



Black Forest Fire & Rescue- Strategic Plan

January 17

2018

The primary purposes of this plan are to effectively communicate to the stakeholders within the district, the residents and business owners, and secondly to assist future Boards by looking at the long-range view of what the Districts needs are; both today and into the future.

2018 and
Beyond

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LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Black Forest Community,

In 2017, the Board decided to embark upon a process to develop a strategic plan, a framework, to assist in several areas with the fire districts mission. The two primary purposes were to first effectively communicate to the stakeholders within the district, the residents and business owners, and secondly was to assist future Boards by looking at the long-range view of what the Districts needs are; both today and into the future.

This framework is intended to serve as a road map to help guide the Board and the departments officer corp with prioritizing resources, maximizing each and every taxpayer dollar, and ultimately to provide for both the efficient and effective delivery of services. This plan is not rigidly set in place to dictate the actions of the current Board, or its successors, but rather it is intended to consider the long term predictable needs while encouraging adaptability. This document is not only a snapshot of where we are today, but rather a vision of where we will likely need to be tomorrow and how we can get there from today.

This plan was developed by the Board of Directors with collaboration from the departments Command Staff, and its employees. This cooperative method allowed for a reality based plan to be formulated. Cooperation was critical because the Directors view is in reality one based upon policy preference and resource allocation, whereas the Command Staff perspective is focused on meeting the expectations of the community at large, and ultimately the vital link to you the community are the actual men and women who serve you on an individual basis daily; whose viewpoint is based in the very difficult and demanding reality of the immediate crisis facing you and your loved ones. By incorporating all of these valued experiences, we believe we have accomplished a strategic plan that will serve the Board and the community in the coming years ahead.

As elected officials, we recognize that the seats of the Board of Directors are not ours, but are in fact yours, the citizens. We have merely been asked by, and entrusted by, you the community to serve you in the oversight and planning of your local fire agency. It is our hope that this planning process serves in effectively communicating the tremendous work that your firefighters, and their leaders, currently do and also define what the goals and needs are for the future, in order to continue to operate effectively and accomplish the daily mission you trust them to do.

Sincerely,

Chair Rick McMorran Vice-Chair PJ Langmaid Treasurer Jack Hinton

Director Rick "Gator" Nearhoof

Director Bryn Kroto

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intent of this strategic plan is to:

- Promote effective communication with the community as to the increasing demands on their fire department.
- Provide a guideline for successive Boards as to what has been identified as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the organization and a long term campaign to address those areas.
- Encourage the community to strengthen the department and to continue to provide well trained and well led firefighters with effective fire and rescue equipment.
- Engage cooperative partnerships with similar agencies to maximize the service delivery of core services and to maximize the impact of each tax dollar.

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ORGANIZATION & COMMUNITY PROFILE

Our Mission

To protect the lives and property, of the citizens and visitors of the Black Forest Community, from the effects of fire, medical emergencies, hazards, environmental incidents and other emergency situations.

We will accomplish our mission through the use of prevention, public education and emergency response by dedicated, professional and team oriented individuals who collectively provide customer focused service, which is deemed outstanding by those we encounter.

The Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District (BFFR) is a mostly volunteer, combination fire department. Physically, the district serves approximately fifty square miles in Northern El Paso County, Colorado. We are an all hazards, emergency response agency that prides ourselves on providing professional, timely and fiscally responsible service to the residents and visitors of the district.

History & Governance

The department was established in 1945 as a volunteer agency, organized to protect the citizens of the community from the threat of fire. On October 11, 1967 the department was incorporated as a Special District, a governmental sub-division of the State of Colorado. The Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District has continued to operate as a Title 32 Special District since incorporation.

The district is served by a five-member Board of Directors, duly elected by the electorate of the district. The directors serve staggered terms of two to four years, and annually the board appoints a president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary. Board member responsibilities include; district policy design and implementation, ultimate financial oversight, strategic and long-range planning, and appointment of the fire chief. The Board of Directors also annually certifies the districts mill levy (the major funding mechanism for district operations). The voter approved mill levy is currently set at 9.251 mills.

District Profile

The district boundaries include approximately fifty square miles of land. Historically, the district was comprised of mostly rural residential plots and agricultural property, with a very small amount of commercial land and business operating within the district. In the past several years (post Black Forest Fire and post-recession) the district has received and reviewed large, new residential development plans. These new residential developments will push the district from a mostly rural/suburban district to a suburban/urban district over the span of the next twenty years.

Currently located within the district boundaries is a resident population of approximately 11,638 individuals. The total number of properties in the district is 5,367: 4,476 residential, 130 exempt, 73 agricultural, 19 commercial, and 669 vacant. (Based on the

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vacant land numbers and the current and future land development plans the district population could exceed 15,000 in the next 15-20 years.)

Furthermore, the district protects the following critical infrastructure: (3) gas/oil pipelines, (3) natural gas sub-stations, (4) cellular communication sights, and an 800mhz radio tower.

The demographic profile of the district shows a median resident age of 42, a median household income of \$98,558 and 52.7% of district resident have obtained a Bachelor's Degree or higher (31.2% have some college or an Associate's Degree). Additionally, the average appraised value of residential property in the district is \$404,378. Based on the El Paso County abstract of assessment, the district serves and protects approximately \$204,077,900 worth of property.

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DISTRICT OPERATIONS PROFILE

Staffing

The district operations are currently managed through the use of a combination fire department model. This model includes the scheduling of full-time career personnel, part-time employees, resident firefighters and volunteer emergency responders. Personnel are assigned to three separate, rotating shifts, which work a 48/96 schedule (48 hours on and 96 hours off). Currently, daily district staffing is set at five personnel, consisting of a career line officer (captain or lieutenant), a firefighter/paramedic, a firefighter/EMT, a part-time firefighter/EMT, and a resident firefighter. Volunteer emergency responders supplement the assigned daily scheduled staffing. The administrative aspect of district operations is managed by a fire chief, assistant fire chief, officer manager, part-time accountant and an appointed public information officer.

The training and certification requirements for personnel, regardless of classification, include: EMT or paramedic, IFSAC Firefighter I, IFSAC Firefighter II, Hazmat Operations, and NWCG S-130/190. Additionally, all district officers were required to attend and obtain a Fire Officer I certification.

Stations

The district currently operates out of two stations. Station #1, located at the intersection of Teachout Rd. and Burgess Rd., houses our administrative offices, a training and community use room and operations staff. Station #1 was designed to accommodate up to ten personnel and has the design to house up to eight apparatus. Located on the station #1 property (ten acres) is also the district training site and helipad. Station #2, located near the intersection of Hodgen Rd. and Black Forest Road, is designed to accommodate four to six personnel and four apparatus. At present, both stations are adequately designed to manage district operations into the foreseeable future.

Current district station locations provide 99% five mile response coverage, with significant overlap in the central portion of the district. The only private properties located outside of the district are located to the north of station #2, and unfortunately these properties aren't within five road miles of any fire district. Even at district build-out, two district stations will adequately cover and serve all areas within the district.

The focus for district facilities should be viewed from the standpoint of repair, maintenance, and remodel/upgrade.

Apparatus

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In 2016 Black Forest Fire Rescue we took stock of all current apparatus, to identify what apparatus we really need to accomplish our mission. Essentially, we identified that we need to maintain the following primary response vehicles: (2) pumpers (ave. cost to replace \$480,000-550,000), (2) tenders, (2) brush trucks and (2) ambulances. Essentially, this provides for a single primary response vehicle, by type, at each station. Furthermore, we have identified the need to maintain a single reserve vehicle, by type, for each primary vehicle identified above.

In 2016 we sold (2) older reserve engines. This allowed us to reduce the amount expended annually on insurance and maintenance of the fleet. The proceeds for the sale of the identified assets were placed into the capital improvement/replacement account. We received quotes to re-chassis two of our three ambulances the price per unit \$139,000-142,000. Additionally, we received quotes to purchase new ambulances \$173,000-190,000. We intend to delay re-chassis or new purchase until the FY 2019 and apply for a State 50% matching grant. In 2017, staff identified the need to purchase a primary engine, to meet the (2) primary and (1) reserve operational model.

Moving forward, the district and staff has drafted and reviewed a replacement schedule that clearly articulates a reasonable and fiscally responsible plan for future vehicle replacement.

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S.W.O.T. Analysis

<p><u>Strengths</u> Talented and capable leadership and employees Highly efficient and responsible with tax revenue Increasing community support Relationships w/ surrounding agencies and stakeholders Age, Number, location of current stations ISO rating of 4/5 Paramedic transport Community programs and involvement</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u> Budget restrictions Employee retention (especially part timers) Volunteer retention/participation Prior developed strategic planning Capability to meet growing service demands Communication with community Lack of vertical movement in organization Coordinated department training Organizational communication/transparency Inability to impose impact fees</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u> Employee development Revenue (Bonds vs. Mill Levy) Grants Partnerships, authorities, mergers Community awareness Information Technology Communication National deployments County EMS Ability to improve ISO rating Strategic planning</p>	<p><u>Threats</u> Uncertain future Economy Sustainable funding Inadequate staffing Continued Annexation by City of Colorado Springs Aging apparatus fleet County EMS Ability to remain an independent Fire District Rapid development Inability to impose impact fees</p>

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

BFFRPD exists solely to accomplish a very specific mission. In order to successfully accomplish this mission, the organization must be highly disciplined and maintain operational effectiveness. Maintaining both discipline and operational effectiveness, requires leadership at all levels within the organization and the efficient management of resources. Operational effectiveness is best defined for BFFRPD as the integration of all operational aspects (strategic, tactical, and task levels) with the support of critical resources and infrastructure (administrative, governance, equipment, etc.), all coming together in order to effectively serve our neighbors in a professional and compassionate manner. These goals and objectives are intended to provide specific measurable criteria that enables the organization to accomplish the mission.

STAFF RELATIONS

Firefighting and rescue operations require people to accomplish the objectives. While certain aspects of the mission can be assisted with engineering, the bottom line is the mission involves human beings helping other human beings in need. In order to continue this service delivery, employees will always be needed and those employees need to be well trained and they need to be taken care of to ensure continued performance of duties.

- GOAL #1: Human Resources
- Adopt a pay scale plan/model to give employees a path for career and financial advancement.
 - Codify the hiring and testing requirements for entry level, company officer, and assistant chief.
 - Ensure confidential access to chaplain and peer support programs.
- GOAL #2: Operational
- Develop a long term plan for number of full time employees (FTE) needed for impacts of future growth.
 - Adopt a Standards of Coverage to ensure community expectations of firefighting personnel are clearly defined.
- GOAL #3: Employee Development
- Encourage and foster an environment of continuing education.
 - Adopt a minimum annual training plan (hours, topics, etc).
 - Establish minimum NIMS courses for each rank.
- GOAL #4: Communication/Transparency
- Increase labor and management meetings for the purpose of creating more dialogue and increasing a shared consciousness throughout team.

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FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Firefighting is a costly endeavor. However, the toll of foregoing firefighting is far more costly for humanity. The reality though, is that a community can only have the fire protection they are willing to pay for and the administration of a firefighting organization has a legal and ethical duty to ensure every tax dollar is properly spent to that end. In order to achieve that objective financial planning and stability must be closely observed due to many emerging threats of additional service delivery coupled with decreasing revenue potentials.

- GOAL #1: Mill Levy Initiatives
 - Develop language for voter approved increases.
 - Adopt plans for where additional mill levy monies would be spent.
- GOAL #2: Grants
 - Continue to apply for every applicable state and federal grant.
 - Apply for SAFER grants for initial hiring of full time employees.
 - Post on website the number of grants applied for and received.
- GOAL #3: Use of Bonds
 - Define when Bonds will be sought from the community and what for.
- GOAL #4: Medical Billing
 - Continue to maintain the effective billing process.
- GOAL #5: Annual Budget Process
 - The organization will continue to solicit input from all personnel to identify needs and other goals.
- GOAL #6: Continued Annexation
 - Adopt a standardized process to exclude annexed property.
- GOAL #7: Purchasing Agreements
 - Approach neighboring fire agencies to attempt to enter into IGA's to purchase similar equipment (apparatus, tools, SCBA, PPE, etc) in order to maximize every available tax dollar.
- GOAL #8: Deployment Revenue
 - Adopt a practice of determining where revenue from deployments will be allocated.

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CAPITAL PLANNING

As noted in "Financial Resources", firefighting is expensive and a major part of that is the capital expenses involved in having the appropriate amount of equipment available at strategic geographic locations within the district. With elected officials terms lasting four years, it is quite possible that these items, with a longer useful term than the elected officials, may be overlooked annually. If proper planning for capital replacement is not accomplished the consequence is to run the risk of a complete operational and financial breakdown at some unknown date in the future that compromise the effectiveness of actually accomplishing the mission.

GOAL #1: Apparatus

- Adopt a 15 year apparatus replacement plan.
- Recommend a line item with a fixed percentage annually for apparatus.
- Maintain deployment model of front line and reserve apparatus.
- Create a systematic maintenance plan for each apparatus.

GOAL #2: Facilities

- Develop a comprehensive plan with a rough budget for the future needs of each facility.

GOAL #3: SCBA

- Adopt a 10 year replacement plan.
- Develop a testing and maintenance program of SCBA and compressor.

GOAL #4: Communications Infrastructure

- Identify and research the departments computer network needs and upgrades.
- Adopt a standardized radio plan to include primary, secondary, and tertiary communication plans to ensure that regardless of the operational environment the needs of the community are being met.
- Work with county partners to identify the future needs and upgrades for interoperability and continued successful radio operations.

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PARTNERSHIPS

Firefighting is a team effort. Considering that a community can only have the fire protection they are willing to pay for, it is incumbent upon the fire district to foster relationships and partnerships with all of the community stakeholders. As a small fire district, we receive monies from our residents but we also rely heavily on our neighbors in mutually cooperative ways to ensure the mission is being accomplished given the extreme costs associated with fire protection and the heavy physical toll firefighting takes on personnel.

GOAL #1: Engage the community

- Promote residential programs for prevention and safety. An example is the continuation of the Firewise program.
- Reinforce the PIO position for better communication with the community regarding developing emergencies and a general awareness of what their fire department is doing to accomplish the mission that they have entrusted us with. Expand the use of social media platforms.
- Ensure 'Cooperators Program' is codified and maintained with semi-annual meetings and trainings.
- Engage the community with CPR/First Aid classes and emergency preparedness training

GOAL #2: Develop and adopt inter-governmental agreements (IGA's)

- Initiate dialogue with neighboring agencies regarding cooperative purchasing agreements for equipment in an effort to reduce overall costs and increase interoperability.
- Engage neighboring agencies in joint training to ensure smooth operations at emergency incidents. (terminology, tactics, NIMS, etc)
- Board members initiate discussion with neighboring agencies Board members to determine the feasibility and interest of a larger fire authority merger; whereby the mission is accomplished more effectively, more efficiently, and at a reduced cost by eliminating the duplication of efforts in some areas.

GOAL #3: Labor/Management Relations

- Add an agenda item at every Board meeting to allow the Labor representative a dialogue with the districts elected officials.

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APPENDIX A

15 YEAR APPARATUS REPLACEMENT PLAN