

WILLIAMS RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Budget Meeting Minutes

May 31, 2024



Called to order: 13:00pm

Roll Call:

Board Members Present

- Position 1 – Heather Glass
- Position 2 – Brian Barton – Absent
- Position 3 – Claudia Pratt
- Position 4 – Bill Ertel
- Position 5 – David Applegate

Williams Staff Present

- Interim Fire Chief & Captain – Nicco Holt
- Administrative Assistant – Jennifer Vetter
- Fire Marshal Jon Scaroni
- Firefighter Devin Brennan
- Lieutenant Oskar Sundell
- Firefighter Jasmine Williams
- Firefighter Ash Martell

Budget Meeting Members Present

- Position 1 – John Kester, Absent
- Position 2 – Dorothy Butz
- Position 3 – Amy Brennan
- Position 4 – Mike Connor
- Position 5 – Wendy Giordano

Community Members Present:

None.

Zoom Attendees:

None.

Announcements:

Board Chair Heather Glass reminded everyone that the meeting is professional and to be treated that way and that the Zoom link will be uploaded to the website.

- A motion was made by Heather Glass to nominate Mike Connor as Budget Committee Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Claudia Pratt.
- Motion passed unanimously

-
- A motion was made by Heather Glass to nominate Amy Brennan as the Budget Committee Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Bill Ertel.
 - Motion passed unanimously

Budget Discussion:

The proposed FY2024-25 Budget was presented by Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt. The Budget Message was read. This the is 3rd year of the Operational Levy of \$0.65 per \$1,000.

Discussions ensued of what units respond to what alarms. Graphs showed the fiscal year's statistics of over half of the alarms being documented to have taken place between 8am and 5pm Monday thru Friday with roughly ¾ of the alarms responded to during the week happening on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays as the busiest days.

Financial budget sheets LB-20, LB-30, and LB-31 were discussed with Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt presenting the budget and deferring to Jennifer Vetter for information. Line items specifically discussed were the additional expenses of a full-time Fire Chief, Capital Outlay's reduction from the current year due to large grant purchases that are already done, Personal Services increasing from the current year, and Materials and Services being reduced from the current year.

Board Member Bill Ertel inquired about the radios and their compatibility with the area and the potential upgrade going forward. Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated that not so much with compatibility and that the radios would be a capital purchase. Board Member Bill Ertel inquired if a looming change is coming in the next 18 months and Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt states that there is a change coming. Board Member Claudia Pratt inquired if there are radios in the budget and Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated that it is going to be a grant funded item but could come from Capital Outlay or Fire Equipment and right now, "we are getting by". Board Secretary David Applegate inquired if a grant has been written to fund radios and Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated that currently, there is no grant being written. Board Secretary David Applegate stated, "You think something that important you would think..."

Advertising was discussed as half of the funding remaining going into the next fiscal year is grant related and the rest of the grant monies are in this fiscal year.

Board Member Bill Ertel inquired of Fire Marshal Jon Scaroni of the chipper program. The chipper being used is adequate but a suggestion was made if the chipper could be upgraded. Jennifer Vetter addressed that stipulations could be made or asked of via a grant representative to utilize the grant funds for equipment or other requests but it must go through a permission process. At this point, the understanding is if the funds are potentially transitioned for purchasing equipment, there will be less funds for personnel to run the program. The chipper being discussed did not come from the grant that is administering the chipper program and the grants were offered in tandem with the programs in which they administer, i.e. the chipper came from a regional grant, the Community Wildfire Risk Reduction (CWRR) Grant was given to utilize the grant awarded chipper, the Capacity Grant was given to provide the prevention position to execute the CWRR program along with the additional firefighter for suppression.

The line item for Fire Chief is for a full-time position working 30-40 hours. Budget Chair Mike Connor inquired if the operational levy that is in place now doesn't pass when it is up for renewal, what will happen to the personnel employed in the budget now? There are grants out right now that have been applied for that if awarded could potentially keep the employees in place now. The operational levy is in its 3rd year of the 5yr life before coming up for renewal. A FEMA grant that could fund 2 positions has been applied for to accommodate staffing.

Budget Committee Member Wendy Giordano inquired about the Community Relations Position and if it is filled now. This position is partially funded for by two 3yr grants and partially funded by the district budget. The position is proposed to be a permanent half-time position. This position was originally not offered to the public. Budget Member Wendy Giordano noted that this position is not in the current budget and inquired if the position would be posted and offered openly. Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated that he would hope to not have to post the position and slide the current person filling the role into the paid position. Board Member Bill Ertel asked why would we not post the position opening openly? Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated that the amount of work to post it is a downside to offering an open hiring process to be available for others to apply. Currently all employees and contracts are at will positions. Jennifer Vetter stated that there are HR documents that are needed to be in place to justify positions that are being developed for a hiring process. Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated that he will look into and follow the policy for hiring positions.

The Training Officer position is at .75 FTE and will be proposed at \$10k more for the year for performing 5 hours more per week. The Training Officer position was scheduled to work 25 hours this fiscal year and will be required and additional 5 hours more per week in the next fiscal year to continue to qualify for employee benefits.

The Duty Officer Stipend has been increased. The past several years, the stipend only covered weekend duty officer requirements and now the budget reflects stipend coverage for weekday evenings and being available to run the district after-hours.

Board Member Bill Ertel stated that he doesn't know what an HR Manager position means, however, noted that the position expense has been adjusted over the past few years for more work being performed. Board Secretary David Applegate stated that the position work flow and expense coincides with the growth of the district. Budget Chair Mike Connor's argument for paying the HR Position is that the levy money was intended for paying personnel and is for the expense. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that the expense is growing at a faster pace than the other positions. Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated that the fire district is offering a better level of service than 3 years ago. Budget Chair Mike Connor stated that this discussion isn't for the budget committee to argue the current pay that has been authorized by the Board but to approve the budget numbers being presented. Board Member Bill Ertel proclaimed that most organizations fail because of personnel expense 'creep'. Firefighter Devin Brennan interjected into the meeting stating that the other positions aren't seeing an increase and compared the increase to the operations officer stating that Firefighter Brennan himself can vouch that the operations officer does more work and hasn't seen an increase. Board Chair Heather Glass stated that the employees supervised by the Chief are subject to the Chief's discretion of compensation and that is not the Board's purview.

Bonus Pay has been reduced due to not being utilized to the full amount in the past.

Board Member Claudia Pratt inquired about the shed that was purchased by Lt. Sundell 2 years ago and what happened to the \$10k that was allocated to the shed project. Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated that the \$10k hasn't been utilized for the shed and may or may not have been utilized elsewhere.

Budget Member Wendy Giordano had a general question about working with Applegate Fire. Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated that Williams Fire is working with Applegate Fire on the current chipper program in place with chipper employees being Williams Fire employees as Williams Fire is the managing

agency that received the grant funds for expenditure. The other area of working with Applegate Fire is mutual aid in emergency response.

- A motion was made by Wendy Giordano to allocate and implement a total of \$1.7052 per \$1,000 for the fiscal year of 2024 -2025. The motion was seconded by Heather Glass.

- Heather Glass – Aye
- Claudia Pratt – Aye
- Bill Ertel – Aye
- David Applegate – Aye
- Dorothy Butz – Aye
- Amy Brennan – Aye
- Mike Connor – Aye
- Wendy Giordano – Aye

- Motion passed unanimously

The meeting was adjourned at 14:09pm

Respectfully,

Heather Glass, Board Chair