

tions about budget and operations back and forth. Although Rusnak was initially to contact Hildebrandt directly, he felt it was better to go through the merger committee for answers to some of the questions. Schwarz said he was asked by TLMFPD why the DW-

FPD board decided not to approve salaries that would be comparable to TLMFPD's, and also wondered why they didn't seek to de-Gallagherize in the 2018 election.

The Gallagher Amendment is a voter-approved measure requiring 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. The outcome could noticeably reduce the amount of property tax revenue all special districts receive. See <https://www.ocn.me/v18n11.htm#dwfpd>.

Secretary Mark Gunderman said that at some point cultural differences between the two districts would have to be discussed. Hartung was concerned because in her discussions with TLMFPD committee members, she found they are not interested in volunteers and worried this would be a problem going forward. "The volunteers make this station what it is," she said.

McAllister said he is proud of the Wescott volunteers who train without pay. Ridings said the zero cost of volunteers is a bonus that provides the community with great service.

The board eventually decided to meet with TLM-

FPD in the next few weeks to work toward the March decision deadline as to whether to move forward with merger discussions.

Long-range planning for possible subdistrict dissolution

Since being elected to the board, Rusnak has been trying to persuade the other directors to consolidate the sub-district and district to eliminate one level of government and to equalize mill levies among homeowners. None of the other board members commented during the discussion, but at a previous meeting, Schwarz said he isn't comfortable charging homeowners in the southern district the same higher mill levy as the northern subdistrict when they don't receive the same level of service.

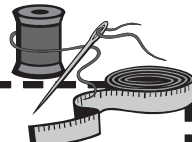
The overall district mill levy is set at 7.0 mills. The northern sub-district pays an additional 14.9 mills after voters in the northern sub-district approved it in November 2017 to make up for a 65 percent reduction in property tax revenue when the City of Colorado Springs annexed more of Wescott's territory. See <https://ocn.me/v17n10.htm#dwfpd>.

In a lengthy technical discussion with Rusnak, Wescott legal counsel Matt Court recommended equalizing taxation through district or subdistrict elimination to make it easier to merge with TLMFPD in the future, but said none of the potential scenarios is straightforward.

During public comments, Simpson said that over 10 years, the revenues lost from the southern por-

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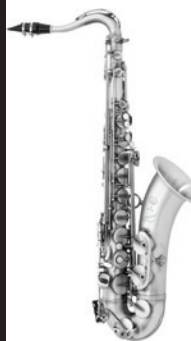
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