

# MOSIER FIRE DISTRICT

Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2015 – 2016

## BUDGET MESSAGE

The Budget Committee is meeting in conjunction with the regularly scheduled Board meeting, at 7PM on Thursday, May 14, 2015. The intent is to review and approve a budget for the Mosier Fire District for fiscal year 2015 - 2016 at this meeting. If absolutely necessary, we can fit one more meeting in before the next Board meeting in June, at which time the Board needs to adopt a budget.

Civilian volunteers on the Budget Committee are Susan Gabay, Mark Cherniak, Wade Root, Brent Foster (Chair), Mac Jervey, Marc Berry, and as a non-voting Volunteer representative Maggie Goter.

The civilian advisers, along with Board representatives Glenn Bartholomew and Joe Sacamano, met twice in noticed work sessions in April and May. Written summaries of those meetings are not yet available, but when ready should be posted on our web site.

Of note, the committee adopted the Oregon Department of Revenue's Local Budgeting Manual as its guidance document (150-504-420, rev. 05-12).

### **CAPITAL RESERVE FUND AND PROPOSED TAX RATE:**

The proposed budget assumes no change in the tax rate from the current fiscal year 2014 - 2015 -- \$1.65 per thousand.

The advisory work sessions spent considerable time discussing the tax rate. Ultimately the group reached consensus that there is no clearly identified need to raise or lower the rate at this time, but that the committee would continue to meet in work sessions next fall and winter to take a harder look at underlying questions, notably planning capital expenses and transfers, and analysis of the Fire Chief's position and contract to assess compensation.

One argument in favor of raising the tax rate which gained any traction was an unverifiable sense that the District could need to raise the rate in the future and doing so gradually may be advisable. The committee deemed this a weak argument and again indicated consensus on this group taking a harder look prior to the next budget cycle.

There was mention made, but no consensus, of the concept of a bond election for capital purchases. Some advisory members expressed interest in this concept A) because a bond sunsets, and B) because a track record of keeping expenses and the tax rate in check and then asking the public to vote on a specific cost proposal may be an easier political "sell" than raising tax our tax rate to achieve the same end.

For the second year in a row, we are not budgeting a transfer into reserves. I anticipate we will transfer

a “roll-over” amount yet to be determined, but conservatively in the neighborhood of our line item for contingency, about \$38,000. This transfer can happen any time, but more likely in the fall once our tax receipts start rolling in. This practice of zero budgeted into reserves and hoping for a “roll-over” transfer is an area the advisory committee can continue to review.

## **GRANTS:**

We will be applying for two federal grants this year, one for PPE and equipment for new recruits, and one resubmitting a recent grant for equipment for interior operations (thermal camera, air monitors, training props and breathing equipment).

Application periods for these grants are still months away, and there are no fixed announcement dates for awards.

## **GENERAL FUND:**

Changes from last year's general fund budget are minor, adding categories and expenses under training to reflect new priorities, slight increases in supplies and maintenance, and cleaning up some loose ends such as separating contracted services and other station development costs, and a category for credentialing costs which in the past we have expensed under dues and subscriptions in part because it has been a minor amount until we started licensing EMT's and certifying fire fighters.

I have increased my salary line by about \$3,000, in accordance with a COLA worked out by Tracie Hornung, retro-active to January 1, 2012. As I have mentioned elsewhere, absent a high-quality analysis of my position and compensation, my own view is that the COLA is fair and affordable. If the committee and Board thinks otherwise that is your choice and I will abide.

Budget Committee members, thank you again for helping the Fire District!

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Jim Appleton, Mosier Fire Chief