

**Wasatch County Fire Board of Directors Meeting**

**Tuesday October 8, 2019**

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

**Those in Attendance:**

Spencer Park

Jeff Wade

Steve Farrell

Marilyn Crittenden

Kendall Crittenden Excused

Danny Goode

Mark Nelson

Chief Ernie Giles

BC Gary Sessions

BC Ben Fitzgerald

Fire Marshal Clint Neerings

Fire Warden Troy Morgan

EMS Director Clair Provost

Items of Business to address:

**Minutes**

**A motion was made by Councilman Goode to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2019 fire board meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Wade and the motion passed all in favor.**

**Warrants**

The listing of warrants totaled \$244,929.55. This total included the added warrants and the payroll transmittals.

**A motion was made by Councilman Parks to approve the warrants as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Goode and the motion passed all in favor.**

### Chief report

Chief Ernie Giles- The percentage listed at the last meeting for the tax increase was incorrect. It is actually 44%. All of you got a packet of the advertisement that is going to go in the wave, the percentage seems high, but it ends up being \$5 a month average.

Councilman Goode- This is with EMS moving right?

Councilman Farrell-That is going the full 1.4 million increase

Councilman Parks- \$5 a month for the average house, so \$60 a year.

Councilwoman Crittenden- That is the increase for the merger

Chief Ernie Giles - I really don't think it is a huge amount.

Councilman Goode- When we put these notices out, do we normally get a lot of calls?

Chief Ernie Giles - A few. The very first one I ever did; I didn't have all my ducks in a row and so we backed away from it that year and went for the next year. We did an open house and explained things better, we talked to them about what the money was going to be used for and where it was at. Around 50 people attended those open houses. This increase is really very simple, absorbing ems and adding 6 employees. Here is the proposed budget (all of you should have received this through the Onbase program).

Councilman Farrell - This property tax revenue, that doesn't include the proposed increase.

Chief Ernie Giles – It does.

Councilman Farrell- Then it is showing EMS revenue there for \$900k.

Chief Ernie Giles- There is the \$900 from the county on EMS revenue and then there is ambulance revenue there at \$850.

Councilman Farrell- Isn't that \$900k included in the 3.5 million if we had a tax increase?

Chief Ernie Giles - No, not until next year. That money will originally come from the county until we actually collect on the tax increase.

Councilman Farrell - Why do we have such a big jump in the tax revenue for 2020.

Chief Ernie Giles- \$500 of that will be in the 2.9-3.5 and the rest is growth. There is about \$150 by that calculation with new growth with that 500 being in there.

Councilman Farrell - Why did our property tax revenue decrease from 2018.

Chief Ernie Giles – 18 is actual and 19 is just a projection and I don't want to overshoot it.

Councilman Farrell - Ok. More than likely that will be higher.

Chief Ernie Giles- It will probably be around 3.2, I like to be more on the cautious side. I have to present this before that hearing. It has to be done before the election in November, that is the reason this is being presented tonight. I would like you guys to look at it for a week or two before I put it on the web.

If you have any questions, adjustments or concerns let me know. Otherwise I am just going to post it as is.

Councilwoman Crittenden- The salary goes up, is that because of the merger and EMS is included?

Chief Ernie Giles -Yes and there are 6 new employees as well as absorbing Clair and his secretary (when hired). We had a meeting for fire and ems, I have asked dozens of the fire and ems employees for ideas and concerns. I put this budget together and the event pay for ems and fire was \$40 per hour and I have raised it to \$50. The stipend will go away and they will get an hourly pay of \$50 per hour when they are on a call. I think that is more of a fair way for me to take care of the tax-payers money. The stipend has worked well for years but now we are moving more into full time and not part time. I announced that information Thursday, I am sure we will lose some that are looking to move on, we hope not too many.

Councilman Goode - Do you have a cola in this budget?

Chief Ernie Giles – Yes, it is figured in there at 4%.

Councilman Goode - The county employees will get the cola right?

Chief Ernie Giles – Yes, technically it will just be considered fire after the first. Now they are just going to an hourly rate instead of the stipend, the only ones I am bringing over is Clair and then I have got to hire a secretary. Clair and I are a great combination because I'm rough around the edges and he is smoother. I think the merger will go well; I haven't heard a lot of issues about the merger.

Councilwoman Crittenden - Financially what do you see the difference being between the stipend and the hourly pay.

Chief Ernie Giles - A lot depends on how busy and how many times we call them out. Clair pulled the hours (ems got paid hourly when on a call on top of their stipend). We calculated those hours into the \$50/ hr. (I figured \$60 just so I had some cushion) it should be about a \$400k savings. Hopefully with this merger the money can go to the full-time people we hire. I hope we don't lose a lot of the volunteers because we need them.

Councilwoman Crittenden - Are volunteers only ems?

Chief Ernie Giles - There are volunteer ems and volunteer fire. I think there are 13 that are ems that are not fire.

Councilman Parks - You think we will lose some?

Chief Ernie Giles - Yes, I do. I told them we are trying to follow the guidelines that ESCI set out for us. We won't get it all done in a year or two, but we are hoping to use that as a road map. With that I am going to advertise for a secretary and a fire marshal assistant / training officer in the next month or two. It will be a training officer and an assistant fire marshal to assist Clint with inspections. We will also need the help with all that is going on in the Jordanelle basin. They have offered to pay for some admin, not just Extell but Hideout etc.. I took a tour there a few weeks ago and there is a lot going on.

Councilwoman Crittenden - How are those agreements with Extell going? Who are you working with?

Chief Ernie Giles - I haven't had any further meetings with them since last month. I have been working with Michael Johnston.

Councilman Farrell - Are they assuming that those agreements are final, and they are just waiting on you to sign it?

Chief Ernie Giles- From their point of view maybe.

Chief Ernie Giles - No. I think there needs to be some changes there, I am not so sure that they \$825 is a deal that I want for the district. Originally when this was presented to me a year ago...

Councilwoman Crittenden - Do we have an attorney that works for the fire dept?

Chief Ernie Giles- No. I have talked to several, but I don't have one currently on staff. I will make sure one looks this over before I sign anything.

Councilwoman Crittenden - That definitely need to take place. This must be looked over.

Chief Ernie Giles - I budget for attorneys and I have visited with one that works for JSSD and some others.

Councilwoman Crittenden - Have you worked with a financial person to help us figure this out?

Chief Ernie Giles – I haven't done anything with that agreement since they presented it because I don't know if I am going to accept it. There is no need to pay an attorney to look at the document if I don't end up accepting it.

Councilman Farrell - I think it would be wise to get an attorney to look at it and you tell them your concerns.

Chief Ernie Giles - I will definitely have an attorney look it over. What was presented and what was written in the contract were different.

Councilman Farrell – If you can have an attorney look at it, they can put your thoughts into the agreement and go back with your proposal.

Councilwoman Crittenden - I think we need to be very careful financially to make sure we have everything covered.

Chief Ernie Giles - They promised 8 ¼ depending on what happens on the 16<sup>th</sup> with our hearing, we may actually generate more with the impact fee than the 8 ¼. They wanted to look at my financials and they wanted to be paid back a certain amount. That isn't what was presented to me, maybe I ought to pay someone a few thousand bucks to look at it. The impact fee on the 3 hotels may very well be more than the 8 ¼. I will advertise to those 2 employees. We will have a hiring committee and I will bring a name to you. I may not have them next month, but the following month.

Councilman Goode - Who is the hiring committee?

Chief Ernie Giles - Myself, Clair, the Battalion Chiefs, David Rowly and someone from the Sheriff office if they are available.

Councilman Farrell - Is there any concerns on the proposed budget? Why don't we review it and if you have questions or recommendations get with Ernie over the next week or so before he posts it.

Chief Ernie Giles – I have a few weeks, maybe by our hearing next week, if you can look at it and let me know if you have any questions. If you look at professional services, you will see they went up from \$75 to \$208 we have absorbed the medical director in that fee because we have to have a licensed dr.

Councilman Goode - How are we going to transfer that medical license? The county will give it up?

Councilman Farrell - We will hold it until they come up with the \$900k. Once the district is 100 percent paying their own way, they will take the EMS license over.

Chief Ernie Giles - The collection company for ems is a part of that fee as well. That is why that has gone up so much.

Councilman Goode - How much do we have in collections now?

EMS Director Clair Provost- We bill out about double what we bring in and that is because Medicaid and Medicare will only pay a flat fee. Across the board we get about 50 percent and that includes collections.

Councilman Goode – Is that including collections or does collections bring in more on top of the 50%?

EMS Director Clair Provost – That is including collections. There is a billing company that processes every report that we send to them and those they can't collect go onto a collection agency.

Councilman Goode - Who do you use?

EMS Director Clair Provost – JCI, is the billing agency we use. They are based locally in Utah.

Councilman Farrell – I attended that conference at the Homestead last week and they came up with a proposal that they would be able to collect off of the income tax. If a person had any state income tax coming back, then they would take that out of it, and they add 25\$ and take it out of the tax refund. So, there would be no loss. That is something that we should look into. That only works with state income tax at this time. They are trying to work with the IRS so they can take it out of any tax refund. That would almost guarantee a better return.

Chief Ernie Giles - Do any of you need anything for the hearing on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Any paperwork resent or anything like that? If you do shoot me an email and let me know so you have all the documentation for the hearing.

Councilman Farrell - Has the advertising been done?

Chief Ernie Giles- Yes, it is in the process. It has been in the Wasatch Wave and will be again next week.

Councilman Goode - Has any of it gone out yet? Have you had any calls?

Chief Ernie Giles -No calls. We sent a copy to each of the mayors as well, so they have had plenty of notice as well. The thing about this impact fee hearing is that fee is generated by the people coming in. Otherwise it will end up coming out of taxpayer pockets. I think it is time and it will be good to have. We are going to close the assessment account at the end of the year. There is still about \$10k of uncollectable "we may get it; we may not get it" we want to move that into the general fund and close that assessment account down. I was asked by Steve to talk about the radio and pager fees. I was out of town for that meeting, but I watched the video. I had a meeting with the Sheriff and Jeremy Hales a few days prior to that. With bringing ems on, it will be around \$90k for radios and pagers. I talked to

the sheriff and Jeremy Hales and asked what I am spending \$90k on. I had questions for them, it isn't like I am pulling out or leaving. If I could get it cheaper and get a better deal for the taxpayer money, I will go with that, but I would talk to you guys about that first. I thought the discussion was great, I wanted to explain my side. Jeff Winterton is who used to do them for us at the sheriff office. I just wanted to know if I could do it cheaper.

Councilman Farrell – I think what we need to know what is included in that radio fee. I was under the impression that it includes dispatch etc... that if we didn't have that fee, we would have to find another way of charging the district for the service.

Chief Ernie Giles - I couldn't agree more, there is more to it than just a pager and a radio and there should be a fund built into there. We need a new command center; they are a million dollars and if that fund is getting built up for something like that, I am spot in with it. I was just asking the questions because \$90k that I don't know where it is going is a lot of money. I didn't have any intent to cause an issue.

Councilman Goode - My worry is that we were pulling out of paying a portion of dispatch.

Chief Ernie Giles – In the MOU for the merger, dispatch is actually furnished by the county.

Councilman Goode - Have we signed the MOU yet?

Chief Ernie Giles - We are just waiting on formalities.

Councilman Farrell - I need to have a paragraph added and get it to the attorney.

Chief Ernie Giles - If you have questions about the radio and pagers let me know. Originally, we were paying for each of those radios to the state and they eliminated that about 2 years ago. We would start replacing radios that need to be replaced, that is where that fee was. Does it need to be there, more than likely, does it need to be that high? I don't know, maybe it needs to be higher. I just wanted to know where it was being spent. Jared and Jeremy have been awesome.

### **Fire Marshal Report**

Fire Marshal Neerings- Business as usual, we have been meeting with the cities and towns frequently. We are working with Heber right now to get on their review system, kind of like the county's DRC. That way we can attach comments. We are making progress with the towns, Hideout, Heber and Charleston. Training we have had hands on training, Travis Wright that works with Troy at the state came and did some high angle training with us using the aerial apparatus. We were up 100 ft in the air practicing high angle rescue operations. We worked with the general contractor at the old Karl Malone building and we were able to do some flat roof ventilation training. Usually we get abandoned houses to train on and the roofs are steep. Going from a residential application to a commercial application, it was a very different scenario and offered very good training. We were also able to do some interior search and rescue with a large area to cover was good. We had that available to us from about the first of Sept to the middle of Sept. We were really able to get a lot of good hands on training out of that. We have a little bit of a slow period where everyone transitions from summer to winter then with the first cold, we will get an influx of permits of people wanting to get their foundations in before it gets too cold.

### **Fire Warden Report**

Fire Warden Morgan- The forest service is doing a controlled burn on the sheep creek side that will be going on throughout the week. They plan to blackline the Wasatch County side yesterday and today and then go in with aerial ignitions later in the week. Last week, I did have the opportunity with another fired district employee to help on that Upper Provo burn up highway 50. The burn went really well, and it was good to get out and get some fire time. We did have one fire in September which was the Deer Creek fire. Chances are that will be a cost recovery fire due to negligence. The gentleman was burning without a permit.

Councilman Goode- What was he doing?

Fire Warden Morgan- He claims he was doing a hot dog roast. All indications didn't really point to that.

Councilman Parks - When does burning open up?

Fire Warden Morgan - November 1<sup>st</sup>. We still have to follow air quality guidelines though and make sure we have the 500 ft clearing. I have been doing a lot of wildland inspections.

Councilman Goode – What has happened with we were going to put in roads and get into the beetle kill?

Fire Warden Morgan - We are still working with the forest

Councilman Farrell – They are trying to get some jurisdictional exceptions.

Councilman Goode - We may be able to get in there in the spring maybe?

Fire Warden Morgan - We have been working with the forest on the Bryants Fork Subdivision out in Strawberry. It is federal lease land, so it is basically their jurisdiction, but we do have structures there. With the state and forest services we have been working to come up with a mitigation plan as well as ways to improve the roads, the water system and to reduce the fuel loading in there. The forest service is being really proactive.

Councilman Goode – What is our next purchase?

Chief Ernie Giles – The last truck we got is an all-wheel drive/structure/ wildland type, it is a Rosenbauer it will be here a year or so from now. We were hoping we could buy one every other year. Right now, we have been purchasing one every year and getting some of those 30-40-year-old trucks replaced. We did have a 3<sup>rd</sup> party look at that structure truck of Park City's and they are saying about \$20-25k to bring it up to best standards. We pay \$40k to Park City and put \$25k into it. In total we are putting \$65k into it and it is a \$200k outfit and then we still have to equip it though which will be roughly \$100k.

Councilman Goode - it is 65 plus ...?

Chief Ernie Giles - \$65k plus \$100k to equip it. The air packs are around \$50k, the hose, the nozzles, etc,... With that tax percentage being different I would like a motion at the new percent to make sure

we are following all the laws to pass the intent of the 44%. It isn't until the December hearing that you approve the actual increase.

Councilman Farrell - The motion would be to modify the one we did last time?

Chief Ernie Giles – Correct, it is in the minutes. It was 31% Kendall made the motion. It was asked at that meeting “what does that cost the average house a year” It is going up \$63.98 so that equals about \$5.33 a month per average home.

Councilman Goode - Is it 44% even?

Councilman Wade- Were the numbers right other than the percentage?

Chief Ernie Giles – Yes. 44.32%

**A Motion was made by Councilman Goode stating that the total tax increase would be 44.32% above last years property tax. The motion was seconded by Councilman Wade. The motion passed all in favor.**

**A Motion was made by Councilman Goode to go into close session for potential litigation, the motion was seconded by Councilman Wade. The motion passed all in favor.**

**A Motion was made by Councilman Goode to come out of closed session, the motion was seconded by Councilman Parks. The motion passed all in favor.**