

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Dec. 3

## 2020 budget approved unanimously

By Allison Robenstein

During the Dec. 3 meeting of the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District board, the 2020 budget was approved unanimously, as were the district and sub-district annual mill levies for property taxes. Many firefighters were recognized for their service to the community. Attorney Michelle Ferguson noted she will be the full-time attorney for the meetings since former district attorney Matt Court has taken a job with the City of Thornton. Board Secretary Mark Gunderman led the meeting.

Treasurer Joyce Hartung arrived late, and Chairman William "Bo" McAlister was excused.

### 2020 budget brings staff changes

Chief Vinny Burns presented a staff plan change for 2020 and associated budgeting that were approved. Burns will continue as chief and add three full-time battalion chiefs (BC), eliminating the assistant chief position and all captain positions. Assistant Chief

Scott Ridings will be the senior battalion chief, and two internal staff members will be appointed for the other positions.

The battalion chiefs will take on some of the current chief's work, including planning and training tasks. The BC's will be in charge of day-to-day operations, including arriving at calls before other vehicles. That way, the BC can address command needs for each call to allot manpower.

Burns also requested \$250,000 for a new diesel generator from the Building and Equipment line item. During the March 2019 bomb cyclone, the chiefs were surprised to find that the Station 1 generator only functions in the southern portion of the building that houses the main office, kitchen and sleeping quarters. The northern addition, built in 2005, acts as the emergency command post and houses stranded travelers if they aren't able to get home, so it needs access to a generator. See <https://www.ocn.me/v19n4.htm#dwfpd>.

Because the current generator isn't sufficient to cover the entire station's electrical needs, the chiefs suggested moving the newer Station 2 generator to Station 1. It runs on natural gas, as does the current generator, and is capable of operating 95% of the secondary station located along Highway 83. Ridings said they are asking to replace it with a diesel generator in 2020.

The chief suggested including \$25,000 for 2020 in the ambulance line item, because it appears the district may be closer to contracting with American Medical Response (AMR) for its ambulance services. He has had to assign three firefighters from Wescott to AMR and hopes to regain those employees to supplement staffing on rigs in the following year.

During budget discussions, the chief asked for \$300,000 from 2019 re-

served funding to purchase a new tender this year. The truck, also called a tanker, will hold 3,500 gallons of water that can be hauled to rural parts of the district that lack fire hydrants. Director Duane Garrett asked how many developments are lacking hydrants, to which Burns said half the geographic area of the district and roughly 1,000 homes.

Director Larry Schwarz said he isn't opposed to the purchase as long as three people are assigned per rig before this additional truck is put into the rotation. Citing National Fire Protection Association standard 1710, Schwarz said engines, rescue and aerial vehicles each require three people per rig, for a total of 14 firefighters on scene for a typical 2,000-square-foot residential structure fire.

Schwarz also asked the chiefs to consider adding requirements for a tender to their mutual aid agreements with local agencies that have the apparatus. That way, they would have access to other tenders and associated water-carrying capacity to fight fires. Burns said Wescott could "knock down a fire" using the existing 1,500-gallon tender, but waiting for automatic aid to arrive on scene takes too long. He said his teams "should have the tools they need" to do their jobs, indicating the purchase would far better serve Wescott.

Ferguson asked about obtaining bids for the project, to which Burns said his intention is to have multiple companies bid for the vehicle. The board unanimously approved his request. The overall district mill levy of 7.0 was approved for 2020. And the northern subdistrict mill levy of 14.90 will also be collected in 2020.

### Chief's report

Wescott held an awards ceremony last week at which many officers were recognized for their lifesaving efforts. These include:

- Capt. Sean Pearson received the Jeff Edwards Award for Excellence for his leadership and ongoing

mentoring of others. This is only the second time this award has been bestowed; the other time was to Assistant Chief Scott Ridings. The award is named after Chief Jeff "Never Give Up" Edwards, who served as chief from 2006 to 2010.

- Lt. Bryan Ackerman was named Volunteer Fire Fighter of the Year, and Lt. Eric Bogenrief was named Career Fire Fighter of the Year.
- Burns said there were two calls for service in which the victims were in full cardiac arrest in 2019 but made a full recovery. Nineteen Wescott personnel were recognized for their lifesaving efforts during these calls: Luke Radakovich, Bryan Ackerman, Shannon Balvanz, Eric Bogenrief, Justin Chavez, Brian Kirkpatrick, Tanner Saucerman, Wayne Krzemien, Robert Patten, John Hoeh, Anthony Mayes, Stef Metcalf, Justin Myers, Lucas Owens, Sean Pearson, Scott Ridings, Melissa Seidenberg, Cory Trottier, and Jon Urban.
- During the March 2019 bomb cyclone, Wescott saved a motorist trapped under a vehicle, identifying creative methods to get the person to the hospital during the worst of the storm. The following firefighters were recognized for the efforts: Burns, Shawn Ballard, Spencer Kohler, Balvanz, Chavez, Brian Kirkpatrick, Jim McBride, Roger Lance, George Laugesen, Anthony Mayes, Stef Metcalf, and Urban.

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The next Donald Wescott fire district meeting is scheduled for Jan. 21 at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Dr. Meetings are usually on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. For information, call Executive Administrator Stacey Popovich at 488-8680 or see [www.wescottfire.org](http://www.wescottfire.org).

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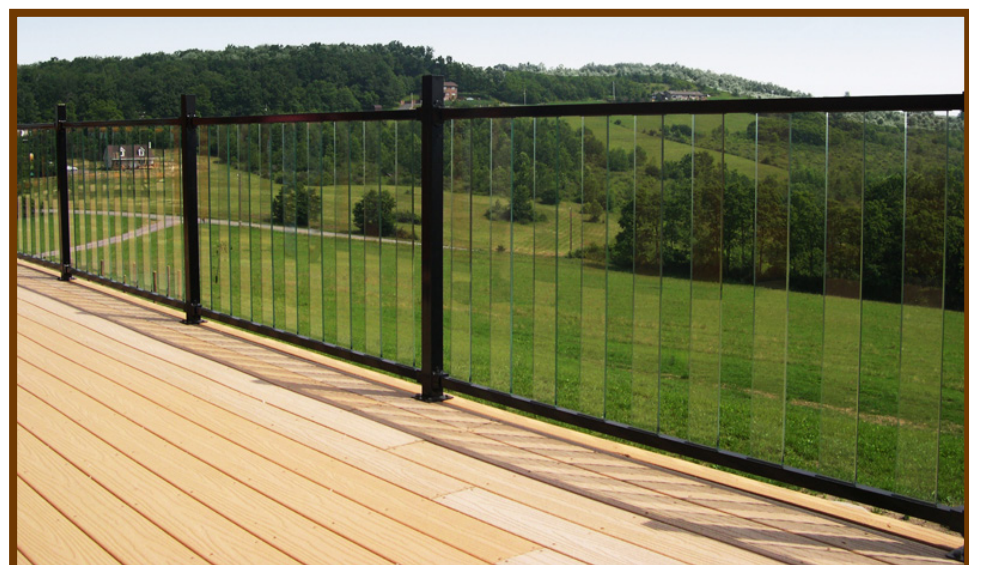
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