

DWFPD (Cont. from 1)

In October, when Burns first introduced the 2019 budget, he recommended offering large pay increases for the firefighters in an effort to make their salaries comparable to TLMFPD in case there is a merger with that district. At that time, the chiefs suggested a 52 percent pay raise for basic fire-

fighters and similar upgrades for all others with the exception of the chief positions, saying their salaries would not increase as much as the firefighters' pay because a merger would mean fewer chiefs are needed. See <https://ocn.me/v18n11.htm#dwfpd>.

At the November meeting, Burns and Ridings scaled down all their salary requests, saying the administrative as-

sistant would receive a \$9,000 raise, exempt employee (supervisors) salaries would increase 21 percent, and non-exempt employee (firefighters) salary totals would increase 11 percent. See <https://ocn.me/v18n12.htm#dwfpd>.

Finally, at the December budget public hearing the chiefs offered a third iteration of salary increases. They asked for the administrative staff to receive a 25 percent salary increase and the non-exempt line item to increase by \$50,500 shared among three chiefs (two full-time and one part-time). At that meeting, resident Steve Simpson said he calculated that would mean the firefighters would receive only a 2.2 percent raise. None of the board members was comfortable with the inequality of the newest salary increase and, after much discussion, they settled on giving a 10 percent raise across the board. The board members pulled \$61,000 from the total of the three salary line items—exempt, non-exempt, and administrative staff—allowing the chiefs to decide which line items should be the source of the total.

Note: The final 2019 budget shows the non-exempt line item representing firefighters' salary was decreased by \$60,000 and there was \$1,000 removed from the administrative assistant line. The chiefs retained their total increase in the exempt employee line item. The money removed by the board was put into the committed funds as promotions that can be spent only after board approval. To see the 2019 budget, see http://wescottfire.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2019_budget.pdf.

When McAllister questioned the board's motives, Director Larry Schwarz said although they had been apprised of the salary increases, none of the board members felt they had information for specific rank increases. McAllister asked why they didn't ask questions about their concerns sooner. Assistant Chief Ridings said he had provided the breakdown of salary increases for all staffing levels via email, saying, "I wish I could have answered the pay scale questions," at or ahead of the meeting.

In the meantime, TLMFPD em-

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