

# **Moab Valley Fire Protection District Commission Meeting- Budget Workshop**

**45 South 100 East, Moab Utah 84532**

**July 22, 2025- 4:00 p.m.**

## **A. Call to Order:**

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Archie Walker at 1:00 p.m.
2. Commissioners Present: Chairman Archie Walker, Commissioner Jim McGann, Commissioner Charlie Harrison
3. Staff Present: Chief TJ Brewer, Administrator Cathy Bonde, Wildland Division Chief Clark Maughan

## **B. General Business:**

1. Citizens to Be Heard – None present

## **C. Draft 2025 Amended Budget:**

1. Cathy went over highlights of the most recent version of the draft 2025 amended budget. The only changes are associated with the wildland program. The revenue anticipated from the Deer Creek Fire has increased that revenue line item and net income.

## **D. Draft Rural Healthcare Tax Proposal:**

1. Chief Brewer presented a draft proposal for use and division of funds for the proposed health care tax increase. He stated it is very preliminary. Commissioners reviewed the proposal and discussed if and how it would meet our general and capital needs. Chief Brewer stated revenue from the proposal is helpful for our general budget, but it isn't enough to meet our capital needs in replacing our aging fleet. Discussion was had on freezing our property tax rate which would need to be done in conjunction with a property tax increase. Doing both the sales tax and a property tax increase was advised against. Pros and cons of each option were discussed. Commissioners were in agreement that the sales tax option is the direction the department should pursue. Chief Brewer stated the next step is for the Grand County Commission to approve adding the question of increasing the rural healthcare sales tax to the ballot for the voters to decide. Chief Brewer said he would like to see percentages locked in before the issue goes to the voters so they know what they are voting for or against.
2. Discussion was had on percentages of revenue among the entities, included further discussion of the department's equipment needs and aging fleet.

## **E. Draft 2026 Budget:**

1. Commissioner Walker asked for a comparison of the budget with and without the wildland program. Cathy presented a comparison of 2025 budgets through the first half of the year with four different scenarios: current actual, without the wildland program, without the wildland program and contribution from the County, and without the wildland program, County contribution and CWDG. Income and associated

expenses were adjusted for each version. The current year to date budget had a deficit of \$84,333.52. The budget without the wildland program had a deficit of \$267,904.02. The budget without the wildland program and County contribution had a deficit of \$579,904.02, and the budget without the wildland program, County contribution, and CWDG had a deficit of \$600,009.

Cathy also presented a recently updated wildland program revenue and expenses spreadsheet which included the California deployment. The bottom-line net profit has increased with the California deployment revenue and expenses included. The program covers all of the year-to-date payroll expenses for Clark, Mark, and Tom as full-time employees as well as all year-to-date payroll expenses for two seasonal employees.

Commissioner Walker asked at what point is the net profit from the wildland program not enough to justify the program. Commissioner McGann stated that has been his concern as to the wear and tear on sending equipment out of district. Cathy stated that without the wildland program we lose 3 full time and 2 seasonal employees. Without the wildland program, we do not have the money to pay for these employees. She added that the wildland program employees are here providing service to the district for a large majority of the time. Commissioner Walker asked if it was accurate to say the wildland program is paying for employees that otherwise the taxpayers would be paying for. Chief Brewer said that was accurate and there are other things we have purchased with wildland revenue including the water tender. Chief Brewer said this has been a good year for the wildland program, and he feels we could continue to grow the program. He also stated that with the annexation, the department now has an obligation to greater Grand County, and if the wildland program went away, he would still ask that these employees stay with the department. We would have to find another way to cover the cost of those employees. He also shared in Commissioner McGann's concern of wildland fire limiting the available resources in district. The Deer Creek Fire was an example of this. Chief Brewer said there is a balance between generating income that offsets the cost to taxpayers and being prepared for in district response. He added that the wildland program provides training and experience for the kinds of fires we can expect to see in the recently annexed areas of our district. Chief Brewer stated when he first proposed the wildland program, he wanted three engine bosses, one to manage the program, one to go on resource orders, and one to be on call in district. We are almost there. Commissioners discussed the wildland program along with having resources in district. Chief Brewer stated the need for volunteers at times like the Deer Creek Fire, and Clark Maughan added that volunteers did make themselves available during that fire knowing resources were limited. He said a number of them were engaged directly on the fire from the beginning, and others made themselves available in district for calls.

Discussion was had on the fact that it has been an active year for wildland fire but the same isn't guaranteed in the future. Both Clark Maughan and Commissioner Walker stated the outlook for the next couple of years is for conditions that are ripe for active wildland fire. Commissioner Walker suggested purchasing another engine to build the fleet considering the outlook. Commissioner McGann asked whether the intent was to build to go out or build to support our district. The more remote areas of our district

were discussed, and Chief Brewer stated he thought we should look into purchasing more engines, but we can't become too dependent on the wildland program or CWDG. He stated that our staff is busy with their regular job duties and a grant like CWDG adds more to their workload. He added employees appreciate the opportunity to hone their skills on wildland fires, and the wildland program has allowed the department to be even better prepared on the Deer Creek Fire than we were on the Pack Creek Fire.

Cathy stated in the 2025 budget as originally approved, total expenses are 2.4 million. General tax revenue is 1.3 million, so 1 million of our revenue comes from other sources. In 2025 \$312,000 in revenue comes from Grand County that we will not see again, and the remaining \$700,000 in income comes from sources than tax revenue such as the wildland program, fee schedule, and grants.

In relation to the draft 2026 budget, Commissioner McGann said some of the line items he has been looking at include the deputy chief and operations chief positions which are expensive line items. He also added we have 2 inspectors. Commissioner McGann asked for more detail on the equipment for specialty rescue, and Chief Brewer said the strut system is an expensive piece of equipment. Commissioner McGann suggested the cost of some of our needs could be negotiated with the annexation of northern San Juan County.

Chief Brewer provided commissioners with a written draft of what he believes the community expects of Moab Fire Department. He felt a future discussion of this is important in shaping the department's direction and needs. With a variety of specialty rescue specialties, Chief Brewer stated it is valuable to have a small number of firefighters very well trained in those specialties who can share that knowledge with the department. Volunteers have shown great interest in specialty rescue.

**F. Closed Session:**

1. Commissioners moved into closed session at 2:45 p.m. to discuss personnel and performance.

**G. Adjourn:**

1. Chair Walker adjourned the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Archie Walker, Chair

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Catherine Bonde, Clerk