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# General Obligation Bond Community Survey Report

## FINAL REPORT

Submitted to Boardman Rural Fire Protection District  
July 30, 2020  
Westby Associates, Inc.



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## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW:

For the month of July 2020, Boardman Rural Fire Protection District (BRFPD) engaged with Westby Associates, Inc., a regional consulting firm with continued experience of assessing, analyzing, and working within the Boardman area on projects related to the growth and quality of life in the Morrow County area, for a public information outreach process about a potential November 2020 General Obligation (GO) Bond ballot measure for the proposed 24-hour fire station and related fire equipment. The summary data is intended to inform BRFPD Board to allow for discussion and decision. Public review and discussion is scheduled for July 30<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. at the Port of Morrow.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the planned in-market Focus Groups were replaced with a digital presentation and online survey outreach. The PowerPoint presentation was used to provide information, and Survey Monkey responses were used by Westby Associates, Inc. (WAI) to collect data presented in this summary report.

This report is provided to BRFPD and includes Issues, Findings and Recommendations. A Public briefing accompanying this report is scheduled to inform survey participants and the public of the survey results and next steps.

The PowerPoint presentation, letter, and survey link were sent to a total of 37 individuals, all of whom are community leaders and active residents, identified by BRFPD Chief Hughes, local leadership and Westby Associates counsel. A total of 18 surveys were completed. All survey questions were responded to by the 18 participants for confidential analysis and reporting by WAI to BRFPD.

There was significant support for BRFPD to put forth a GO Bond in November. Key takeaways with high consensus include the following:

- Overall experience with BRFPD is positive
- The Boardman community is growing and there are plenty of employment opportunities
- Participants agree that the current building on Wilson Road is not positioned to meet district growth
- 94% of respondents agree that a new facility away from Wilson Road is positive
- 94% of respondents believe the community would make an investment through a GO Bond request to improve BRFPD services

It is critical that for the potential GO Bond be successful, BRFPD needs to have clear and informative outreach to the public, which should include assurance that the project/improvements are modest and realistic.

## B. SURVEY PARTICIPANT ROSTER:

Summary as of 7/30/20:

NUMBER OF SURVEYS SENT: 37

NUMBER OF SURVEYS COMPLETED: 18

Full Name	Title	Survey
Kalie Davis	Port of Morrow Workforce Training Manager	X
Pam Docken	Mountain Valley Land Company	X
Roy Drago Jr.	Tidewater/City Councilor	X
Torrie Griggs	Boardman Chamber of Commerce	X
Bill Hancock	Port of Morrow	X
Dino & Jennifer Leighton	Bozo Foods	X
Paul Keefer		X
Lisa Mittelsdorf	Port of Morrow Economic Development Director	X
Jessica Narain	Business Owner	X
Ryan Neal	Port of Morrow Executive Director	X
David Norton	Riverside High School Principal	X
Vijay Patel	A-1 Hospitality Group	X
Karen Pettigrew	City Manager	X
Lisa Pratt	Resident	X
Krista Price	Mid-Columbia Title Company	X
Don Russell	BRFPD Director	X
Rick Stokoe	Chief of Boardman Police	X
Sandy Toms	Mayor of Boardman	X
Allen Cleaver	Cleaver Farms	
Lee Docken	Mountain Valley Land Company/ UEC Board Member	
Vern Frederickson	Oregon Hay	
Leah Harris	Resident	
Deacon Heideman	Farmer	
Travis Heider	Lamb Weston/Local Resident	
J Fletcher Hobbs	Custom Feed Services	
Bob Houser	Morrow County Health District	
Art Kegler	Realtor	
Blake Lawrence	Windwave Technologies, Inc.	
Reyna Pacheco		
Debbie Radie	Boardman Foods	
Dora & Juan Reyna	Manages Sinclair / Threemile Canyon	
Maria Richards	Boardman Hardware	
Marcie Rodelo		
Tami Sinor	Umatilla Electric Cooperative	
Karl Smith	Retired Farmer	
Joe Taylor	Farmer / Port Commissioner	
Jeff Wendler	Threemile Canyon	

## C. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS:

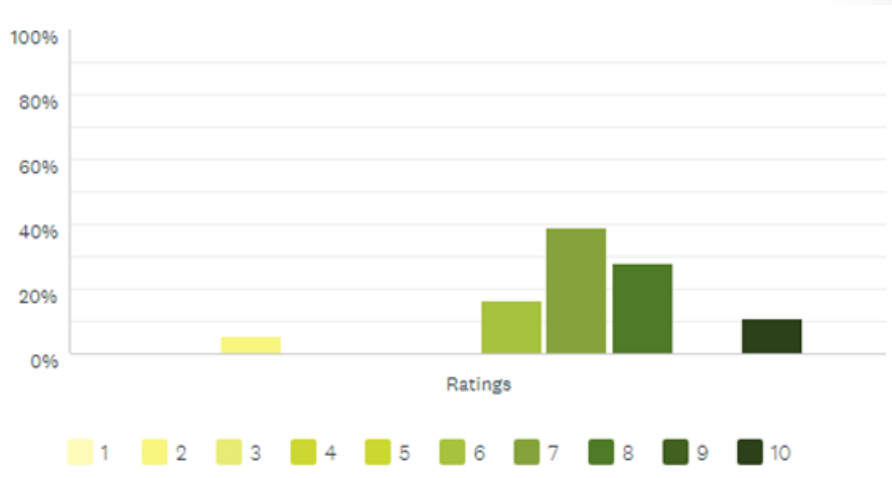
As of July 30, 2020, Westby Associates Inc. (WAI) has completed the first phase of its contracted work on behalf of Boardman Rural Fire Protection District (BRFPD). The PowerPoint presentation, letter, and survey link were sent to a total of 37 individuals, all of whom are community leaders and active residents, identified by BRFPD Chief Hughes and leadership. With 18 responses, we can analyze and synthesize the responses to survey questions to inform the Findings and Recommendations that follow.

### Survey Results

#### 1. How would you currently rate Boardman local services and opportunities such as education, recreation, housing, 9-1-1 response?

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being low and 10 high

- Weighted average: 7.17
- Most common rating was 7 (39%)
- Lowest rating was a 2, with comments that explained: "This score relates prior to Chief Hughes, if I were to re-evaluate this in 6 months from now it would be a 10! It's been great to watch the efforts Chief has gone to re-establish the FD in our community."



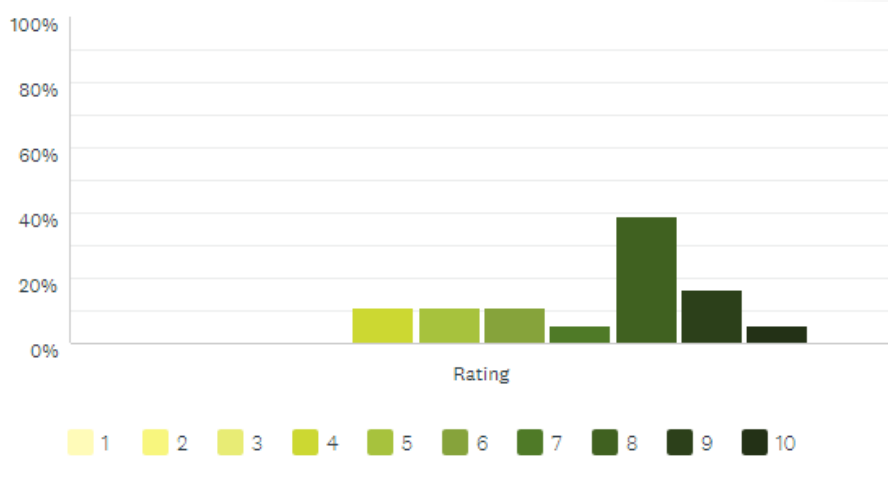
Other comments regarding current Boardman services and opportunities include:

- "The main issue Boardman has had to grow is the lack of housing. There are currently several projects in place that will definitely help with this."
- "Housing for middle income residents is very hard to find. \$150,000 housing is very hard to find."
- "The increase of population and industry in town will lead to the need for more resources in education, 1st responders, etc."
- "Schools great. 911 response is speedy."
- "Need more dedicated services with quick response time."
- "The town is growing rapidly. New infrastructure is needed."

**2. How would you rate employment opportunities and senior services in consideration of “recruitment and retention” of individuals and families moving to or continuing to call Boardman “home”?**

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being low and 10 high

- Weighted average: 7.22
- Most common rating was 8 (39%)
- Lowest rating was 4 (11.8%)



Other comments regarding Boardman employment, senior services, and family recruitment and retention include:

**Challenges:**

- Senior services (2)
- Finding individuals who understand small communities
- Language barrier
- Lack of amenities and activities
- Lack of safety and security for employees and families
- Competition with higher paying employers who offer benefits

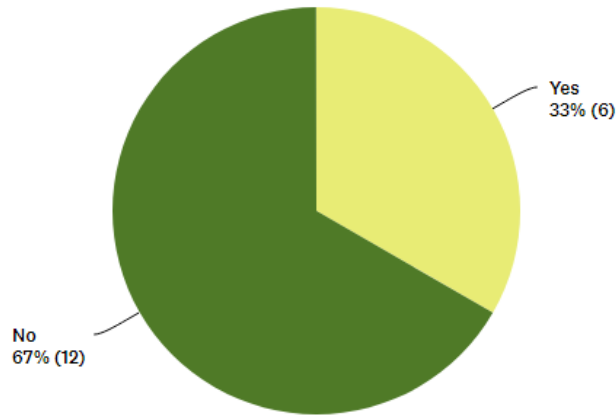
**Accolades:**

- Excellent employment opportunities (3)

**3. Do you think BRFPD is currently positioned to meet District growth?**

Yes/No

- Yes 33.3%
- No 66.7%



**4. When you think of Boardman Rural Fire Protection District (BRFPD) how would you describe your impression?**

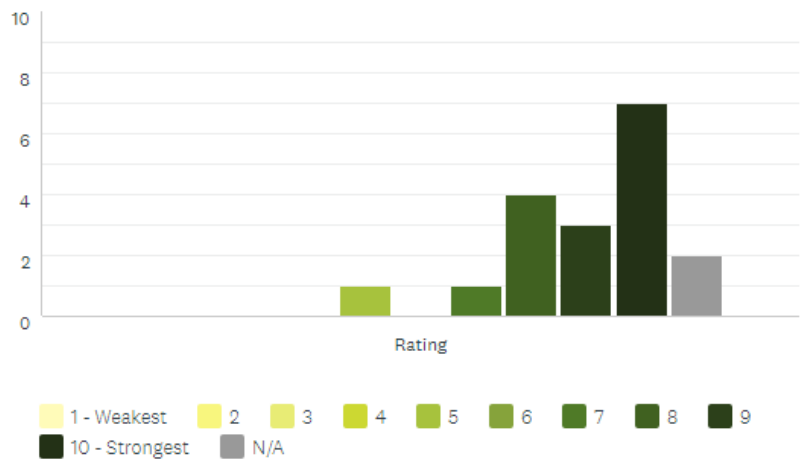
Open-ended question. Several respondents included more than one description

- Great community involvement (6)
- Great staff (5)
- Needs a new building & room to grow (4)
- Friendly (3)
- Great (3)
- Limited capacity station/station is obsolete (3)
- Good growth over the years (2)
- Has good equipment (2)
- Positively improving (2)
- Does not want to do more than what is required
- Helpful
- I am not a fan of fire department being called for EMS
- In past it was not great
- Limited hours of operation
- Located in poor spot
- Need new programs
- Needs are often overlooked
- Not able to timely cover service area
- Overweight
- Prioritizing quality service
- Professional
- Responds faster than the ambulance
- Responsive
- There are more ways for the community to be involved
- Well-trained

## 5. How would you rate your overall experience with BRFPD?

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being low and 10 high

- Weighted average: 8.81
- Most common rating was 10 (35.3%)
- Lowest rating was a 5 (6% / one respondent) \*this respondent later commented, "I believe that the new leadership has us going in the direction we need."



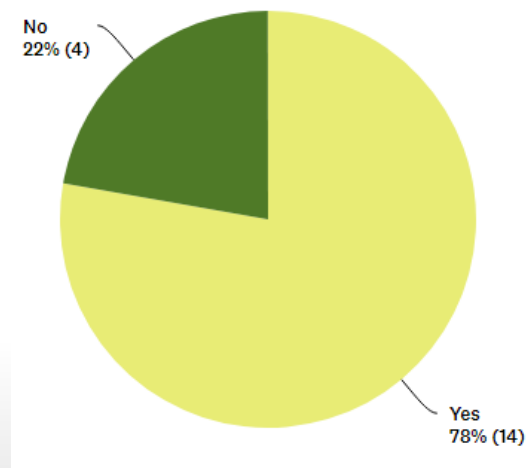
Comments include:

- "I think the current staff is doing amazing things! When you see them around town, they are welcoming, energetic and kind."
- "Never really had a reason to contact them, but certainly feel 'safe and secure' in doing so, should need arise."
- "The response the few times I've personally needed them has been very good."

## 6. Importance that BRFPD is responding to EMS calls as of mid-March 2020?

Yes/No

- Yes 77.8%
- No 22.2%





**7. How do you think District citizens would respond to a tax request for a better location, new equipment, and a larger facility to serve the District?**

Open-ended question

Most respondents qualified their response given that certain circumstances were met

Some individuals gave more than one response and total may be more than 18 responses

Summary

- Positive response from citizens: 12 (67%)
- Individually personally sees need and would support: 3 (16%)
- Citizens would not respond well: 2 (11%)
- Unsure of how citizens would respond: 2 (11%)

In order to have a positive response...

- BRFPD provides clear information (4)
- Project/improvements are modest and realistic (3)
- Bond and information are presented correctly
- Optional guidance from the State level
- Rumors are cleared-up
- Tax rate is below \$1.00 per thousand

Those who are unsure noted:

- "Worth pursuing."
- "Not sure about timing now."

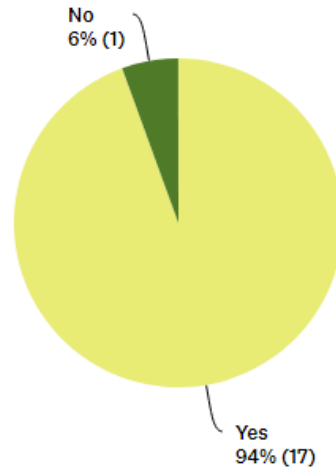
Those who believe the community would not respond well to the GO Bond also said:

- "Unless there is more information about what is needed and how it would benefit our area."

8. Do you think the current location on 300 SW Wilson Lane in Boardman could be improved with a new facility at a different location (proximity to City Hall); away from local school traffic during peak student hours from two schools?

Yes/No

- Yes 97.4%
- No 5.56%



9. If you were the new Fire Chief, what would be your 3 top goals for the next 12-24 months?

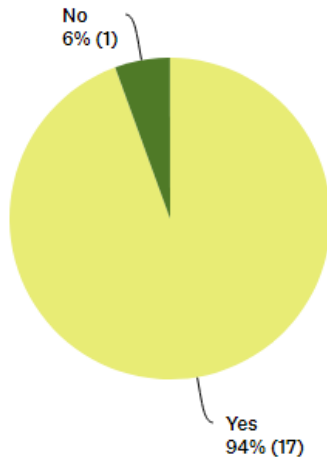
Open-ended question

- Community engagement & education (9)
- Restructure/recruit/add quality staff/retention (9)
- New facility (4)
- New/state of the art equipment (4)
- Quality training (4)
- Recruit and train more volunteers (4)
- Continue to build EMS response (2)
- Expand hours of operation / 24-hour service at station (2)
- New location / East Beach (2)
- Public communications /Social media posts with training videos, great deeds noticed, and special interests in the area (2)
- Budget for a new facility that is realistic to community and the department
- Expansion
- He is doing what he should now
- Improve response times
- Modernization
- Physical and mental health of the firemen
- Securing future financial stability
- Service standards

**10. Do you think the local community served by BRFPD is willing to make an investment through a potential GO Bond in November of this year with appropriate information to inform the GO Bond request?**

Yes/No

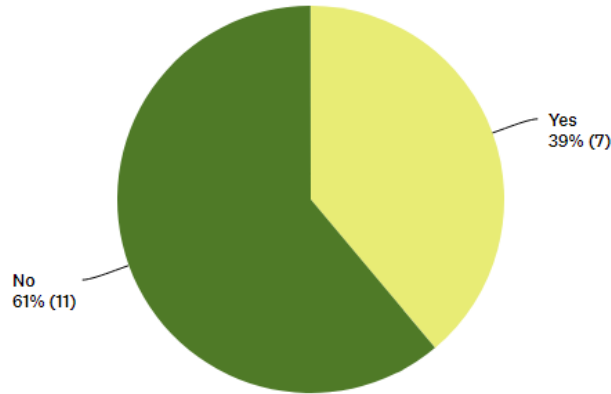
- Yes 94.4%
- No 5.6%



## 11. Is there anything that we have not asked that you would like us to consider?

Yes/No

- Yes 38.9% - 7 responses
- No 61.11% - 11 responses



Those who said 'yes' commented:

- "I believe that the new leadership has us going in the direction we need."
- "Growth of BRFPD is critical to the growth of industry at the Port of Morrow and providing world class service to our world class businesses."
- "A New Fire Station is badly needed to serve the growing Industrial and Residential development and also would attract more development when developers see the various modern and safe services available for safety."
- "Joint cooperation with Naval fire fighting for the vast lands within the district to use air retardant?"
- "I am not sure that the Citizens of Boardman would be in favor of taking over the Irrigon Fire Dist. and building a new building in Boardman. I am afraid they might think they will be excepting a debt by having Irrigon on board. Also, if you want to respond to all EMS calls you should take over the ambulance service. Do you include all of the EMS calls in your figures for calls for service because that is a little misleading."
- "Youth involvement. What are things that you can do to help involve children who are interested in helping? Summer fire youth program or training camps?"
- "Some of these questions do not allow for a good answer. For example, lumping senior services with employment or recreation with 911 services. As far as bond goes, I think timing might be difficult. This is a different plan than the last 2 bonds. This would need a lot of explanation in the community. Of course, I would support a bond but have many questions."

Additional Comments:

- "Like mentioned before. I believe the community will give support. They just need to be informed. The chamber and city have been doing an excellent job informing people by having online meetings, but we need a way to get those numbers up. I've watched and the notification on the meeting will say "currently viewing" and the number is very low. Like below 10."
- "Looking forward in a strong working partnership to better serve our community."
- "The changes that have been made lately are very positive."

## Survey Analysis:

Survey results from the community show a generally good rating of current Boardman local services and opportunities, with a weighted average score of 7.17 out of 10. This shows a broad approval of Boardman services and opportunities and that there is room for improvement in these areas.

While participants voiced that employment opportunities in the Boardman area are great, there are several challenges to recruiting and retaining individuals and families moving to the Boardman community. Current opportunities and services relating to “recruitment and retention” of individuals and families was rated 7.22 out of 10. Housing for individuals and families was described as the greatest need for the community’s services, opportunities, and ability to attract and retain people to call Boardman “home.”

Two thirds of participants (66.7%) feel that BRFPD is not currently positioned to meet district growth. Several participants note that as the city expands, the fire protection district also needs to grow and improve.

There is an overall positive opinion and experience with BRFPD. Top attributes associated with BRFPD from this survey are great community involvement, great staff, and friendly. Top responses also show the community’s recognition of a need for a new building and room to grow.

Most participants (77%) feel that having BRFPD respond to EMS calls is important. This is an excellent example of recognition for the importance of services that the fire district provides. This also aligns with comments praising the fire department’s quick response time.

When asked how the community would respond to a tax request for a better location, new equipment, and larger facility for BRFPD, 67% of the responses indicated that the community would likely respond well. Only one participant felt the community would not respond well. That said, the overwhelming feedback is that for the community to pass the tax request, BRFPD needs to provide clear information and engage the community, as well as ensure that the project/improvements are modest and realistic.

The community also expressed that a new location for the station is favorable, with 97.4% of participants agreeing that a new facility at a different location would be an improvement.

94% of participants think that the community served by BRFPD would be willing to invest in a potential GO Bond in November 2020. This is an excellent indicator of the likely success the GO Bond could have in November.

Additional concerns and comments from the survey that should be addressed include a concern for taking over the Irrigon Fire District and a desire for increasing Youth involvement.

In sum, the surveys convey the theme that Boardman is growing and there are excellent employment opportunities. There is an opportunity for BRFPD to grow with the community to ensure quality service aligns with community size and needs.

## L. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

After reviewing data from 18 surveys, the following is a summary of the results.

- 1) The community was candid with responses and feedback
- 2) There is consensus that BRFPD is a valued community service that needs to grow with the community as it expands
- 3) If the community could pick the top two goals for BRFPD, they would be:
  - 1) Community engagement and education
  - 2) Restructuring/recruiting/adding staff
 Tied for the third goal is:
  - 3) New facility
  - 4) New equipment
  - 5) Quality training
  - 6) Recruiting and training more volunteers
  - 7) Retaining great fire fighters
- 4) There is support for a new location, added staff, and new equipment.
- 5) Most participants believe that the community would support the potential project with a GO Bond in November, if, and only if, the community is engaged and provided with clear information. The community would also like to see:
  - 1) BRFPD providing information showing that the project is the right size and cost to the public for the need
  - 2) Efforts in training and recruiting more volunteers
  - 3) Engagement with the community
- 6) Other issues and concerns to be addressed:
  - 1) We did not survey or have baseline information regarding questions related to Irrigon Fire District and any comments regarding merging with BRFPD
  - 2) According to survey results, top goals for Chief Hughes in the next 12-24 months should include continued community engagement and education, and restructuring, recruiting and adding quality staff to support retention
  - 3) A potential GO Bond campaign should include information that would focus on the condition of current equipment and gaps in equipment needed, as well as current and future BRFPD firefighter training
- 7) Key takeaways:
  - 1) The hiring of a Fire Chief is viewed as positive per community feedback and potential of measuring public support for a GO BOND appear to be well-timed for a public information campaign
  - 2) Experience with BRFPD is measured as being 'high' in the survey results
  - 3) Current building on Wilson Road is not positioned to meet District Growth
  - 4) 97% of respondents agree that a new facility away from Wilson Road is positive
  - 5) 94% of respondents believe the community would make an investment through a GO Bond request to improve BRFPD services
- 8) The Survey respondents represent a small but qualified representation of local and community leaders that are part of shaping the future of Boardman, including: City of Boardman Mayor, City Manager, Chief of Police, City Council, Port of Morrow Executive Director, Workforce Training Manger, Economic Development Director, Boardman Chamber of Commerce Director and other members of business and community in the Boardman area

- 9) Other Summary and conclusion:
  - 1) We believe that there is sufficient response and measurable data to inform Recommendations.
  - 2) There is an existing and still developing 'positive' image of BRFPD that can be further measured through a GO Bond request.
  - 3) The review and consideration of this July 30<sup>th</sup> Report allows for meeting August date of meeting GO Bond placement for November 2020 General Election: or
  - 4) Set aside GO Bond option and determine next course of action for 'future' bond placement.

## M. RECOMMENDATIONS

*The data and analysis above inform the following recommendations*

WAI to conduct and lead post-survey briefing with BRFPD Chair at the Port of Marrow. This is a Facebook-live presentation hosted by the Boardman Chamber of Commerce for the purpose of reviewing July 2020 Survey Report and Recommendations.

The following provides BRFPD with two clear options:

**Option 1:** BRFPD receives this report at the Fire District Special Meeting on July 30, 2020 and takes action to approve GO Bond placement by August deadline for November 2020 campaign. The following data points #1-3 from this report inform the remaining #4-10 recommendations:

- 1) 67% of Survey respondents (Question 3) believe that the BRFPD is NOT positioned for District Growth.
- 2) 67% think District citizens (Question 7) would respond to a tax request for:
  - Better location
  - Larger facility
  - New equipment
- 3) 94% of Survey respondents affirm that the local community would be willing to make an investment in District improvements with following respondent recommendation(s):
  - Clear information as to what the Bond request provides to taxpayers
  - Address the Irrigon Fire Department merger as a separate issue- clear up rumors.
  - Tax rate on per \$1,000 is under \$1.00 requested on potential Bond request
- 4) Meet all State of Oregon, Morrow County and City of Boardman requirements for GO Bond filing and bond placement for November 5<sup>th</sup> General Election.
- 5) Contract with Bond Counsel for all related information and GO Bond Placement for November 2020
- 6) Exercise MOU and/or option to set aside purchase option regarding proposed site for future BRFPD fire station
- 7) Request appropriate State of Oregon Agency to review and approve all related public GO Bond Information for public outreach
- 8) Immediately respond to and provide District residents with clear information regarding GO Bond Request. Printed information to be provided in both English and Spanish.

- 9) Public outreach to include partnering with Boardman Chamber of Commerce for purposes of providing Facebook Live public information presentations to inform BRFPD District Residents with GO Bond request.
- 10) Provide Fire Chief Hughes with authority to provide direction regarding information to BRFPD resident to include:
  - English/Spanish information flyers
  - Web and Facebook information
  - New station renderings, equipment updates and location updates
  - Participation in any related information gatherings to include: (with adherence to Covid-19 requirements):
    - a) Back to school info nights
    - b) Senior Center luncheons
    - c) Hosted District or County campaign invited events
    - d) 'Other' as determined BRFPD information outreach to District resident
    - e) Exercise contract extension to support Information services to inform BRFPD information outreach to District residents and business community.

**Option 2:** BRFPD sets aside meeting the August GO Bond placement deadline requirements for and plans for the following:

- 1) A larger District survey response is requested by BPRFD
- 2) Contract for additional 15- 20 surveys and expand questions to measure additional BRFPD and Chief Hughes potential questions TBD on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Special Meeting
- 3) Resolve Irrigon Fire Department merger question as to not to confuse BRFPD with information that could impact GO Bond request
- 4) Survey deeper public position regarding EMS response and BRFPD as a responder to these EMS calls for public assistance
- 5) Engage and contract for public information support as outlined in Option 1
  - Consider GO Bond Placement for Spring 2020
  - Further cost evaluation recommended in GO Bond cost delay for an additional 6 months
- 6) Provide Fire Chief Hughes with BRFPD outline and direction from Board to continue public outreach for GO Bond placement
  - Schedule BRFPD Board advised calendar date for future discussion of 2021 GO Bond placement