

Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District, July 21

Staffing turbulence; exclusion process is slow

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District (BF-FRPD) board meeting on July 21, the directors discussed staffing, the exclusion process, equipment availability, and how those factors may affect the current budget and the budget for 2022.

Director James Abend-schan was excused.

Staffing turbulence

Fire Chief PJ Langmaid said the district's hiring practices have proven to be very effective at selecting top performers, and as a result three personnel have been "sniped" by larger, higher-paying organizations such as the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD), the Boulder Fire-Rescue Department, and a department in Dallas, Texas. The district has offered four individuals conditional job offers—two are paramedics—and they are anticipated to join the district on Aug. 9, said Langmaid.

Exclusion process update

Colorado Springs resident Colleen Murphy asked the board and the chief if they had heard anything from the City of Colorado Springs' legal attorney or the Colorado Springs City Council regarding the exclusion of the properties south of Black Forest between Cowpoke Road and Woodmen Road. The Colorado Springs City Council has been non-responsive to monthly requests for information, and they just say, "there is a plan," said Murphy. See www.ocn.me/v20n8.htm#bffrpd.

Langmaid said:

- He met with CSFD Chief Randy Royal to discuss the exclusion process and develop a plan.
- The district has been waiting 90 days for the city to send the details on the plan.
- The district received a list of properties from the city right before the discus-

sions with the attorneys earlier in the year when there was momentum.

- There will be more pressure in August from the district because the delay will impact the El Paso County assessor and the El Paso County treasurer, and the district will need to know the tax revenue for the 2022 budget.
- The district's attorney, Linda Glesne of Collins, Cockrel and Cole law firm, Denver, will be contacting Colorado Springs City Council to try to speed up the process.

Murphy thanked the board and the chief for trying to "speed up the process" and said she would ask a few of her neighbors to get involved.

Super Vacuum Industrial (SVI) Trucks/Spartan engine

Langmaid said every possible plan has been explored to

rectify the problems with the Spartan engine and we come back to two feasible choices, make it work or sell it to another department. Chairman Rick Nearhoof said he would not want to sell it to another department if it still has problems with a pump engagement issue. Langmaid said SVI Trucks has pledged to write a letter to any future purchaser stating the Spartan engine is fully operational and functional and meets the criteria of what it was designed to do, it just takes a lot longer to work its way through the transfer case, and the letter would remove any liability on the district. See www.ocn.me/v21n5.htm#bffrpd and www.ocn.me/v21v7.htm#bffrpd.

Financial report, year-to-date June 30

Treasurer Jack Hinton said the following:

- The district has \$2.905 million, which includes the Emergency Reserve Fund of \$235,812, the Capital Improvement Fund of \$249,621, and TABOR of \$94,470.
- The district is 38% of the budget year to date. Normally in recent years at this time of year, the district would be at 50% of the budget.

Hinton said there is nothing outstanding for June, but the district has purchased gym equipment, and the 2006 Rosenbauer engine continues to have costly maintenance issues that use up most of the maintenance budget. That engine will be switched out next year when the Pierce engine is received, and "the district has plenty of money," said Hinton. See www.ocn.me/v21n7.htm#bffrpd.

Hinton said that for the next two years, the Residential Assessment Rate (RAR) multiplier will be 6.95% instead of 7.15%, and residents are "gripping" on Nextdoor.com that it is still too high. Although homeowners would like lower taxes, the multiplier directly affects revenue for fire districts. There will be no adjustments, but at least we know what the rate will be for the next two years when calculating the budget, and the district was de-Gallagherized in 2018 and can match to the current multiplier, if necessary, said

Hinton. See the DWFPD article on page 17.

Hinton also noted new Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn is very knowledgeable and willing to help with his requests, and district auditor Dawn Schilling of Schilling & Co. Inc. has requested an audit extension with the state for the 2020 audit.

The financial report was accepted as presented, 4-0.

Wildland deployments

Langmaid said the following:

- Small pockets of firefighters are deploying around the nation to help with wildland firefighting suppression.
- Staff volunteer for deployments to gain the strategic benefits of experience and qualifications.
- The district deployed wildland resources to California and Wyoming, along with the Type 3 engine to assist the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- Lessons learned will be discussed to assess the feasibility of sustaining a deployment program while ensuring adequate local resources.
- Zero staffing reductions are made due to deployments, but it does not mean that it is painless for the staff that take on the extra shifts.
- The wages for staff coverage/overtime are reimbursed by FEMA.

The cost to the department is the tired staff that remain behind. Morale can be an issue, but the district is always covered during deployments and operates shifts with five personnel, said Langmaid.

Chief's report

Langmaid said the following:

- The district attorney Glesne will be contacting El Paso County to find out how much revenue will be lost with the exclusion properties coming off the books.
- The RAR may need to be adjusted, but we will know more after Aug. 22, when the county assessor releases the projected property tax revenue for 2022.
- The district has begun the preliminary development of the 2022 budget.

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Questions? Contact Erica Meyer,
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