

A special monthly meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Belgium Cold Springs Fire District was called to order at 7:00 P.M. on September 20, 2023, by Chairperson, K. Thompson.

Present: K. Thompson, M. Chura, D. Rafkis, M. Malone, C. LaPrease, A. Speach, J. Root, B. Raymond-LaPrease, L. Malone, Janelle Melchior, John Melchior, T. Eckel, B. Harden.

Pledge to the Flag.

K. Thompson presented 3 alternative proposals for the budget for additional money to be budgeted to staffing. This included options for the carryover from the overage in the staffing line item in the 2023 Budget as we didn't staff for the full year as projected. At the last budget meeting, the board had indicated that we wanted to try to keep the tax rate level and the presented options reflect that. The state comptroller does recommend having a fund balance (10-20%) and what was suggested is not that high a percentage but it would give a start to funding that fund balance. K. Thompson also explained we will need to plan more to add more to the revenue line as our money is making more on interest in the bank. That amount indicated on the revenue line gets subtracted from the budget. Lengthy Discussion. The median proposal keeps the tax rate more level.

K. Thompson asked for comments from public in attendance. Lengthy discussion ensued with the following topics of concern:

- B. Raymond-LaPrease noted that there is reduction in equipment. Chief Root explained that in purchasing the rescue pumpers we will be reducing the fleet so we do not need to equip as many vehicles and that equipment can be used elsewhere.
- B. Raymond-LaPrease noted an increase in payroll services, are we utilizing all of the services. K. Thompson indicated we purchased a package from them and are working with them to utilize what we need.
- L. Malone was concerned about the reduction in training and getting the CMEs required. Chief Root explained that we have not been using all the funds for training and it will not be a problem to get that training.
- B. Raymond-LaPrease asked about the increase in software. Discussion. It was explained that we are looking at different software for our fire and EMS reporting that would put everything all in one system and more user friendly.
- J. Melchior expressed concerns over an increase in taxes and the effect it may have on the fire department fundraising. Discussion. C. LaPrease stated the cost of everything is going up.
- J. Melchior had concerns over the coverage and how E91 or duty nights would work. If it is required for coverage is it going to be a burden for the volunteers to provide coverage. Chief Root explained that the goal is to have duty nights a bit more scheduled and that the volunteers would get the first choice of what nights they want to do duty nights. He is still working out the details of his plan but he does not see the paid FF/EMT going beyond 2 per shift. He is in discussion with mutual aid departments and what their future plans are so we can work together. The median budget proposal gives us the funding with less of a jump in taxes.

- Janelle Melchior asked how the increase in population with the proposed developments would affect the budget. K. Thompson explained that the growth could help keep the tax rate level but it also means we have more people to provide a service to. Discussion regarding various tax rates within the county. K. Thompson explained that even with this years increase and what is proposed we are still in a better position than some other fire districts within the county.
- B. Raymond-LaPrease asked if the Chief would still need to show a need or does this give him the authority to move forward. K. Thompson stated that we would need to see a plan before moving forward. C. LaPrease stated there need to be open dialogue and we need to work together.

Old Business: No report

New Business:

K. Thompson reported the 2024 Preliminary Budget has been provided. We will possibly be overriding the 2% tax cap. M. Chura made the motion to approve the 2024 Preliminary Budget at the median budget proposal for \$2,031,018 with carryover of \$75,000 and fund balance of \$56,000 and C. LaPrease seconded the motion. Carried.

Public comments:

Meeting dates:

Next Commissioners meeting: The budget hearing will be October 16 at 6:30pm with our regular meeting at 7pm.

C. LaPrease made the motion to adjourn at 9:05PM and M. Malone seconded the motion. Carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Speach
District Secretary