

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Feb. 18, March 9 and 16

Payroll discrepancies rectified; ISO rating improves

By Allison Robenstein

The Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) held two special meetings and one regular meeting Feb. 18 and March 9 and 16. A Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) audit showed payroll issues, the district achieved an improved Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating, and the search for an interim fire chief continued.

FLSA audit shows payroll inconsistencies

The board held a special meeting and executive session on Feb. 18 in accordance with C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(b) to receive advice of legal counsel. During the executive session, the board reviewed an FLSA audit of Wescott's 2020 payroll records. The audit was conducted because of irregularities found in payroll procedures. In open meeting, the board directed Administrative

Assistant Stacey Popovich and Legal Counsel Michelle Ferguson to proceed with another audit of 2019 payroll records and to communicate to all employees that the board intends to take actions to pay any discrepancies found.

In the regular March 16 meeting, Ferguson said the results of both audits show seven employees are owed money ranging from \$45 to \$4,000 in underpayments. Popovich provided those employees a lump sum reimbursement in their next payroll cycle.

Chief's report

Battalion Chief Scott Ridings said the ISO review is complete and Wescott achieved a two rating. The Fire Suppression Rating Schedule used by ISO determines how capable a fire department is in putting out a fire. A one rating is the best, while a 10 means a department doesn't meet minimum

requirements. Ridings said insurance companies use the ratings to set home insurance rates. A rating of two means the district is efficient in putting out fires for areas where hydrants exist and hauling water to portions of the district without hydrants as well. Ridings said of the 556 fire departments in Colorado only nine are rated a one and 61 are rated a two. "This is something to be proud of," said Ridings.

Chief Vinny Burns began the process of improving the district's ISO rating shortly after the mill levy passed in 2017. See www.ocn.me/v17n12.htm#dwfpd.

Other items of interest in the chief's report include:

- The department had 72 calls for service in February 2020 and, for the same month this year, there were 84 calls. There was no significant fire loss within the district.

- During the major snowstorm, DWFPD worked as part of the Northern Unified Command, which includes the Tri-Lakes Fire Protection District, Town of Monument, Monument Police Department, Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District, Falcon Fire Protection District, and Palmer Lake Fire Department. Battalion Chief Shannon Balvanz prepared the district for the event, while Battalion Chief Sean Pearson manned the command center. As expected, most of the calls were traffic accidents and stranded motorists, although a stroke victim had to be brought out with the aid of Wescott's Humvee and town snowplows in order to transfer the victim to an ambulance. Chairman Mark Gunderman thanked everyone who worked during the storm.

Interim chief interview proceeds

During the Feb. 18 meeting the board decided to interview two retired fire chiefs to serve as potential interim chiefs. One unidentified person took their name out of the running. The remaining candidate, Warren Jones, will be interviewed by the board. Gunderman said Jones is well credentialed and Gunderman feels comfortable moving forward with just the one candidate, but Director Joyce Hartung said, "I would like to get a couple of others just for comparison." This was overlooked by the rest of the board who arranged for Jones to meet staff. Firefighters were enthusiastic at the chance to meet their possible new chief.

Gunderman and Secretary Larry Schwarz were appointed to the personnel committee. The first order of business for the newly formed group will be to facilitate hiring of the interim fire chief.

The meeting adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

The next Donald Wescott fire district meeting is scheduled for April 20 at 4 p.m. If the meeting is held in person, it will be at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Dr. For a virtual meeting, the phone number is 669-900-9128, and the meeting code is 980 378 2073. 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.

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Black Forest Fire Rescue/Protection District, March 23

Fire code variance concern; fleet modifications needed

By Natalie Barszcz

The Black Forest Fire Rescue/Protection District (BFFRPD) board met both in person at Station 1 and via Zoom meeting on March 23. Vice Chairman Nate Dowden attended via Zoom. The regularly scheduled meeting for March 17 was rescheduled to observe the CO-

BFFRPD (Cont. on 20)

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