

KFD adds shift commanders if budget gets OK

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

The Keizer Fire Board will consider the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year at its meeting Tuesday, June 21, at 7 p.m.

Keizer Fire District's Budget Committee approved the proposed budget last month and forwarded its recommendation for approval to the fire board.

The centerpiece change in the budget would call for three current district employees to modify their current work schedules and be assigned the role of shift commander. The proposal generated a flurry of debate at a recent Keizer Fire Board meeting as directors weighed the options involved in instituting a pilot program. Some members of the board wished to take more long-term look at the staffing needs, but settled for a six-month shift commander trial period, set to begin in January 2017.

In a letter to the fire board, Jeff Cowan, Keizer fire chief, said the change is intended to help solve logistics problems caused by increased call volume. "Approximately 35 percent

of our calls occur while another call is in progress, often requiring a medic unit to handle a call on their own or requiring the engine company to 'abandon' one call for another," Cowan wrote.

KFD experienced a 9.1 percent surge in calls last year. Given limited resources, it frequently meant calling for back-up from surrounding fire services, either Salem Fire Department or Marion County Fire District No. 1.

The new shift commanders, division chiefs Brian Butler and Hector Blanco along with Capt. Ryan Russell, would respond to overlap calls with a career or volunteer firefighter and free up the engine company officer that rides on the engine to the initial call.

Additionally, the shift commanders could: pick up personnel from the hospital; respond to public service calls, burn complaints and other low priority calls; and shadow new officers to provide immediate feedback on performance. In either of the first two scenarios, the presence of the shift commander would free up the en-

gine for higher priority needs.

The function would normally be performed by a battalion chief, but KFD has no battalion chief program. Cowan told members of the budget committee the shift commander program would allow KFD to sidestep some of the extra costs incurred with establishing battalion chiefs.

"The shift commander a step above battalion chief, and salaried, to avoid the other costs incurred by them being hourly and incur overtime," Cowan said. "We want to gather some data and see if our guys can meet the demand. We're trying to get through some tough growing pains, and close the gap between what's needed and what we can afford."

The program is expected to cost KFD an additional \$49,000 in personnel expenditures, \$4,000 in additional pay for Ryan, who will become an acting-in-capacity shift commander for the length of the trial, and \$45,000 for a temporary hire while the program is underway.

While it is adding to costs, Cowan said the larger change

will be in the way shifts are structured for the shift commanders. Currently, Butler and Blanco are considered admin personnel meaning they typically work a standard 9-to-5 schedule with additional appearances after hours during meetings and major emergencies. Under the pilot program, they will become members of the regular 24-hour-on, 48-hour-off shifts, and they will still be required to perform admin duties during those shifts.

"Whether they can do all of that is the big question we have to answer," Cowan said.

Other items of note in the proposed budget include:

- The addition of a part-time clerk to assist with front office work.

- A 59-cent local option levy approved by voters in 2014, will allow the district to continue the employment of seven firefighters hired as a result of bond funds and federal SAFER grants.

- The overall proposed budget of \$8,126,476 represents a 2.26 percent increase over the approved 2015-16 budget of 7,917,308.

School district budget gets board nod

BY HERB SWETT
Of the Keizertimes

Final approval of the 2016-2017 budget for the Salem-Keizer School came at Tuesday's School Board meeting.

The \$673,547,775 budget reflects a gain in projected revenue for the second straight year after several years of forced cuts in services. It involves a tax of \$4,521 per \$1,000 in assessed value and \$33,990,211 for bonds.

On other financial matters, the board approved grants totaling \$14,503,560. The largest grant is \$14,288,417 from the federal government through the Oregon Department of Education, to ensure that schools in high-poverty areas meet state academic standards.

A CenturyLink grant included \$4,069 for iPads for fourth-graders at Gubser El-

ementary School.

In other business, the board heard the first reading of a lease with option to buy a 1.3-acre property at 1115 Commercial Street NE for various programs. The negotiated price is \$2,625,000, to which about \$77,000 in lease payments will be applied. A board vote on the proposed lease is scheduled for a special meeting June 28.

The board approved modifying a 2013-2017 agreement with the Salem-Keizer Education Association, increasing the maximum insurance premium contribution by \$35 per month to \$1,220 per month.

Administrative hirings approved by the board included those of four assistant principals, but only one for Keizer: Stephanie Makjavich at Keizer Elementary School.

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Rob Robertson, Owner

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"We offer our clients help in establishing a billing and collection procedure time schedule to help increase the best rate of return for them," says Robertson.

Cascade Collections offers a letter writing service prior to a past due account being assigned for collection. "This is a notice sent on our own letterhead giving the consumer a final 30 days to remedy their debt and deal directly with our client," Robertson explains.

There is a small cost to our client, however, 100 percent of the money collected during the initial 30-day period goes directly to the client; there is no commission owed during this period.

Cascade Collections is a full-service collection agency, dedicated to the success of their clients through the highest level of professional and ethical collections procedure providing their customers the best rate of recovery on their past due accounts.

"Our mission is to maintain a positive reputation of our industry and add to the health of our economy. We represent our clients with integrity and treat our customers with respect," Robertson says.

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