**Wasatch County Fire District**

**Truth in Taxation Hearing and Budget Hearing**

**Meeting held at the Wasatch County Administration Building located at 25 N Main in Heber.**

Those in Attendance:

Steve Farrell

Greg McPhie

Mark Nelson- Excused

Danny Goode

Kendall Crittenden- Excused

Mike Petersen- Excused

Spencer Park

Fire Chief Ernie Giles

Public

Chairman Steve Farrell stated that the 2018 budget has an increase proposed in the amount of $920,000.00. This will cover the elimination of the Assessment and add five people and acquire new equipment. The District budget has been very sparse and some of the current equipment is not repairable. With the increase a property valued at $380,453 would go from $83.49 to $123.90 and a business would go from $151.80 to $225.27. If the proposed budget is approved, it would increases the budgeted revenue by 48.40% above the last year.

Chief Giles addressed the board. He stated that in the budget is the projected 2017 and the actual 2016 budget. In the past there was $640,000.00 that was generated by the revenue fund. There had been a charge per ERU in the Jordanelle Basin then the charge went to assessed value. They knew that this assessment would sunset in five years and the Jordanelle Station was funded by the assessment. He stated that the county call volume has gone up dramatically. The District started covering the valley floor 4 days per week 6 am to 6 pm with volunteer coverage during the night. Weekends are very busy that the District then hired five additional staff, with the help of the county to run daytime coverage 7 days per week 6 am to 6 pm.

Chief Giles stated that the call volume is still increasing and he showed a chart showing the pattern of growth. He stated that the day shift had responded to 1300 calls so far this year. With this call volume the volunteers cannot be away from their full time jobs. He stated that he is proposing five new hires that will provide full time coverage for Jordanelle and Heber. They will run out of the Midway station. Chief Giles stated that the inside of the Midway station is not complete. It needs to be furnished and equipped. This is the reason that they are here today.

**Chairman Steve Farrell asked the board members had any questions then opened the Truth in Taxation hearing for public comments.**

Keith Daniels addressed the board. He asked what the magic number of call volume is to get full time coverage. Is it based on call volume of population and when will it be 24/7 full time.

Danny Goode stated that they have an advisory board set up with both professionals and residents serving. They are working on getting a needs assessment and a strategic plan. They do not know what the magic number is but they feel it will be helpful to have a firm come in and do the study to show where we need to be and also have a 5 and 10 year plan that will be evaluated every two years.

Chief Giles stated that they will still need volunteers with this budget. On any given day there are 2 to 3 amubulances out at a time. They will utilize the Jordanelle station and volunteers for the additional calls.

Kerry Siggurd asked what they will get with the budget for taxes and if the big homes at Jordanelle part of the tax base. He also asked about retirement for firfighters.

Steve Farrell stated that they will purchase the equipment they need. He stated that three years ago they started setting aside funds for a new apparatus and it will be picked up this month. He stated that all of the big homes are part of the tax revenue base and 35% of the tax base comes from the Jordanelle basin. He explained that fire and all other county entities are a part of the Utah Retirement System.

Danny Goode stated that the Needs Assessment will provide and equipment replacement policy with variables for replacing. They are way behind in replacing equipment. This way old equipment does not get pushed onto the District longer than it should be in service.

Nick Lopez addressed the board. He stated that he supports the department and then need full time. They also need funds for equipment and training.

Doug Murdock addressed the board. He stated that he has 30 year plus in EMS and asked why they are combining. This is not the national trend. He stated EMS is a separate world. You cannot force EMS to become firefighters. They do not have the enthusiasm for this. You will get better care if you do not combine and EMS is compromised by this.

Steve Farrell stated that the Needs Assessment will address combining Fire and EMS. He stated that EMS is still under the county.

**With no additional comments from the public the chairman closed the Truth in Taxation hearing and opened the public hearing for the budget.**

Chief Giles presented the budget. He stated that they have had legal fees in the past and have recently settled one of the two lawsuits and yope to settle the other one in a few months. This line item will then go away.

Chief Giles addressed the apparatus funding. He stated that at the last tax increase they budgeted $300,000.00 for this. They have purchased the apparatus and by purchasing it with cash they saved approximately $60,000.00. They were charged no interest while it was being built. They do have old equipment. When he took the job he thought they could make do with this but they are not able to repair these apparatus any longer. With the 2018 they are boosting the apparatus replacement line item. The Needs Assessment is a one time fee and after 2018 they will roll this amount into the replacement fund. This will allow them to purchase every other year. He stated that the newest apparatus is 12 years old. By the time they get through replacing them it will be time to put this new on into a backup status. He stated that he has tried to make things work but the really need to start replacing them. It is time.

**With no public comments the chairman closed the budget hearing.**

**Resolution 17-02 Opening and Amending the 2017 Budget**

Chief Giles stated that they did make a change to the 2017 budget. He stated that the state of California summoned for help with the fight on their fires. He stated that 6 firefighters and 3 county workers and some from the state responded with two type 6 and one type 1 vehicle. They have amended the budget to cover the pay of the firefighters working in California. These expenses will be reimbursed by CalFire.

**A motion was made by Greg McPhie to approve Resolution 17-02 opening and amending the 2017 budget. The motion was seconded by Danny Goode and the motion passed all in favor.**

Kendall Crittenden arrived at the meeting.

**Resolution 17-03 Adopting the 2018 Budget**

**A motion was made by Greg McPhie to adopt Resolution 17-03 adopting the 2018 budget. The motion was seconded by Danny Goode and the motion passed all in favor.**

**Resolution 17-04 Setting the Date and Time for the 2018 Fire District Board of Directors Meetings**

**A motion was made by Greg McPhie to adopt Resolution 17-04 Setting the Date and Time for the 2018 Fire District Board of Directors Meetings as the second Tuesday of each month at 4:30 pm.**

Greg McPhie stated that the Fire District and EMS have been committed and have really worked hard. He stated that raising taxes is not taken lightly. You cannot take Fire and EMS for granted and you have to fund them.