

According to the Black Forest Fire/Rescue Department website, the district boundaries include about 50 square miles of land. Currently, there is a residential population of about 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.

Jack Hinton, budget officer for the Black Forest Fire/Rescue District, said they would like to raise the upcoming mill levy from 9.215 “up to” 14.5 mils. Hinton said in planning the 2019 budget, they will need about 12.8 million and will adjust as needed. Hinton said when they researched salaries of other fire stations in the county, they realized their firefighters are the least paid in the county, which creates turnover. “The pay needs to get in line with the rest of the county,” Hinton said.

They would like for Station 2 to be staffed full-time, 24 hours a day. They use Station 1 staff to help fill in when they can, Hinton said. “This is a big deal for the residents in the northern part of Black Forest,” he said.

The fire department also needs money for apparatus replacement. Hinton said right now they are replacing one vehicle every 15 years. For example, if they need a new fire truck, which runs about \$500,000, it would take two years to pay it off. The Black Forest Fire/Rescue Department has always been careful with their budget; they paid off Station 2 early, saving the taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars in interest, Hinton said.

“The community can only have the fire protection and EMS services it is willing to pay for,” Hinton said. “It is your department and it should reflect your values.” There will be a town hall meeting at Station 1 (11445 Teachout Road) Oct. 10 at 7 p.m. to discuss the mill levy. Hinton said they encourage the folks of Black Forest to come and ask questions, get involved and vote.