

West Lake Limestone VFD And Emergency Services District #2

e-NEWSLETTER – 2ND QTR. JUNE 2021

SALES TAX CAPTURE INITIATIVE

As you know we recently held a district-wide election on the following ballot proposition:

“The adoption of a local sales and use tax in Limestone County Emergency Services District#2 at the rate of two percent.”

Of the 119 voters participating in the May 1st election, eighty one (81) voted in favor of the proposition and thirty eight (38) voted against. Thus, the voters in the district approved the proposition by 43 votes or a margin of 36%. This is good news for the ESD, the West Lake Volunteer Fire Department (WLLVFD), the residents of our district, and all our visitors. We anticipate that financial support from the state will begin Fall 2021.

The hard work started back in 2019 when the ESD#2 Board became aware of the opportunity ESDs had to use the local portion of the 8.25% Texas sales tax to support emergency response in their districts.

A review of the strategic improvements proposed by the ESD and the WLLVFD that constituted the basis for the 2% sales tax request included:

- Radio communications upgrade to improve response to emergency calls,
- Personnel incentives program to recruit and retain first responders,
- Tender: a large water tanker truck to deliver needed firefighting water to fire scenes,
- Hardening station-1 with a generator, and
- Sustainability initiatives needed to maintain quality emergency services in the district:

- Apparatus replacement fund,
- Equipment replacement fund, and
- Facilities improvement fund.

The Board noted other advantages of our 2% sales tax capture. These include:

- Keeping the organization debt free,
- Sharing financial responsibility,
- Improving response to fire calls,
- Improving response to medical emergencies,
- Providing potential ISO improvement for home insurance,
- Creating recruiting and retention advantages,
- Keeping revenue in our service area,
- Insuring safety for first responders and
- Sustaining future emergency response efforts.

The mission of the ESD#2 is to provide a solid foundation for our fire and emergency services stakeholders in prevention, preparedness, and response. The Board has the responsibility to ensure that the WLLVFD has the necessary financial support to develop and sustain progress as a model, rural emergency services organization dedicated to the preservation of life, property, and the environment. These new funds will allow us to sustain our exceptional volunteer emergency services organization.

Thank you for your vote of confidence in us and your continuing support.

Deciding the Future Emergency Services Improvement Opportunity

SNOVID-21/WINTER STORM URI

This past February we faced record freezing temperatures with snow and icy rains that made roads impassable. Our local power went out for a couple of days, then "rolling" blackouts turned into another two-and-a-half days without electrical power!

Compounding things, SLC Water announced that they had lost water pressure. We had no water! We were stuck, experiencing the largest blackout in the U.S. since 2003 and the coldest disaster in Texas history!

This was a very serious storm that caused numerous fatalities in the state and created medical equipment issues straining emergency medical response everywhere. Locally, WLLVFD had more calls that week than in a normal 2-month period. We had over thirty 911-calls! Despite situations at home or iced-over roads, our volunteers **DID NOT MISS ONE CALL!!**

Most tone-outs were for assistance with oxygen because, without power, O₂ machines could not operate. Because we get our cylinders refilled in Mexia, this increase in O₂ response required extra trips due to dangerous road conditions to keep these critical supplies on hand.



In addition to these extraordinary efforts, WLLVFD members responsible for our three stations and their trucks, each holding 500 to 1,000-gallons of water, were trying to keep equipment from freezing. Unfortunately, the main fire pump on Ol' Ladder-17 (engine-2506) at station-3 was damaged. Also, the piping to the 16,000-gallon water plant at our main fire station burst. After things thawed out, it was easy for us to re-plumb and refill the firefighting water storage tank but engine-2506 had to go to Waco to evaluate the damage, which was quite extensive. Our insurance company totaled Ol' Ladder-17 and took possession.

So, we must sadly say "*Goodbye*" to our old friend!!

There are lessons learned and actions to be taken in response to Snovid-21. To meet immediate needs, plans are to use the insurance money to buy a pumper on the used market as a replacement engine needed to provide

coverage for the northeast portion of the district. Next year we plan to "harden" our stations for cold weather conditions, to get a large diesel generator system to power the main fire station in emergencies, and to double our supply of oxygen cylinders on hand.

All in all, it was a terrible storm but our first responders did an outstanding job!! Everybody who needed help when their lights were out and their homes were cold are most grateful.

NEW ESD#2 OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS

At the February meeting an election was held where several offices were exchanged for the 2021 year. Commissioners Charles Eastburn and Debbie Garrard changed places, with Charlie accepting the role of Secretary and Debbie taking over the position of Treasurer. Commissioner Vernon Davis became the Assistant Treasurer; Paul Loeffler, the President. Barbara Hicks retained her position as Vice-President.

Our immediate task was addressing the May election, but with that behind us, we have been addressing the ESD#2 2019-2020 audit report, the upcoming year's budget, and exploring ways to better support the fire department.

With the sales tax initiative successfully completed, Vernon Davis elected to resign from the Board. Debbie Gerrard also resigned for personal reasons. Thus, two vacant positions were created. Fortunately, there have been several community members who have expressed interest in serving on the Board. Herbert (Randy) Behringer and John Beall will fill these vacancies and continue through the 2022-2023 term.

Their initial task will be defining shared functions for the Assistant Treasurer and Treasurer positions as these roles will soon be addressing greater responsibility in support of the fire department and in integrating an outside bookkeeper/business manager into ESD/VFD operations as our emergency services organization continues to grow.

Welcome aboard Randy and John!

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF MCWHIRTER

After having been Fire Chief for six productive and exciting years Chief Allen McWhirter has elected to retire from that leadership position. He anticipates moving from the district this summer but imagines that he will soon be fighting fires in another VFD. Chief McWhirter had been a member of the WLLVFD for twelve years.



Allen McWhirter
Fire Chief

254-729-0165 (O)
254-747-1548 (C)
amacfire@hotmail.com
6614 FM 937
Thornton, Texas 76687

WEST LAKE LIMESTONE VFD

Before moving to the Lake Limestone area, Allen retired as Senior Captain of the Texas City Fire Department. Soon after, his passion for a life of service as a firefighter/medical first responder turned his volunteer work into a full-time endeavor. As Chief, he brought extensive experience and leadership skills that transformed the WLLVFD into a fully functional, semi-professional organization.

Allen is a “list maker,” and six years ago he established a set of goals for the department centered on improving our fire suppression capabilities and medical response abilities. His list included establishing, among many tasks, having three fire stations, each with a fire engine and brush truck so that almost all of the homes in the district had the coveted ISO-8 coverage. His plan included a rural water supply system with a 16,000-gallon water plant at each station and a tender/tanker to efficiently deliver water to fire scenes. As a certified instructor, Allen created an extensive training program giving our firefighters and medical first responders the knowledge, confidence, and certifications to better serve the community. He grew the department from eight to 35 active members.

We owe Allen our gratitude for his vision, dedication, and determination. He is an outstanding individual; we have been privileged to know him. Thank you, Allen. We will miss you. God speed in your new endeavors.

NEW FIRE CHIEF

In addition to new faces at the ESD, there have been major changes at the West Lake Limestone Fire Department. Anticipating the change in leadership, Allen has been working with David Nobles, a former Fire Chief at WLLVFD, to ensure a smooth transition in leadership. David was installed on June first and affirmed by the members at the June meeting.

Welcome aboard David!

NOTE FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

My name is David Nobles and I have assumed the West Lake Limestone VFD Fire Chief position.

I began as a firefighter with Groesbeck VFD in 1991 before WLLVFD even existed but when it was created I moved my membership, originally starting with this department in March of 2000. I have served as a firefighter and medical first responder, and have held the ranks of Lieutenant, Captain, Assistant Chief, and was the Fire Chief for eight years until 2012. During my tenure as Chief, we were able to obtain several more fire apparatus, purchase the land for the central station, design station-1, and create an emergency services district, ESD#2. In 2012 I left the fire department due to unforeseen circumstances but, fortunately, was able to return in 2015.

I obtained my basic EMT certification in 2000 while with WLLVFD, and I went to work in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) full time in 2002. Then, in 2005, I progressed to the level of Paramedic. I still hold my Paramedic Certifications and will continue to do so. During my employment in EMS I gained a large amount of first responder experience, experience which is invaluable here in the district. I have also worked in the oilfield as a Remote Duty Paramedic and have learned over time to be able to handle almost any type of emergency.

My wife and I currently own and operate Nobles RV’s located in Box Church on FM 937; we have been in business since 2019 at that location. Being a small business owner gives me a unique perspective for the Fire Chief position as I am well versed in the budgeting and managing day-to-day operations. WLLVFD has been on a steady path of growth and improvement, and I hope to keep us on that same path. Our mission and goal are to continually improve this department and to better serve our community.

In closing, having returned to the Fire Chief position, I am dedicated to the success of WLLVFD and its members. We will continue to recruit, obtain grants, provide training, upgrade equipment, improve our stations, and grow our community relations within our fire district. I will continually strive to meet the expectations of the public, the ESD#2 and the WLLVFD members.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Fire Chief David Nobles (254-729-0165; westlakelimestonevfd@gmail.com);
Paul Loeffler (chm_pal@shsu.edu)
President of ESD#2 Board; Newsletter Editor