nearhoof said he hoped that Langmaid would find it agreeable after reviewing it with his lawyer before the July board meeting. Langmaid has done a great job so far after starting out as a board member eight years ago, he is highly recommended by the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) and the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) and we hope he accepts the permanent fire chief position, said Nearhoof.

Board Vice Chairman Nate Dowden said he hoped that an accord could be reached before the July board

meeting. He made a motion to allow Nearhoof to execute a signed contract and review any revision to the contract with the district counsel before the July board meeting. The board accepted the motion, 5-0.

Note: Langmaid was BFFRPD board chairman until he stepped into the role as interim fire chief at the request of the board in May 2019, and he has continued to work full time as a firefighter for CSFD.

Langmaid informed OCN that after the board meeting, he had accepted the contract and is now the permanent fire chief. He has resigned from CSFD.

2019 audit

Nearhoof asked board members to confirm they had received and read a copy of the 2019 audit as presented by Dawn Schilling at the May board meeting. The board confirmed they had read the audit report and had no comments. See www.ocn.me/v20n6.htm#bffrpd. The board accepted the 2019 audit as presented, 4-0.

Operational report

Langmaid gave the following update:

- Call volume has remained relatively low and is likely associated with the "safer at home" order. But traffic accidents have increased now that restrictions are being lifted.
- Langmaid requested the board convene in a long-term planning session before the end of the summer to discuss the 18 vehicles the district currently owns.

- Annual pump testing cannot be confirmed and is likely overdue, Langmaid said, hoping all the vehicles will pass the test.
- Deputy Fire Chief James Rebitski inspected the new 4x4 ambulances at Arrow Manufacturing Inc., Rock Rapids, Iowa. Both ambulances arrived in the district the week of June 22 and will be put into service soon after branding is applied and the radios and the existing Stryker gurneys are fitted.
- Firefighter/EMT Cody Poole created a new patch for the department in a traditional old English style in red and black. The patch will be displayed on new vehicles and district correspondence and will complement the existing department patch that was created by Fire Chief Bob Harvey at the beginning of his tenure.

Mobile Data Communication project update

Langmaid said two Mobile Data Communication (MDC) devices have been ordered, one for the in-service ambulance and the other for the Command/Communications vehicle. The district has to own its own communications and not rely on the county to provide communications, and we need to build a robust communication system, he said.

After testing the Panasonic Toughbook and the Microsoft Surface, both were found to be unsuitable with the latter being prone to melting in the heat of a vehicle. A rugged G Tech Microsoft Surface model is less costly than the Panasonic Toughbook and was chosen to serve the district better. However, the need for eight additional MDC's for the frontline units to include hardware mounting and connectivity would cost the district \$70,000 to move forward with the project, said Langmaid.

Treasurer Jack Hinton wanted to discuss the cost of current and future IT costs. Langmaid said he had already asked for two, three-year projections from Colorado Computer Support (CCS), the district's current IT provider, and a competitor to avoid any budget surprises in the future. Typically the average cost is \$2,200 to \$2,500 per month. CCS currently provides the district with over 10 hours of support per month for a cost of \$1,400 but, with the additional MDC's, the cost would increase to \$2,200.



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Above: Conex containers are delivered and stacked during June on rough ground south of Station 1. The newly created training area will serve BFFRPD and neighboring fire departments as coordinated training events increase under the direction of district Training Officer Capt. Chris Piepenburg. **Inset:** The facility has been painted green to blend with the surroundings. Photo by Chris Piepenburg.

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