

Communication devices" should read "Mobile radios." OCN regrets the error.

Meetings are usually held at 7 p.m. on the third Wednes-

day of each month at BFFR-PD Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. The

next regular board meeting is scheduled for Aug. 19. For updates and minutes, visit www.bffire.org.

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

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, July 21

Board approves steps toward election for de-Gallagherization

By Allison Robenstein
During a virtual meeting held on July 21, the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District board approved a notice of intent to the county to hold an election this November that will ask voters to de-Gallagherize revenues. Also, Chief Vinny Burns identified numerous completed projects and board officers were voted in.

Joyce Hartung was noted absent.

Election to de-Gallagherize approved

The board voted unanimously to send a notice of intent to El Paso County to ask the voters to approve de-Gallagherizing their revenue. There will be two of the same questions, one for the district and another for the sub-district.

A ballot initiative to de-Gallagherize would mean the district is unaffected by the changes to the residential tax rate in order to maintain a consistent cash flow.

Background: The Gallagher amendment is a voter-approved measure requiring 45 percent of the state's total property tax burden to be paid by residences in order to relieve the increases in residential property taxes. The other 55 percent is paid by nonresidential (commercial) property. Because of TABOR, the tax rate can never increase. Fluctuations in the residential tax directly affect the district's budget.

The district's legal counsel, 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#tlmfpd>.

The next step will be to sign an intergovernmental agreement with the county by August. The full ballot language is due in September.

Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich said the last election cost the district \$30,000. Ferguson will supply assessed valuation statements for 2019 that the board can review to be sure they are making a financially sound decision in holding an election.

Chiefs' report

Burns and other chiefs had the following comments:

- During the June meeting, the board approved money for a Station 2 roof replacement, citing extensive wind and hail damage from 2019. Burns said this project had been completed. Once the insurance check arrives, the district will need to spend only about \$1,000 for the project.

- Burns said the district has received their usual thank you notes from local residents that are so appreciated.
- Burns said the teams have been on four deployments so far this summer. This includes three in Colorado and one in Arizona.
- Battalion Chief Shannon Balvanz told the board the new tender was delivered and will come in under budget. The truck, made by Midwest Fire, is intended to haul water. The vehicle includes a 450-horsepower engine and can carry 3,500 gal-

lons of water, pumping it at a rate of 500 gallons per minute.

- Lt. Justin Chavez said a grant was approved to purchase the Lifepak 15. The state grant will pay for 50% of the defibrillator cost, which is roughly \$17,500. Because this is a non-budgeted request, Burns urged the board to take money from reserve funds to pay for the expense.
- Employee handbook—Popovich started the new version of the handbook; it is in review before they present it to the board as a rough draft. Ferguson

assisted with a template. The board must approve it before it's handed out to the employees.

Public relations and website finances approved

Battalion Chief Sean Pearson asked the board to approve \$5,000 for the website update, a photo shoot, and miscellaneous items for future public relations functions. Pearson noted this is an unbudgeted request.

A statement of work for website updates didn't include training or lead time to make future changes to the www.Wescott.org site. Pearson said he was leaning on a district

staffer, Rachael Dunn, to get training and pass it along to the rest of the staff. Updates will cost \$50 per hour.

The board unanimously approved the request but didn't identify from where the money will come.

Board officer election

Through a block vote of candidates, Director Duane Garrett was named treasurer, while Secretary Larry Schwarz retained his position, as did Chairman Mark Gunderman.

Public comments

Resident Mary Gunderman of Paradise Village thanked the district on behalf of her neighbors saying, "We're very appreciative of all you do for us

If your walls could talk, they'd thank you.



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