

# **CARBONDALE & RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **CARBONDALE FIRE HEADQUARTERS**

**SEPTEMBER 9, 2015**

The Board of Directors of the Carbondale & Rural Fire Protection District met for their regular meeting on September 9, 2015 at the Carbondale Fire Headquarters/Training Building.

President Gene Schilling called the meeting to order at 5:29 p.m. Directors present were Mike Kennedy, Louis Eller, Bob Emerson and Carl Smith. Also present were Jenny Cutright, Ron Leach, Bill Gavette, Jake Spaulding, Brandon Deter, Jeff Wadley, Tom Adgate and Susie Adgate.

### **CHANGES TO AGENDA**

There were no changes to the agenda.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

The items on the consent agenda were: Approve Current Bills and Balances.

**MOTION:** made to approve the consent agenda. Jenny Cutright noted that checks that are being approved for payment include the list distributed. She said that these bills were received after the Board packet went out. It carried and passed unanimously.

### **PERSONS PRESENT NOT ON THE AGENDA**

No members of the public had any comments.

### **2015 NOVEMBER ELECTION**

Election Update Ron Leach said the ballot language has been certified to the counties and is on the ballot. He said that the question is number 4B in all three counties.

Ron Leach said that the District is required to send the TABOR language to the county clerks by September 22. He reviewed the items that must be on the TABOR notice. He added that there is a place for people to submit comment for or against the issue. Ron Leach said that it is up to the Designated Election Official to summarize the comments. Ron Leach said that comments are due to the Designated Election Official by September 18 at 4:30 p.m. and must include the submitters name, address and signature. He added that the Bond Attorney has reviewed the question, made a minor grammatical change and approved it.

Ron Leach said that Jenny Cutright reviewed over 20,000 names on the property owner list. He said that she has been working on the list for over 3 weeks. He noted this is an election task that is done behind the scenes and is a lot of work.

## Consider Approval of Resolution 2015-006

MOTION: made to approve resolution 2015-006, A Resolution of the Carbondale & Rural Fire Protection District Requesting that the Voters of the District Vote “Yes” on the Mill Levy Override Question Certified by a Resolution No. 4, Series of 2015, to be Placed on the Ballot on November 3, 2015. Bob Emerson questioned if there should be a sentence about the amount the mill levy would generate in the resolution. Discussion regarding adding the phrase “estimated to generate \$595,204” in the resolution followed. The motion was amended to:

MOTION: made to approve resolution 2015-006, A Resolution of the Carbondale & Rural Fire Protection District Requesting that the Voters of the District Vote “Yes” on the Mill Levy Override Question Certified by a Resolution No. 4, Series of 2015, to be Placed on the Ballot on November 3, 2015 and add the phrase “estimated to generate \$595,204” in paragraph 10. It carried and passed 4-0, with Carl Smith abstaining.

Jeff Wadley said that there is nothing about the volunteers in the resolution. He said that he would like to see something about volunteer development in the resolution. Discussion followed. Louis Eller said that the quotes are directly out of the master plan document. Gene Schilling said it would not be appropriate to change a direct quote from the master plan.

Staff and Volunteer Training Concerning the Legal Requirements Concerning the Upcoming Election Carl Smith said that he has been outspoken about people getting the opportunity to speak. He said that he wants to make sure the volunteers and paid staff can speak out and what their limitations are.

Ron Leach said that he will be discussing this at the next volunteer meeting. He said that he has spoken with the paid staff about this issue already. He said that he has said that staff is likely to be asked questions about the election and it is appropriate to review the facts of the election and answer questions from the public, but not get in to a debate for or against the issue.

Ron Leach said that when staff is off duty, they are private citizens who have a right to speak up for or against the issue and contribute money to any political committee if they choose to do so.

Jeff Wadley asked if the District would produce a fact sheet. Ron Leach said that he does plan to create a fact sheet and it would contain facts about the District and election and what the Board intends to do with the money if the issue passes.

Budget Proposal for the Mill Levy Increase Carl Smith said that there have been different proposals and comments about how to spend the mill levy increase if it passes. Ron Leach reviewed the proposed 2016 budget. He said without a mill levy increase, there is approximately \$200,000 being spent out of reserves to balance the budget.

Ron Leach said that a main objective of all budget proposals has been to stop the reserve spending. He suggested budgeting the first \$200,000 of the mill levy increase toward balancing the budget and to prevent the reserves from being spent.

Ron Leach said that all budget proposals have called for safety of personnel as the top priority. He said that everyone agrees on the need for personal protective equipment, communications equipment and equipment replacement with the additional funds that would come from the mill levy increase. He added that a main difference in the budget proposals is hiring paid personnel. Ron Leach noted that Carl Smith explained his rationale for not replacing personnel in his proposal.

Carl Smith reviewed his budget proposal for the mill levy increase. He said in 2018 the assessed valuations will not be enough to fund the 1.75 mill levy increase after it expires. He said that it would put the District in the position of having to go back to the voters or cut staff. He said that additional equipment is also needed.

General discussion regarding the two budget proposals followed. Bob Emerson said that there may be a different way to deal with the personnel needed. He suggested looking at ways to hire people over a period of time or hiring people to fill shifts, but not as full time employees.

Ron Leach said that he would like to further discuss the idea of blending the paid staff with casual employees. He said that he would like to be able to clearly state that the mill levy increase would be used for additional personnel, capital equipment purchase and to stop spending the reserves and balance the budget. Bob Emerson said that he is concerned with the concurrent calls and saying that the District won't hire any additional staff is a problem. He said that there is a need now to have increased staffing and the board needs to further discuss this issue and receive a recommendation from staff on what the appropriate course of staffing is going forward. Gene Schilling said that the Board needs the general idea of where the funds will be allocated.

Mike Kennedy said that he expected to have to go back to the voters in two or so years unless the assessed valuations increased significantly in 2018. He said that was one of the reasons the Board agreed to a two year sunset. He said the idea was to allow for time to work on the master plan and figure out if the District needs to go back to the voters for a new mill levy override and for what period of time to accomplish the goals in the master plan.

Carl Smith said that the master plan shows that a lot of the calls are between 8 am and 5 pm Monday through Friday. He suggested hiring a 40 hour work week person to cover those calls. He also said that Bill Gavette spends a lot of time working on computers and he would like to contract with someone to provide those services so Bill Gavette can work on fire prevention needs. He added that he feels very strongly about sending people to outside training.

Ron Leach said that the training budget has taken a huge hit over the past few years. General discussion regarding the training budget followed.

Ron Leach said that the main goal is to ensure there are three paid personnel on 100% of the time. He said this happens about 50% of the time now. Ron Leach said this is an untenable

situation. He said whether it comes to full time or casual employees, this goal needs to be met. He said that the second goal is to stabilize the reserves. General discussion regarding staffing and hiring followed.

Ron Leach noted that the raises on the mill levy worksheet are also included in the 2016 proposed budget so the personnel amount on the mill levy work sheet can be reduced. He said the amounts are roughly \$200,000 going to stabilize the reserves, \$300,000 going toward personnel and \$100,000 for equipment. Ron Leach said that this is an easy way to articulate the mill levy issue and an honest view of the way the District plans to spend the money.

Gene Schilling asked if the equipment purchasing list would change in 2017. Ron Leach said that it would and some of those funds could possibly be used to help increase the training budget. Ron Leach noted that he agrees with the premise with sending people to training. He noted that if a paid staff member is sent to training, they get paid and they need to be backfilled.

Louis Eller asked if overtime would be decreased with additional staff. Ron Leach said that the current staff is getting a minimal amount of overtime now, that Chief Officers are covering a lot of the time off, so overtime would not be reduced.

Ron Leach reviewed the cost of hiring full time employees. Louis Eller asked for a list of the District vehicles, year and mileage. Carl Smith noted that on some of the fire apparatus, there is as component of obsolesce, even if the mileage is low. Ron Leach added that with pumper trucks, the wear and tear on the vehicles comes from having them parked and pumping water, not driving miles.

Ron Leach said that the budget should not skimp on personal protective equipment (PPE) for members. Ron Leach said there are no funds budgeted for PPE 2016, nor has there been any budget in 2014 or 2015. Ron Leach said that is a deficiency in the proposed 2016 budget.

Ron Leach said that the cardiac monitor grant is still a possibility. He said that District was notified that the consolidated grant scored near the bottom of the grant list and the state funding hasn't been secured yet. He said it is expected to be funded at some point.

Ron Leach said that he spoke with Tom Peltz, the bond attorney a few weeks ago. He said that the District's bonds are rated AAA, but that rating was purchased with bond insurance. He said that there are many factors a bond company looks at when rating bonds. One is the community's ability to repay the bonds; another is the District's reserves. He said that the District had to purchase bond insurance to be rated AAA. He said that if the budget isn't healthy, it will cost more to purchase the bond insurance. Ron Leach said that the bond companies watch the agencies with outstanding bonds and have recently requested copies of the District's audits. Ron Leach noted that this is an unintended consequence of the current financial situation in the District. He said the best thing to do now is to stabilize the reserves.

Louis Eller asked about the need for an IT position. Ron Leach said that the District contracts with Trailhead Technologies for IT needs and Bill Gavette does not do much of that work. Ron Leach said that he spoke with Bill Gavette who estimated about 2% of his time went to

maintaining computers. Carl Smith said that fire prevention is a way to earn more points in ISO. He also suggested looking at a dynamic staffing plan where one person's schedule fluctuates based on covering other staff during time off. Ron Leach said the best way to allow Bill Gavette to work on fire prevention needs is to have more operations staff so Bill Gavette isn't pulled away from his work to drive the ambulance or go on calls.

Discussion followed and it was agreed to estimates of 300,000 for personnel, 100,000 for equipment and 200,000 to stabilize reserves as the plan for the mill levy increase. Ron Leach suggesting using the raise line item toward increasing the training budget. Discussion followed. Jeff Wadley requested funding for volunteer retention. Ron Leach agreed with the need and said it would be added in the personnel category. Bob Emerson noted that the Reserves line is not increasing the reserves but being used for expenditures to prevent reserve spending. Discussion followed and all Board members verbally agreed to budgeting \$200,000 to balance the budget and stabilize the reserves, \$300,000 for personnel/training/volunteer retention and \$100,000 for equipment.

## **2016 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

### Appoint Budget Officer

MOTION: made to appoint Ron Leach the 2016 Budget Officer. It carried and passed unanimously.

2016 Proposed Budget Ron Leach presented the proposed 2016 budget to the Board of Directors. He said that as this is a proposed budget, there will most likely be changes before the final adoption in December.

Ron Leach said that the new assessed valuations increased property taxes 23.29%, not the 25.5% originally estimated. Ron Leach reviewed expenditure changes in the proposed budget. He added that the proposed budget is a static budget with \$200,000 of reserve fund spending. Ron Leach noted that there is no capital spending other than the truck payment budgeted in 2016. Ron Leach said that this is a trend that needs to reverse. General discussion regarding line items and reserves followed. No action was taken.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Email Policy Carl Smith requested his email be part of the Board packet. Ron Leach said it was inadvertently left out. Copies of the memo were distributed to Board members earlier in the meeting.

Documentation of Agenda Items Carl Smith said that there are items that come out at the Board meeting and not in the packet. Discussion followed. It was noted that some items cannot be included in the packet due to time constraints. Gene Schilling said that he would like as much as possible in the packet.

October Agenda Ron Leach requested the following items on the October 2015 Board of Directors agenda:

- Wage & Benefit Survey
- Response Time Study
- Wooden Deer Firewise Program

Louis Eller requested the following item:

- November Board Meeting Date Change

Email Policy Bob Emerson said there are some items in the email policy from Eric Gross that he would like to review. He said the policy is very restrictive on use of personal email addresses. Bob Emerson said that he will talk prepare a redline of changes for the October board packet.

Mill Levy Issue Comments Jeff Wadley said that Louis Eller asked him if he was supporting the current mill levy issue. He said that he does support the mill levy and reviewed his history of supporting tax increase issues in the past.

He said there is a reason why there are an odd number of people on a board, so different opinions can be heard. He said the discussions have been good but he would like to see the abrasiveness diminished. He noted that everyone wants the same end result and he would be supporting the mill levy increase. The Board thanked Jeff Wadley for his support.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Reserve Fund Bank Account Louis Eller said there has been talk about creating a sinking fund. He suggested setting up the sinking fund and another fund so there is an account that is the reserve fund.

Oregon Wildfire Assignment Jake Spaulding said that a crew from Carbondale Fire was dispatched to Vale, OR on August 11. He said that there were 10 new fires in their 10 million acre district and they needed assistance. He said that they mostly worked on initial attack status for the 14 days they were on the fire line. He said it was a very educational assignment.

Brandon Deter noted it was good experience to work with BLM firefighters and learn their tactics. Jake Spaulding added that these assignments benefit them as responders and as well as the community. He thanked the Board of Directors for their support.

**MOTION:** made to adjourn the Board of Directors meeting at 7:25 p.m. It carried and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jenny Cutright, Recording Secretary

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Gene Schilling, President