

entities, are trending upward and could be reduced by going out to bid. "It's not a spending concern," Simpson said, but a budget number issue, and he suggested budgeting more conservatively. He also suggested restructuring the way financials are presented to the public to make comparisons more efficient, such as using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and making it easier to get copies of the information.

His questions garnered criticism from Hartung who defended the budget as is, saying the department isn't spending on items they don't need. "I have been here nine years. You haven't been here long enough to know what is going on," Hartung said to Simpson while pointing at Director Gary Rusnak who seemed to be troubled by this, saying "please don't point at me ma'am."

Ridings said the department works very hard to take a conservative, lean accounting approach and takes pride in using cash reserves that have been carefully curated over years to make capital purchases rather than using loans. Rusnak expressed concern that there should be more going into savings, saying "We're setting our capital reserves too low." He also said the actual rollover amount from 2018 would not be known until 2019 and that the district was "really in the red." Simpson stressed to the group, "Budget very conservatively, and es-crow very liberally."

Rusnak expressed frustration that some expenses that had been agreed upon at previous meetings had also changed, and it was unclear if the changes reflected the updates to revenues. After hearing of the deviations from the budget provided to the public, resident and former DWFPD board member Dennis Feltz asked, "Can we get the new budget?" Attorney Court said, "Terminology is important here. It's not a new budget" but the same one the board has been discussing over the last few months. He stressed it can absolutely change over time before the board approves it.

The changes Rusnak identified included:

- The administrative staff request increased from \$40,000 to \$50,000, making the 2019 raise a 25 percent increase from 2018. Ridings said every other administrative assistant around the area makes more than this position.
- IT Infrastructure and Network increased by 50 percent to \$7,600, which Burns explained will pay for Panasonic Tough-books.
- The health insurance account was increased \$12,000 from the last time the board met for a total of \$245,000, an increase of 22.5 percent. Ridings said they

intend to do a thorough review of their health care in 2019.

Gunderman worried about how Gallagher might reduce 2019 revenues. The Gallagher Amendment is a voter-approved measure that requires 45 percent of the state's total property tax burden to be paid by residences and the other 55 percent paid by nonresidential (commercial) property. A Colorado General Assembly committee is reviewing the amendment to determine how it will

change over time. See [www.ocn.me/v18n11.htm#dwfpd](http://www.ocn.me/v18n11.htm#dwfpd).

Court made clear the purpose of the meeting was to establish the budget expenses and revenue needed and then certify the needed mill levy. Rusnak asked if budget efficiencies allowed, could the board certify a mill levy lower than the one approved by voters for one budget year. Court said no, telling him if they voted tonight to decrease the levy, it would require a vote of the people to regain those extra

mills in the future. Burns, Ridings, and Gunderman agreed with Court, saying once a district certifies a lower mill levy, it is locked in.

After much discussion, the amended budget was adopted, revenues and expenditures were appropriated, and the full voter-approved mill levies of 7.00 and 14.90 were certified by votes of 3-1. Hartung voted no on all budget-related resolutions.

The meeting adjourned at 9:22 pm.

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The next Donald Wescott Fire Protection District Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. Jan. 15 at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Dr. Meetings are usually on the third Tuesday of each month. For information, call Executive Administrator Stacey Popovich at 488-8680 or see [www.wescottfire.org](http://www.wescottfire.org). The district is also on Facebook.

Allison Robenstein can be reached at [allisonrobenstein@ocn.me](mailto:allisonrobenstein@ocn.me).

Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, Dec. 5

## Front Range fire risk a stark reality; another new engine, pay raises in budget

By Natalie Barszcz

On Dec. 5, the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) board approved the 2019 budget, including a pay raise for all staff and the purchase of another engine. Fire Marshal/Administrative Battalion Chief Jamey Bumgarner presented the dire findings from the Colorado State Forest Service November report to the board.

TLMFPD board President Jake Shirk and Director Jason Buckingham were excused.

### Front Range—millions of people at fire risk

Bumgarner discussed the report from the Forest Service study released in November 2018 that found that 2.9 million people have moved into the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI, the point where the forest meets development) in Colorado since 2012, a 50 percent increase.

"The stark reality is that with the Waldo Canyon and Black Forest Fires and most recently the California, Paradise (Camp) Fire, we are still in a fire regime and this area sometimes burns very well," said Bumgarner. He added, "We want to prevent fires that start in a neighborhood and keep them from spreading house to house; our goal is to take steps before a fire starts in a community through mitigation efforts with a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), tailoring specific needs to each community with FirewiseUSA."

He said some local homeowners' associations have fire risk reduction strategies already devised, but to achieve a "fire adapted community," more residents need to do actual work on their own property in every neighborhood. If you need advice on mitigating your property, you can arrange a home mitigation inspection by calling Bumgarner at 719-484-0911. See [www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Firewise-USA](http://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Firewise-USA).

### Budget 2019 includes engine purchase

Chief Chris Truty presented the final proposed 2019 budget for approval, taking particular note of the following important features:

- The need to certify the full 18.4 mills approved by voters in 2017. (In contrast, for the 2018 budget, TLMFPD certified 18.1 of the possible 18.4 mills. See [www.ocn.me/v18n11.htm#tlmfpd](http://www.ocn.me/v18n11.htm#tlmfpd)).
- A 3 percent COLA increase on Firefighter 1 salary, which is increasing from \$52,496 to \$54,071 in 2019. All other higher-ranking salaries are calculated using formulas starting with that base rate.
- New fleet and equipment purchases including two new engines, one arriving soon and another just ordered.
- The remodel of Station 1.
- Funds set aside for future capital purchases.

The 2019 wage increase was met favorably by union members having noted the differential for engineers and paramedics that were taken into account, bringing the schedule "up to average" in comparison with comparable districts. Truty said there are no plans to revise the wage schedule annually, but it will be revisited on a three- to five-year

basis. "We are right at average now." See [www.ocn.me/v15n9.htm#tlmfpd0826](http://www.ocn.me/v15n9.htm#tlmfpd0826) and [www.ocn.me/v18n11.htm#tlmfpd](http://www.ocn.me/v18n11.htm#tlmfpd).

TLMFPD is beginning 2019 with a \$15,000 surplus for the budget with a total operating fund balance of \$1.978 million.

Truty and Bumgarner presented a request to add the purchase of a \$729,853 engine



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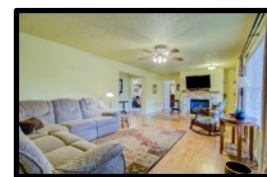
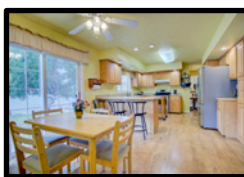
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