



LEBANON FIRE DISTRICT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 8, 2025

Board of Directors

- ☒ Robert Taylor, Board President
- ☒ Dale White, Vice President via phone
- ☒ Wyatt King, Secretary/Treasurer
- ☒ Matt Herb, Member
- ☒ Robbe Boren, Member

Budget Committee

- ☒ Alesanne Dugan
- ☒ Allen Forster
- ☒ Jeff King
- ☒ Tom Oliver
- ☒ Kerry Whitlatch

Staff

- ☒ Joseph Rodondi, Fire Chief
- ☒ John Tacy, DC of Operations
- ☒ Ken Foster, Fire Marshal
- ☒ Mark Fitzwater, DC of Training
- ☒ Desiree Barker, Chief Administrative Officer
- ☒ Michael Perkins, Recruitment Lt.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER AT 5:00 PM

FLAG SALUTE

Chief Rodondi led the flag salute.

The members introduced themselves.

CONVENE BUDGET COMMITTEE

Agenda Item #1 - Elect Budget Committee Chair

President Taylor opened nominations for the Presiding Officer over the Budget Committee.

Budget Committee Member Jeff King nominated Board Member Herb. Budget Committee Member Forster 2nd the motion.

Vote:

Budget Committee Member Dugan - Yea
Budget Committee Member Forster - Yea
Budget Committee Member J. King - Yea
Budget Committee Member Oliver - Yea
Budget Committee Member Whitlatch - Yea
Board President Taylor - Yea
Vice President White - Yea
Secretary Treasurer King - Yea
Member Herb - Yea
Member Boren - Yea

Motion approved.

BUDGET PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Agenda Item #2 – Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Proposed Budget

Member Herb convened the Budget Committee at 5:01 pm and turned the meeting over to Chief Rodondi for the budget presentation.

Chief Rodondi began the budget presentation commending all staff who helped prepare the budget. He then highlighted the budget message.

- The budget was built on reasonable expectations at the time the budget was created.

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- Based on history, it was determined that our revenues were not going to keep up with rising expenses. Chief Rodondi reminded the committee of past unexpected expenses during Covid. A 5-year projection in 21/22 showed budget shortfalls. Repeating the projection in 2024, also showed future budget shortfalls, although to a lesser degree than the 21/22 projections.
- Chief Rodondi outlined the current main revenue sources including our beginning fund balance. Our auditor prefers to see 3-6 months ending fund balance to begin the year, however today, we retain 2.5 months.
- We have limited means to increase our revenues. Many agencies are charging new fees to attempt to bridge the gap. Voters are rejecting paying more taxes and openly opposing such efforts.
- We will continue to apply for grants including those for wildland turnouts, a CWDG program that includes funds for wildland mitigation, among others.
- Fleet increase expenses are increasing at a much higher rate than expected. As a result, we have moved to refurbishing our apparatus. It is less than purchasing new by almost half. We are also investigating leasing vehicles to replace our aging light fleet. We are a small agency and may partner with City of Lebanon to maximize savings.
- We still need generators that are \$45k each.
- Due to the failed levy attempt we are forced to make service reductions. The R&R Lt position will be eliminated. This position supports volunteers and training. One ambulance has already been reduced to ½ time. The two vacant single-role positions are eliminated, and the remaining two single-role positions sunset in January into dual-role positions. Resident volunteers are reduced by half.
- Capital investments are limited to Station 34., because the repairs can no longer be deferred.
- We will continue to invest in training and education for succession planning. 50% of our current staff has been with us less than 5 years.
- Unfunded mandates will continue to increase our expenses, such as Paid Leave Oregon, or Federal requirements without funding, such as the opioid crisis. Small agencies like ours, struggle to comply in those situations.
- Chief Rodondi shared the many ideas to take corrective action to reduce expenses or develop new revenue. Those ideas included aligning LFD under the City of Lebanon umbrella to reduce fleet and IT expenses, offering ambulance services to Lebanon Community Hospital, leasing office space to the South Santiam Watershed Council, updating the LFD fee schedule to name a few.
- The City of Lebanon is also struggling financially so shared ideas to merge into the COL would further burden the City and further threaten our resources.
- Lebanon is one of the fastest growing cities in Oregon, but income is slow to be realized from that growth. The URD will continue to impact us negatively until 2028.
- To understand the real impact our Enterprise fund has on the budget, we charged the FTE's based on actual times worked in the fund. GEMT revenue is also reducing, so our General fund will have to fund a much higher amount as a result.
- Negotiations begin in February with the Union. We will investigate other health insurance options.
- Simultaneous calls have increased almost 3000% in that last 12 years. Increased overlapping calls may impact response reliability and force us to delay the low acuity call responses 20-45 minutes. We are developing a policy to follow priorities.

Chief returned the meeting to the Budget Chair and the meeting was opened for questions.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Member Herb declared the Public Hearing/Citizen Comments open for comment. There were no citizen comments.

Member Herb closed the Public Hearing/Citizen Comments and resumed regular session.

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- Chief Rodondi confirmed for Member Forster that LOSAP, a retirement supplement for volunteers with longevity, remains in the budget. We have roughly 60 volunteers to support our staff.
- Secretary/Treasurer W. King suggested adding LOSAP to the Department 207 objectives. Chief countered with LOSAP is a benefit and not an objective.
- Budget Committee Member J. King asked if potential losses to the reserve fund are becoming a trend. Chief Rodondi reassured the group that the losses aren't compounding and that we are not using reserves in this budget but are attempting to increase our beginning fund balance. The structural deficit mentioned in the budget message, would have impacted 25/26 if we didn't act. We scaled back programs and staff. 26/27 still has time to be fixed as well. Secretary/Treasurer King requested an update to the budget message to include a statement that without taking corrective actions, the reserves would have been reduced.
- The Fire transfer to the ambulance fund has increased due to the increased FTE time and more realistically recorded expenses.
- Secretary/Treasurer King requested clarification of the overtime reduction Chief had explained in a previous email communication stating 17% of salary to the projected 15% of salaries. Chief Rodondi explained it is our best guess based on today. The distribution of hours will be actively reduced. This year we trained staff to have the qualified staff members available to drive the vehicles or other jobs requiring training to meet minimum qualifications. Overtime can be demand while other is mandatory. Train the trainer is a means to reduce overtime. Secretary/Treasurer King worries about the attainability. Budget Committee Member Oliver supported the budgeted amount and staff's belief that it is attainable. Board Member Herb supported the administration's plan to meet the budgeted amounts.
- Budget Committee Member King questioned the impact our neighbors see on mutual aid requests. Chief Rodondi provided some statistics on the reciprocal associations. Albany and LFD call volume in responding to each other are very similar. Sweet Home is using our services far more than we use theirs.
- Board Member Herb asked each committee member if they had any additional questions. Except for Secretary/Treasurer King, they were satisfied.
- Secretary/Treasurer King asked what was included in the line item for Marketing, Outreach, and Data Analysis. Chief explained the necessity due to combining the Office Administrator and Finance Director jobs, in addition to a new administrative assistant, CAO Barker is working most days of each weekend, assistance is needed for newsletters, social media, website, and administrative assistance.
- Secretary/Treasurer King wondered if other districts or departments have attained monetization with YouTube revenue to support programs. Chief – there isn't a guarantee, but it may fund smaller programs, but it will take time. More importantly it educates the public. We are investing in ourselves to try to generate revenue.
- Secretary/Treasurer King asked about the coin sales plan. Chief Rodondi noted that we don't yet have a plan other than to make them available for sale. The hope is those sales will support our awards.

Budget Committee Member King moved to approve the 2025/2026 FY budget for \$15,380,003 and approve property taxes for \$2.26 per \$1,000, and \$970,485 for the general obligation bond, and with 3 amendments to the budget, 1) update the terminology "cash carry-over" to "ending fund balance"; 2) grant changes to "Wildland PPE" and "CWDG from \$8.7 million to \$1,000,000; and 3) clarifying language in the budget message that without this budget effort the reserves would have been reduced.

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Budget Committee Member Jeff King moved to approve the motions as stated. Budget Committee Member Tom Oliver 2nd the motion.

Budget Committee Vote:

**Budget Committee Member Dugan - Yea
Budget Committee Member Forster - Yea
Budget Committee Member J. King - Yea
Budget Committee Member Oliver - Yea
Budget Committee Member Whitlatch - Yea**

Board of Directors Vote:

**Board President Taylor - Yea
Vice President White - Yea
Secretary Treasurer King - Yea
Member Herb - Yea
Member Boren - Yea**

The motion was approved.

ADJOURN BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING AT 6:25 PM.

Robert Taylor, Board President

Joseph Rodondi, Fire Chief