

TLMFPD (Continued from 18)

in October to the proposed 2019 budget:

- Health care line item was updated to reflect the latest open enrollment information now up to \$670,000.
- A complete set of spare turnout gear was added to allow turnaround time for detoxifying gear.
- A \$37,000 Stryker Powerload System was added to the new ambulance to help prevent EMT back injuries.
- Specific Ownership Tax of \$925,000 was 20 percent higher than expected in October, but 2019 budget projections will not assume this is a trend.

Truty said the revenue assessment for the pro-

posed 2019 budget is based on the voter-approved 18.4 mills and not just on the 18.1 mills certified in 2018. "TLMFPD has been able to accomplish so much due to the mill levy increase that passed in the November 2017 election, and we are not taking risks in light of the current situation with the Gallagher Amendment," he said.

The Gallagher Amendment dictates that Colorado's total property tax collected must maintain a balance of 45 percent residential and 55 percent nonresidential. The assessment rate for nonresidential properties is fixed at 29 percent, but the residential assessment rate is adjusted to maintain the 45/55 balance. TABOR limits Colorado's annual revenue growth and mandates that state and local governments cannot raise tax rates without voter approval. See <http://www.colorado.gov/>

<http://www.sdaco.org/2015-legislative-information-for-in-depth-explanations>. Also see www.ocn.me/v17n12.htm#tlmfpd and www.ocn.me/v18n10.htm#tlmfpd.

Union relations and CBA resolution

At the beginning of the meeting, Shirk requested a motion to change the agenda, with a proposal to move the executive session to discuss collective bargaining to begin directly after public comments.

Then TLMFPD board moved into executive session to discuss a potential contract with regard to negotiations pursuant to CRS 24-6-402(4)(b) to receive legal advice from Adele Reester of Lyons Gaddis Attorneys and Counselors.

When the board resumed open session, Shirk confirmed that TLMFPD board members had decided to pursue negotiations as a result of the executive session. "Chief Chris Truty and Deputy Chief Dave Trost will be our negotiators with union representatives," Shirk said.

Shirk asked Lt. Micah Coyle if he had anything to say to that, since he "looked surprised," but Coyle didn't make any comments on behalf of the union.

During the budget discussion later on, Shirk asked Truty if there was any follow-up with the union concerning the 2019 wage increases that were such a hot topic last month. "I engaged and talked about the structure with Lt. Franz Hankins, and certainly there was a misunderstanding on who was engaging who," Truty replied. Hankins is president of Local 4319 of the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) union.

Lt. Micah Coyle was then invited by Truty to speak on behalf of the union. Coyle said, "We did discuss wages and there were some misunderstandings on both sides ... We have unanimously agreed that next year we would be better at it and start talking about it in July."

Shirk responded with, "Negotiations are going to go on now that may or may not define that. But my understanding is that differences have been worked out and it is not as dire as originally presented! Good!"

Note: Senate Bill 13-205, the Colorado Firefighters Safety Act, provides for two types of collective employee organizations. Collective bargaining agreements are formal obligations between an employer and an employee group, including policies plus compensation. It requires a vote of the people. However, the statute also allows for the employer to choose to waive this requirement and engage in collective bargaining without a public vote. The meet and confer option is available as an informal choice in which an employer and an employee group must come to the table to talk about policies, but does not include compensation. There are no commitments on either side, so unions lack the power to mandate changes. See www.ocn.me/v18n10.htm#tlmfpd and www.ocn.me/v18n11.htm#tlmfpd.

Wescott merger update

Truty stated that finances are still the main concern with a TLMFPD/DWFPD consolidation. "The level of detail in the questions we asked took Wescott by surprise at both the subcommittee meeting and the Chiefs meeting," he said. "There are still questions to be answered and we are now waiting to hear if DWFPD want to move forward with a merger once they have further discussed finances with their board."

DWFPD board Director Larry Schwarz was present at the TLMFPD meeting "as an interested citizen" and was welcomed by Truty to give his views on the potential merger. Schwarz made the following comments in response:

- I am excited about the idea of working with TLMFPD board and the concept of creating a Fire Authority. It would be good for Colorado, El Paso County, and the firefighters of our community.
- As a newly elected DWFPD board director along with financial analyst Director Gary Rusnak and Secretary Mark Gunderman, we are challenging our board by asking a lot of questions with regard to the budget and how to make it sustainable.
- I am impressed with how the TLMFPD board and your department Chief Truty are run, you are excellent. We all appreciate the communications from Treasurer John Hildebrandt. He

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