

**Riceville Volunteer Fire Department**

**Public Special Meeting**

April 24<sup>th</sup> 2019

Minutes

**BOD Members present:** Judy Dillingham, Carla McLendon, Dean Reed, Lisa McCallister, Dereck Lindsey, Mark Dillingham Dan Friday, and Mark Curran.

Judy calls meeting to order at 6:37pm. She tells the people present that this is for the budget and that John has put together a presentation for us.

John C. Mentions the closed bridge and what the NC DOT is doing to fix it. Swannanoa FD is helping to cover part of our district while the bridge is out. John gives a presentation outlying the need for more money to pay our employees a living wage.

Judy does the board have any questions for John

Dan F. asks we are looking at the numbers are we loosing revenue due to the Medic thing.

John C. I'm not certain and can't estimate a monetary impact but I can say that our call volume is down about 25% from this time last year.

Dan F. what does that turn into if that is the number

John C. as far as revenue if that is the effect about \$100,000.00 if we continue that trend of being down 25%

Dan F. how much is a penny to us in taxes

John C. a penny is about \$70,000.00

Mark C. do you know how many calls Medic has run?

John C. No I don't that's why I can't speculate.

Mark C. how do we know its 25%

John C. I compared it to our call rates of last year. This could just be an unusually slow month or two. The call volume has dropped about 25% and usually it does not trend down. Not that much

Dan F. Maybe people are suddenly getting healthier.

Mark C. It might not be just Medic

Dean R. I have a comment about volunteers. I work a bit in McDowell County. I had a meeting with a business owner and he said he had to go. To volunteer on a call. He had to close his business down to go to that call. That is where we have these men and Women here to do that fore us. I don't know if you have ever met a volunteer fire fighter on one of these back roads going to a fire but it is dangerous. Where our guys I have met an ambulance, a Fire Truck I'm in a two and a half ton truck myself I have never felt in danger. I have met volunteers driving a hundred miles an hour on the wrong side of the road going to try to save someone's life. I don't fault them for doing that. We have a staff that can come and get us and I think we are blessed to have what we have.

Mark C. is this the presentation to the county?

John C. No for them I only have three minutes. We have a workshop beforehand with staff. I am working with Tim Love on how to properly submit our needs.

Dan F. So how much do you need, forgetting about the Medic thing possibly blowing \$100K hole in our budget?

John C. a 2.5 cent increase would bring us up to where we need to be that would be 14.5 cents per hundred. That is still pretty good in comparison to where we are.

Judy D. does the board have anything else.

Judy reads the rules for public comment

#### Public comment

Emily Fontenot? Thinks we do important work and is in support of the tax increase.

Reba has a question about the Medic Ambulance service and how that affects her. When would they be entering Riceville how does it work.

Dan F. tries to answer her question as best as possible. To my understanding the Medic ambulances are staged according to a plan that I have not seen and maybe have not been made public. From there 911 have everyone's position on a computer screen if we are 4 minutes away and they are 3 Minutes away the call goes to them. As far as I can tell we as a Fire company have been using profits from the ambulance service to keep our Riceville Fire taxes low. If this Medic deal hurts our ability to make a profit with the ambulance we will need to ask for higher taxes to offset that. I know I have seen them at Ingles a lot and also down around Bojangles so if there is a call and they are closer they get it.

Reba I know I want you all to take me to the hospital not Medic.

Reba, would also would like to know the difference between a fire officer, engineer and fire fighter.

John the Fire officer is the leader of the shift. They go to leadership classes and learn management skills so they know how to manage the Fire. The Engineer drives the truck and manages the pump. We count on that engineer to keep the water flowing. The Fire fighter is just that they go in and fight the fire.

Terry Duckworth speaks his mind a moving speech in favor of pay raises and appropriate staffing.

Michelle Willix says her husband works here and he and all of these folks need a raise.

Francis Shaffer I know that everyone I know of count on this company and I am shocked at how little they make. The Taxes do you all get all of that or just a certain amount.

John C. Just a certain amount. Those 12.5 cents per hundred means that for every hundred dollars your house is worth us get 12.5 cents

Dean R. I think her question is do we get that whole 12.5 amount.

John C. Yes we get all of that as well as a portion of the sales tax from the convenience store, lumber mill, Pie factory and Tool Man.

Dan F. It's not the entire tax bill it's the separate line at the bottom of your tax bill

Francis Shaffer, They certainly need to be paid it is a dangerous job.

Reba approves of the increase and mentions that we should have everyone who can attend to attend the buncombe county commissioners meeting and make a case that our fire department needs the asked for tax increase.

May 7<sup>th</sup> 5:00pm

May 21<sup>st</sup> 5:00pm

Dean R. makes a motion to accept the budget

Dan F. seconds

Discussion:

Mark C. only got the budget last night and had trouble opening the attachment. He is not against paying a living wage but he is against voting on something he hasn't seen.

Mark would like that if we get any increase it be used first to bring existing employees up to a living wage before we bring any more employees on. That has been our goal.

Dean R. Makes the motion to accept the budget and that with any monetary increase we first use it to bring current employees up to a living wage before we use it to hire any new employees.

Dan F. seconds

Voice vote 7 in favor 1 opposed

Mark D. makes a motion to adjourn.

Dan F.. seconds

Vote unanimous

We adjourn executive session at 7:35pm