

The TLMFPD board will be returning a portion of the fees to builders who engaged in new construction from 2006-15 and who make a claim. Questions can be directed to TLMFPD Fire Chief Chris

Truty at 719-484-0911 or at ctruty@tlm-fire.org.

Mill levy citizens advisory task force

Truty offered the following three state-

ments on the first meeting of the 25-member citizens advisory task force on March 21. The task force's goal is to evaluate TLMFPD's situation, with data from staff, to make a recommendation on the amount of a possible mill levy increase that could be put on the November ballot.

1. The question under discussion is how to maintain the same level of service the district has been providing, since current funding will not be adequate to meet the continuing needs in these categories:

- Replace outdated breathing apparatus, rescue equipment, cardiac monitors, etc.
- Replace and maintain aging fire engines, ambulances, brush trucks.
- Update essential communications equipment.
- Provide competitive wages to attract and retain firefighters and medics and address training needs.
- Address critical health/life safety improvements to fire stations.
- Maintain emergency services, address revenue lost due to Gallagher Amendment.

2. The figures staff and citizens are discussing include current commitments, equipment replacements and maintenance, and wage increases to encourage trained staff to stay with the district instead of leaving for higher salaries elsewhere as they have already been doing, and attract more paramedics and other trained staff. "This is so we can operate responsibly, nothing extravagant," Truty said.

3. That being said, those preliminary numbers do not include projections for the population growth that will inevitably be occurring within the next few years. Truty said the district needs to begin now to shape and update the organization to then be ready to deal with the growth that is coming.

Truty, Deputy Chief Randy Trost, and Administrative Battalion Chief/Fire Marshal Jamey Bumgarner said preliminary calculations done by the district show that a mill levy increase between 7 and 8 mills would generate about \$16 million over five years. These are still just ballpark figures, Truty emphasized. **Note:** OCN will report more specific numbers and details in coming months as the district works with residents and its mill levy election consultant, George K. Baum & Co., to decide whether to put the measure on the ballot at all and, if so, exactly how many mills to ask voters to approve.

Meanwhile, Truty and Bumgarner said any group of citizens in the district that would like to hear the detailed pre-

sentation, including all the rationale for the estimated amounts, should contact the district to arrange for an informational meeting. See related NEPCO article on page 22.

Wescott will respond only to life-threatening calls in TLMFPD

On March 22, Trost said he met with DWFPD Chief Vinny Burns and they had agreed on a way to even out the imbalance in the number of automatic aid responses between the two districts. Starting on April 3, by altering how the dispatch system works, DWFPD will automatically respond to only the most life-threatening calls in the southern part of TLMFD. Officers on duty would still have the option of calling DWFPD for additional resources if needed. See www.ocn.me/v17n2.htm#tlmfpd.

In answer to Secretary Mike Smaldino's question, Bumgarner said that TLMFPD had had 479 calls so far this year, compared to 545 by the same time in 2016.

Neighborhood Wildfire Leadership Summit needs you!

Bumgarner announced that the May 6 Neighborhood Wildfire Leadership Summit was open to anyone who wants to increase the wildfire preparedness of their own neighborhoods.

TLMFPD and the El Paso County Office of Emergency Management are coordinating the event at Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church to get leadership from homeowners' associations across the county to learn from experts and share experiences about how specific communities have accomplished momentum. This includes how to do successful FireWise chipping days and mitigation programs and get more neighbors trained in lot evaluations to help each other. "It's really promising," Bumgarner said. Register for this free event at epcwildfire.eventzilla.net.

Director Tom Tharnish said that when residents of the town of Monument do mitigation, they could drop off brush, trees, and slash at the south end of Limbach Park for chipping.

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Meetings are usually held the fourth Wednesday of each month. The next meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 26 at TLMFPD Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For information, contact Jennifer Martin at 719-484-0911 or see www.tlmfire.org.

Lisa Hatfield can be reached at lisahatfield@ocn.me.

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