



Clifton Fire Protection District

3254 F Road/PO Box 386 • Clifton, CO. 81520

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www.cliftonfire.com



FACTUAL SUMMARY

OF

REFERRED BALLOT ISSUE 5A SEEKING A MILL LEVY INCREASE

As part of the November 7, 2017 regular District Election, the Clifton Fire Protection District Board of Directors has referred to electors of the District, a ballot issue, seeking a 2.25 mill levy increase from the current levy of 9.302 mills to 11.552 mills, beginning in 2018. By law, the Election will be conducted by mail ballot, with a ballot mailed to each “eligible elector” of the District.

“Eligible electors” include all active, registered Colorado voters who either reside within the District and who or who’s spouse, own taxable, real or personal property within the District, in the name of the individual voter or spouse. (Property held in the name of a corporation, partnership or trust may not result in voter eligibility.)

Rationale for Proposed Mill Levy Increase:

Since the District’s formation in 1943, the Clifton Fire Protection District has been very reluctant to pursue mill levy increases and has prided itself on sound yet conservative spending. As an organization we have never seen nor sought out to be and organization based on having the newest, shiniest apparatus or equipment with all the bells and whistles. Rather we have always maintained a focus of quality service to the community in the most fiscally responsible manner. Therefore the decision to pursue a mill levy increase was not entered into lightly.

The District was organized as a purely volunteer organization, using such equipment as available or as donated from local citizens or other fire departments. Over the years, the District has grown to include paid staff to provide; fire prevention and education, fire suppression, emergency medical response and medical transport to the local community on such basis as its limited resources allowed. By State law, fire districts can only secure revenue from property taxes and charges for medical response and transport.

As a governmental entity, the District must operate on a balanced budget to be determined annually. This annual budget process, by its very nature, favors a short-term focus on expenses, rather than a longer term view of future needs. Despite this, the District Board of Directors and the Fire Chief believe the long-term sustainability of solid volunteer program, combined with paid personnel to provide full-time emergency response and transportation services to the citizens of the District, demands not only long-range planning, but an annual budget process which involves future needs.

Fire and emergency medical response equipment, including communications equipment, firefighter safety gear, and emergency apparatus is expensive to purchase and to maintain. Due to past budgetary constraints, the District’s equipment and facilities housing that equipment, are aging and in need of replacement. Yet, due to limited sources of revenue, the Board recognizes that the stress upon future budgets will be significant, such that continued capital planning for future needs, is required to focus on sustaining a reasonable level of service to the community.

The average amount of tax revenue has remained relatively flat and, at times, decreased, so as to force the District to act in a fiscally-conservative manner, while maintaining a full service response agency providing emergency medical services and transport, structural and wild land firefighting capabilities, technical rescue operations, public safety education and fire code enforcement.

Finally, the cost to train personnel to the appropriate levels for both fire and emergency medical response is a significant expense. This training is vital to the success of the organization and to ensure every member goes home safely to their family after each shift. A new firefighter will easily spend 280+ hours in their first year to two years obtain their necessary basic certifications regardless if they are career, part-time or volunteers. After that all members must attend recertification and continuing education trainings in addition to various advancement courses. The average cost to train one person to the Firefighter I level with their EMT is \$3,000 to \$4,0000 depending on course location. The average cost to provide the necessary protective equipment and uniforms for a single firefighter is \$3,500.

Significant Factors Requiring a Mill Levy Increase:

1. Years of flat or declining property tax revenues, coupled with regularly increasing operational expenses, have left the District with insufficient funds to readily replace worn-out equipment or maintain or improve aging apparatus to more than a minimally required level necessary for safety of the community and District staff, paid and volunteer.
2. Changes in Colorado's automobile insurance laws, combined with State and Federal restrictions on Medicare/Medicaid reimbursements for services, permanently reduced the District's revenue from emergency medical and transport services, in half.
3. Increasing medical premiums for both, automobile and health insurance, as well as the state of the economy, have left more people unable to afford insurance to cover emergency medical/transport services.
4. State and Federal grant monies are increasingly difficult to secure, since more fire departments are applying and lesser amounts of grant monies are available.
5. Impacts from the Gallagher Amendment have resulted in a decrease in the amount of tax revenues that can be collected under the current Mill Levy.
6. The continued annexation of residential properties by the City of Grand Junction in the Pear Park area has reduced the amount of residential homes available for tax generating revenue.
7. Steadily increasing call volumes are placing a significant toll on the number of personnel on duty each day. It is not uncommon for our crews to respond to 15-20 calls per day. We are frequently seeing back-to-back-to-back calls for service.

Fire District Information

Fire District Summary:

The Clifton Fire Protection District was formed on the 9th day of July, 1943, in Mesa County, Colorado in accordance with the then existing laws of the State of Colorado . The Clifton Fire Protection District covers a 15 square mile area within Mesa County with an additional 11 square miles of ambulance service area. In addition to the rural residential properties, including significant rural/residential subdivisions with lots between 2.5 acres and 35 acres in extent, the District also contains typical

suburban residential subdivisions with a moderate amount of commercial and/or industrial properties centered in and around the Clifton Community.

Generally, the boundaries of the Fire District are (using the Mesa County Road designation) 30 Road on the West from Interstate Highway 70 to “D” Road, 30 1/4 Road on the West from “D” Road to the Colorado River, the Colorado River on the South, 35 Road on the East from the Colorado River to “G” Road, 35 3/10 Road on the East from “G” Road to Interstate Highway 70, and Interstate Highway 70 on the north. The boundaries as described are general in nature and not precise legal description of the District’s boundaries and have some alcoves of properties that have been annexed into the City of Grand Junction. The District has provided and intends to continue to provide service outside its service area under our Ambulance Service Area agreement and mutual aid contracts with other districts, cities or other governmental bodies within Mesa County.

The District has a current population of approximately 33,000 residents with most considered to be low to middle income. On top of our permanent resident population, the I70 Business Loop brings a large number of commuters through the Clifton area looking to for a shorter route of travel to Denver in addition to I70 itself which serves as a throughway for industrial and hazardous materials transport, daily commuters and recreational commuters. There is also a railway that travels through the heart of the Clifton Fire Protection District which serves to transport everything from hazardous materials/chemical cargo to passengers on AmTrak on a daily basis.

The District currently operates as a Combination Department and is established as a “special district” pursuant to the Special Districts Act of the Colorado Revised Statutes §§ 32-1-1001, *et al.* It is governed by an elected five member Board of Directors. The District provides emergency medical, fire suppression, fire prevention, Code Enforcement, public safety education, hazardous materials response (limited), and limited rescue services. The District is currently unable to provide technical rescue services beyond basic levels.

ISO Rating:

The Clifton Fire Protection District currently maintains a community fire insurance rating from the Insurance Services Office (ISO) of “3/3x” within the community of Clifton. Areas within the District which are within 5 travel miles of the Fire Station, maintain an ISO rating of “3” and all other areas beyond that, are rated as a “3x.”

Fire Station:

The District is covered by one fire station: Station #21 is located at 3254 F Road, in the unincorporated community of Clifton. The current fire station was originally built in 1980 and served to house a couple of emergency apparatus operated by a dedicated group of volunteers. Throughout the years the organization has been able to adapt to an increasing demand on services. In 1992 the first expansion of the station took place that added much needed space for training, apparatus and offices. In 1996 the second story of the station was remodeled to allow for sleeping quarters and a small kitchen area. Then in 2014 the station underwent a remodel that allowed for an expansion of the training room, the addition of four more dorm rooms that serve as sleeping quarters on a rotational basis, and a larger dayroom and kitchen for an increased number of personnel.

Staffing:

The District currently employs a paid career Fire Chief, a paid career Operations Chief, three paid career Captains, two paid career Lieutenants, and ten paid career firefighters. Additional staffing is supplied by approximately 20 part-time firefighters and 15 volunteers who live both within and outside of the District. All volunteers work shifts at the fire stations. Volunteers living within the District may also respond to calls, from their homes, when available.

Volunteers often provide a substantial time commitment which goes well beyond Department requirements. For example, volunteer firefighters donate an estimated 280 hours in their first year alone just for initial training.

Call & Response Profile:

The Clifton Fire Protection District is an all-hazard response organization which means we provided emergency services to include; emergency and non-emergency medical response and transport, structure fires, wildland and wildland-urban interface fires, vehicle accidents with and without extrication, river rescue and hazardous materials incidents. In addition we provide non-emergency services as well such as; public education and fire prevention activities, building plans review, and an internship program with Central High School.

In 1980 the Clifton Fire Protection District responded to a total of 347 requests for service. Since that time the organization has seen a significant and steady increase in the requests for service. As this increase has remained steady we as an organization have been able to keep up with the demand primarily due to the support of the community and through strict fiscal responsibility.

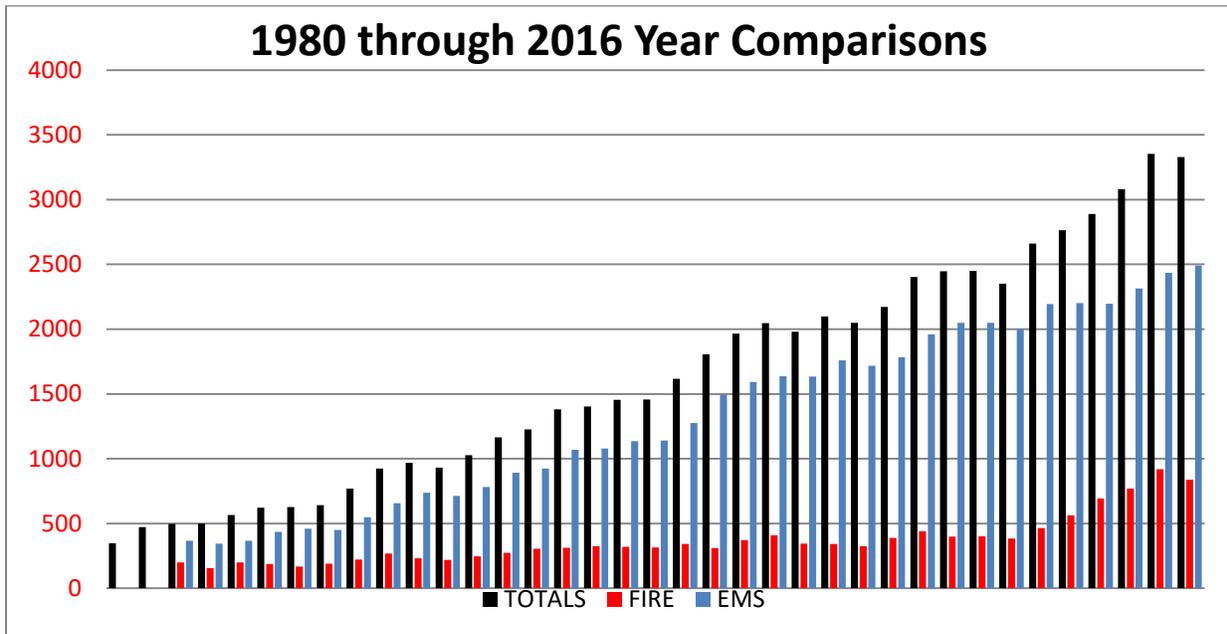
In 2016 the Clifton Fire District responded to 3329 calls for service, a 26% increase from 2008 when the last mill levy increase was approved. In the years spanning 2012 to 2016 we responded to 16,995 calls for service and is broken down in the following:

| Call Type | Number |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| EMS – BLS | 9,235 |
| EMS – ALS | 5,195 |
| Motor Vehicle Crashes | 362 |
| Wildland Fire | 119 |
| Structure Fire | 92 |
| Misc.* | 1,992 |
| Total | 16,995 |

*Misc. includes calls such as River Rescue, Smoke and/or Odor checks, Hazardous Materials calls, etc.

The majority of responses are for emergency medical services (EMS) which account for 85% of all calls (in line with national statistics for the fire service). Clifton Fire personnel respond to a daily average of 9.31 calls per day. Advanced Life Support (ALS) response (accomplished by paramedics) account for approximately 36% of all EMS calls. The District responds to an average of 72 motor vehicle accidents annually, an average of 19 calls for structure fires, and an average 24 calls for wildfire/vegetation fires.

The following graph shows the steady rate of increase in calls from 1980 to 2016 for Fire and EMS related emergencies.



Apparatus and equipment:

The Clifton Fire Protection District provides service through the use of a fleet of emergency apparatus. The average age of our apparatus is 15 years. According to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards front line apparatus should be moved to reserve status between 10 to 15 years and not maintained in a fleet more than 20 to 25 years due to safety concerns, maintenance issues and cost of ownership. Our current fleet consists of the following apparatus:

| Unit Identifier | Make | Model | Type | Year | Age |
|-----------------|--------------|----------|--------------|------|-----|
| Chief 21 | GMC | SUBURBAN | Command/SUV | 2005 | 12 |
| Squad 21 | GMC | YUKON | SUV | 2013 | 4 |
| Brush 21 | GM | HMMWV | Type 6 Brush | 1987 | 30 |
| Engine 21 | PIERCE | DASH | Type 1 | 2001 | 16 |
| Engine 22 | PIERCE | DASH | Type 1 | 1991 | 26 |
| Ladder 21 | PIERCE | VELOCITY | Quint | 2008 | 9 |
| Rescue 21 | FREIGHTLINER | FL80 | Heavy Rescue | 1996 | 21 |
| Ambulance 21 | CHEVY | G4500 | ALS/BLS | 2011 | 6 |
| Ambulance 22 | CHEVY | G4500 | ALS/BLS | 2012 | 5 |
| Ambulance 23 | FORD | E350 | ALS/BLS | 1999 | 18 |
| Boat 21 | OMC | 1448 | River Rescue | 1998 | 19 |

Threats to the District Future

The Clifton Fire Protection District has operated under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the City of Grand Junction for the area commonly referred to as the Pear Park Development area. This was a direct result of the impacts to the Fire District from the Persigo Sewer System Intergovernmental Agreement. This Agreement states that any new property development in this area is automatically annexed into the City limits of Grand Junction. In order to ensure effective and timely emergency response the MOA allowed for the Clifton Fire Protection District to continue serving this area with tax reimbursement from the City of Grand Junction. This year we were notified that the City of Grand Junction will be terminating this MOA effective January 1, 2018. This results in an estimated \$174,000 loss in tax revenues for our Fire District. While we will no longer be immediately servicing this area we will still respond and provide service via mutual aid.

Part of the operational revenues that the Clifton Fire Protection District relies on come from our Ambulance Billing for patients we transport to area hospitals. While the actual service is provided and funded partially comes from those ambulance bills, the operation and maintenance of the ambulance service is funded by tax revenues. The unfortunate thing is each year the collection rate for ambulance transports steadily decrease as Medicare and Medicaid continue to cut their reimbursement amounts.

The assessed evaluation for the Clifton Fire Protection District has remained relatively flat with slight increases and decreases over the past several years. The assessed evaluation is determined by the County Assessor and is based on the current and expected growth of an area. Without increases to the assessed evaluation the District continues to face financial hurdles as we are expected to continue doing more with declining revenues and raising costs.

District Administration

As previously stated the Clifton Fire Protection District is governed by a five member Board of Directors. The Board of Directors have hired a Fulltime Fire Chief to serve as the District's Chief Executive Officer and to ensure the daily operations of the organization. The Board of Directors includes;

Paul Frey, Board President
Jennifer Robertson, Board Vice President
Michelle DeShazer, Board Secretary
John Hall, Board Director
Lauretta Watkins, Board Director

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why is this mill levy increase necessary?

To continue to provide a highly trained and qualified public safety service for both fire suppression and EMS services, as well as comply with all required State and national safety regulations.

2. What would the revenues from the proposed mill levy increase be used for?

The tax revenues from the mill levy increase would be used for:

- Implementation of an established Apparatus Replacement Program of aging emergency response vehicles.
 - The District currently has two **Type 1** Engines for primary fire/rescue response capacity (Engine 21 and Engine 22). A **Type 1** Engine is one that is specifically designed to carry the necessary tools, equipment, personnel and water to safely and effectively respond to and deal with structural fires. Until recently, however, the District was able to only safely utilize one of these engines for emergency response, due to minimal funds for maintenance. While less frequent, there are numerous scenarios within the District which may require the deployment of multiple engines in order to meet demands of a larger fire. Such scenarios include: fires in commercial structures and large residential buildings, water shuttle operations, flammable gas impingement, and wild land structural protection. Additionally, it is important the District have the capability to quickly place a second engine in service for additional calls such as; additional calls in our response area, for mutual aid purposes or in the event of a mechanical breakdown of the primary engine.
 - The District currently maintains a fleet of three ALS/BLS (Advanced Life Support/Basic Life Support) capable ambulances. Due to the increasing call volume we frequently respond to multiple medical calls at the same time. This causes significant wear and tear on ambulances. These units are utilized to provide quick treatment and transport to the hospital for those individuals that are suffering from either a medical or traumatic complaint.
 - The District currently utilized a 1987 Humvee that was donated to use and converted into a brush response unit. Due to the unique nature of the mixture of agricultural and open wildlands this vehicle needs to be capable of operating and transporting personnel into areas with limited access and little to no water.
- Renovation of Fire Station #21, which was originally built in 1980. Due to the age of the building it is necessary to replace the roof. Currently there are significant leaks in the roof which allows water to run into the building causing a hazardous mold issue. The exhaust removal system needs to be replaced with one that can keep up with the increased demand of starting diesel engines.
- Replace out dated safety equipment to include self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), protective clothing to include structural turnout gear, and fire hose and nozzles.
- To improve the recruitment and retention of qualified emergency responders. We are continually losing our personnel to larger organizations that provide higher pay and better

benefits to employees and their families. Upon approval we would increase the pay for our part-time firefighters in attempts to keep them from leaving our organization for other agencies.

- Plan for construction of Station #22 to meet the increase call volume which is putting a strain on current staffing and apparatus resulting in increasing response times and need for the use of mutual aid (if available).
- Increase in the daily staffing level. If approved we will hire an additional 3 firefighters preferably with ALS certifications.

3. Will the mill levy increase be limited in duration?

Very likely not, in view of the fact that the District will only continue to see increasing costs necessary to provide fire and EMS services expected by a growing and aging local community.

4. What happens if an increased mill levy is not approved?

- If the increase in funding is not approved, the District Board will be forced to make difficult decisions regarding reductions in service. We will attempt to do so in a manner which minimizes the impact on its residents. This may include but not limited to reduction in staffing.
- Without a mill levy increase, the Fire Department could be faced with the inability to maintain the current level of service and faces the real prospect of no future increase in the level of service.
- Without a mill levy increase, the District will not be able to improve living conditions for firefighters sufficient to ensure appropriate comfort and safety. This may lead to a recommendation that volunteers forego Fire Station staffing, and revert to a system where volunteers respond to the Station for emergency calls, training and meetings only, increasing response times and negatively impacting volunteer service.

5. When was the last mill levy increase for fire protection services?

The last mill levy increase the District successfully sought and received was in 2008. This increase was absorbed into the Operations of the organization and used for maintenance costs for apparatus, staffing costs and day to day operations of the District.

6. How does the current mill levy rate compare with surrounding Mesa County Fire Districts?

Provided below are the current mill levy rates on file for agencies within Mesa County:

| Agency | Mill Levy | Square Miles | Residents | Calls 2016 | Stations |
|------------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| Central Orchard Mesa | 4.035 | | | | 1 |
| Clifton Fire District | 9.302 | 33 | 33,000 | 3,329 | 1 |
| City of Grand Junction | 8.000 | 726 | 83,000 | 15,598 | 5 |
| Grand Junction Rural | 5.938 | | | | |
| Grand Junction Redlands | 4.904 | | | | |
| De Beque Fire District | 4.000 | | | 239 | 1 |
| Gateway/UnawEEP | 10.000 | 815 | 410 | 57 | 1 |
| Lands End Fire District | 5.000 | 193 | 2,200 | 170 | 1 |
| Lower Valley Fire District | 5.311 | 408 | 25,000 | 2,106 | 2 |
| Palisade Rural Fire District | 6.242 | | | 831 | 1 |
| Plateau Valley Fire | 5.169 | | | 300 | |

7. How are my taxes determined and compare to a mill levy?

Colorado State Statute provides that the actual value of property is not the taxable value. Rather, the taxable value is a percentage of the actual value. The percentage is called an “assessment rate,” and the resulting value is called the “assessed value.” The assessment rate is 29 percent for all non-residential properties. The residential property assessment rate is established by the legislature every odd numbered year. After remaining at 7.96 percent since 2003 it is now 7.20 percent. The intent of having the ability to change the residential assessment rate is to maintain the tax burden balance between residential properties and all other property types.

Your property taxes are calculated by multiplying the mill levy or tax rate by the assessed or taxable value of your property. Please keep in mind that tax rates are not finalized until December of each year and are subject to change.

Calculation of Property Taxes:

Actual Value x Assessment Ratio (Percentage) = Assessed Value

\$150,000 Actual Value x 7.20% (.072) = \$10,800

Assessed Value x Mill Levy Percentage (mill levy divided by 1000) = Taxes

\$10,800 x 11.552 (11.552/1000 = 0.11552) = \$124.76

8. What will the additional 2.25 mills due to my annual residential property tax bill?

\$150,000 Residence would increase \$10.40 per month (150,000 x .072 x 0.011552 mills)

\$200,000 Residence would increase \$13.86 per month (200,000 x .072 x 0.011552 mills)

\$300,000 Residence would increase \$20.79 per month (300,000 x .072 x 0.011552 mills)

\$400,000 Residence would increase \$27.72 per month (400,000 x .072 x 0.011552 mills)

(Non-residential property increase: \$1,500,000 x .29 x 0.011552 mills = \$418.76 per month)

The average cup of coffee is \$2.70 with the average person drinking 3.1 cups per day. This equals \$7.37 per day spent on coffee or \$221.34 per month by the average American. (<http://www.e-importz.com/coffee-statistics.php>)

9. How can I vote in the upcoming November 7, 2017 election?

If you are registered to vote in the State of Colorado and you are a resident, property owner, or a spouse or civil union partner of a property owner, and the property is owned in the name of an individual (corporation, partnership or trust) within the Clifton Fire District, **or**, if you are registered to vote in the State of Colorado and own property within Clifton Fire District, you will receive a ballot in the mail in October. Simply fill out the ballot in accordance with the enclosed instructions and mail it or drop it off at the designated location no later than November 7, 2017 at 7:00 pm for your vote to be counted.

10. Do I have to vote by mail? Can I vote in person at a polling booth?

By statute, this election is a mail ballot election only and as such, there will be no polling place to vote at on November 14, 2017. You must vote the ballot that is mailed to you.

11. How can I register to vote in the November 7, 2017 election?

Colorado law allows you to register to vote through Election Day, but please note that how you register to vote is important.

If you register to vote by mail or online through www.govotecolorado.com at least eight (8) days before the election, you may contact the Designated Election Official to receive a ballot

If you register to vote less than eight (8) days before the November 7, 2017 election, you must contact the District's Designated Election Official.

If you register to vote through a voter registration drive, your application must be submitted no later than 22 days before the November 7, 2017 election.

You may register to vote by appearing in person at the Mesa County Clerk & Recorder's Office.

12. Where do I mail my ballot, and when does it need to be received by in order to count?

Your ballot needs to be returned to Clifton Fire District by 7 p.m. on Election Day, November 7, 2017. Postmarks do not count. ***Your ballot must be received by 7 p.m. on Election Day, November 7, 2017.***

13. What are the locations and deadlines for dropping off my ballot in person?

The Clifton Fire Station, at 3254 F Road, CO. 81520, or the Mesa County Office of Elections, 544 Rood Ave, Grand Junction, CO 81501, are the locations to drop off your ballot no later than 7:00 pm on Election Day, November 14, 2017.