

Hinton said through staffing attrition the district has enough salary funding to cover additional staff. The wildland deployments of Deputy Chief of Operations Chris Piepenberg and Dunn saved some salary expenditure. Another staff member was deployed for three months, he said.

Langmaid said if the board agrees, he would like to extend job offers to lateral firefighters the next day. There is a cost savings to hiring lateral entry firefighters due to the avoidance of a three-month fire academy delay, but it incurs an immediate job start and a higher starting salary. The Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) has reduced its Fire Academy Training to summer only, so slots for the district will not be available. Lateral entry firefighters are usually difficult to attract due to the district's lower wage scale, and staff lose out on accrued benefits when moving organizations, so moves are usually due to family decisions. The district usually receives about 50 applications, but just five were received in the last hiring round, he said.

Hinton suggested moving forward with the hiring, and the determining factor on adjusting the mill levy will depend on the passing of Proposition HH. The city has not yet excluded the remaining two-thirds (about 1,466) of the 2,200 properties subject to dual taxation, and the tax loss for 2025 is unknown, he said. See www.ocn.me/v22n2.htm#bffrpd.

Langmaid also said:

- Because of the increase in property values, it is not possible to know how much revenue will be lost when the dual taxation residents are finally excluded, but it could be 10% to 20% of the budget.
- The City of Colorado Springs will be under tremendous political pressure to complete the process that the board gave the city permission to begin in 2017, and once the tax assessments are finalized, those dual taxation residents will be pressuring the City Council to complete the exclusion process.
- He recommended the board make the budget decision based on the ballot initiative that granted permission in 2018, and not on decisions made in Colorado Springs.
- Proposition HH, a state decision, proposes to continue ratcheting down the property assessment rates.

If the board agrees with the recommendations, the executive staff will begin developing the budget for 2024, he said.

Vice Chair Kiersten Tarvainen said the district purchased a ladder truck and should be able to use it.

Hinton said he is in favor of paying off the debt on the apparatus purchases and the staffing increase.

Director Chad Behnken said he is on board with the general vision.

Director Jim Abendschan agreed with the issues, but more clarification is necessary on how the property taxes will be impacted if the board implements the 15.24 mill levy to make up for revenue loss, he said.

Langmaid said he encourages dialogue and direction from the board before continuing to develop the budget for the first presentation in October, but the budget can be changed at any time until December. The original request for an aerial mid-mount lad-

der truck was to support the growth in Sterling Ranch and the Flying Horse North developments, and the plan was to open up the truck in 2025-26 when additional property tax revenue would have covered the cost. There is no pressure to staff the truck, it is not the main priority, but the district is unlikely to obtain a SAFER grant to hire firefighters and he was not anticipating any success with a potential government shutdown, he said.

Apparatus replacement plan

Langmaid presented the board with the final budget projection for the two Ford F-550 Type 6 brush truck chassis, with one being a full new build for \$203,000. The funds will come from wildland deployment revenue. For information purposes, he also presented the cost of a Pierce Enforcer Engine for \$868,684. See www.ocn.me/v23n9.htm#bffrpd.

Directors' bylaws

Dowden thanked recording board secretary Donna Arkowski for providing the board with the updated bylaws, and he requested the following changes:

- A change to reflect that the board may elect from its membership a secretary/assistant secretary, and/or assistant treasurer.
- There may be a permanent budget committee with another board officer involved in the budget process.
- There may be a permanent audit committee.

Arkowski said BFFRPD had not elected a board secretary for 45 years, but the option for both positions needs to remain in the bylaws until such time as the district does not have a recording secretary. The bylaws are not mandatory, just a suggestion by the district counsel, unless indicated that state law be followed as annotated in the bylaws, she said.

Hinton and Dowden questioned the board's compliance when appropriations are made that exceed the approved budget during the year.

Langmaid said if the board passes an appropriation by resolution to make a purchase mid-year, they are not outside the bylaws, and that is why legal counsel is required to sign lease agreements. There is nothing to prohibit purchasing outright, and he recommended the board continue reading the bylaws and discuss appropriations with legal counsel, he said.

Arkowski said the bylaws set local government and state government apart, the board cannot spend more than they receive, and there are different rules for lease purchase agreements.

Dowden said he was inclined to agree with Langmaid, but clarification from district attorney Linda Glesne should be made to ensure the board remains in compliance.

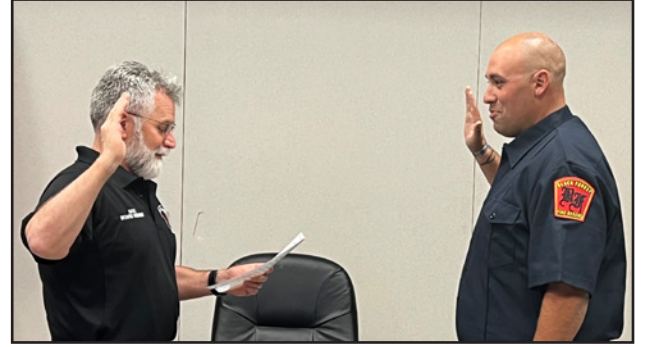
The board unanimously adopted the bylaws subject to the changes.

Wildland deployment update

Piepenburg said the department still had crews deployed in California, and the U.S. Forest Service had hoped to keep them until November. But due to the government furlough and weather activity, crews will all be back in the district by the end of September.

Director Chad Behnken asked if the frequency of the 2023 deployments were comparable to the 2022 numbers.

Piepenburg said the district is ahead of 2022, with five 21-day deployment rotations, 105 days with the Type 3 (wildland fire engine) and 35 days with the



Above: From left, Chair Nate Dowden administers the oath of office to the new Training Capt. Michael Torres at the beginning of the Sept. 20 Board of Directors meeting. Family members pinned on the badge and lapel pins during the ceremony. *Photo by Natalie Barszcz.*

Type 6 (brush truck).

Langmaid said the surplus revenue for 2023 is expected to be about \$1 million, the same as for 2022.

August department reports

The August department report and the financial report can be found under Transparency at www.bffire.org.

Staff kudos

Tarvainen said she attended the Echelon Front Women's Assembly with five colleagues from CSFD, and the women of BFFRPD in attendance were exceptional, and that is a testament to the leadership within the district.

Arkowski said former board member Bill Marchant praised the department for the professionalism demonstrated when his wife needed an ambulance during a life-threatening emergency.

Donation received

Dowden said the district received a note card from the High Forest Ranch community, thanking the department for keeping them safe. The card was accompanied with a donation of \$1,370 from Monica Davis of the Social Committee of the High Forest Ranch Homeowners Association. He thanked the group for the generous donation.

Former board director remembered

Arkowski said former board Director Peter Burleson had recently passed away. He served on the board in the 1980s-90s for about 10 years.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Pension Board of Trustees meeting

The BFFRPD Pension Board of Trustees held a short meeting to discuss the fund status, distributions, and expenses.

Pension Board Trustee John Strupp was excused. Trustee Lisa Montijo attended via Zoom.

The board approved the minutes from the Sept. 15, 2021 meeting, 6-0.

Hinton said the beginning balance for the Volunteer Pension Fund in 2023 was about \$1.336 million and the ending balance was \$1.383 million with a gain of \$4,500 in interest. The distributions to the volunteer pensioners were \$37,000. Expenses were \$4,000, and the fund gained about \$47,000, he said.

Arkowski said the financial statement accounted for the first six months of the year, and the actuarial report states that the pension fund is in good condition and a little overfunded. The report recommends the district continue to fund the pension annually, and the pension fund still has 27 members.

Montijo said it is important that the fund is in good shape, because she plans on living forever, and it is good that all the members are still around.

The board accepted the reports as presented, 6-0.

The next Pension Board meeting will be at the beginning of the regular board meeting in September 2024.

The Pension Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Meetings are usually held on the third Wednesday of the month at Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. Meetings are open to the public in person or via Zoom. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 18 at 7 p.m. For joining instructions, updates, agendas, minutes, and reports, visit www.bffire.org or contact Director of Public Relations Brooke Reid at admin@bffire.org or call 719-495-4300.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz@ocn.me.

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Sept. 27 Board meeting canceled

By Natalie Barszcz

On Sept. 27 at 2:09 p.m., this reporter received notice that the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District Board of Directors had canceled the scheduled meeting due to the lack of a quorum. For the Joint Factual Summary for the Donald Wescott sub-district dissolution regarding ballot questions 6A and 6B, and information about the October public hearing for the 2024 budget presentation, visit www.monumentfire.org. For details on the proposed 2024 budget, information, and upcoming events see the Monument Fire District article on page 1 and the calendar on page 26.

Meetings are usually held every other month on the fourth Wednesday. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 15 at 4:30 p.m., at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes visit www.monumentfire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz@ocn.me.

If 6A and 6B pass, how much money will I save?

To determine this we must first figure out the *assessed value* of your home. The El Paso County Assessors office determines how much a household owes in property taxes. Currently in El Paso County the assessment rate for a single family home is 7.15% of the market value. So what does this mean? For simple math purposes, let's pretend your home is worth \$100,000.

Market Value X Assessment Rate = Assessed Value

100,000 X 7.15% = \$7,150

So... the assessed value on a \$100,000 home is \$7,150. You're probably wondering now what a mill levy is and how does that effect the property taxes I pay? The mill levy is the "tax rate" that is applied to the *assessed value* of a property. One mill is equal to one dollar per \$1,000 dollars of *assessed value*. It consists of a local portion which is used to fund schools, libraries, roads, police, and FIRE.

Currently, the mill levy for the Wescott Fire Protection District is 21.9 Mills. **Remember, by voting YES on 6A and 6B the fire district will LOWER this tax rate for you.** Again using our home valued at \$100,000, with an assessment rate of \$7,150.

Assessed Value X Mill Levy = Annual Taxes Received

\$7,150 X .0219mill = \$ 156.59 for fire protection for the year

Now we realize that homes in our area are worth much more than \$100,000, but now it's easy to work the numbers out. A couple of quick examples:

Your Homes Market Value	Cost for Fire Protection Annually (What you pay now)	Estimated Tax in 2024 if 6A and 6B Pass (Mill Levy 21.4)	Estimated Tax in 2025 if 6A and 6B Pass (Mill Levy 18.4)
\$100,000	\$157	\$153	\$131
\$200,000	\$314	\$306	\$262
\$400,000	\$628	\$612	\$524
\$600,000	\$942	\$918	\$786
\$800,000	\$1256	\$1224	\$1048

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