

WEST LAKE LIMESTONE VFD AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT #2

Volume: 2019-Q1

RECENT SUCCESSES

----- Financial News -----

On January 18th the ESD Board paid off the mortgage on the fire station! We have been aggressively augmenting the loan payment and now celebrate being debt free. This allows a budget item, which was almost a third of our annual income to be allocated toward other major investments in the five-year plan.

----- Fire Engine News -----

We took possession of our third fire truck! Through family and friends of one of our members and the professional network that Chief McWhirter had established in his long career in Texas City, the San Leon VFD donated a ladder engine to our department.

Chief Allen McWhirter and Assistant Fire Chief Warren Miller went down to the coast the other week to inspect the truck and supervise a pump test, ensuring that this major piece of equipment was in good shape. They drove it back and have been addressing minor issues. We will soon be installing the necessary equipment and tools. It will go over to station-3 on FM 3371 making all three of our stations ISO-PPC-8b compliant. This means the folks in "LCR 800" area across the bridge will join most of the folks in the areas around our other stations enjoying potentially lower insurance rates!



NEW E-NEWSLETTER AND E-MAIL ADDRESSES

This is the second issue of our new e-newsletter. Through its use we hope to keep folks better informed of what we do in the WLLVFD and the ESD#2. You are receiving it because you gave us your email address, or it was offered to us by your neighbors. We will not use our email list for any other purpose other than this newsletter or a very important notice. Please help us build an accurate data base of email addresses by sharing the newsletter with others in ESD#2 and urging them to give us their email addresses (wllvfdfire@gmail.com.) For this to work, we need your help! Thank you.

EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICTS

BY EDS#2 BOARD PRESIDENT, VERNON DAVIS

HISTORY OF TEXAS EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICTS

The origination of the idea for a special governmental entity to provide fire protection and emergency medical service began in 1949 at the behest of farmers and local property insurers to provide funding for rural areas against devastating effects of fire damage. The Texas Legislature created Rural Fire Prevention Districts (RFPDs). These special districts would levy a property tax capped at \$0.03 per \$100 of property valuation. As time passed more areas looked to the legislature for a better funded form of the existing RFPD. In 1987 the Legislature created, with voter approval, Emergency Services Districts (ESDs) with broader powers than RFPDs and the capability to tax at the higher rate of \$0.10/\$100. Today ESDs are local political subdivisions of our State that provide fire, rescue, EMS, and other emergency services. Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 775 is the enabling statute for all ESDs and contains the legal prescriptions for operating and conducting business. ESDs are governed by a Board of five Commissioners who are appointed by the County Commissioners Court and reside in their district. ESDs are primarily funded by an ad valorem (property) tax, and may levy a sales and use tax for additional funding. Simply put, ESDs replace fundraising efforts that typically take away from service provision and that can still leave the service provider in difficult financial straits. The tax revenues may be used by ESDs to hire full-time emergency personnel, contract with full-time departments, and/or purchase new equipment and facilities. More importantly, ESDs can contract with volunteer fire departments and emergency medical services organizations and provide a stable funding source for these entities. ESD tax revenues mean more time to focus on training and the provision of emergency services rather than fundraising and other activities. Through stable funding, established ESDs have considerably reduced fire and medical response times and have allowed local entities to provide enhanced services, thus saving lives, property, and funds for local citizens. The establishment of an ESD may result in a better Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating within the ESD service area and lower insurance premiums for businesses and homeowners.

WE NEED YOUR HELP: SUSTAINING MEMBER PROGRAM

A significant fraction of our WLLVFD budget comes to us through donations from individuals and businesses in our district. Generally this is about equivalent to the amount we receive as a county stipend. This county stipend is the same for all VFDs even though our department is the largest and most active rural VFD. Our VFD is recognized for its aggressive plans to improve its fire suppression and medical response services. In order to continue to improve our capabilities, we need funds to expand our operational budget. For instance, we currently have two proposals out for a major asset, a tender or tanker that will dramatically change our firefighting abilities for residential fires. A new tender costs \$350,000 to \$400,000! These grants require matching funds in the range of \$40,000 to \$100,000!

We need to raise these matching funds. This requires strategic planning and community support. Consider becoming a sustaining member at the platinum level (\$50/mo.), the gold level (\$25/mo.), the silver level (\$10/mo.) or the bronze level (\$5/mo.)

We need your assistance and would welcome your regular, monthly contribution to our firefighting vehicle fund. Please contact WLLVDFD President Kim McWhirter.



Barbara Hicks

LIMESTONE COUNTY ESD#2's MISSION

The West Lake Limestone community voted to establish and fund an EDS to provide and sustain exceptional, prompt, and skillful response in (1) fire prevention, (2) fire suppression, (3) rescue operations, and (4) emergency medical care. To accomplish these tasks our ESD was formed and will operate as funds custodian with sole authority, accountability and oversight over of this mandate. To build a viable fire and emergency response service, four fundamental requirements had to be satisfied: (1) establish either an ESD volunteer fire department or enter into a contract with an existing volunteer fire department, (2) ensure a continuum of emergency services training for volunteer personnel, (3) secure appropriate fire and emergency response equipment and (4) provide buildings and structures as centers of operation.

As President of ESD#2 it is my fervent desire that we, the board of commissioners, continue to fulfill our fiduciary obligations and responsibilities of the mission we were chosen to perform, and do these things in a way that reflects positively on the County of Limestone and the people of the district of West Lake Limestone.

ESD#2's TAX RATE COMPARED TO OTHERS STATEWIDE

There are 325 known ESDs in the state protecting 8 million Texans. Of those, 97 collect sales taxes, and 320 receive property tax support. In those 320 ESDs, 138 are taxing at or above \$0.09 per \$100 of property evaluation with the median ESD tax rate being \$0.075 per \$100. Our ESD #2 has a tax rate of just \$0.04 per \$100 of property evaluation. Media EDS ad valorem tax collected is \$376,000 per year. Limestone County ESD #2 collected \$91,000 in 2018. Only 75 of the 320 ESDs collect less than \$100,000 per year.

BARBARA HICKS: ESD#2 COMMISSIONER OF THE QUARTER

Vice President Barbara Hicks has been on the ESD Board for two years. She has lived in the district for twenty-five years and is no stranger in helping her community supporting local civic and youth sports organizations. Since 2006 Barbara has been a nurse in three local hospitals serving both in Medical Surgical Units and Emergency Rooms. Through her husband, a local paramedic and volunteer firefighter, she is familiar with pre-hospital emergency services, like those provided by our WLLVFD's emergency medical responders. Being married to a first responder allows Barbara to see the sacrifices they make and the dedication they have to serve their neighbors. For people like Barbara and her husband, the choice of a career is more like a calling rather than a mere choice of vocation.

Barbara received her LVN from Navarro Community college in 2006, later obtaining her BSN through the Nursing Bridge Program at the University of Texas at Tyler. She holds a Master of Nursing Administration degree from the University of Phoenix. She is employed as a Nurse Supervisor at Baylor Scott & White Hillcrest Hospital in Waco. In the near future, she will be obtaining her Nurse Practitioner certification from UT Tyler. She tells us: "By obtaining more knowledge through education and volunteerism I hope to continue to serve my community."

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Note from the Editor: Please share with your neighbors. Request a subscription by emailing me, Paul Loeffler, at wllvdfire@gmail.com