

BFFRPD

(Cont. from 14)

The command staff team is working with Colorado Springs Fire Chief Randy Royal to take smaller chunks, pushing out the exclusion for a little longer. See www.ocn.me/v22n2.htm#bffrpd. Deputy Chief of Planning and Prevention James Rebitski concurred with Piepenburg and said the reduced staffing model will affect manning the ladder truck, but the benefit for 2024 will be a little brighter and if the district has an emergency the budget will allow a cushion for repairs. See www.ocn.me/n22n8.htm#bffrpd. The board unanimously di-

rected the staff to pursue the eight staff per shift model for the 2023 budget.

Matching pension contributions debated

Hinton said the board needs to discuss reducing FPPA compensation from \$10,000 to \$5,000. It means taking the \$10,000 down to \$5,000 as a \$14,000 loss, because the state will not be matching the maximum amount. District Auditor Dawn Schilling noted the district was over-capitalized in the Volunteer Pension Fund during the audit presentation.

Chairman Nate Dowden said the board should ask district counsel for advice on the over-capitalized fund.

Board Secretary Donna Arkowski said when the day comes

and the pension recipients and their spouses are all deceased, then the remainder of the pension fund would be returned to the district. There are 20 people enrolled in the district's volunteer pension plan and most have a surviving spouse, but the chance of almost \$1 million being used up is slim to none, said Arkowski.

Dowden recommended the district match the full \$10,000 to capture the full state matching contribution.

Hinton said the district is on an extremely tight budget and the district might need the extra \$5,000 to help with the budget, but I have always advocated for the full matching contribution.

Director Chad Behnken said, "I am of the camp that the budget is heavy, but how much is \$5,000 in the grand scheme of things."

Vice Chairman Jim Abendshan agreed with Behnken and said the maximum contribution is important should things snowball, and I would not want my pension reduced in the future.

Director Kiersten Tarvainen concurred the full match is important.

Dowden said he supported spending the additional \$5,000, for a full \$10,000 matching contribution, recognizing 2023 will be tight, but the district has emergency reserve funds.

Financial report

Hinton said that as of Sept. 30, the district had about \$3.1 million (including the reserve funds and TABOR). Due to the purchase of apparatus, the Capital Improvement Fund is down to about \$200,000. The fund had \$800,000 at the beginning of 2022. See www.ocn.me/v22n9.htm#bffrpd.

Ford F1550 request

Dowden said the board had received a proposal from the command staff to purchase two Ford F1550 crew cabs and chassis for about \$133,000.

Hinton said the district had received \$178,000 in Wildland Deployment income for 2022 and had billed the state for about \$541,600 in additional revenue. Dunn estimates an additional \$132,000 will be submitted in bills for the current teams and apparatus on Wildland Deployments.

Dunn said that in total, the district is estimated to eventually receive about \$749,000 in Wildland Deployment reimbursements for 2022.

The district had been given a four-day window to sign up to make the purchase before the window closed.

Hinton said the district should be budgeting for the funds available today, and generally the board will receive the apparatus specifications before approving funds. In this case, it is hard to decide without all the information, he said.

Rebitski said:

- Ford had provided contract pricing of about \$66,647 per chassis, but the exact pricing will be determined Oct. 27.
- Two new Ford plants are opening in January to produce the F550 Super Duty Trucks.
- There is no penalty for canceling the contract later, the trucks will be built regardless and made available for another customer on the waiting list.
- The district would pick up the chassis and the district mechanic will build the trucks at Station 1 to save money.
- The district is waiting on accurate pricing and does not plan to build the trucks immediately, but if the projected Wildland Deployment revenue is not received, the district can cancel the whole project without any liability.

Hinton said there comes a point when the district cannot replace everything and asked are these things actually needed.

Piepenburg said operationally they are needed. The staff struggles and crams into a brush truck, and precious time is lost in the process, he said.

Hinton said he finds it difficult to understand why the district needs to replace everything all at once. The district just purchased a ladder truck and spent \$750,000 on several pieces of apparatus, but it just cannot do that every year. Maybe the money could be used for something else, he said.

Piepenburg said the district will receive the Wildland Deployment reimbursement, the state cannot withhold it, and every state that the staff deployed to will also reimburse the state. It is not fun cramming into one vehicle during deployments, and staff are not comfortable the whole time. They sleep on the floor, next to loud generators. Sometimes they do have nicer accommodations, but more often they are shoved in a crew cab pickup, he said.

Dowden thanked the staff for their diligence and recognized that Ford was pressuring to get names on the waiting list.

Piepenburg said the staff is taking taxpayers into account when proposals are presented to the board.

Rebitski said looking at the long-range plans, if the district does not get on the list for the chassis, the next possible oppor-

tunity will be 2024. The district is making the best of the situation with current resources—the new trucks would benefit the district and the old truck would be used by the administrative office to run errands. There is a "method in the madness" and if we lose the functionality of one truck, it could be a two-year wait, he said.

Dowden said the board still had questions but supports the mission of the department, understanding the order deadline is Nov. 7. The board could authorize the staff to proceed with the order to get the district on the list, and maybe hold a work session before approving about \$250,000 for the trucks to be eventually completed, he said.

The board unanimously approved authorization for the command staff to proceed with the reservation of the crew cabs and chassis.

Dowden said the board will need to decide before the December board meeting, when the 2023 budget will be approved, whether to proceed with the purchase. The deployment revenue is included in the proposed budget, said Dowden.

Commissioner Williams requests opinions

Hinton said El Paso County Commissioner Holly Williams had telephoned him earlier that evening to request his opinion on the district as a whole but with particular attention to the fire stations and the water supply for the Flying Horse North (FHN) development.

Abendschan said it is one thing to have a designated lot for a new station but another to have the money to build the station, equip it, find funds for additional staff and an ongoing account to pay for that staffing, and provide adequate living facilities. Another huge part for FHN is the half a million gallons of water a day they will be using, and what kind of cistern facility or reservoir will be required for the proposed casitas (guesthouses) and the hotel, he said.

Hinton said the water resource opinion is not a Fire Department issue.

Abendschan said, "It is a Fire Department issue to have enough water to extinguish a hotel fire."

Hinton insisted the water resource is a public issue and not the Fire Department's problem. He was unsure how water will be delivered to the hotel. Hinton also said Williams suggested:

- It may be possible to deliver water via pipeline to FHN when the Northern Delivery System along Roller Coaster Road is installed, or maybe from Banning-Lewis Ranch, and the district ought to discuss matters with the Falcon Area Water Authority.
- BFFRPD could maybe take over the "Shamrock" Station 5 on Highway 83.

Hinton told Williams that taking over another district's station would be a decision entirely up to the command staff.

Note: The "Shamrock" Station 5 on Highway 83 is owned by the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, and the transfer of that property to Monument Fire District is almost complete, as part of the ongoing merger process between those districts. See DWFPD article on page 17. See MFD article on page 18.

Dowden said the board members cannot comment or make personal opinions on whether they favor FHN or not, but the board can weigh in on National Fire Protection Association standards and response times. The district can inform the devel-



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