

attend one of the training days.

- Eight new hand-held radios were purchased for about \$70,000. The district is close to completing the radio replacement project. Jones thanked Battalion Chiefs Sean Pearson and Shannon Balvanz and Lt. Matt Gibbs for the successful federal

grant request that made the purchase of the additional radios possible.

Jones also said Popovich will be working remotely from home from Nov. 9 until the end of 2021, and the system has worked well in the past.

The meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

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Meetings are usually held on the third Tuesday of the month at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Dr., at 7 p.m. Due to COVID-19 distancing protocols, meetings are held virtually for public attendees. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 16 at 4 p.m. For updates, virtual meeting join-

ing instructions, agendas, and archived minutes, visit: [www.wescottfire.org](http://www.wescottfire.org) or call the Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich at 719-488-8680.

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### Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District, Oct. 20 and 28

## 2022 budget revealed; eight firefighters hired

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) meeting on Oct. 20, the board reviewed and accepted the proposed 2022 budget for public review in November and heard eight entry-level firefighters would join the district on Nov. 1. The board also received numerous updates, to include the sale of the 2013 tender. At the pension Board of Trustees' "special meeting" on Oct. 28, the board approved funeral benefits and a survivor pension benefit.

Vice Chairman Nate Dowden was excused from the regular meeting.

### 2022 budget revealed

Fire Chief PJ Langmaid reviewed the detailed proposed 2022 budget with the board, noting multiple decreases and increases, and said:

- The district assessed property tax revenue is expected to be \$3.7 million for 2021, and it includes the first 392 exclusions of property. See [www.ocn.me/v21n2.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n2.htm#bffrpd).
- The district received \$3.3 million last year, but growth in the region has been a benefit to the district. However, more exclusions of property are pending.
- Specific Ownership Tax is trending up, and \$250,000 is anticipated for 2022.
- The wage and leave schedule adopted into the budget at the September board meeting will include some structural changes, specifically for paramedics. The district has three paramedics and a fourth will join in November, providing more flexibility on

shifts. See [www.ocn.me/v21n10.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n10.htm#bffrpd).

- A sick leave accrual adjustment from 2.7 to 4.6 hours, will allow staff to accumulate 120 hours of sick leave per year. Sick leave is owned by the district and is not paid out to the employee when leaving the district.
- The district is now using an accounting firm for payroll, resulting in a cost savings.
- The proposed training budget is \$157,865, a significant increase for 2022.
- The funds set aside to purchase an engine and two tactical tenders in the 2021 budget will be used to pay down the purchased Pierce Enforcer Pumper engine. The engine cost was about \$632,000, and the loan will be reduced to \$316,000. The district did not purchase the tenders. See [www.ocn.me/v21n5.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n5.htm#bffrpd) and [www.ocn.me/v21n7.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n7.htm#bffrpd).
- The district saw an unusual 18% growth in 2021, and Zillow predicts the county will continue with a 17% growth rate. If the growth rate reduces to about 9%, the district would retain more revenue than previously predicted. But a 2% growth rate would be a concern, and the district would lose \$244,000 over two years, so it will continue to roll over revenue each year in case the economy changes.
- The district will take a "big hit" in 2023 and 2024 due to the exclusion of property south of Black Forest. Langmaid said "the district is head-

ing in the right direction" and after the board approves the 2022 budget, an abbreviated three-page general summary will be available on the district website, in the same abbreviated format that was posted on the website and sent to the state in 2021.

Hinton said, "at least we can give the line staff an 11% wage increase for paramedics and below" and he made a motion to accept the proposed 2022 budget for public presentation and comment at the Nov. 17 board meeting. Final board approval will take place at the December board meeting.

The board accepted the proposed 2022 budget as presented, 4-0.

### Financial report

Treasurer Jack Hinton said:

- The district's total assets were \$2.369 million as of Sept. 30, and the district is 22% under budget year to date.
- The district has received 97% of the intake of property taxes, which is about the same as last year.
- The district is in good shape.

The board accepted the financial report as presented, 4-0.

### Chief's report

Langmaid said the following:

- The interviews for entry-level firefighters have been completed and the district will be hiring eight extremely high-performing candidates to start on Nov. 1. Staff feedback indicates the investment made to develop a hiring process is paying off.
- District legal counsel reviewed the resolution for the Joint Plan for the exclusion process and it is moving forward. The Colorado Springs City Council has amended the plan to reflect the correct administrative dates and the additional addresses, and Chairman Rick Nearhoof has signed the Joint Plan. The Joint Plan will be presented in district court by the legal teams. See [www.ocn.me/v21n10.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n10.htm#bffrpd).
- The 2013 tender was sold to a broker for \$130,000 and shipped to a North Carolina fire department. Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) and a Minnesota fire department were considering purchasing the tender. See [www.ocn.me/v21n9.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n9.htm#bffrpd).
- The district has hired a part-time local mechanic, and he is already assessing the fleet and developing a fire apparatus maintenance program. In-house repairs will alleviate the need to send apparatus away for lengthy repairs.
- Deputy Chief James Rebitski attended a multi-day conference in Kansas City on fire station remodels, renovations, design, and construction, to assist with the Station 2 remodel project. A request will be made for a work session in November to discuss the findings.
- Estimates from two contractors for the small minor improvements (a concrete wall/or large decorative concrete wall blocks, regrading, and shower upgrades), previ-

ously approved for Station 2, are expected soon. See [www.ocn.me/v21n9.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n9.htm#bffrpd).

- A firefighter deployed with Security Fire Protection District to Silverthorne, and the Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn deployed to Oregon to solve logistic problems. Both are back in district and there was no operational impact to daily staffing.
- Eight previously budgeted fire signs have been purchased, and the district is researching the county specifications for signage positioning. The signs will be placed around the periphery of the district boundary.

### Training update

Langmaid said the following:

- A weeklong auto extrication class was held in-district and attended by TLMFPD, Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Cimmaron Hills Fire Protection District, and Falcon Fire Protection District.
- A lecture by Battalion Chief Nick Martin from South Carolina brought in firefighters from as far away as Cheyenne, Wyo., Boulder, Denver, and Colorado Springs.
- A four-day rope rescue skills class was complete by six district firefighters.

### Public comment

Black Forest resident Linda Smith asked if the district would continue to receive revenue from the new construction in Wolf Ranch up to Old Ranch Road, Colorado Springs, or will a mill levy increase be needed.

Hinton said the following:

- Property values and assessed property taxes have increased, and that has made a huge difference in district revenue. The construction of large homes continues, and it will take a while before property values decline.
- The Residential Assessment Rate (RAR) is currently set at 7.15%, but for the next two years it is set to drop temporarily to 6.5%.

Langmaid said the following in response:

- Wolf Ranch is no longer part of BFFRPD, but the district is providing services to the homes east of Old Ranch Road and Sterling Ranch.
- The properties pending exclusion from BFFRPD will impact district revenue, and those properties are south of Cowpoke Road and Cumbre Vista Way.
- A request to increase the district's mill levy will not be made until all options have been explored, but if the RAR set by the state drops to a much lower level in the future, the district can adjust the mill levy to maintain the status quo.
- The matching adjustment is possible due to the voter approved decision to de-Gallagher the district in 2018, but the district can only match up to the current 7.15% RAR by adjusting the current mill levy to maintain revenue, and not a penny more without further voter approval.

BFFRPD (Cont. on 16)



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