

DWFPD (Cont. from 18)

in the 2021 budget. The chiefs did good work applying for the grant, Jones said. "A successful grant is a great thing."

2021 budget mid-year review and follow-up

Jones said there were no subsequent changes to the 2021 budget after July 31, and he noted the following:

- Eight radios have been ordered, although the district had budgeted for 10.
- The district has also pulled back on some projects, including the annual awards banquet that would normally cost about \$5,000 to \$6,000 and will now cost about \$3,000.
- The district will be tracking and watching overtime and the spare legal costs as the next two to three months unfold to find out how much revenue will be needed for costs and salaries.
- The district would prefer to use as little as possible of the \$150,000 held in reserve. See www.ocn.me/v21n8.htm#dwfpd.

2022 budget planning

Jones said the internal process has begun for the 2022 budget and he noted the following:

- A pay plan does not appear anywhere in the budget, and it is important to build it into the front of the budget rather than the back.
- The district receives about \$3 million in revenue annually, and 84% is dedicated to salaries and benefits.
- The pay plan, cost-of-living allowance, health insurance, and reserve funding will be the focus during the planning process.
- The district program managers responsible for purchases and maintaining stock and equipment will be looking at the 2021 budget and focusing on new purchases for the 2022 budget rather than old line items.
- The county assessed property values for the district and the sub-district were expected by the end of August.
- The district does not expect to be impacted by any constitutional amendment or ballot decrease to the property tax multiplier for the 2022 budget.
- Even though DWFPD hopes the unification with TLMFPD happens, the district needs a 2022 budget for the transition phase.

Gunderman said, "Last year, the board did things differently, and we gave the former chief the pay increase amount to distribute to the [lieutenants] and below for equity adjustments." Gunderman asked Jones about the fire industry standard for pay plans. See www.ocn.me/v21n1.htm#dwfpd.

Jones said there are various systems, some based on performance and others include tenure, experience, special training, and many variations.

Chief Jones has "hit the nail on the head," and "I like the idea of a pay plan and making some salary comparisons with TLMFPD, but we cannot compete with South Metro Denver and Colorado Springs Fire Department salaries," said Gunderman.

Treasurer Duane Garrett asked how the district is

addressing the fleet and equipment issues.

Jones said, "We need to deal with our fleet issues, but the numbers are so big and it is close to the end of the year, and without knowing the numbers, I am not sure we can resolve the issues."

"It is like a big sun coming over the horizon with fire trucks coming at us," and "it would take \$300,000 per year to make it happen," said Jones.

Secretary Larry Schwarz said he could not read the presentation board that Jones was using during the discussion and he would just listen and wait until the work session to provide his comments, but all the discussion points are "on the right track."

A work session for the proposed 2022 budget will be scheduled for the first week of September.

Financial report—July 31

Jones read the financial report as of July 31 as follows:

- The Community Banks of Colorado Fund has \$244,426.
- The Wells Fargo Public Trust Fund has \$1.78 million.
- The district has a total of \$2.02 million.

Gunderman asked what could have contributed to the increase of \$549,000 in the Wells Fargo Public Trust Fund. See www.ocn.me/v21n8.htm#dwfpd.

Jones said he would request information about the increase from Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich.

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

July activity report

Battalion Chief Scott Ridings said there were 79 requests for service calls in July and none were significant, but it was a 27% increase in calls compared to July 2020. The district has accomplished a lot of mutual aid and good multi-company training with TLMFPD and Black Forest Fire Protection District and in particular within a pre-demolition donated building in downtown Monument. "A lot of good training is going on, and we are getting together about every other week for training, and it is very positive," said Ridings.

Wildland deployments

Ridings said the couple of crews that were out on 28-day wildland deployment have been switched out now and a couple are deployed as mixed crews of two with one additional member from Cimarron Hills Fire Department and Security Fire Department, but all equipment is back in service within in the district. "Great feedback has been received from the first crew that deployed," said Ridings.

Station 3 update

Jones said that he and Gunderman had been contacted by Gary Nelson, president of the El Paso County Emergency Incident Support (EIS) volunteer group, about the Station 3 property, but he recommended the board wait until every board member could review the information received from EIS, and maybe waiting until after the unification study is complete. See <https://epceis.com/>.

Gunderman said the following:

- The board has no specific agenda for Station 3.
- He had met and discussed the information EIS provided with the group's president over the past

weekend, and he found that EIS has a lot of equipment including a large food truck.

- There is a lot of information "to kick around" with regard to Station 3, and all board members have received a copy for review.

Gunderman recommended the board wait until the September board meeting to make any decision.

All board members in attendance agreed with the decision to defer the discussion.

Cell tower at Station 2

Jones said that the district attorney is reviewing the cell tower documents the district received regarding the placement of a commercial cell tower at Station 2. See www.ocn.me/v21n8.htm#dwfpd.

Powell said both documents from the two cell tower companies interested in renting space at Station 2 for the positioning of a cell tower are lengthy at 16 and 30 pages and very involved. The review of the documents will be a full-day project and that would be costly to the district. Alternately, a high-level review of costs, access, and indemnity to identify the typical problem areas would be the best starting point.

Gunderman said board members are all "lukewarm" to the cell tower at Station 2, but the high-level approach would be best right now. The district already has so many "irons in the fire" with the unification process and knowing whether to do a deeper dive in the future or just say "no thanks" to the cell tower companies would be helpful.

Powell said she would keep the review as efficient as possible.

Retirement "Thank you"

Jones thanked the firefighters and duty staff for organizing a successful retirement event for former Fire Chief Vinny Burns in recognition of his 40-plus years of fire service to the district. "It is a long time, and it was a nice event," said Jones. See www.ocn.me/v21n2.htm#dwfpd.

Public comments

No public comments were heard during the regular meeting, but a few members of the public dialed into the Zoom meeting via telephone and despite their attempts to use the un-mute feature, they were unheard during the meeting. The un-mute feature *6 was explained to attendees at the beginning of the meeting and at both scheduled public comment points during the meeting, but an unanticipated delayed response was occurring during those times.

A minute after the meeting had finished, resident Steve Simpson did reach the board.

The meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

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 meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 21 at 4 p.m. For updates, virtual meeting joining instructions, agendas, and minutes, visit: www.wescottfire.org or call Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich at 719-488-8680.

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

Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, Aug. 25

New operations chief sworn in; crew commendation received



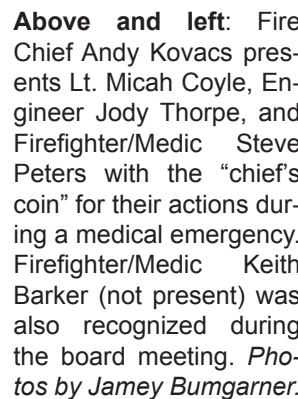
Above: Fire Chief Andy Kovacs (left) administers the oath of office to the newly promoted Division Chief of Operations Jonathan Bradley at the TLMFPD board meeting, Aug. 25. Photo by Jamey Bumgarner.

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) board meeting on Aug. 25, the new division chief of operations was sworn in, four staff members received the "chief's coin," and the board received updates on the unification process and several ongoing projects. Director Terri Hayes was excused.

New division chief of operations

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs administered the oath of office to newly promoted Division Chief of Operations Jonathan Bradley during the board meeting, and Division Chief of Logistics Randy Trost pinned on the badge of office during the swearing-in ceremony.



Above and left: Fire Chief Andy Kovacs presents Lt. Micah Coyle, Engineer Jody Thorpe, and Firefighter/Medic Steve Peters with the "chief's coin" for their actions during a medical emergency. Firefighter/Medic Keith Barker (not present) was also recognized during the board meeting. Photos by Jamey Bumgarner.

Vacant positions to fill

Kovacs said the goal now will be to hire two firefighters, promote a lieutenant internally, and fill the battalion chief of training position that Bradley vacated. In 2022, the EMS coordinator position will become full-time. After extensive advertising on multiple social media sites and flier distributions at local hospitals, the district has

already received 15 applications for the firefighter positions, said Kovacs.

Chief's coin presentation

Kovacs read a letter from another agency commending one crew for its action during a difficult medical emergency incident at a local restaurant. The letter stated, "The Tri-Lakes crew got ahead of the power curve and crushed it, I haven't run with Tri-Lakes before, but now, I'm excited to run in the area." Chief Kovacs stated that the crew "represents the very best TLMFPD offers."

Wescott unification

Kovacs said the following:

- Three consultants from Emergency Services Consultants International spent three days meeting with staff and board members at TLMFPD and at Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) in early August, and the feasibility study is on schedule.
- The consultants are busy gathering information, and they describe it as putting all the pieces together like a "jigsaw puzzle."
- A recent meeting at DWFPD's Station 2 revealed the firefighters are excited and anxious, and they want the process to move forward.
- Over the next two months, everything will start to come together and a clearer picture of what the unification process will look like will develop.

Station 1 Training Center update

Trost said the following:

- The training center committee is working on prioritizing the foundation for the site, the top priority props that could be used right away before all the