

- The cost to DWFPD will be \$1 per month for the contract for services.

The board approved the fee of \$1 per month, 4-0.

The DWFPD attorney, Emily Powell of Ireland Stapleton Pryor Pascoe PC law firm, said the contract for services is a “stop gap” to ensure adequate executive staffing before working on the next steps toward unification, and the chief’s salary that was to be paid to TLMFPD for the contract for services will be removed. Both districts have agreed that the fire chief’s salary of \$121,000 can be spent in better ways, said Powell.

The board approved the contract for services with TLMFPD, 4-0.

Kovacs thanked the board for putting their faith and trust in TLMFPD and said, “We hope to serve the district well.”

Jones said the Wescott staff is excited, and the unification will move quickly as the executive staff begin working together, and he requested the board make a motion to direct staff to get the full-service contract going in 2022.

Powell said the hope is to start negotiating this contract to be signed in the first quarter (physical assets, apparatus, stations, and equipment, etc.) of 2022. After that the transfer of employees will happen Jan. 1, 2023, due to complications with wages and benefit transfers, and W-2 forms.

Jones said he has worked with Powell on a similar project in the past and the time passes quickly, and everything worked out well.

The board approved 4-0 to implement the transfer in a timely manner and no later than Jan. 1, 2023.

Jones said the following:

- TLMFPD agreed to lower the cost of the contract for services from \$121,000 annually to \$1 per month and allow the Wescott fire chief salary to equalize the base salaries of the Wescott staff to allow for a more harmonious transfer and integration of staff.
- About \$236,000 would be needed to make that happen. Along with the fire chief salary for 2022, which is about \$128,554; \$12,854 in Fire & Police Pension Association (FPPA) contributions; the \$25,000 for the no longer needed part-time employee salaries; and about \$71,000 in revenue over expenditure, there should be enough to cover bonus salaries.
- A bonus system will avoid a future budget overhead if the merger does not work out.
- The bonus salaries will not count toward the pension system. See TLMFPD article on page 4.

Resident Steve Simpson said, “The bo-

nus pay is a great solution, and it is good not to add an unnecessary overhead, if the merger does not go through, but I am 1,000 percent for this merger.” Simpson thanked Jones and said, “This could not have happened without Jones, and this is the best board he has seen.”

Simpson joined the meeting late because he thought the meeting had occurred on Dec. 7.

Gunderman made a motion to direct the fire chief to develop a salary bonus schedule comparable to TLMFPD until the district staff transfer to TLMFPD.

The board approved the bonus salary, 4-0.

**Proposed 2022 budget—presentation/joint public hearing**

Powell said that after the presentation of the proposed 2022 budget, the board will need to make a motion to open the joint public hearing on the proposed 2022 district and sub-district fiscal year budget for comments after the presentation.

Jones presented the proposed 2022 budget and said:

- Concurrent to the 2022 budget development are the ongoing negotiations with TLMFPD for the unification of the districts.
- If the unification goes ahead, at least one budget amendment will be needed to accommodate the unification and meet the objectives.
- The 2022 budget continues with the current step pay plan, the health insurance plan and other employee benefits, to include a 4% inflation adjustment (the same as TLMFPD—the national average is projected to be 3.9% for 2022).
- Revenue of \$3.3 million is expected in 2022 and expenditures are projected to be about \$3.2 million, leaving an overage of about \$121,000.
- The board has already directed \$50,000 in 2022 to rebuild the district reserves.
- The district will need about \$2.7 million for 23 positions. Only 22 positions will be funded if the unification occurs, with the elimination of the fire chief position. The salary for the fire chief position will be used for another project if the unification is approved.
- There will be about \$450,184 in the budget for non-personnel administrative, emergency operations, facilities, training, and communications expenses.
- There are no capital expenses or purchase of major new or replacement equipment for 2022.
- The most important aspect of

the 2022 budget is building the end-of-year balances and the reserves.

Jones thanked Rachel Dunn, the district website administrator, for putting the proposed 2022 budget presentation together and for collaborating with district Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich. He also thanked the executive staff and the program managers, and he said, “They all did their due diligence making their budget requests” and “Popovich has been a ‘real trouper’ going above and beyond the call of duty to obtain information and manage the spreadsheets from home.”

Gunderman opened the public hearing on the proposed 2022 budget.

Powell said that the public hearing was duly published as required by law, and the board did not receive any public comments before the public hearing.

Gunderman, hearing no public comments, closed the public hearing.

The board approved and adopted the 2022 joint fiscal year budgets for the district and the subdistrict, 4-0. The 2022 approved budget can be viewed at [www.wescottfire.org](http://www.wescottfire.org).

The board also adopted and approved, 4-0, the following:

- The 2022 pay scale, that includes a 4 percent inflation adjustment.
- The services of Peak Consulting Services Inc. for plan reviews and inspections, and the corresponding fee schedule to include a 10 percent administrative fee to be retained as additional revenue by

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