

WILLIAMS RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

April 26th, 2022

Called to Order at 15:02

Roll Call:

Board Members Present

Position 1 – Heather Glass
Position 2 – Brian Barton
Position 3 – Claudia Pratt
Position 4 – Bill Ertel
Position 5 – David Applegate (Absent)

Williams Staff Present

Administrative Assistant – Jennifer Vetter
Chief Rick Vetter
Volunteer Firefighter Jason Stevens

Budget Committee Members Present

Position 1 – John Kester
Position 2 – Dorothy Butz
Position 3 – Lydnsey Hayes (Absent)
Position 4 – Mike Connor
Position 5 – Wendy Giordano (Late Arrival)

Public Presence:

Wilma Hyde – Community Member

Nomination of Budget Committee Chair:

A motion to make Mike Connor the Budget Committee Chairperson was made by Bill Ertel and seconded by Dorothy Butz.

Nomination of Budget Committee Vice Chair:

A motion to make Wendy Giordano the Budget Committee Vice Chairperson was made by Mike Connor and seconded by Brian Barton.

Presentation of Budget Message:

Chief Rick Vetter presented the budget letter to the community, Board of Directors, and the Budget Committee. The Budget Message was followed by information about the fire district and then followed by the budget sheets which reviews the breakdown of each of the line items on each of the LB-Sheets. The proposed budget includes personnel service items that break down each item of payroll, the inclusion of employee benefits, payroll taxes, material and service items, and capital outlay items. Discussions were held on the use of the SAFER Grant and how it ties into the proposed budget for the 2022-2023 district expenses.

Discussions:

LB-10

It was discussed in the Budget Officer Chief Vetter's budget letter and then again later in the meeting that LB-10 would be collapsed this year. It no longer is in use due to no longer using a special fund and therefore no longer applies.

LB-20

SAFER Grant funds are included in the budget and reflect on both the income and expense lines

Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter answered questions regarding this sheet. Income from grants and previously levied taxes were addressed along with the mobile home income that the Fire District is seeking as additional district revenue. Total resources proposed: \$818,600. The Fire district is carrying over roughly \$300,000 into the new fiscal year and proposing to collect roughly \$340,000 in property taxes. It was discussed that the mobile home would generate income by becoming a rental to a firefighter. The grant income is proposed to be significantly more than what was expected in the last budget process.

LB-30

This sheet was not reviewed in depth as the requirement summaries were generating questions that could be resolved by referring directly to the LB-31.

LB-31

Page 2 of the LB-31 Detailed Requirements were focused on, specifically the budget group of Personal Services. Questions were asked regarding the doubling of the line item for the Deputy Clerk/Administrative Assistant. Board Member Bill Ertel expressed that the hours worked in this position were questionable to him and to his knowledge never validated. Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt and Board Secretary Heather Glass stated that the Deputy Clerk/Administrative Assistant was given a raise to break the BOLI threshold for the hours worked and being compensated for the expertise of the job.

Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano inquired why Personal Services amount was significantly higher than the previous budget. Jennifer Vetter explained that the budget is inclusive of the hourly increase of the Lieutenant to 40 hours per week, SAFER Grant income expense reimbursements, the proposal of seasonal firefighters, and to accommodate the proposed staffing needs of the upcoming fiscal year. She also asked if the FTEs increased and what was the number of the previous year's FTE. It was explained to have been 3.3 in the previous and the proposed seasonal hires were not included.

Questions regarding the Fire Chief's compensation were answered. Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano also asked what bonuses were based off of. Board Chair Claudia Pratt answered that Chief Vetter did not ask nor want a raise, however, the Board decided that the position did need a raise to accommodate a comparable and competitive salary if they were to have a hiring process for another fire chief. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that initially the Board of Directors did start off with a low compensation for the Fire Chief as the Fire Chief would accumulate experience and that the Board "didn't want to move too fast leaving the next board members with a burden".

Why is the Deputy Clerk compensation doubled was asked by Budget Committee Chairperson Mike Connor. Jennifer Vetter stated that she brought to the Board's attention that the compensation

did not reflect the amount of work involved or expertise applied and that this position went a very long time below BOLI standard. Board Secretary Heather Glass stated that the services provided were well over the compensation being paid. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that “the number of hours worked have never been verified and pretty much based on what the incumbent says”. Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt stated that back in 2017 there were two volunteers to now having 13 volunteers and other paid positions which plays into part of what the increase in hours are for the position of the Deputy Clerk. Jennifer Vetter stated that it is often overlooked in administration the kind of expertise involved in accounting processes that to pick up an inexperienced person for minimum wage would be challenging to expect that person to meet the standards expected. Chief Vetter stated that each position has so many challenges to meeting the demands in what the Board may expect to see done in less time. Board Member Bill Ertel called the Administrative Assistant’s position the most unique position that he has experienced in all his years. The Administrative Assistant’s compensation is salary and not hourly and her work hours are not mandated to particular times of the day. Board Member Bill Ertel states that there is no record keeping of how many hours and when the Administrative Assistant works. Board Secretary Heather Glass stated that the Board is now meeting and exceeding the BOLI standard. Board Member Bill Ertel states that the administrative assistant is also a volunteer and attends training classes. Board Chair Claudia Pratt stated that regardless of set hours (and includes that it is difficult to mandate set hours as she is a volunteer as well), that the administrative assistant does complete her tasks and recognized that the administrative assistant has been witnessed to have worked past 9pm at the district office to accomplish her paid tasks successfully. Budget Chair Mike Connor stated he felt his question had been answered and requested that the meeting move on. Board Chair Claudia Pratt agreed and requested the meeting move forward.

The District Benefits line was discussed. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that the benefits of \$48,000 were divided amongst three employees instead of four. Specifically, mentioning the Administrative Assistant’s salary needs to have \$14,000 added to it to understand what this job is costing. Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt asked Board Member Bill Ertel if it would be better to hire someone to do that job at a cheaper rate and not get the same quality. Board Secretary Heather Glass stated that the Fire District would be “hard pressed to find someone to do what the Administrative Assistant does right now.” Fire Chief Vetter stated “that we are losing perspective... The reason why we went out for the levy *is* for personnel and operations. We asked to increase our Personal Services. We knew that we were going to be higher.” Budget Chairperson Mike Connor agreed that this reason was clear. Jennifer Vetter reminded everyone to keep the perspective that if her position goes up \$14,000 due to benefits so does everyone else’s.

The SAFER Grant line items of this budget group were discussed as well. Specifically mentioned was the SAFER Recruitment and Retention Officer wages as it ties to the Training Officer position. Per Board Member Bill Ertel, the training officer and his compensation were made of the two positions. The Recruitment and Retention Officer works 20 hours per the SAFER Grant which is reimbursed by the SAFER Grant. The rest of the hours performed are as the Training Officer paid by the Fire District. Chief Vetter mentioned that the Training Officer is also a Paramedic and a 30 year firefighter that comes with experience and worth the expense. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that he has been here 12 years and never had more money to spend as an organization and wanted to remind everyone to “think about how we are spending it”. Budget Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano wanted to know how we were able to reduce the expense of the benefits package and Jennifer Vetter explained that the employees pay into the insurance premium costs to keep district costs down.

Volunteer Nominals were next on the discussion. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that it seemed that the volunteers should get more than they are receiving for their services. Budget

Member John Kester explained that many volunteers don't respond and that you may only get two or three that do respond. Budget Committee Member John Kester supplied an answer to Board Member Bill Ertel's question of sign on bonuses that volunteers don't get sign on bonuses. Volunteer Jason Stevens stated that the pool of volunteers is more than in previous years and since there are more volunteers there is less for each volunteer in stipends. It was discussed to raise that line item to \$10,000 with the addition of the \$4,000 to come from the Conflag/Deployment/Associated Personnel line reducing that line from \$20,000 to \$16,000.

- A motion to change the LB-31 line 9 with an increase of \$4,000 from \$6,000 to \$10,000 and line 16 with a decrease of \$4000 from \$20,000 to \$16,000 of the 2022-2023 proposed budget was made by Mike Connor and seconded by Wendy Giordano. The motion passed unanimously with all ayes from each present member of the Budget Committee and the Board of Directors. The decision was unanimous.

Capital Outlay discussions followed. Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano asked how the Capital Outlay total came to be what it was when the amount listed under budgeted priorities in the budget message didn't add up to that bottom line number for that budget group. Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter explained that the budget priorities list did not include all items calculated and to put an exact number in there with no cushion could be problematic if unexpected capital expenses were to take place during the next fiscal year.

Budget Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano inquired about Capital Outlay Other to know what the amount represents. Jennifer Vetter stated that capital outlay items have to be paid from capital outlay. That amount is for other unforeseen expenses that fall in that category. The Fire District currently has a regional grant it is involved in for radios. If by chance that grant does not happen, this is an avenue to fulfill this expense need.

Board Member Bill Ertel discussed the possibility of capping the number of volunteers to limit expenses. In terms of the discussed regional radio grant with Applegate Fire District and Jacksonville Fire Department, would this cap aid in the expense of how many radios the Fire District would need. Budget Committee Member John Kester explained that the need for radios is based on the number of riding positions in the responding apparatuses. Jennifer Vetter stated that if we cap volunteers to what numbers there are now, with not enough volunteers to operate the amount of equipment the Fire District currently has for potential response, the community member with the fire would be waiting potentially an additional 30 minutes for another response apparatus to come from the neighboring fire district... potentially causing a burning home to surely be a complete loss.

Board Member Bill Ertel discussed the use of district staff vehicles. Chief Vetter stated that those vehicles allow command/duty officers to respond faster while equipment is being gathered and responding. This alleviates a responder having to drive past a response address needing attention in order to get equipment when a duty officer can go straight there to mitigate the emergency while awaiting any needed equipment.

Materials and Services was discussed with Utilities increase being a focus. The question why the proposed amount was much higher than the current was answered by Jennifer Vetter that the increase included the use of electricity proposed to be consumed by the mobile home to be much higher than normal.

Board Member Bill Ertel referred to a compensation chart that he created to include compensation by person stating that the person who worked in the position of Recruitment and Retention and Training Officer made more than anyone else in the Fire District with the Deputy Clerk/Administrative Assistant being second, the Lieutenant third, and last in the income tier, the Fire Chief. Board Member Heather Glass interjected with the proposed assessment being an unfair assessment since the Fire Chief does not take advantage of the benefits which knocks \$14,000 off of the Chief's compensation according to that chart.

Budget lines reflecting Legal and Accounting and Consulting Fees are proposed higher this year to accommodate for needs and changes that are currently unknown. The total Materials and Services summary will be increased by \$29,000.

Unappropriated fund balance is proposed to be \$102,700.

Board Member Bill Ertel stated that the Budget Report was a real good report and would like to see a history of calls divided up by fire, medical, automobile, and wildland.

- A motion to approve the 2022-2023 budget as amended with the noted increased changes to Line 9 on page 2 of the LB-31 and the noted decrease on line 16 of the LB-31 was made by Claudia Pratt and seconded by John Kester. The motion passed unanimously with all ayes from each present member of the Budget Committee and the Board of Directors.

- ✚ John Kester – Aye
- ✚ Dorothy Butz – Aye
- ✚ Mike Connor – Aye
- ✚ Wendy Giordano – Aye
- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Aye
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye

Announcement:

If anyone would like to donate to the Oregon Fire Service Honor Guard, please see Chief Vetter. Oregon State Fire Marshal will be visiting April 27 at noon if anyone would like to come to the station during that time.

Motion to Adjourn:

- A motion to adjourn was made by Mike Connor and seconded by Claudia Pratt at 16:40.

Attachments: Budget Committee Meeting Agenda, Chief's Budget Letter and Budget Message, Budget Sheets.

Respectfully Submitted:

Claudia Pratt, Board Chairperson