



**Above:** Emergency Services Consulting International Project manager Dan Qualman presenting the findings and recommendations of the joint feasibility study on Nov. 10 at Lewis-Palmer Middle School. The joint special meeting between the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District and Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District board members was also attended by executive staff, firefighters and four members of the public. *Photo by Natalie Barszcz.*

suggested adding two firefighters per shift for a total increase of six firefighters at DWFPD Station 1. Station 1 could become Station 4 if the merger moves forward.

- Fleece and Lance asked about extra staff to reduce overtime. Hildebrandt said, adding an additional 14 employees would cost about \$1.3 million per year and we can do without it right now. Qualman

said the final report removed the increase of 14 personnel, but it is an option.

**Findings/recommendations**

Qualman said:

- The merger by inclusion would create combined financial sustainability for the future.
- An historical financial analysis of both districts was used to complete the study and a combined

five-year forecast of the finances discovered that TLMFPD revenue would continue to climb and DWFPD would experience a decrease by 2026.

- TLMFPD needs coverage in the southern part of its district and the unification would avoid the cost of spending an estimated \$6 million to build a fourth station, and about \$1.1 million per year to staff it.
- Over a five-year forecast period, the study predicts a cost avoidance of \$12 million could be achieved with a unification of the districts.
- Future station relocations or the elimination of stations should be based on response needs and performance standards. The board will need to set the response times.
- The continued monitoring of response times with improved data collection will determine future station locations.
- ESCI recommended a fire authority, not knowing how long it will take for the DWFPD subdistrict to be dissolved. *See [www.ocn.me/v21n6.htm#dwfpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n6.htm#dwfpd) and [www.ocn.me/v21n7.htm#dwfpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n7.htm#dwfpd).*

Hildebrandt said TLMFPD is not considering the unification with DWFPD a loss of revenue, and would not be subsidizing, but more of a contribution of about \$20 per \$500,000 home from the already assessed property taxes in TLMFPD. DWFPD residents could see an annual savings of about \$78 on a \$500,000 home should a vote to equalize the mill levy for the northern and sub-district take place, said Hildebrandt. *See [www.ocn.me/v21n10.htm#dwfpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n10.htm#dwfpd) and [www.ocn.me/v21n10.htm#tlmfpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n10.htm#tlmfpd).*

Former TLMFPD board president Charlie Pocock said, “he has asked many crews about the merger, and they are 100 percent behind it.” He continued, “I realize that everyone has to give a little to gain a lot, and the taxpayers will gain the most, and there is a lot of support for this merger, and a lot of people behind this.”

Qualman thanked Pocock for his input and said he heard positivity after talking to the crews from both districts and that is not always the case during mergers, but it is normal to be hesitant.

Interim Fire Chief Warren Jones said the next steps will be:

- Board discussions about a partial contract for services, for Wescott to partner with TLMFPD, and for Fire Chief Andy Kovacs and Division Chief of Operations Jonathan Bradley to manage DWFPD in 2022.
- Both district’s attorneys have suggested the boards continue discussing the path forward at the November board meetings, and separately in executive session to talk about a fire authority or a contract for services.

“This has been a tremendously wonderful project, and just about the coolest thing to experience in my fire service career, and as an outsider, we are on the cusp of making it happen and I applaud you all,” said Jones.

Kovacs thanked Qualman for his leadership in conducting the feasibility study and said, “The findings speak for themselves and really point to a unification of the two departments.” “It was a pleasure working with Jones, and he and the executive team are looking forward to the challenge of moving toward the end game of a merger-by-inclusion model that Qualman alluded to, and how best to move forward as one,” said Kovacs.

Both boards unanimously approved the agendas for the executive sessions to take place at the November board meetings. See the DWFPD article below and the TLMFPD article on page 14.

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.  
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For future joint special meeting information and joining instructions on the unification process visit [www.tlmfire.org](http://www.tlmfire.org) and [www.wescottfire.org](http://www.wescottfire.org).

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**Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Nov. 16**

**Unification diving deeper; 2022 Budget proposed**

*By Natalie Barszcz*

At the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) meeting held on Nov. 16, the board discussed the findings of the Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) feasibility study for the proposed unification between the district and Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD), the proposed 2022 budget was revealed, and a firefighter took the oath of office.

The board noted Director Joyce Hartung was absent and they declined to make a motion to excuse.

**Unification update**

Interim Fire Chief Warren Jones welcomed TLMFPD Fire Chief Andy Kovacs and Division Chief of Operations Jonathan Bradley and said:

- After six months of both district boards working together on the unification process, there is hope that in the next few weeks the districts will come together on the operational and administrative side.
- Kovacs has already begun chatting with the Wescott executive staff and firefighters.
- Jones also gave a quick review of the ESCI feasibility study presentation and said:
- The feasibility study showed un-

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