

departments within the state for the Cameron Peak Fire on Labor Day. The district sent two captains and one firefighter and a Type 3 Engine as part of the El Paso County strike team to the Fort Collins area to assist. However, the team returned on Sept. 9 due to an early snowfall that temporarily quelled conditions, he said.

Capt. Chris Piepenburg, the district training officer, had deployed to Louisiana to assist in rescue efforts during Hurricane Laura with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Colorado Task Force (CO-TF1)—Urban Search and Rescue.

**Note:** West Metro Fire Rescue of Lakewood is the sponsoring agency for CO-TF1—Urban Search and Rescue and consists of 200 highly trained members including firefighters, paramedics, physicians, structural engineers, hazardous materials technicians, heavy rigging specialists and canine handlers. The task force responds throughout the U.S. and responded to the collapse of the World Trade Center during 9/11, and to natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes.

**Overtime and staffing**

Langmaid explained the reason for the recent in-

crease in overtime was due to COVID-19, deployments to wildland fires within the state, and a shortage of three personnel until recently. Four openings have now been filled, and three personnel have started and the fourth will join the department in October.

**Ambulance and vehicle disposal**

Langmaid said now that the two new ambulances are in service and the district has a ready reserve ambulance, the sale and donation of the three old ambulances and a command vehicle can proceed. The 2010 ambulance and the Ford Expedition command vehicle are to be purchased by Tri-County (East) Hanover Fire District for a combined total of \$30,000. The 2007 ambulance will be donated to the Palmer Lake Fire Department, and the 2005 ambulance will be donated to Emergency Incident Support. "We are able to pay it forward and help three organizations in need of the apparatus," he said.

The board unanimously approved the sale and the donations of the excess fleet apparatus, 5-0.

**Apparatus proposals**

Langmaid asked the board to approve moving forward with the Request for Proposal (RFP) process to solicit accurate cost projections for fire apparatus as

discussed at the August board meeting. See [www.ocn.me/v20n9.htm#bffire](http://www.ocn.me/v20n9.htm#bffire).

Dowden said that due to the extensive volume of the 10 RFP's, the board would need more time to review the requests before they could be posted on the district website, and he recommended postponing approval until the October board meeting.

**SHIELD616 fundraising**

Shield616, in conjunction with KOAA, is fundraising for the BFFRPD. The goal is to raise \$48,500 to provide each staff member with a \$2,200 Full Armor Package, which includes a protective vest. Donations to SHIELD616 can be made by visiting [www.koaa.com](http://www.koaa.com).

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

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Meetings are usually held at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at BFFRPD Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Oct. 21 at 7 p.m. For updates and minutes, visit [www.bffire.org](http://www.bffire.org).

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*Donald Wescott Fire Protection District meeting, Sept. 15, 22*

**Board favors de-Gallagherization**

*By Allison Robenstein*

The Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) held a regular meeting on Sept. 15 and a brief, special meeting Sept. 22. The board reviewed possible tax revenue losses if the de-Gallagherization ballot question fails, going so far as to approve a resolution of advocacy for the initiative. Chief Vinny Burns gave a brief report on the 2021 budget and discussed wildland fire deployments.

**De-Gallagherization financial modeling**

Town attorney Michelle Ferguson gave the board an overview of the proper engagement as a board and a district with regard to the de-Gallagherization ballot question they will ask all residents to answer. As individuals, board members may express their opinions.

The board passed a Resolution of Advocacy in favor of the ballot question. The formal statement explains the way property taxes are assessed, and the impact of a reduced revenue stream will have on the department. This includes:

- Residential property owners in Colorado do not pay property taxes on 100% of their home's value. Instead, residential property owners pay property taxes on only a percentage of their home's property value, called the "residential assessment rate," or RAR. The Gallagher Amendment requires the percentage of property taxes paid by residential property owners in the state to be 45% of the total taxes paid. Due to the steady increase in residential property values across the state, the RAR has been reduced from 21% in 1982 to 7.15% in 2019. Preliminary projections indicate the Colorado Legislature will further reduce the RAR to 5.1% in 2021.
  - The decrease in RAR would have a devastating impact on the fire district's tax revenue because 79% of revenue comes from residential property.
  - The double impact of upward spiraling costs and service demands will make it difficult for the district to keep up with increased population, emergency call volume and may adversely affect future staffing, stations and equipment.
- Lt. Roger Lance is running the Colorado State Fire-

fighters Association campaign for approval of the ballot question. He is going door-to-door informing residents of the initiative.

Resident Steve Simpson said he is concerned about the timeline to get de-Gallagherization information to the public so they can make informed decisions on the ballot initiative.

**Chief's report:**

Burns told the board the following:

- The 2021 budget would be very similar to this year's budget with no major requests. Based upon the Gallagher issue, there may be deep cuts to employees and stations if both the district's de-Gallagherization and the state's ballot initiative both fail. There has been discussion that the residential assessment rate may fall as low as 5.1%, leaving a \$635,000 loss in revenues to the district. Burns said the district couldn't sustain the same operations as now.
- Secretary Larry Schwarz asked if there has been any COVID-19 fatigue from employees. Burns said that early on, the district put standard operating procedures in place for the use of personal protective equipment and other precautions. Battalion Chief Sean Pearson said most have adjusted to the new processes. Battalion chiefs go on all calls to make sure everyone is wearing PPE properly and disposing of it after the call.

**Wildland fire deployments**

Burns told the board many Wescott firefighters have been deployed to fires in Colorado over the summer. Crews work two-week shifts with a mandatory two days off before being able to deploy again. Deployments are purely voluntary.

Deployments are not just for putting out fires. Districts are required to keep detailed notes regarding the financial impact of the fires.

Rachael Dunn is experienced in logistics and worked to set up camps and facilitate meals and supplies for 600 people. She has been deployed a total of 60 days this summer.

Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich was deployed, keeping track of costs in a task book that

would be used by the incident commander to record all the costs associated with fighting fires.

Burns said the federal government compensates the wildland crews as well as the backfill folks who take their places at the stations while deployed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

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The next Donald Wescott fire district meeting is scheduled for Oct. 20 at 4 p.m. If the meeting is held in person it will be at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Dr. For a virtual meeting, the phone number is 669-900-9128, and the meeting code is 980 378 2073. Meetings are usually on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. For information, call Executive Administrator Stacey Popovich at 719-488-8680 or see [www.wescottfire.org](http://www.wescottfire.org).

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*Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, Sept. 23*

**Fire chief search timeline; Amendment B and the 2021 budget**

*By Natalie Barszcz*

The Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) board met via Zoom and in person on Sept. 23 to discuss the preliminary results of the Fire Chief Search Committee, and the board heard about a projected funding loss and the first presentation of the 2021 budget.

Secretary Mike Smaldino and Director Terri Hayes were excused.

**Fire chief search**

Board President John Hildebrandt said Prothman consultant Mark Risen had met with the Fire Chief Search Committee in open public session on Sept. 15,

and Risen gathered all the information he needed to conduct the search during his visit Sept. 15-16. Committee members are John Hildebrandt, board president; Mike Smaldino, board secretary and Colorado Springs Fire Department public information officer; Jonathan Bradley, battalion chief of training; Franz Hankins, Local 4319 Union president; and Christian Schmidt, union board director.

Fire Chief Chris Truty said that on Sept. 16, Risen had also met with eight lieutenants from TLMFPD and Fire Chief David Girardin of the Security Fire District, Monument Police Chief Sean Hemingway, and El Paso County Deputy Fire Warden James Schanel to



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