

Rocky Point Fire & EMS
Open Forum Levy Meeting
April 8, 2024

Board members present: Teresa Petersen, David Carpenter, Bruce Harp. Jennifer Pickle, Pat O'Shay (via Zoom) and Chief Walker-Pope.

Those in attendance: Richard and Melanie Stevens, Sharna and Mike Igou, Mike and Diana Newdall, Alice Martin, Rob Buerck, Steve McKee, Jerry Higgins, Ty Collins, Carl Taylor, Dustin Wyble, Linda Reed

On-line via Zoom: Deej and Judy Teagarden

David Carpenter opened the meeting at 11 am with the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

David presented the case for the levy request. He shared some examples of the increases from 2021-2023 as follows:

The cost of the gloves we have to wear on a medical call has increased by 137%, IV Fluids up 300%, Narcan up 293%, Ambulance Licensing up 156%, Workers Comp Insurance up 313%, Liability Insurance up 68%, Utilities: Electric up 31%, Garbage up 173%, Propane up 42% Equipment: Service and repairs up 134%, fuel (excluding Ambulance) up 24%.

He stated we are trying to keep our service to the community at least up at the current level it is today. We just had 10 SCBA tanks go out of service and we had to spend over \$6,000 to get 6 new ones. The reoccurring fees keep going up and fundraisers aren't keeping up with the increases anymore.

In 1971 the State set the property tax at \$1.18 per \$1000 of assessed value, set by the County Assessor. Rocky Point Fire has never received any increase to that and has never filed for a levy. But inflation has caused a serious gap between income and actual expenses. We are second to the lowest on the tax income base estimated to receive \$62,540 annually however we consistently have received only \$55,000 due to non-payers.

Question was asked how other districts were dealing with inflation. The response was that several districts already have added levies. A review of what other districts are receiving from the property tax income and from levys was shared. Total to be received by each fire district is as follows:

Bly	\$ 66,819
Bonanza Fire	107,652
Chemult Fire	167,269
Chiloquin Agency Lake Fire	286,033
Central Cascade Fire & EMS	207,012
Central Cascade Fire & EMS Local Option	23,953
Crescent Fire	233,131
Crescent Fire Local Option	124,232
Keno Fire	465,911
Klamath Fire No 1	11,211,031
Klamath Fire No 3	56,360
Klamath Fire No 4	200,443
Klamath Fire No 5	137,865
LaPine	79,014
LaPine Fire Operation Levy	32,843
La Pine Fire Capital Project	11,803
Malin Fire	75,425
Merrill Fire	59,564

Merrill Fire General Operations	75,437
Oregon Outback	71,299
Rocky Point Fire & EMS	62,540

Central Cascade Fire & EMS, Crescent Fire, LaPine, and Merrill have already added levies to their tax base.

Question was asked about the length of the levy and it was clarified that the levy was for five years only. Then the question was asked what happens at the end of five years. It was explained that at the end of five years the property taxes would go back to the \$1.18 per \$1000 of assessed value of your property or the fire department would request another five year levy of whatever amount would be needed at that time to keep things rolling.

It was explained that in 2018 when Glenn Harmon passed and Chief Walker-Pope came on board we couldn't enter a burning building for two reasons. 1. Because we had no PPE that wasn't expired and 2. We had no certified firefighters. Until Chief came on board our ambulance was certified for BLS only.

Many things have changed in requirements and we now have certified PPE, Fire fighter 1's and firefighter 2's, We have DPSST certified instructors, our ambulance is certified ALS and all of that means increased services available to the community. ALS means drugs can now be administered. Certified Firefighter 1 and 2's means we can go into the burning building and rescue you instead of standing outside and watching your home burn hoping you aren't in there, and only able to keep the fire from spreading to surrounding areas.

Another issue affecting the financial situation is that less and less people are carrying auto insurance. And if they don't have insurance we can't bill for our services.

It is estimated that 1/3 of all Oregon residents live on property that is unprotected. (E.g. Lake of the Woods.) Currently fire departments go out of their districts and fight house fires in these areas if they are available to do so. But the unprotected areas don't pay into the operating costs of the fire department and your tax dollars are covering their emergencies. This is being looked at in the legislature. A current bill just signed by legislature allows unprotected properties within 7 miles of the fire department to be annexed in, however in our case that only includes Wampler's.

If you pass the levy it means that: if your property's assessed value is:

- 100,000 you will pay an additional \$82 per years in property taxes.
- 150,000 you will pay an additional \$123 per year
- 200,000 you will pay an additional \$164 per year
- 250,000 you will pay an additional \$205 per year
- 300,000 you will pay an additional \$246 per year

And the fire department will receive near double what we receive currently, or \$105,000 per year.

If the levy doesn't pass, the first thing that this community will lose is the Ambulance Service. And the Ambulance service supports the Fire Department. If we lose the Ambulance we lose income and the fire department will not be able to continue to operate for long. If the Fire Department has to close due to not enough funds to function 99% of current Home Owner's Insurance will be canceled and you will have to try to find insurance at much higher rates, if you can find any at all.

No matter how small or large the fire department is, no matter whether the fire department has paid staff or is all volunteer, and no matter what the property tax base is all fire departments in the State of Oregon, whether rural, frontier or in a town, have the same State requirements they must meet. They all are required to have the same equipment, the same certifications, the same PPE requirements have to be met. The same number of hours are required for certification of paramedics, EMTs, EMRs, firefighters, wildland no matter the circumstances.

Question was raised regarding the grants we have received. And it was explained that the grants are awarded for specific things. We can't pay the electric bill with grant money that was awarded for PPE. The CDWG Grant has allowed us to have 3 paid staff and we have once again been awarded the \$35,000 staffing grant which will give us another 2 ½ paid staff from July 1 through September 30, 2024.

Question was asked if when the grant has been completed will the levy money help pay for paid staff to continue. The answer was no. In fact it is important to note that when the CDWG Grant is completed we will lose three firefighters, one of them being an EMT also. They will be moving on to paid jobs elsewhere. The staffing grant will only be going on for 2 more years after this year. We need volunteers to step up and train now.

It is imperative that the fire department keep SCBAs serviced and in good operating condition as well as adding PPE annually to always have PPE that is within the certified period. If this doesn't happen we can't go into a burning building and rescue.

Question was asked about if we had talked with Grayback about access to their water supply and their services. The answer was yes we had. They provided us a quote for a 2 yr contract with us on the CDWG project. Their quote for the project was 4.2 million dollars for 3 persons and one type 6 brush truck.

The fire department through the CDWG Grant will be setting some water storage tanks strategically for fire suppression usage which we hope will help with Home Owner Insurance issues. With the CDWG Grant we will be required to have a full audit of the books which costs \$30,000 and will be paid by the grant moneys.

The Levy meeting was recorded and a copy will be available for anyone who requests one.