

REDDING FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1

July, 2022

Dear Redding Fire District No. 1 Taxpayer:

You have likely noticed the increase in your 2022 annual Fire District Tax bill. This increase is the result of the District budget voted on and approved by the taxpayers present at the May 22, 2022 annual budget meeting, and is the first step in a pair of planned budget increases which are aimed at securing funding for the construction of a large retaining wall on the north side of the property and new firehouse at 186 Black Rock Turnpike, the site of the current "Ridge Firehouse" that you are familiar with. The attached Timeline provides some informal information about the Ridge Firehouse Project. This letter gives you information about the planned tax increases.

The current estimated cost of the Ridge Firehouse Project is \$7,711,000. The District does not intend to commit to construction unless and until full financing for the project is secured.

The District's normal budget each year provides for the annual operations of the District and Redding Fire & EMS Co. NO. 1, and a reserve fund for capital expenses. The capital reserve fund allows for the timely replacement of fire apparatus and ambulances according to a planned schedule which anticipates the aging and eventual required replacement of each vehicle owned by the District.

To fund the Ridge firehouse project, the District plans a combined approach of building a significant additional capital reserve dedicated this to project, and borrowing. The District believes this is the best approach to spread the cost of the benefits of the new firehouse across current District taxpayers (who will bear the cost of the immediate capital reserve) and future taxpayers (who will bear the cost of repaying the debt incurred by borrowing). All the taxpayers will enjoy the benefits of the new Ridge Firehouse.

The first step in this plan was the inclusion in the May 2022 budget of an additional line item of \$300,000, dedicated to a separate capital reserve fund earmarked for the firehouse project. A similar increase, also dedicated to the Ridge firehouse, is planned for May of 2023. We plan no further increases specific to the firehouse capital reserve, but do plan to maintain that level of funding of the firehouse capital reserve (and taxation) for the following five years (2024-28). This will build our dedicated capital reserve, and increase the annual tax receipts of the District, which increases the District's borrowing ability. We believe that the District will then be in a financial position to commit to the actual construction of the new firehouse.

At this year's annual Redding Fire & EMS Co. No. 1 Open House, to be held in October, at the Ridge firehouse, the District will hold a special information session at noon. The session will include display of plans for the new firehouse, a general overview of the project and plans for financing it, and a question-and-answer session. We hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Bennett Pardee, Commissioner
Phyllis Magnussen, Commissioner
David Hermenze, Commissioner

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ABOUT REDDING FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1

Redding Fire District No. 1 is a special taxing district established in 1927 by state statute, which levies taxes on the residents of the District for the purposes of supporting the operations of Redding Fire & EMS Company No. 1. Redding Fire & EMS Company No. 1 is the all-volunteer fire and EMS company established in 1915 serving the residents of Redding Fire District No. 1.

Redding Fire District No. 1 also operates a part-time, paid, EMS crew that staffs ambulance coverage for the District, and for Redding Fire District No. 2, during daytime hours on alternate weeks. Redding Fire District No. 2 provides similar coverage to both Districts on the off weeks. This arrangement was initiated in 2008, to provide town ambulance coverage during hours where volunteer coverage was difficult to provide.

Redding Fire District No. 1 owns the real estate and improvements located at 186 Black Rock Turnpike (the "Ridge firehouse") and 105 Hill Road (the "Center firehouse"); the fire apparatus and ambulance deployed by Redding Fire & EMS Company No. 1; and equipment located at both locations.

Three elected Commissioners, who serve three-year terms, oversee and operate Redding Fire District No. 1, together with an elected Secretary, Treasurer, and Tax Collector, who serve one-year terms. District meetings generally occur on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm at the Ridge Firehouse. Budget discussions normally begin at the regular monthly meeting in February and continue until approved by the Commissioners at the April monthly meeting. The Budget is then presented to the taxpayers of Redding Fire District No. 1 on the first Monday in May each year. The approved budget and mill rate is sent to the Tax Collector so the bills can be prepared in June. The fiscal year for the fire district is the same as the Town of Redding: July 1 of the current year to June 30 of the next one. Elections are held on the first Monday of August of each year. Each owner of real estate located in the taxing district is an eligible voter.

Bennett Pardee, Commissioner
Phyllis Magnussen, Commissioner
David Hermenze, Commissioner

Bill Pardee, Secretary
Christine Van Oostendorp, Treasurer
Patricia Moisis, Tax Collector

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TIMELINE RIDGE FIREHOUSE RENOVATION/REPLACEMENT:

2015:

- Commissioners approved starting process to renovate/update the Ridge Firehouse
- Search for architect to handle renovations/updates and to work with ideas presented by membership committee
- Commissioners chose Jeff Mose, Architect, to work with membership committee
- Email sent to membership for things to consider with regard to renovating the Ridge Firehouse
- Compilation of suggestions from membership categorized by area:
 - General needs
 - Public spaces
 - Member spaces
 - Exercise room
 - Kitchen
 - Training space
 - Dedicated office space
 - Radio/Dispatch space
 - Engine bays
 - Whole building updates
- Ridge Reno committee meeting with architect to discuss member suggestions.

2016:

- Discovery of engine bay foundation deterioration and consultation for immediate remediation
- Remediation work to reinforce foundation, long term solution will need to be researched
- Site work and schematic design consultation with architect and documents presented at district meeting
- Recommendation by architect that infrastructure failings and inadequacies prohibit renovating the existing building. Suggest research be done to see if new building can be built on existing lot or if new land purchase might be considered

2017:

- Commissioners met with representatives from Sacred Heart Church to discuss possibility of purchasing lot adjacent to existing church property. Idea has merit but must be approved by person who donated the property and would be contingent on approval by Redding Fire District 1 taxpayers. Church met with member and he wants the parish to keep the property.
- Commissioners met with representatives of Redding Ridge Cemetery Association to ask if they would be interested in selling a strip of land adjacent to the firehouse. Several discussions and ideas for sharing parking area in the strip of land took place; however, the final quote for purchasing that strip included paying for each gravesite, cost prohibitive for the district.
- Commissioners discussed any other alternatives and decided to pursue whatever avenues were available to expand existing property.

2018:

- Obtained updated survey of current property and surveyor discovered the 1965 transfer of a small piece of land donated by Donaldson and Hilda Jennings had not been recorded property with Town of Redding.

- Commissioner Gass entered into discussions with current property holder and her attorney to finalize that transfer and to discuss obtaining property reserved for acquisition by Hilda Jennings in her will.
- Entered into contract with Jeff Mose, Architect for design through construction of a new firehouse.

2019:

- Ongoing discussions with attorney representing Mrs. Mayo regarding purchasing additional 50' strip of land north and east of existing property, as described in the will of Hilda Jennings. Purchase finalized in August, \$13,000.
- Architect submitted several proposals for design of new firehouse to committee. First choice will depend upon engineering evaluation of existing property to see if it will support it.
- Engineering report came back negative for first design choice, architect to present revised drawings at next meeting.
- New drawings submitted and approved by committee and commissioners.

2020:

- Various surveys, drawings prepared and reviewed with intent to begin Town of Redding approval process.
- Progress halted by COVID-19 Pandemic
- Engage attorney to oversee and represent Redding Fire District No. 1 during presentations of:
 - Variance Application
 - Conservation Application
 - Zoning Application

2021:

- Contract with Land Surveyor, Environmental Surveyor, Engineering Surveyor, Landscape Design firms for preparation of documentation needed for Town of Redding approval process
- Presentations and site visits to gain approvals for several variances for non-compliant property use, conservation approval for building retaining wall adjacent to wetlands, zoning for approval of design of new firehouse. All applications approved.
- Architect met with Commissioners to present estimated construction costs for full project (retaining wall, septic system and building replacement) came in at \$7,711,000.
- Discuss options and limitations with regard to financing a large project. District borrowing is limited by CT statute to 2.25 times taxes collected in prior fiscal year.

2022:

- Zoom meetings with state congressional representatives to discuss what grants might be available to the fire district
- Zoom meeting with attorney regarding statute limitations and if there are any alternative options available.
- Redding Fire District No. 1 does not meet the median income requirements for most grants available at this point and there is no alternative statute which would make borrowing more than the 2.25% limit.
- Budget discussion on best way to increase tax revenue to get closer to the number needed. Decision was to create a new line item in the budget and increase the mill rate to begin that process. No new capital expenses will be included in this budget.