

DWFPD

(Cont. from 14)

- A firefighter training at the CSFD Firefighter Academy could not meet the academic standards and has been terminated. The district hopes to replace him during the ongoing firefighter recruitment process.
- The district will seek budget approval to hire six firefighters plus one additional firefighter to replace the lost fire academy recruit.

- Two firefighters successfully finished Paramedic Training School and are completing their field internships in the district. Three more district firefighters are training to be paramedics.
- Division Chief of Operations Jonathan Bradley, Division Chief of Administration Jamey Bumgarner, and Lt. Chris Keough will travel to Florida to complete the final inspection of the Squad vehicle.
- The asphalt at Station 2 on Rollercoaster Road is

being replaced and, until completed, staff members are operating out of the "Shamrock" Station 5 on Highway 83/Stage Coach Road.

Fleece thanked Kovacs for the detailed monthly report.

"Fill the Boot" campaign appreciated

Kovacs thanked the community on behalf of the Local 4319 IAFF for generously contributing to the "Fill the Boot" campaign in support of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. This year the combined district firefighters

collected \$14,770—the largest amount ever raised locally, said Kovacs.

Annual Pumpkin Giveaway

The Local 4319 IAFF plans to hold the Fifth Annual Pumpkin Giveaway on the morning of Oct. 22 at the Clock Tower, Monument Marketplace, Jackson Creek Parkway. The district will be collecting donations for Tri-Lakes Cares during the event, said Kovacs. For further information and timings, visit www.tlmfire.org.

The meeting adjourned at

5:11 p.m.

Meetings are usually held on the third Tuesday of the month at MFD Station 1, 18650 Highway 105, at 4 p.m. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Oct. 18 at 4 p.m. Meeting attendance is open to the public in person or via Zoom. For joining instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates visit www.wescott-fire.org or www.tlmfire.org or contact Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich at 719-484-9011.

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

Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District, Sept. 21

2021 audit is unmodified; staff members promoted to permanent status

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) meeting on Sept. 21, the board received the 2021 audit presentation and witnessed five staff members take the oath of office and become permanent employees. The board also heard the district would request the board approve a mill levy adjustment to offset revenue loss from the temporary Residential Assessment Rate (RAR) drop for the 2023 budget.

Directors Chad Behnken and Kiersten Tarvainen attended via Zoom. Vice Chairman Jim Abendschan was excused.

2021 audit presentation
Dawn Schilling of Schilling and Co. Inc., Littleton, announced the district had received an unmodified or "clean" opinion for the 2021 audit, and thanked district Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn for assisting with all the requests for information. The internal controls are strong, and the board's overview and review of the financial information are key, said Schilling.

Schilling said the auditors found no difficulties during the audit process and made the following suggestions and requests:

- The proposed eight audit adjustments should be implemented by the district's certified public accountant before the 2022 audit commences in 2023.

- Suggested the district look at additional methods of investing funds.
- The board members review the draft 2021 audit and submit comments by Sept. 28.
- Board approval of the 2021 audit is subject to changing the dates and a board review.
- Fire Chief PJ Langmaid and Treasurer Jack Hinton sign the audit after the presentation.
- The 2021 audit is scheduled to be filed with the state on Sept. 28.

The board approved the requests, 4-0.

Staff members take the oath

Chairman Nate Dowden said the district had the honor of welcoming Lt. Erik Beckstrom and Firefighters Marina Fine, Michael Alvarado, Taylor Trotter, and Dustin Ore as permanent staff members. Dowden administered the oath of office during the swearing-in ceremony and family members pinned on the badges.

Medal presented

The 2021 Firefighter of the Year medal was presented to Beckstrom by Deputy Chief James Rebitski.

Langmaid said Beckstrom received the 2021 Firefighter of the Year award at the Second Annual Awards Banquet in



Above: From left, Firefighter Dustin Ore, Firefighter/Paramedic Taylor Trotter, Firefighter Michael Alvarado, Lt. Erik Beckstrom, and Firefighter Marina Fine take the oath of office administered by Chairman Nate Dowden (pictured in the foreground) at the BFFRPD board meeting Sept. 21. Photo by Natalie Barszcz.

March, but the presentation of the medal was delayed due to a possible supply chain issue.

Mill levy adjustment request

Langmaid said the district received the property tax projection from the El Paso County assessor at the end of August, and he also said:

- The loss of the dual service area property exclusions significantly impacts revenue, but the loss is offset by the increase in property values, coupled with the addition of some new properties. However, development is slowing down a bit.
- The district will ask the board to adjust the mill levy to compensate anticipated revenue loss from the state lowering of the Residential Assessment Rate to 6.95 %.
- The board has no authority to change the mill levy without a public vote, but he and the board have the annual responsibility to ensure that an adjustment is made to the RAR to maintain the projected property tax income.
- District counsel provided a legal opinion on the voter-approved ballot measure that passed in November 2018, advising the district it would only be allowed to match up to 7.2%, the same amount of RAR that was set when the residents passed the question allowing the district to de-Gallagher.
- The draft budget will be presented in October, and changes will be made after the board agrees to implement an adjustment to the mill levy.

Note: Black Forest residents approved a ballot measure in November 2018 to de-Gallagher the district. The ballot wording

allows the district to maintain the mill levy without further public vote should a drop in the RAR result in loss of revenue. Senate Bill 22-238 will temporarily drop the RAR from 7.15 % to 6.95 % in 2023 and 2024. This decrease was intended to provide relief by alleviating some of the property tax burden caused by the rapid increase in home values.

Financial report

Treasurer Jack Hinton said the district has current assets of about \$2.8 million (including the Emergency Reserve Fund of about \$236,000, the Capital Improvement Fund of about \$272,000 and the TABOR Fund of about \$137,000). The required TABOR Fund needs to be \$119,300, so no changes will be necessary for the TABOR Fund in the 2023 budget because the district has enough funds, said Hinton.

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

2023 budget planning

Langmaid said that from a strategic perspective, he spends a considerable amount of time working on succession planning and developing all the staff across a broad spectrum, so that he is not the center of gravity in the district, the mission is. The 2023 budget has been the focus for the past couple of months and all the budget requests from the section chiefs have been incorporated into a workbook. Nothing new has really changed in the budget process since he became fire chief except that Deputy Chief of Operations Chris Piepenburg and Rebitski will discuss the discretionary stuff that does not impact the mission and the priorities. The total compensation branch and an increase in staff and capital maintenance will be the key items to balance in the 2023 budget.



Above: Lt. Erik Beckstrom received the Firefighter of the Year medal from Deputy Chief James Rebitski at the BFFRPD board meeting on Sept. 21. Photo by Natalie Barszcz.

Department report for August

Dunn said the notable revenues and expenses for August were received as follows:

- Ambulance revenue of about \$14,136.
- Deployment revenue of about \$41,445.
- Total tax revenue of about \$54,103.
- The district received \$15,000 in grants.
- Uniform items (cost undisclosed).
- \$275,000 down payment on the 2022 Pierce Enforcer Pump Engine.

Dowden said "kudos" to the team for securing the grants.

The board welcomed Administrative Assistant Brooke Reid. Reid began working for the district in August.

Rebitski said the following:

- The district continues to update communications and the response unit.
- The 2005 Pierce mid-mount aerial ladder truck is expected to be delivered in November.
- The district is building a specification book for future apparatus purchases.
- Reid has scanned 40 years of boxed documents. The district can now search efficiently via the digital filing system and avoid sifting through boxes.
- Six of the eight fire danger signs have been installed around the district; the remaining two will be installed when the locations have been determined.

Dowden said the fire danger signs have good visibility.

Rebitski said the Fuels Mitigation Team was responsible for the installation of the signs. They have been a huge asset to the district.

We Don't Just Brighten Homes, We Brighten Futures.

High School Sophomores & Juniors Win a Summer Trip!

MVEA Youth Leadership Trip Contest

High school sophomores and juniors are just a couple of short questions away from an opportunity to win a once-in-a-lifetime all-expenses paid trip. Top-placed winners will receive either a trip to Washington, D.C., with students from across the U.S. for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, or will be invited to the Colorado Electric Educational Institute's Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in the mountains outside of Steamboat Springs. For additional details and an entry form, visit www.mvea.coop/leadershiptrip. Deadline: Thursday, November 10, 2022.

Need Cash For College? Win a Scholarship!

\$28,000 In Scholarships Available

MVEA's scholarship program includes scholarships to accredited colleges, universities, junior or community colleges, as well as Vocational/Technical Scholarships. Additional scholarships include Power Lineworker Scholarships for students pursuing a career through a lineworker training program, as well as a Power Engineer Scholarship for current college students pursuing a power engineering career. Visit www.mvea.coop/scholarships to learn more. Deadline: Monday, January 16, 2023.

Questions? Contact Erica Meyer,
(719) 494-2654, erica.m@mvea.coop.

www.mvea.coop • (800) 388-9881

Stay Connected: Like. Follow. Share.