

The Future of the Pioneer Fire District: A Decision for the Community

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- FACT: Pioneer is the ONLY fire district in the county without a parcel tax or benefit fee.**
- FACT: Pioneer’s professional firefighters are among the lowest-paid in the county.**
- FACT: The tax proposal does not increase salaries, benefits or services. It maintains current levels.**
- FACT: Many homes in the Pioneer Fire District are already “technically” uninsurable.**

What this meeting is about: Without an additional source of revenue such as a parcel tax, fire protection and emergency services in the Pioneer Fire District will change dramatically. From 2009 to 2012 the district will have lost nearly half of its yearly revenues. If no additional funding is obtained, this means at the least: A likely increase in property/fire insurance of between 20 and 30 percent; The loss of half the district’s paid staff; increased response times; decreased service levels.

Finances

Total Revenues:

2008 - 09: \$1,018,275
2009 - 10: \$1,179,152
2010 - 11: \$845,672
2011 - 12: \$740,771 (projected)
2012 - 13: \$528,499 (projected, no additional revenue)

Aid to Fire Funding:

2008 - 09 = \$279,047
2009 - 10 = \$257,813
2010 - 11 = \$178,590
2011 - 12 = \$178,590
2012 - 13 = \$0

June 30, 2012, Aid to Fire funding ends.

What We Have Done to Save Money

- Apparatus & Fleet:** Fire personnel perform a large portion of fleet maintenance and service.
- Facilities & Equipment:** Fire personnel perform a large portion of facility maintenance/upkeep and repairs.
- Operations:** Investigating contracting out fire district services while maintaining district’s independence.
- Training & Certification:** Fire personnel perform most in-service and certified training to reduce costs and meet local, state and federal mandates. Created EMS CEU Program for EMTs, Paramedics and 1st Responders.
- Purchasing:** Reduced to essential levels as an emergency response agency.
- Grants:** Awarded 2010 Cal Fire Grant to replace & upgrade communications equipment.
- Fuel:** Restrict vehicles to essential operations.
- Salaries:** 1. For three of the last four years, the professional firefighters have not taken a cost-of-living salary increase. 2. The Fire Chief has voluntarily taken a 25% cut in pay and hours. 3. The Admin. Asst.’s hours were cut by 50%.
- Benefits:** Through various methods, the district has cut health insurance and employee workers comp. costs. District contributions to the Chief’s retirement account have been suspended.

The Tax Proposals

\$73 per developed parcel per year / \$6.08 per month / \$0.20 per day. Annual Revenue: \$203,743

\$85 per developed parcel per year / \$7.08 per month / \$0.23 per day. Annual Revenue: \$237,235

\$100 per developed parcel per year / \$8.33 per month / \$0.27 per day. Annual Revenue: \$279,100. This is the amount suggested in the county’s Citygate report. It replaces 2008-09 Aid to Fire funding.

What we will get for the money:

- Maintain local control over Fire & Emergency Services

- Keep homeowner's insurance rates low by maintaining paid staff at local fire stations.
- Maintain EMT/Paramedic (ALS) Program and Basic Life Support (BLS) Program
- Continue to fund Firefighter/Paramedics, Firefighter/EMTs and Volunteer Firefighters 24/7.
- Purchase protective clothing, with related emergency rescue, medical and communications equipment.
- Contribute to the Emergency Response Vehicle Replacement trust fund.
- Maintain current response times.
- Ensure equipment, response vehicles and communications are maintained and up to date.
- Ensure compliant personal protective safety clothing and associated equipment.

The Likely Future

Special Tax PASSES: We maintain local control, response / service levels and times.

Special Tax FAILS, Option 1: Loss of EMT/Paramedic (Advanced Life Support) Program; decreased service levels and increased response times to outlying areas: Grizzly Flats, Sand Ridge Corridor, Happy Valley, Omo Ranch; Increased Homeowner's Insurance rates; Loss of half of the paid staff; Permanently close Fire Station 31 (Willows); Deferred Fleet & Facility maintenance; Apparatus & Fleet Replacement unlikely; Unable to obtain Grant Matching Funds; Negative Impact on County JPA EMS System; Inability to comply with unfunded mandates, agreements and training requirements; Inability to purchase and replace protective equipment.

Special Tax FAILS, Option 2: The PFPD ceases to exist. Fire / EMS service provided by El Dorado County at the discretion of the Board of Supervisors. No local control.

Questions?

Why are we so short of funds? Last year, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors voted 3/2 to eliminate Aid to Fire funding by FY 2012-13. In 2010-11, the PFPD's share was cut by over \$100,000. A decrease in local property taxes of approximately \$40,000. Despite cost-cutting by the district, it was not enough to offset the decrease in revenue. Also, the lack of high-density development limits property taxes.

How about more volunteers? Volunteers do not provide a guaranteed response, because most volunteers work outside the district and are not available during the day.

Will the tax go up? Probably, slightly. It is written with an automatic Consumer Price Index adjustment. Since 1990, the CPI has averaged around 2% to 3% a year. In 2009, it went down for the first time since 1955.

How long will the tax last? There is no end date. It will be reviewed annually by the Board of Directors.

Can the Board of Directors raise the tax? No. To raise the tax requires an election and 2/3 approval by the voters.

Statistics

Population: 6,250
 296 Square Miles / 187,000 Acres
 96,920 Acres of USFS Land
 3,000 Acres in Williamson Act Contracts
 2,791 Developed Parcels
 5,339 Undeveloped Parcels
 6 Fire Stations (One Paid, Five Volunteer)

Chief
 6 Paid Firefighters & Paramedics
 1 Part time (20 hr. / Week) Admin. Asst
 1 Volunteer Resident FF / Paramedic
 1 Volunteer Resident FF/EMT
 7 Volunteer Firefighters
 5 Fire Explorers/Cadets
 11 C.E.R.T. Team Members (Grizzly Flats)

Equipment

3 Fire Engines; 2 Fast Attack Vehicles;
 3,000 Gal. Water Tender;
 2 Utility Vehicles; Command Vehicle;
 XED Haz-Mat Decontamination Trailer