

SVFR/WLAD from page 1A

We've got some vehicles that are 40 years old, and they're just not safe anymore. You just have to start putting money away and save up for a couple of years. It was a tough decision to move to \$1.54, but it allows us to save money. With all these stations and all these vehicles, it's something you really have to stay on top of."

SVFR's permanent tax rate has been set at \$1.5417 for decades, and between 2000 and 2010, the rate had been levied. But in 2011, the rate dropped to \$0.8717 when City of Florence taxpayers chose to annex in the rural fire district.

The rate had increased incrementally throughout the years, settling in at \$1.1391 in 2014 and has remained at that rate ever since.

SVFR board and staff stress that the day-to-day operations are financially sound, but problems could occur in the future if funding isn't set aside.

"It's time that we start putting some money away and saving up some money so we can plan for those replacements," Schick said.

The increase was approved unanimously by the board, but Schick still plans on educating the public on the increase.

"I've got meetings with the Kiwanis at the end of July and I'm going to be giving a presentation at Rotary," he said. "If anybody has any kind of group that would like me to speak, I'd be happy to do that. If it's a homeowner's group, or any kind of civic group, whatever they have, I'd be more than happy to come out and talk about the fire department, where we're going and why we have to make these kinds of decisions. It will also just be to answer any types of questions people might have about the fire department and the ambulance district as well."

A second increase occurred in a June 27 SVFR/WLAD joint session, with WLAD board members passing a resolution raising emergency ambulance rates for clients outside of the taxing district.

WLAD has been operating under ambulance reimbursement rates that were approved in 2015, but it was determined throughout the year, especially during peak months when out-of-district calls rose, revenue was not being maximized.

"When we're looking at ways of capturing additional revenue, we saw that roughly during the summer, there were 10 cases per month," WLAD Operations Manager Matt House said. "We extrapolated the data, and we found that there was roughly \$70,000 of annual revenue that we're missing out on by not increasing the rates."

WLAD Director Rick Yecny clarified, "This would be out of district, so it doesn't impact anything with our residents."

The measure was passed unanimously.

In other news from the joint session, SVFR Board President Ron Green held the official pinning ceremony for Schick on Thursday, June 27. After Schick was sworn in and received his shield, he stated, "As my first official act, I get to swear in some new firefighters in the room. Come on up here, you have to go through the same process."

New SVFR recruits who were sworn in included James Rumler, Grandon Sutherland and Shannon Viesca. New recruit Conway Pebley was not present.

Also sworn in were two new lieutenants, including Colten Griswold and Jerry Ward. Not present were Tim Teel, Blair Campbell and Shannon Curry.

Operations Chief Jim Dickerson also honored Fire Prevention Captain Tony Miller for "diligently achieving his associates degree in applied science for fire science technology a week ago."

Finally, retiring board members from both SVFR and WLAD were honored. Green first thanked Tony Phillips for his service for the past four years, the first three of which were as secretary and treasurer.

"I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the staff and all the volunteers. It's been sometimes trying, but a pleasure to serve. Thank you very much," Phillips said.

Green next honored outgoing director John Carnahan, saying, "Director Carnahan was hired as a paramedic for WLAD in 1986. In 2010, he was promoted to paramedic supervisor and held that position until he retired in 2014. In '86, he became a volunteer firefighter for SVFR. For 30 years, he was a battalion chief for stations 5, 6 and 8. During the past four years for SVFR, he was in charge of recruitment and retention. He served one term, and during that time he has served as vice president. John, it's been an honor."

Finally, Green honored former board member

Woody Woodbury, who retired a few months ago and was replaced by Alan Burns. Burns will continue on as a board member, having won the seat in the May Special Election. James Palisi, who sits on SVFR's budget committee, will also become a board member, as will Sam Spayd.

Yecny then honored outgoing director Dick Childs, who has "been with us for two terms, eight years on the board, one year as secretary treasurer and the last three years as vice president. You're the type of person everybody listens to when you speak. We thank you for your service through the community for WLAD district board."

Childs will be replaced by John Murphey.

Afterwards, Schick gave a progress update on the third entity project, an organization that will employ administrative personnel from SVFR and WLAD while also allowing both boards to work more closely together. Originally, the two boards were supposed to make a final decision on the project earlier this month, but it was delayed so details could be further discussed with legal counsel.

"We discussed all the planning we needed to do to wrap up the third entity," Schick said. "We sent what I hope is the final draft. I would like to meet with the intergovernmental agreement committee, just to go over the documents of the employees, job descriptions and policies that have been modified."

He added, "We should be ready for the first meeting at the July board meeting. I think we've made fantastic progress this past week, and I see very few problems existing now."

Schick then praised Training Officer Captain Jeff Larson, who worked with his crew on a unique training opportunity for the department.

"We were very fortunate to have a house donated for our use," Schick said. "Every once in a while, somebody who wants to demolish a house will donate it to the fire department. ... We were able to spend a whole day setting fires inside this



Siuslaw Valley firefighters learned from eight different fires set in this donated Burn to Learn house.

house. This was the first time for a lot of our firefighters to actually see fire, to actually put water on a fire, and then make sure it's not in the walls. We were actually able to set eight different fires in this house, which is very unusual. Typically for a fire, they go in

and put a lot of fire on it because it puts it out. They had the opportunity to put the fires out, and then overhaul the scene. In the end, we got to watch it burn down. Again, it was fantastic training."

As the meeting closed, outgoing director Carna-

han said, "If you look back at where we were, we're full speed ahead. And it's a really good thing. We got a good new chief, and a lot of good things working for us."

For more information on the first-response agencies, visit svfr.org and western-ambulance.com.

the spotlight

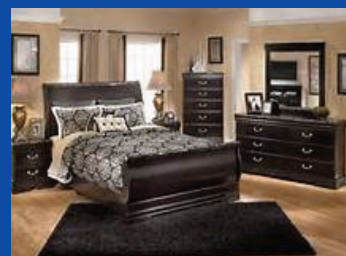
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