

The event includes a canned food donation drop-off to help support Tri-Lakes Cares. See the calendar of events on page 26.

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday every month. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 25 at 6:30 p.m. at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit www.monument-fire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

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

Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District, Sept. 20

2022 audit is clean; 2024 budget direction explored

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) meeting on Sept. 20, the board received the 2022 audit presentation, discussed the major 2024 budget priorities, and reviewed the board officer by-laws. The board also witnessed the swearing in of Capt. Michael Torres. A brief Pension Board of Trustees meeting preceded the meeting.

2022 audit presentation

Dawn Schilling, co-owner of Schilling and Co. Inc., Littleton, attending via Zoom, said the executive team had collaborated with her to complete the 2022 audit. She thanked the team and the district accountant for their assistance during the audit, and said:

- The district received an unmodified or clean opinion as of Dec. 31, 2022, and the financial position of the district “presents fairly.” The opinion could not be higher and there were no significant delays in providing information or disagreements with recording transactions.
- There was significantly more revenue than anticipated left in the budget at the end of 2022 due to deployments and special ownership taxes. The result left \$951 in the budget at the end of 2022, as close to a zero-based budget as possible.
- Investing in a local government investment such as ColoTrust could net the district 5.4% or about \$54,000 a year.
- There was a dip in assessed valuation of district properties in 2022, and the district attorney should be contacted to seek advice on Proposition HH. (Proposition HH is a question on the November ballot proposing a statewide bill that would implement property tax reductions and allow the state to retain and spend excess state revenue. For information on the fiscal impact of the measures visit <https://leg.colorado.gov/bluebook>.) The changes would be significant for special districts if it passes.

The board received the audit on Sept. 20, and she would file the audit with the state the following week, allowing some time for questions from the directors, and in time to make the Sept. 30 deadline.

The board unanimously approved the 2022 audit.

Auditor search resumes

Treasurer Jack Hinton thanked the staff and the accountant and said the auditor always does a good job and her fee is reasonable, but the district gets put on the back burner, requiring a two-month filing extension with the state every year, and she almost did not make the meeting. Even though the staff began providing financial information in February, her questions were not received until August. If the district were ever to file a late audit, the state could begin cutting funding. Most auditors are charging much higher fees, but the district should conduct another search and bid out for another auditor to conduct the 2023 audit, he said. See www.ocn.me/v23n3.htm#bffrpd.

Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn said a lot of questions were presented during evening hours.

2024 budget development explored

Fire Chief PJ Langmaid said the budget is usually submitted in October for board review, but because of Proposition HH and the increase in assessed property valuations, he requested the board consider:

- A proposed budget based on the assessed property valuations provided by the county with an assessed 15.24 mills levy to maintain the revenue trajectory.
- The board made a mill levy adjustment last year in line with the 2018 voter-approved ballot initiative, allowing a mill levy adjustment to compensate for revenue loss after the state dropped the assessment rates.
- If the board decides to stick with a 14.951 mill levy, there would be a budget shortfall of about \$101,000 for 2024. The

- board could dip into capital improvement funds to make up the difference. See www.ocn.me/v23n1.htm#bffrpd.
- The key initiatives for the 2024 budget are to pay down the debt on the engine and tender.
- A cost-of-living allowance increase of 4.7% based on the Front Range data from July/August 2023.
- Hire six new firefighters to begin using the ladder truck with limited capacity. Three more officer positions will be required with the opening of the ladder truck.
- The budget resolution will include the historical ballot language, approved by the voters in 2018, and be reviewed by legal counsel. See www.ocn.me/v22n10.htm#bffrpd.

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The Gleneagle Safety Committee is composed entirely of your neighbors and firefighters who currently or have previously worked out of the Gleneagle Firehouse. Many of us have spent decades protecting this community and care very deeply for the residents of Gleneagle, Pleasant View and surrounding communities. All of our funding has come out of our own pockets and donated by the firefighters.

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