

**BFFRPD (Cont. from 14)**

- A crew deployed to southeastern Colorado to the Cimarron and Comanche Grasslands with a Type 6 “brush” truck for about 3 weeks, and as soon as other areas in the Southern and Western states have wildland fires, the crew will deploy again with a truck or Type 3 engine.
- The district receives wild-

land deployment reimbursements for deployed apparatus, at \$96-\$110 per hour, depending on the type of apparatus.

**Wildland pre-plan program update**

Piepenburg presented the board with a sample of the wildland pre-plans and said the tactical maps will cover 93 areas within the district. They are available to download and use, but not all of

the information is available yet. Retired firefighter/paramedic Dave Reid, a former employee of South Metro Fire Rescue, Denver, is developing the maps for less than \$30,000 and they are expected to be completed by the end of the year, said Piepenburg. See [www.ocn.me/v22n4.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v22n4.htm#bffrpd).

**Note:** A Black Forest resident invited county commissioner candidate Lindsay Moore to the board meeting to hear the dis-

trict’s concerns. Moore pledged to support the district if elected and rebuked the current commissioners, the county coroner, the Flying Horse North development, urban sprawl, and the Democratic Party. Board meeting minutes can be viewed at [www.bffire.org](http://www.bffire.org).

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

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Meetings are usually held on the third Wednesday of every month

at Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. Meetings are open to the public in person or via Zoom. The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 18 at 7 p.m. For joining instructions, updates, agendas, and minutes, visit [www.bffire.org](http://www.bffire.org) or contact Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn at [admin@bffire.org](mailto:admin@bffire.org) or call 719-495-4300.

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**Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, March 30 and April 27**

**Election canceled; district will rebrand**

*By Natalie Barszcz*

At the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) meeting on March 30, the board discussed rebranding the district and the revised employee handbook, canceled the May board director election, and held an executive session to discuss the intergovernmental agreement

(IGA) for a full contract for services between the district and Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD). At the April 27 meeting, the board discussed employee leave agreements and amendments to the employee handbook and received an update on the unification process. Multiple employees at both

meetings were recognized for “performing above and beyond” the call of duty.

On March 30, President John Hildebrandt acknowledged the firefighters in Ukraine and said, “It is commendable to see that they are just doing their jobs, amidst the fighting.”

Treasurer Jason Buckingham was excused on March 30. Secretary Michael Smaldino was excused on April 27.

**Election canceled**

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs said the district had not received any self-nominations other than from the incumbent candidates, and he declared the following incumbent board members elected for three more years: President John Hildebrandt, Director Tom Kelly, and Secretary Mike Smaldino.

The board approved the cancellation of the election, 6-0.

**Rebranding**

Kovacs said staff members had received their permanent station assignments in mid-March and the two organizations had come together seamlessly, but although the district does not want to change the department name legally until the merger is complete, the combined district staff is hoping to achieve a rebranding before the completion of the IGA—full-contract for services. See [www.ocn.me/n22v4.htm#dwfpd](http://www.ocn.me/n22v4.htm#dwfpd). The combined district employees submitted about 30 potential names, and about 184 community members completed an electronic survey to narrow down the new district title. The results will be revealed to the board directors in late April, said Kovacs.

Vice President Roger Lance said the rebranding is the last piece toward unity.

**Wescott unification—full-service contract**

Kovacs said that progress is being made on the IGA for a full contract for services between TLMFPD and DWFPD, and said:

- Multiple issues, to include health benefits and compensation, are being discussed for inclusion in the IGA. The discussions have caused the contract to be delayed until July 1.
- The district would rather bring the Wescott employees on in July and not continue to lease them for \$1 until Jan. 1, 2023. See [www.ocn.me/v22n1.htm#tlmfpd](http://www.ocn.me/v22n1.htm#tlmfpd).
- Paramedic Charles Ragland, the DWFPD Local 4319 union board president, conducted a survey, and the DWFPD personnel agreed to the option of car-

rying over 72 hours of leave per year, or a cash-out of the remaining leave days.

- Revenue from DWFPD will be used for any employee requesting a cash-out through the end of 2022.
- The employee handbook has good controls to ensure sick time is not abused, and staff members are back-filled with time-and-a-half pay.
- He is comfortable with both options and the flexibility, and by 2023, all employees in the combined district will receive 96 hours of sick time (four shifts for the entire year), allowing employees the ability to take time off without being financially impacted.

The board agreed to maintain the status quo.

Kovacs said he would share the board’s sentiments with legal counsel.

**Employee handbook revised**

At the March meeting, Kovacs said the employee handbook had been reviewed by the board over the past couple of months and about 20 pages had been removed.

Hildebrandt said there were a lot of redundancies in the old handbook, and it is now more streamlined.

Smaldino recommended that an annual form be signed to make the executive staff aware of the personnel that are engaged in employment elsewhere.

The board approved the revised employee handbook with recommendations, 6-0.

At the April meeting, Kovacs said an internal executive staff discussion regarding the TLMFPD “use it or lose it” vacation policy had occurred, and the decision to allow each employee to cash-out or roll over any remaining leave at the end of the year was possible. The expense is under-budgeted by about \$50,000, and it would need to be budgeted. The carry-over of 72 hours of leave per year was not available to TLMFPD employees in the previous handbook, but it was up to a year in the past. The amendment would be in place for the next calendar year, said Kovacs.

Hildebrandt said the district is financially in a good spot to allow it to happen.

Kovacs said that any future changes will be modified by the district attorney and presented to the board for approval annually.

The board approved the changes to the employee handbook, 6-0.

**Chiefs’ coin presentation**

Kovacs said multiple staff members had been recognized for “going above and beyond the call of duty” and certificates and the chiefs’ coin would be awarded to the following: Lieutenants Franz Hankins, Michael Smith, Justin Chavez, and Tony Tafoya, Engineer Mike Rauenzahn, EMS Coordinator Paramedic Stephanie Soll, Firefighter/Paramedics Jay Bruchis, Derek Thorne, and Firefighter Hunter Ortuno. Firefighter William Vogl was recognized at both meetings for two separate responses.

**Future staffing needs**


Kovacs said that a conditional offer of employment has been extended to a firefighter, and that candidate will attend the Colorado Springs Fire Department’s (CSFD) firefighter academy in June, and he added:

- The flexibility of having two firefighter academy options in the future will serve the district well. The West Metro Rescue District, Denver, firefighter academy currently has no available placements due to resignations, retirements, and growth along the Front Range.
- The direct benefits of attending the CSFD firefighter academy are that district personnel will be taught in exactly the same way, and the district is now running more calls with the CSFD due to a shared border. Regardless of patch or agency, the closest district should respond.
- No other district in El Paso County is currently utilizing the CSFD firefighter academy.

Division Chief of Operations Jonathan Bradley said every department needs recruits, and the firefighter academies are currently running 32-36 recruits per course, and he said:

- The firefighter academies the district uses run longer with more in depth, detailed courses than other academies, and the district has found that transformative.
- The combined district has four staff members, close to graduating the West Metro Rescue District fire academy.
- In addition, two TLMFPD paramedic students will return to the district in June and will operate as paramedics in October
- The district has staff shortages, and finding paramedics is like “digging up a nugget of gold” these days.
- The Wescott staff addition

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